

Cluedo—Wizard Style

by devsgma

Someone's dead, but who did it?

Original Prompt by timestep: #3 My daughters love to play the Harry Potter version of Clue. How would Hermione and Severus solve the crime?

Chapter One

Chapter 1 of 1

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AN: Due to some serious time, constraints I've chosen to modify this slightly. Instead of the Harry Potter version of Clue, which I'm not at all familiar with, I have used a fairly standard version of the Cluedo/Clue game. It still called for quite a bit of research and a bit of head scratching, but at least I wasn't starting from zero as I have played many a fun game. Huge hugs and kisses to my wonderful beta, Lariope, who saved the day, again!

Horace E. F. Slughorn was dead. The cause was as yet undetermined to be sure, but there must be no doubt in the reader's mind that Horace had indeed nibbled his last piece of crystallized pineapple, sipped the last glass of spirits he would ever drink, and donned his emerald-green silk pajamas a final time. If he'd been found in his bed, there would have been no inquiry, as it would have been supposed that he had succumbed to the malady that all mortals share, the inability to halt the slippery seconds that relentlessly sweep the face of the keeper of time.

Instead, Horace was discovered lying on the floor in the middle of the Entrance Hall of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry at the end of June in the year 2010. That was odd in itself, but surrounding him was an array of weapons. A Muggle revolver was positioned above his head, in a manner that could lead one to guess a fatal bullet might be lodged somewhere inside the old codger's cranium, while a dagger was suggestively placed near his carotid artery. A heavy golden candlestick lay on the right side of poor Horace's neck, and near his feet there was a coiled bundle of rope. Directly below the dagger, quite near the corpse's left hand, there was a spanner, and near the right, a lead pipe. Circling the corpse...and its fearsome armory...there lay a book, a trophy, a spyglass, a metal frying pan, a rusty-looking, old-fashioned oil lamp, a Muggle thermometer intended to take one's temperature, a set of greaves, a roll of gaudy garland, and a rather odd device that hummed and spun on a brass axle.

Minerva McGonagall, current headmistress, was the first to *pop* onto the scene, clutching a bright blue envelope in her hand. She was dressed in her tartan house robe with her black hair done up in a long braid that swayed when she walked.

The Charms professor, Filius Flitwick, was the next to appear, but his envelope was a glaring purple which almost...but not quite...matched the color of the bunny slippers he was wearing. Instead of pajamas, he had donned a miniaturized version of a long white nightshirt, but no robe.

Professors Sinistra, Granger and Longbottom arrived in short order, and all were wearing the clothing they'd worn earlier that day. The very last to arrive, Professor Snape, had apparently removed his teaching robes, along with his coat, before he'd been summoned by the green envelope in his right hand. "What is the meaning of this?" he asked while trying to peel the paper off with the left one. It clung as if glued and stubbornly refused to budge or even tear.

"We'd all like to know the answer to that, Severus, and since you *were* the last to arrive, perhaps you're the best...Oh, my goodness gracious!" Minerva, out of all of them,

had finally noticed Horace when she turned to reply to Severus. "Horace, are you all right?" she asked while starting to move in the prone man's direction. She was halted in her tracks by the DADA professor who grasped her arm as she attempted to scurry past him.

"Unhand me, Severus! We must see to Horace," Minerva stated while trying to wrest her arm free.

"While I've no doubt that I would be quite competent to take over as headmaster in the event you were injured or killed by one of the objects surrounding him, I really don't care to deal with the current Board of Governors, Minerva," Severus stated and pulled her back toward his side.

"He's right," piped up Filius while walking up to Minerva, who did a double-take upon seeing Filius' footwear. "Who knows what dastardly person has killed Horace and left him displayed in such a disrespectful manner."

"While I appreciate your sentiment," Snape advised in a dry tone while looking the little man over, "we don't know that he's dead. He may be under a spell or have taken a potion."

"All the more reason to check on him," Minerva stated while glaring at her DADA professor.

"I disagree. If he's dead, then there's no hurry. If he's not... then it could be a trap of unknown intent and we must proceed with caution," he shot back.

"He's dead," announced the Transfiguration professor from near Horace's head. She had slipped away from the group while they watched Severus and Minerva argue. "So far I can't tell why. All the diagnostic spells just bounce off. There's no blood apparent anywhere, but if someone did kill him, they could have cleaned him up I suppose," Hermione stated while she glanced back at the group. "What?" she asked when she noticed that Sinistra was staring at her open mouthed. "I checked, and the stuff lying around on the floor isn't anything other than what it appears to be. Although why someone would put a dagger, a candlestick, a revolver...oh, my gosh!" Hermione said while staring at the red envelope stuck to her left hand. She ran back toward the others and muttered, "I think I know what all this is about. Scarlett...me." She pointed at each one in turn. "PeacockMinerva. MustardNeville. GreenSeverus. WhiteAurora and PlumFilius!" Hermione's mouth dropped open and she squeaked, "Purple bunny slippers? Where did you get them? They're darling!"

Filius flushed and glanced down at his feet as if aware for the first time what he was wearing. "They're warm," he explained with a shrug. "My niece sent them to me last Christmas."

"Footwear aside, I must offer my congratulations, Hermione," Severus drawled in his most sarcastic tones. "You've managed to learn more than your primary colors after *all* these years. I'm sure Mummy and Daddy will be quite proud."

Hermione stood and stared at each of her fellow professors with an expression of horror on her face. "You don't understand, do you? One of you must have murdered Horace."

"That's preposterous!" protested Aurora Sinistra. "Why would any of us kill Horace?"

"I don't know," Hermione answered while slowly putting a small bit of distance between herself and the others. "But it fits. It fits entirely too well to be a mere coincidence."

"For Merlin's sake, Hermione," Minerva stated. "*What* fits, and why can't I remove this blasted blue envelope from my hand?"

"Because you're Mrs Peacock, Aurora is Mrs White, Neville is Colonel Mustard, Severus is Mister Green...or the Reverend Mister Green depending on which edition you have...Filius is Professor Plum, I'm Miss Scarlett and Horace is..." Hermione turned to look at the man on the floor. "I'm afraid Horace is Doctor David Black."

Severus eyes widened slightly, and he quickly glanced at each envelope before striding toward Horace. "This is impossible," he muttered while walking around the display. "Why would anyone do this?"

"Would the two of you care to let the *rest* of us in on the little secret you seem to be sharing?" Minerva asked in her sternest teacher's voice.

A brow rose on Severus' forehead, and he glanced from Minerva over to Hermione. "She could be pretending ignorance to cover the fact that she grew tired of Horace's pilfering from the school's funds over the years and finally killed him," he suggested to Hermione.

Hermione nodded her head and drew a bit closer to Severus. "Neville was always complaining about Horace stealing bits and pieces of his rare specimens, but what about Filius and Aurora?"

Severus looked thoughtful for a moment before stating, "It might be that Filius finally tired of all the requests for a sample of his blood, and Aurora... well, let's just say that she may have had enough of being wooed."

"By Horace?" Hermione asked with an expression of disgust on her face.

"None other," Snape replied smoothly.

"If you're both quite finished besmirching our characters, could you *please* get on with the explanation?" Minerva demanded.

"All of this," Severus stated with an encompassing wave of his hand, "is based on a Muggle board game called, of all things *Cluedo*."

"Oi! Gram and I used to play that when I was little!" Neville exclaimed with a large smile on his face. "Of course, with just two players, the murder was always pretty easy to solve, but..." Neville abruptly stopped speaking and looked at each of the people on either side before sending a questioning look toward Snape. "You really think that one of us...them...killed him?"

"Either that, or Horace is having us on," he stated while poking Doctor Black in the leg with his boot.

"He's dead," Hermione hissed. "Show him some respect."

"Why?" Snape asked with a sneer. "He never showed any toward my private stock of potion supplies *or* my brandy." A gasp from Hermione made him turn his head in her direction while he raised a brow.

"That's your motive found out then, Severus," she stated with a small smirk.

"And what might yours be, Miss Scarlett?" Severus asked with a low growl. "Could it be revenge for that mangy feline of yours that Horace accidentally poisoned?"

"I knew it!" Hermione exclaimed with a shout of triumph and then said, "Oops. I guess I just put myself back in the ring of suspects, didn't I?"

"You did," Aurora said with a note of satisfaction in her voice. "So what does this all prove? We've all had a problem with Horace from time to time, but nothing bad enough to drive us to murder!"

"Ah, but the meanest murders have happened over the most trivial things, dear Aurora," Snape purred back at her. "Simple little everyday happenings that build up...day in and day out...that make us snap and do things we never thought we would *ever* do, like pushing a telescope over the balcony because it refused to retain its focus for more than five minutes at a time."

Aurora flushed and said, "That was different, Severus. It was only a machine, not a person."

"The point I think he was trying to make is that we all have limits," Hermione offered. "And some days we reach them sooner than others."

"Thank you *so very much*, Professor Granger, for interpreting my little speech, but I'm sure Aurora got the point all on her own," Snape said to Hermione while shooting her small daggers with his eyes. "Your colleagues *aren't* the boy wonder and his sidekick. They actually *do* have brains that work."

"Enough with the bickering," Minerva announced as she drew closer to Horace. "We need to move him up to the hospital wing and have Poppy run some diagnostic spells. He might simply have choked to death on that damned pineapple he was always eating."

"Minerva!" Hermione exclaimed in shock. "You swore!"

"Oh, do grow up, Hermione," Minerva snapped. "We'll discuss my vocabulary some other time, if you don't mind. Right now, I have a dead professor on the floor, and you're chattering on about some foolish board game and purple bunny slippers."

Pointing her wand at Horace, Minerva cast a Mobilicorpus and was not pleased when nothing happened. "Filius, you try," she commanded. Filius met with similar results.

"I wonder if it's the same thing that kept me from finding out what killed him," Hermione pondered with a frown. "Did it feel like it bounced?"

"It did," Minerva stated in disgust while Filius merely nodded his head. A Locomotor Spell met with the same results, as did several others they tried. Pursing her lips, Minerva positioned herself near Horace's feet and motioned the others to gather around the body. "We're going to have to do this the hard way. Everyone grab an arm or a leg, and we'll carry him there."

"Up two flights of stairs?" Aurora asked in dismay.

"Unless the hospital wing has been moved, that would be the logical conclusion," Snape growled as he squatted in order to lift Horace under the arms. "Uhm, Minerva? He appears to be stuck to the floor. His head and shoulders won't move at all."

Hermione, who had been attempting to lift one of Horace's legs, sneaked a glance at Minerva's face before she stated, "His whole body seems to be under a Sticking Spell of some sort, but Finite Incantatem bounces off, too."

Minerva's expression was, to put it mildly, thunderous. "This has gone on far too long. Whichever one of you is responsible for this...this *abomination*...end it now before it ends your career!"

After glancing around at his fellow professors to see if anyone would fess up...and noting that they were doing the same...Severus arched a brow at the headmistress and stated, "I think it follows, Minerva, that *whoever* is responsible for this, isn't going to give up easily. *If* Horace was murdered, I imagine they'll be a tad more concerned about going to Azkaban than they are about their career." He paused, stroked his chin lightly and continued, "In fact, I highly doubt that anyone among us is responsible. Not for the murder...if there actually was one...but for the setup before us. Why would you want to *flaunt* the fact you'd committed murder? It's much more likely that someone *not* here is the culprit. Perhaps he or she thought it would be more...circumspect...than pointing the finger of blame themselves?"

Minerva frowned and said, "That's assuming that Horace was in fact murdered, and whoever set this up *knows* that he was murdered and doesn't want to end up the same way." She sighed and walked over to the base of the stairway leading up to the second floor. Using the blue envelope still stuck to her hand, Minerva dusted a step off before turning to sit down. "Severus, since you're the Deputy Headmaster, please fetch Poppy so we can at least try to determine how he died. One of us should stay here with his... remains so no other funny business occurs."

Severus made it to the fourth step before he collided with a solid wall of air. After testing the boundaries, he concluded there was no way around it. Glancing down at the upturned faces, he shrugged and attempted to fly above it. His feet never left the step. Trotting down the few steps, he walked over to the doors of the Great Hall and attempted to open one. It wouldn't budge, nor would the doors leading to the outside. Any open doorway was walled off with the solid air he'd found on the stairs.

"It appears we're not going to go anywhere, Minerva," he advised while taking a seat beside her on the steps. The others sat on various steps around them, waiting for a decision, any decision, to be made.

"I'm getting too old for this sort of nonsense," Minerva muttered before she straightened her spine and glared at Severus, Hermione and Neville in turn. "Explain this blasted board game we're being forced to play."

While Severus, and to some extent Neville, had explained the basics of the game to the rest, Hermione had been examining the objects in the outer circle around Horace. They, like him, were fastened to the floor. She hadn't paid any attention at all to the weapons as they were the standard ones issued with the board game. In order to read something that was written on the side of the ancient looking lamp Hermione had nearly lain down on the stone floor before she was satisfied she knew what it was. "I have a question," she stated to no one in particular after she rose and dusted off her hands.

"Mark this day on your calendar, everyone. She has only *one* question," Snape said with a roll of his eyes, slightly annoyed that he'd been interrupted in his argument with Neville over the best strategy to determine which room was the correct one.

Hermione turned away from Horace and his trinkets, put her hands on her hips, and frowned. "Has anyone tried to summon an elf? One of them might be able to Unstick everything since their magic works differently than ours."

"That's a brilliant idea, Hermione," exclaimed Minerva while standing up. "Lipswitch!" She waited a moment and called again, "Lipswitch, come at once!"

As the moments ticked by, Minerva sighed and sat back down.

"It's only brilliant if it works," Snape remarked snidely. "Now, Longbottom, about..."

"How are we supposed to solve this if we can't leave this room? And what about the clue cards? We don't have them, our little papers with the ticky boxes or anything," Hermione stated with a toss of her hands in the air.

"You lied," Snape stated while sending Hermione a glare.

"I did not! We need all those things if we're going to solve this," Hermione protested.

"You lied when you said you had a question. That was at least three," Snape said while folding his arms and looking superior.

"Well, here's another one for you while you're keeping track: What are the objects in the outer layer around Horace? They're not weapons; those are in the inner layer. There are nine of them, which are how many rooms there are *supposed* to be, but they are definitely *not* rooms, now are they?" Hermione snapped in response.

"No, they're not," Severus muttered and walked over to stand behind Horace's head. He glanced over at Hermione and stated, "And that was two more questions, not just one," before he started studying the objects.

Hermione exchanged a glance with Minerva that made them both roll their eyes in exasperation.

"This one," Hermione said while pointing at the oil lamp, "has Aladdin engraved on the side. What in the world does One Thousand and One Nights have to do with anything here?"

"If you keep on blathering, it might take us that long to solve the puzzle," Snape remarked as he slowly made his way down the opposite side and paused at Horace's feet. "I believe they represent your precious rooms, Professor Granger, but not the rooms in the actual game. That one," he stated while pointing at the tome lying on the floor, "points to the library. The frying pan must signify the kitchen. The greaves are fairly obvious, as is the trophy."

"Not to me," Neville stated with a puzzled frown on his face. "There are suits of armor all *over* the castle."

"There's only one *room*, Neville," Hermione stated absently. "They point toward the armor gallery. The garland must be for the Great Hall; it was used in there when we had the ball during the Triwizard Tournament."

"The spy glass could be the Astronomy Tower," Sinistra offered and then frowned. "I didn't kill him!"

"Simmer down, Aurora, no one has accused you of anything," Minerva stated while patting the other witch on the arm. "That little spinning doo-dad is from Albus' collection, so that has to point to my office."

"The Muggle thermometer must represent the hospital wing," Filius advised and then frowned. "What possible room could be represented by Aladdin's lamp?"

"The Room of Requirement!" Neville exclaimed and then added, "Don't you see? You rub the lamp, and you get your wishes granted by the jinni of the lamp, which is what the Room of Requirement does."

Enlightenment dawned on several faces, and they all stared at different objects until Sinistra asked the obvious question. "Now what? That doesn't seem to have done *anything* other than waste a few more minutes of our time."

"What's the hurry, Aurora? Panting to go pack your bags for a quick trip far, far away?" Snape asked with a smirk while he circled Horace's temporary bier.

"What's that supposed to mean?" she asked with narrowed eyes. "I did *not* murder that odious old man!"

"So you say," Severus purred while beginning another circle. "'The lady doth protest too much, methinks.'"

"*Minervaaaa*, make him stop! This isn't funny," whined Aurora.

At first Minerva was too flabbergasted at the pair of them to say anything, but then she took the hand that wasn't married to her blue envelope, pinched the bridge of her nose, and muttered, "Good gods, I'm surrounded by children...even when I'm not."

"I am *not* a child," Severus said emphatically while facing Aurora. "I was merely pointing out that she has protested at *least* three times that she didn't murder Horace. No one else has felt the need; why does she?"

Four other pairs of eyes fixed themselves upon Aurora Sinistra, who wilted slightly and backed up toward the stairs. "... I *didn't*!" she wailed before she burst into tears and sat down hard on the step behind her.

"That's quite enough, Severus!" Minerva stated while walking toward him and shaking her finger. "How do you propose we proceed, since you seem to be the self-appointed expert?" Turning toward Aurora, she added, "Stop the sniveling, Aurora! If you don't care to help us with this situation, then at least don't disturb our concentration." Crossing her arms and facing the DADA professor again, she asked, "Well?"

Severus shrugged and pointed a long finger in Hermione's direction. "Ask Miss Scarlett. She *always* goes first." If Snape had been a plant instead of a Wizard, he might have shriveled in the heat of the glare Hermione sent him in thanks for offering her up to Minerva. "Well, she *does*!"

"I *know* she does, Severus, but how in the hell am I supposed to make my *suggestion* without any cards to eliminate some of these things?" she asked while using her hand to indicate Horace and his many objects. After turning to look at them she was obviously a little startled, but then she smiled and said, "How very clever."

Failing to see any difference in the objects or their positions, Severus asked, "What, pray tell, is *so* very clever?"

Hermione moved her head enough to make eye contact with Severus. Her eyes widened a tiny portion, which made his narrow. They narrowed further when she smirked and stated, "You'll find out when it's your turn, Mister Green."

"Get on with it, Hermione," Minerva ordered.

A small portion of the smirk she'd given Severus still lingered on Hermione's mouth as she approached the headmistress of Hogwarts and stopped in front of her. "I *suggest* that it was Mrs Peacock," she said and the smirk grew a trifle larger when Minerva frowned at her. She then turned away, walked over to the oil lamp, and continued with, "In the Room of Requirement, with the lead pipe." Her eyebrows rose, and Hermione nodded her head. "Quite clever, indeed!" Turning around she beamed and pointed at Neville. "Your turn, Colonel Mustard!"

Neville blinked, grinned and looked at Hermione. "Wicked! Who'd have thought to put a faint outline of our color on the things?"

Hermione's mouth pursed for a moment when Neville blatantly announced that the clues became tinted with the colors they'd been assigned, but then she shrugged and walked back toward Severus to await her turn.

Severus gave her a calculating look and then glanced over at Neville. "Hold on a moment, Longbottom. Hermione, what were your clues?"

"That's cheating!" an indignant Hermione announced, but when Minerva raised an eyebrow in her direction, she held up a hand. "You're right; this isn't really a game, is it? It might be...probably is...a murder investigation, and we should do all we can to solve it. I had thingamabob, doohickey and whatchamacallit. After my guess, higgty-jig showed up with a black outline, mostly I think, so I couldn't tell who had that clue."

"Hermione, I demand you tell us what you had and what you found out after your suggestion," Minerva stated angrily. "No more foolish games."

"But... but I *did*!" Hermione stated with an expression of astonishment on her face. "Thingamabob, doohickey, whatchamacallit and higgty-jig!"

Severus, who had been watching Hermione's mouth closely while she spoke, said, "I think she's telling the truth, Minerva. When she actually said 'doohickey,' her mouth was obscured for a moment."

"I never said doohickey," Hermione said while shaking her head. "I said thingamabob, doohickey, whatchamacallit and higgty-jig!"

"Neville, you try," Minerva stated while fixing her eyes on his mouth.

"I've got ding-dong, hi-ho-hi-ho, and do-si-do," he said in a hopeful tone.

"Pure and utter nonsense," muttered Minerva. "Obviously our *host* has taken all contingencies into account."

"Perhaps," Snape advised before he said, "Hermione...and you too, Longbottom...walk over and stand by any of the objects that..." He stopped speaking when the objects in question started to rotate and blur out of focus. "Bloody fucking hell! I'm actually looking forward to playing our *host* in a game of chess."

"Severus, such language!" Minerva protested.

"So you're allowed to swear and I'm not?" he asked absently while watching the objects gradually slow and retain their original positions. "There are no students about to hide in the corners and fall under my bad influence, Headmistress. If this evening proceeds as it's started, I've a feeling that the air may become very blue indeed."

An hour and a half later, some of them were a bit closer to solving the mystery. They had discovered, much to their dismay, that when it wasn't their turn, all of the colors disappeared from their clues and the ones they'd uncovered. Hermione seemed especially irritated by this fact.

"This is going to take forever," she stated from her seat on the third step. Aurora had just taken another turn and...although Hermione had watched closely...she still couldn't tell what object or person Aurora had been given when her suggestion had been vocalized. "At least with the little ticky boxes...and the other players actually showing you what they have when they have to...you can mark who has what; and then from what they guess...especially if you have a couple of things marked that they *definitely* have...and they put those in, and someone shows them a card, you know what it is that they've seen even if it's *not* your turn, and you'll know who has *that* clue...but it's even better when they *don't* get shown a card because then the one they weren't shown is the odd one out and part of the solution." She had noted the calculating expression on her step-mate's face while she'd been speaking and said, "Don't tell me you haven't done the same, Severus."

"No, I have. You'd be a fool not to. I was just wondering if you were going to pass out from lack of oxygen since you never seemed to take a breath of air during that little speech," he advised before he rose and walked toward Horace. It was his turn, after all.

Clearing his throat, so he would have all their attention, Severus allowed one corner of his mouth to lift in a small smile before he said, "I am about to make an accusation."

"Oi! If you do that and you're wrong, you'll be out of the game," Neville said with a worried frown.

"I'm well aware of that, Longbottom."

"But we don't know what happens to you in this *particular* version of the game," Neville stated while he rose from his seat on a step. "You could just pop back to wherever you were when the Portkeys brought us all here, or...well, who knows?"

"This is true; however, it is my choice when to suggest or accuse, and it's going to be an accusation, not a suggestion," Snape advised him while making a shooing motion with one hand.

"How much are you willing to wager?" Minerva asked with a slight smile on her face.

"You're seriously suggesting we wager over Horace's corpse?" Severus asked while both brows rose. "Isn't that rather... disrespectful?"

"He'd be the first one to do it, and you know it," Minerva said with a larger smirk. "Are you protesting because you're not quite certain that you're right, Severus?"

"Not at all, Minerva; I'm merely attempting to give the man what he never had in life: a little dignity," Severus replied smoothly.

"Stuff and nonsense," Minerva retorted with a small snort. "Next year's lesson plans to be filed the way I want them if you're wrong."

"And if I'm right, *you* file them the way I want," he offered in exchange.

"Done," Minerva said with a nod.

"Done and done." After agreeing, Severus stepped up near the Muggle thermometer and said, "I accuse Colonel Mustard, in the hospital ward, with the rope." As soon as the word rope had left his mouth, a loud gong sounded, and as it reverberated around the stone walls, all the different colors the items had been assigned showed up for everyone.

"But that's me!" Neville protested with a horrified expression on his face.

"Yes, it most certainly is, isn't it? And you're the only person who doesn't have a color floating about them," Severus advised him.

"I'm am?" he asked while looking at the other participants and after seeing them all color coded added, "But that's not possible! I didn't kill him! You have to believe me! There's been a mistake!"

"Unless the person who set this all up comes forward to offer evidence, it's very unlikely that it can be proven, Longbottom," Snape said, almost kindly. "But I do have to ask what drove you over the edge to finally do poor old Horace in?"

"Nothing! I *didn't* kill him!" Neville yelled while backing up the steps.

"We'll help you, Neville," Hermione offered while Filius and Aurora nodded their heads in agreement.

Minerva frowned and tapped her chin before she stated, "Until this is all cleared up, I will need to suspend you, but as soon as it is, you'll be reinstated of course."

"How many times do I have to tell you all, that I didn't k...what the hell! Where'd the body go?" Neville asked while pointing. When the rest of them turned to look where Horace's body had been, he twisted to race up the steps. Unfortunately, he'd forgotten about the solid wall of air and tumbled back down toward the bottom where he bounced. Luckily for his skull, he disappeared before he landed.

"Damn, where'd he go?" Severus asked while walking over to where he'd last seen the Herbology professor.

"Wherever Horace and all the other things ended up?" Hermione offered and then looked at her hand which still had the red envelope on it. "Uh-oh. I think we're about to find out. It's tingling."

Landing on a plush carpet was highly preferable to landing on unforgiving stone, but Neville was still slightly groggy after he stopped rolling. He stared at a horny pair of elfen feet that weren't far from his head for several seconds before he had the presence of mind to glance up to its face. "Wha... where am I?"

"You are being in Master Horace's private rooms at Hogwarts, Professor, sir. Is you being injured? Wiffle is trying to catch you before you are hitting the stone, but Wiffle is not always knowing what the professors will do. Wiffle is a bad, bad elf for letting Professor of Plants be injured," the elf stated while wringing its hands.

"No, you're not, I'm fine," Neville advised the elf, while pushing himself up and sitting on the carpet. "But what am I doing here with... with *that*?" he asked in horror as he pointed at a coffin in the far corner of the room.

Wiffle turned his head to look and then offered Neville a small, sad smile. "That is being Master Horace, Professor, sir, laid out as he is ordering."

Neville pushed himself the rest of the way to his feet and approached the ornately carved wooden box. Horace was inside, but his emerald-green pajamas had been replaced by a resplendent black suit from an earlier century. A snowy white cravat...tied in the formal, old fashioned manner...was held in place by a brilliant emerald pin. The matching pocket square was positioned perfectly on his left breast.

"He's *really* dead?" Neville asked.

"Master Horace is being very dead," Wiffle answered sadly. "The last of his line, he is."

Neville frowned, turned away from the coffin and asked, "Who really killed him, Wiffle? I know damned well I didn't."

Wiffle started shaking his head. "Wiffle is not being allowed to say, Professor of Plants. When all the professors is being here, then Wiffle is giving answer to Headmistress of all Professors."

"When will that be?" Neville asked with a weary sigh.

"Is being now," Wiffle replied and snapped his fingers. Neville watched as the other five players emerged from nothingness, and their envelopes finally released them. Only one, Aurora Sinistra, seemed to have any difficulty with the landing, as she had apparently been walking when Wiffle activated the second aspect of her Portkey.

"Mine's tingling too, Minerva. Do you think...Ack!" Aurora's arms whirled in a very poor imitation of a windmill before gravity finally overcame the spindly heels of her shoes. She landed face first on a platter of crystalized pineapple before sliding off and onto the floor. The stunned expression on her face didn't change as several pieces of the fruit *popped* onto her hair where they left a trail of crystals behind before slipping down beside her on the floor.

Wiffle, extremely upset, rushed over and helped her back to her feet. "Wiffle is a bad, bad elf for not seeing Professor of Sparkly Lights in the Sky is having problems with shoes," the elf whimpered while whisking any traces of pineapple off of her face, hair and clothing.

The ruined pineapple, along with several types of different canapés, had been placed on a long side table near a circle of six overstuffed chairs. Wiffle assisted Sinistra into one while Severus and Hermione started looking over the rest of the offerings. There were other items of edible interest on the table that belonged in the dessert category, as well as several bottles of alcoholic beverages ranging from firewhisky to butterbeer.

"Wiffle? Is that your name?" Minerva asked the elf as she drew nearer.

Wiffle paused in removing a stray piece of pineapple that had managed to slide into one of Sinistra's pockets and nodded. Pulling a green, ribbon-wrapped scroll from out of nowhere, Wiffle offered it to Minerva and said, "Yes, Headmistress of Professors. Master Horace is wanting Headmistress to read this now that the strange party is being solved."

Taking the scroll, but not opening it, Minerva said, "I know you're not a Hogwarts elf, Wiffle. Do you belong to the Slughorn family?"

Wiffle opened his mouth, but didn't answer right away. He glanced toward Horace's coffin, gave a loud sniff, and said, "Wiffle is being not certain, Headmistress. Master Horace is not telling Wiffle what Wiffle is to do now that the House of Slughorn is being no more." A large tear trembled at the edge of one of the large eyes before it fell onto the thick carpet.

Wiffle straightened, gestured toward the other five chairs and said, "Master Horace is wanting his guests to have comfortable chairs, Headmistress of Professors, while Wiffle is serving the food."

"Are there any other surprises in store for *this party*?" Minerva asked sternly.

Wilting slightly, Wiffle shook his large head. "No, Headmistress. Wiffle is only to serve food now."

"In that case, I'd love to have a comfortable chair after two hours of sitting on nothing but a cold stone step," Minerva announced while slipping into the closest one.

Wiffle, ears quivering with eagerness, snatched a plate of delicate looking biscuits from under Severus' questing fingers and managed to ignore the muttered, "Bloody thief," sent in his direction. "Master Horace is especially eager for Headmistress to have some of these," Wiffle advised her.

Minerva had been untying the scroll when the plate was almost shoved under her nose. Drawing her head back in order to properly focus on the wafers, she picked one up, turned it over and then smiled. "I haven't had these in years," she said before taking a small nibble. "They're as delicious as I remember. Thank you, Wiffle."

"Wiffle is leaving them here for Headmistress. Master Horace is saying they is favored," Wiffle said while placing the remaining biscuits on a small table beside her chair.

"They are, Wiffle. Thank you, again," Minerva said as she unrolled the scroll and began reading. The others, including Neville, who was still protesting his innocence to anyone who would listen, were each given a chosen favorite by the elf and led to a chair in the circle. Some, like Severus, watched Minerva's face while she perused the letter from the dead man on the other side of the room. A variety of expressions crossed her face, from mild surprise to extreme sadness, before she rose and gave the scroll to Severus. She walked toward Horace's coffin, placed her hand atop one of his and said, "Please, read it aloud, Severus. The others need to know as well."

Putting his glass of brandy aside with a longing glance, Severus unrolled the parchment and cleared his throat.

"Dear Friends and Colleagues,

"I do hope you've had a good, rousing game of Cluedo. It's always been one of my favorites, and since we've never played it together, I thought this was a good time to begin a tradition of my own."

Severus paused and glanced at the others who were listening quite closely. He noted that Minerva hadn't moved and lowered his eyes back to the parchment. "Every year on the anniversary of my death...which wasn't a murder at all in case any of you were still wondering...I've made arrangements for a game, Minerva permitting, to be played at Hogwarts. I won't be present, of course, but I do hope you will all participate and pass the tradition on to the professors who will follow after you in the future. You see, I'd like to be remembered with a bit of laughter and...after the game is solved...perhaps a few drunken toasts instead of being a stuffy old portrait hanging on a wall." Another pause was taken, but this time he didn't glance anywhere except where Horace lay. After raising the glass of the excellent brandy Horace had so thoughtfully provided, he said, "Good on you, Horace, old man. Good on you," before he took a small sip and set the glass down again.

"Do forgive the manner in which I chose to set it up, as I wasn't sure*exactly* when it would be played, but my medical advisor assured me that I would probably live at least a month after the end of this last term. If he had been wrong, I didn't want any of the students to accidentally discover the game board."

"Does he say what he died from?" Aurora asked before taking a large bite out of her favorite sugary biscuit.

Severus sent her an annoyed look before he began to read aloud again. "Tell me, did you have as much fun solving it as I had setting it up? I did everything by the rules when I did. I didn't peek at the cards when I picked them out and then shuffled the remainder together and doled them out to each player. I only wish I knew who had solved it, but I have had many a silent chuckle, while looking into your faces, wondering how you would cope with the scant clues you were given. My money would have been on Severus, except that he wasn't given any suspects to work with, so I finally decided that Hermione would be the one to discover that Colonel Mustard had done the deed in the hospital room with the rope. Was I right?"

Severus sent Hermione a gloating look, to which she replied, "Oh, shut it, already."

"I can't," he replied smoothly and indicated the parchment in his hand. "Minerva, dear lady, don't worry about the price of the refreshments. You won't have to try and explain the expense to the Board. I've no family to leave my money to, so I've set up a fund that will cover the cost with the interest gleaned from the principal.

"My only real concern at this point is my dear, loyal Wiffle. He has served my family, and me, very well. I leave him to Hogwarts, in the hope that he will find the same type of home that I did. One that is warm, forgiving and accepting of all those strange little quirks we all have. Fare very well indeed, my friends." It is signed, Horace E. F. Slughorn."

The scroll was tidily re-rolled, and the green ribbon fastened around its middle before it was set down on a small table. Severus glanced over at Aurora and said, "I'd wager *you* feel like a giant arse about now."

"Me?" Aurora asked in astonishment.

"You," Severus replied while picking up his drink and cradling it in both hands. "*You* who called him an 'odious old man,' and now you sit there scarfing the biscuits he provided because he knew they were your favorite." Another small sip was taken, and he added, "And a very fine brandy for me."

Minerva chose that moment to sit back down with her teachers and accept a glass of scotch that Wiffle hesitantly offered. A healthy amount was downed as she closed her eyes. "Horace certainly knew his liquor," Minerva advised after she swallowed. "Smooth as silk and twice as slippery."

"Minerva," Aurora said with an indignant tone, "Did you hear what *he* said to me?"

"I did," Minerva replied before glancing at the other witch. "I suggest you close your mouth, brush the sugar off of your chin, and let the rest of us enjoy what Horace has so thoughtfully provided."

When Aurora opened her mouth to protest, Minerva wagged her finger at her. "No, Aurora. No more whining. Not tonight at any rate. Tonight... tonight we're attending the wake of one of our colleagues, and we're going to give him a proper send-off by getting pissed. At least I am," she added before knocking back the remainder of her drink and holding the empty glass out to Wiffle. "Refill, Wiffle, if you please."

"Hear that, Hermione?" Severus said, sending her a smirk while Wiffle scurried to grant Minerva's request. "You can't really get pissed on butterbeer, so you'd better pick a different poison."

Wiffle turned a horrified expression toward Severus while still holding the bottle of scotch. "Wiffle is serving no poisons, Deputy Headmaster of Professors! Master Horace is being very concerned over

none of his guests being injured or killed."

"It's an expression, Wiffle," Minerva told him gently. "He was telling Hermione that she should change to a different type of beverage if she wanted to get pissed."

Sending Severus an uneasy look, Wiffle asked, "Deputy Headmaster is not saying Wiffle is serving poison?" At Minerva's gentle laugh, and further explanation, Wiffle was reassured and wandered off to see if any of Horace's other guests needed refills.

"Are you going to allow the annual observance?" Hermione asked Minerva while she shucked off her shoes and drew her feet up on the chair.

"I am. I rather like Horace's idea, and since we'll know from the beginning that it's only a game rather than an actual accusation of murder, I think it will be a fun way for the staff to celebrate the end of another term," Minerva replied. Another wafer was taken from the plate beside her, but it wasn't eaten, merely studied. "I only recall mentioning these to Horace once, about thirty years ago. It's quite touching that he remembered."

"Don't get too sentimental on us, Minerva. Remember all the overages in the Potions budget," Severus reminded her.

The remainder of the evening passed with all of them contributing memories, horrific or otherwise, about their dealings with Horace E.F. Slughorn over the years. Wiffle continued to ply them with food and drink until the wee hours of the next morning.

Minerva glanced over at Aurora and Filius, who were snoring, side by side, in their own armchairs. Neville, who was seated next to her, was still awake and from what she could tell in her slightly soused condition, fairly sober. "Are you all right, Neville? It couldn't have been easy thinking we all thought you had killed Horace."

"Eh, once it was explained, it was all right, but there were a few minutes there that I thought I was headed to Azkaban for sure," he replied with a shrug.

Minerva blinked and focused on the two empty chairs facing her. "Where'd Hermione and Severus go? I never saw them leave."

"They're still here," Neville said while pointing behind her. "Talking 'bout Horace I imagine."

Minerva twisted in her chair enough to see the pair of them near the coffin. "Ah, paying their respects. Good," she stated.

A bit of the conversation they were having drifted over to Minerva and Neville when Filius shifted position and quit snoring quite so loudly.

"No," Severus stated in response to something Hermione had said.

"But"

"Hermione, I said no and I mean it!" he replied.

Minerva sighed and shook her head before turning back toward Neville, saying something she never would have stone-cold sober, "I do wish those two would stop with the eternal bickering and see that they're quite right for each other."

"H...Hermione and... and...you think?" Neville asked in astonishment.

"I do," Minerva said while nodding.

"All right, I accept the fact that you won't let me buy you a pair of those darling bunny slippers, but I insist that you let me get you a pair of silk pajamas. They'd feel so much better on my skin than those damned nightshirts you insist on wearing to bed," Hermione stated.

"I'll consider it," Severus replied.

Neville, blushing bright red, killed the last of his drink and motioned for Wiffle to refill it. "I think they already have," he muttered in a hoarse whisper meant for Minerva's ears only, "and if I try really hard, I may get pissed enough not to remember."

Minerva's loud, happy laughter interrupted the pair's conversation and drew their attention back to the other side of the room. "I wonder what Longbottom's said that so amusing?" Severus asked before turning to Horace and raising his glass one more time. "I'll see you later, Horace," he added before taking another sip. "Coming?" he asked Hermione.

"Of course," she answered and slipped her hand into his arm. "Why do you insist on calling him Longbottom?"

"That is his name isn't it?" Severus asked with a raised brow.

"It is, but it sounds so... so unfriendly when you call someone by their last name," Hermione said with a small pout on her face.

"Only Gryffindors think everyone has to be *friends* with everyone else," Severus growled.

"Do not!" she protested.

"Give me an instance," he challenged.

"Me and Bellatrix Lestrange!" Hermione said instantly.

"Someone that's *not* dead, or a mortal enemy," Severus scoffed.

"Give me a minute," Hermione pleaded.

"Ha!" Severus exclaimed with a smirk of victory.

"That proves nothing!" Hermione said while flouncing down into her chair.

Minerva chuckled and waited for the bickering pair to be seated and raised her glass. "To our Hogwarts family, those present and not."

"Hear, hear!" three other voices chimed in, loud enough to rouse Filius, who held up an empty hand and muttered, "Just a touch more."

Wiffle, who was standing quite near Horace's coffin, raised himself up on the tip of his toes to see his beloved Master. "Master Horace? Wiffle is thinking your strange party is being one you is calling a success. Headmistress of Professors is telling Wiffle she is giving permission for more, and Wiffle is being in charge."

He adjusted Horace's cravat slightly before he noticed that Neville's glass was in the air again. "Wiffle is being needed, Master Horace." Wiffle sped off to tend to his master's guests, content that his master would have been pleased.

The End...until next year!

AN: Just in case anyone's interested, here are the players and the cards as Horace dealt them:

Miss Scarlett Hermione Granger 1st Has: kitchen, lead pipe, Mr Green

Colonel Mustard Neville Longbottom 2nd Has: library, Mrs White, candlestick

Mrs White Aurora Sinistra 3rd Has: Great Hall, knife, Professor Plum

Mr Green Severus Snape 4th Has: Head's office, spanner, revolver

Mrs Peacock Minerva McGonagall 5th Has: Trophy Room, Mrs Peacock, Miss Scarlett

Professor Plum Filius Flitwick 6th Has: Room of Requirement, Astronomy Tower, armor gallery