

Total Eclipse of the Heart

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Choices

Chapter 1 of 1

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The first thing Hermione saw when she finally opened her eyes was Poppy Pomfrey putting away potions into the supply cupboard.

"Poppy? What am I doing here?" Hermione asked weakly.

"The Founders be praised! You're awake. Let me send a message to Minerva."

Moments later a large, shaggy St. Bernard bounded through the wall in the direction of the Headmistress' office.

"Lie still, lovey. You've been unconscious for almost ten days. Harry wouldn't let us move you to St. Mungo's. He said you'd rather be here."

"Oh, right. The last thing I remember is trying to run down the stairs while they were crumbling under me. Guess I didn't make it before they fell. Was anyone else hurt?"

"Nothing to signify, Hermione. You were the one who took the brunt of the fall. Hit your head against a stone newel post. I decided that keeping you asleep was the best way to proceed. You kept improving every day, so I didn't dose you with Dreamless Sleep today. Now just lie there and don't try to get up. I'm sure Harry and the others will be here soon."

"Poppy, we won, didn't we?"

"Yes, child. That foreign lad of yours arrived with his team and routed the dregs of Riddle's people. He came and sat at your bedside for three days until word came that he was needed back home in Bulgaria. But he said he'd be back."

"Viktor was here? Oh, I wish I'd been awake."

"He carried you in here like you were the most delicate china, lovey. Insisted that he stay next to you and snarled at anyone who came too close. That is one smitten young man. He and Ron Weasley nearly got into it right there at your bedside. Ron told Viktor that you were his girl and Viktor should just take himself off. I thought they were going to duel right there. Luckily, Harry stopped them. Ah, here is Minerva."

"Oh, thank Merlin, child. We were so worried. I'll send Harry in after I talk to you. Are you sure you're up to talking?" The Headmistress was very concerned and had been crying.

Minerva had gathered several pillows and was busy tucking them behind Hermione so the girl could sit up.

"Yes, I feel fine now. Thank you and Madam Pomfrey for letting me stay and taking such good care of me."

Minerva's face brightened considerably, and she dabbed at her eyes with an embroidered handkerchief. "You were hurt during the battle, child. We at Hogwarts take care of our own. I'll send Harry and Ginevra in. I think it best that you wait to see Ron until later. He is being quite obstreperous. Mr. Krum was here while you were unconscious. An owl from his family came asking for his help with something. He did say he would be back. He is such a gentleman. I'm blathering, sorry. We'll talk later."

With a quick hug, Minerva left Hermione's bedside.

Harry and Ginny were the next ones in the door, running to her side.

Harry hugged her tightly as Ginny blurted out, "What is this, that you and Ron are getting married?"

"Hush, Gin. You know I think that Ron made that up."

"What? Oh, Gin, I never said anything like that. I don't know what my feelings are right now. Harry, did we lose anyone else?"

"Oh, Herms, it's priceless. We actually got someone back. No, there weren't any more deaths. In fact, Arabella Figg sent an owl to Minerva after the battle and asked her to come pick up something that belonged to her. I think her words were, 'He's eating me out of house and home. I presume you want him back.' It was Moody. When he fell, he landed in her back garden. She had hidden him all this time."

"Oh, Harry, that's wonderful. I'm so glad. What is this that you had to stop a duel between Viktor and Ron?"

"Well, when you hit the newel post, Ron came running, but Viktor flew down and picked you up. He ignored Ron totally, being intent on getting you help. Ron followed and tried to pull you out of his arms. Viktor gave Ron the coldest look I've ever seen, and said, 'Do you wish to have her death at your hands? Let me get her to those that can help her, and we will discuss this.' I swear I thought Ron would let it go, but he kept on nagging and sniping at Viktor the whole way."

Ginny took Hermione's hand and said, "The parents are still grieving over Fred, and Ron is out of control. I'll go see if I can get him to calm down. You don't worry about anything right now. I'll be back later with your clothes. The elves cleaned and repaired them."

"Thanks, Gin. I really don't want a confrontation with Ron just now."

Once Ginny had left the room, Harry spoke up again, quietly. "Herms, I think you are going to have to think about which one of them you want in your life. The wireless said there is still some fierce fighting going on in Bulgaria. I hate to say it, but there is the possibility that Viktor could still be killed. Just think about it today, please. I'm not pleading Ron's case. They are both good people. You just need to search your heart." He kissed her forehead before standing and leaving the room.

"Maybe you're right, Harry. I do need to think about this very carefully." She leaned back against the pillows and began to remember.

From first year, she remembered, Ron had been jealous of the help she had given Harry. He had belittled her, insulted her, made fun of her.

Second year had been no better. The nicest things Ron had said about her were that she was mental or scary. When she had been petrified, only Harry had come to sit with her and tell her what was going on. Ron had skived off that as well.

Third year Ron had been so intent on blaming her for Scabbers disappearing that she was relieved not to have to deal with him so often.

Fourth year had been a revelation. Ron had been enthralled by the Veelas from Beauxbatons and Viktor had come quietly, yet forcefully into Hermione's life. That had changed everything.

A boy—no, he was almost a man already—had noticed her. He was not intimidated by her studiousness, or by her brusque manner. He simply, shyly, slowly had become an important part of her life. She had been made to feel cherished, beautiful, appreciated. Her heart had recognised a kindred spirit and welcomed him.

There was no comparison. Ron was like a bratty, sulky, little brother. Viktor was the one who had earned his place in her life. On that thought, she fell asleep again.

She woke just after dark to the sounds of Ron Weasley yelling in the hallway.

"Let me in there. She's my girl. C'mon, Harry, you know it's true."

"I don't know anything of the sort. Now shut it. You'll wake her."

"Well, somebody should wake her and tell her that her precious Viktor is missing and presumed dead! Hah! Now she'll be my girl. Wait and see."

Ginny's voice screamed at Ron, "Get your arse out of here, Ron. I am going to tell Mum what you just did. She and Da will have your hide. Now go."

Ginny opened the door and saw that Hermione was awake. "I guess you heard all that?"

"Is he really missing, Gin?" Hermione tried very hard to keep from sobbing.

"The wireless just said that he hadn't reported back in after a battle. I brought your clothes. Don't listen to my idiot brother. He is jealous. He's always been jealous: of Harry listening to you, of you falling for Viktor, of Harry for beating Voldemort. Ron is always jealous of someone or something. I think it's because the twins were so hard on him when he was small. But he won't ever grow up, Herms. You need a man, not a little boy. I'll go see if there are any updates on the wireless. The house-elves have set the dinner hour back a bit in your honour. I'll come get you."

"I think I'll be on the Astronomy Tower, Gin. I have a lot to think about. Thanks for bringing these." Hermione hugged Ginny.

Once Ginny was gone, Hermione dressed and made her way to the top of the Astronomy Tower, where she could see the wreckage of the school.

Tears began to stream down her cheeks as she considered the possibility that Viktor was dead. "No, he can't be. I would feel it if he were."

Suddenly, a tiny spark of warmth began in her chest as she thought of him. It grew slowly, as she walked down the scaffolding to the Great Hall.

She *knew* he was alive.

At the evening meal, she managed to smile and talk to people and act normally. She even had a normal conversation with Ron.

"Look, 'Mione, I talked to Mum and Dad. I want us to get married as soon as possible. We can stay at the Burrow for a bit."

"Ron, I'm sorry, but I am not going to marry you. We just wouldn't suit. I have other plans."

Ron looked mutinous, but Harry stepped in to draw Hermione away from him.

"Ron, I think Arthur wants to talk to you," Harry said, as he ushered Hermione to the seat next to Minerva.

"I see Ronald has recovered from Ginevra's hex this afternoon. How are you, dear?"

"I am fine. No, I'm better than fine. I know Viktor isn't dead. I feel it in my heart."

"Good. I knew Alastor wasn't dead, and when Arabella's owl came, I rushed to bring him home. He is off on a journey right now, but I know he'd like to see you when he returns. I am putting you back into the Head Girl's quarters tonight. You'll sleep better there, I hope."

"I think I'll go up now, Professor. Harry and Gin can walk me there, if they will."

"Sure, I managed to beg a wireless set off Aberforth that you can put in your room." Ginny volunteered.

"You bet we will. I don't want you to worry at all. He is just out of touch. Hey, I know that look. You don't think he's dead."

"I know he's alive, Harry. I can feel him here." She touched the spot where her heart was.

She didn't see Harry and Ginny smile and nod at each other behind her back.

Ginny had brought her a nightgown and her expanding bag, so she took a bath and went to bed. As the sun brightened her window, Hermione heard someone knocking at the door to her room.

She opened the door and found Alastor Moody standing there.

"Hello, lassie. Found this wandering around and thought you might know what to do with him." Moody's good eye winked at her, and he shoved a tired, bandaged, very much alive Viktor into her arms.

"Oh, Viktor!"

"Doushenka, I am not much hurt. I wanted to be here when you woke up, but had to go back. I am sorry."

"Shut up, Viktor. Hold me. I never ever want to be out of your arms again."

"Will you marry me, loff? That vay ve nefer haff to be apart again?" Viktor was exhausted, but managed to ask the one question that was foremost in his mind.

"Yes, I'll marry you. You're the only man I'll ever love."

Muse's prompt was:

A comatose Hermione wakes up several weeks after the Battle of Hogwarts and is mistakenly (or maliciously) told that Viktor is dead. Hearing those words shatters her world because she had only just begun to realize the true depth of her feelings for the handsome Bulgarian.