

The Librarian's Assistant

by magalena

In order to be released from custody, Lucius is required to obtain meaningful employment. What better job could he find than working in a research library as the librarian's assistant? Now all he has to do is convince the librarian that he's the man for the job.

This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ. Note: rating and warnings are for later chapters.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 7

In order to be released from custody, Lucius is required to obtain meaningful employment. What better job could he find than working in a research library as the librarian's assistant? Now all he has to do is convince the librarian that he's the man for the job.

This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ. Note: rating and warnings are for later chapters.

AN: This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ (I post on LJ as madeleone). Many thanks to my betas: Softobsidian, who beta'd it for the fest and Clairvoyant, who is polishing up the rough edges.

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter. I make no money here.

Lucius stood on a tiny out-of-the-way side street in central London, several blocks from the Ministry offices. He held a slip of paper with an address, but it did not seem to match the numbers on the buildings in front of him. He had walked up and down the block twice already. He'd just decided that he shouldn't draw attention to himself by wandering aimlessly back and forth when he noticed what he had assumed was a gate for deliveries in precisely the spot where 110 Hydrangea Court should be. Approaching the gate, he now saw the numbers buried amongst the intricate scroll work of leaves and vines that embellished the iron gate.

Pushing it open, he discovered a long narrow alleyway between buildings 108 and 112. It was so narrow that were he to hold his arms straight sideways, he could very nearly touch the buildings on either side. The gate closed behind him, and the busy sounds of London faded to nothing. As he walked the length of the alley, the heels of his dragonhide boots clicked loudly on the cobbled path and echoed against the brick walls. He didn't want to be here. He felt like a man walking to his own execution.

Oh, things could be much worse, and he knew that. But still, it was a long way for a Malfoy to fall. After the war, he'd lost everything. Narcissa divorced him, his son disowned him, his fortunes were confiscated, and his family estate was appropriated by the Ministry for some, as yet unnamed, god awful post-war project.

He'd thankfully escaped incarceration in Azkaban. He didn't think he would have been able to survive another stint in that hellhole, even minus the Dementors. For nearly a year, Lucius had been placed in a holding cell in the bowels of the Ministry where he'd been interrogated over and over, and had given endless testimony. The results had been that, for his cooperation, he was not sent to the wizard prison, but he did have to serve a minimum of five additional years. He had been sent off to an isolated, heavily warded jail cell. Until his release, he hadn't even known the location where he'd been held for the past five years; all he knew was that it wasn't Azkaban. He'd been

isolated there, somewhere in the Outer Hebrides. But he'd not been mistreated, too much, and except for the lack of companionship and the curse of utter boredom, he had managed fairly well.

His freedom had not come without a cost...there were several stipulations. He was not allowed to leave the UK, and there was a tracking spell placed on him to make sure he did not simply move out of the country. He'd been forced to petition a sponsor, someone willing to vouch for him. He'd asked Severus, who'd miraculously survived Nagini's attack, and he'd been willing to do it. But apparently the powers that be decided allowing one former Death Eater, war hero status aside, to supervise another former Death Eater was just not what they had in mind.

Surprisingly, Harry Potter himself had volunteered for the role. Lucius had no idea why the Boy Wonder had stepped forward, but in this case, he was not going to let his pride stand in the way of his liberty. He had to check in with Potter weekly and with some flunky at the Ministry monthly. He'd been assigned a tiny flat, little more than a closet, really, and also given a small stipend to tide him over until he found gainful employment. And he was required to attain said employment within one year of his release or accept a job the Ministry would assign him. If he refused, he would be in violation of the terms of his probation and would be sent to Azkaban.

The lead for this job had come from Potter at their last weekly meeting. Although Lucius usually avoided talking much about his problems with Potter, he'd been primed by a couple of glasses of some very fine Firewhisky after the dinner that Potter insisted on offering him. The boy was always sitting down to eat just as Lucius arrived. He would declare that there was just too much food for him to eat by himself, so Lucius invariably got a free meal. He never objected too strenuously, as the Ministry stipend he received was rather small, and making ends meet meant skimping on things like three meals a day.

"So, Lucius, how is the job hunting going? Not to pressure you or anything, but the deadline is only a few months away," said Harry, clearly worried.

"I thought that finding gainful employment would be the least of my worries," Lucius lamented. "I have skills; I excelled academically at Hogwarts. I took over the management of the Malfoy family estates and businesses when I was younger than you, due to my father's failing health. I can keep books, delegate authority, have a good grasp of business strategy, and I'm a whiz at finance. But none of these skills have garnered me a job. It seemed former associates want no part of me, and strangers are afraid of me or of my reputation, at least."

"So, you have actually been trying to find something? Because they are quite serious about it, you know. If you don't find something by the time the year is up, they will assign you something. I am quite sure you won't like what they choose."

Lucius listed the many wizarding businesses he'd applied to and been rejected from. As Harry refilled his glass, he continued, "So, then I decided to think of other areas I might be able to work in. I've tried everywhere I can think of. I applied at Gringotts, but the bloody Goblins merely looked down their sanctimonious noses at me. I applied at the *Daily Prophet*, thinking perhaps I could write a finance column or something along those lines. While there, I had a run in with Rita Skeeter, who made it quite clear she'd put in a good word for me if I were willing to accommodate her privately." Lucius shuddered visibly at the thought. "That witch is a piranha, and at this point I'd almost rather consider Azkaban."

"The *Prophet*, huh? You like things like that... reading and writing and organizing stuff, I mean?" asked Harry, sounding excited.

Lucius thought that a strange question, but continued with his tirade about job hunting. "I tried to get a job at both the wizard publishing houses of Obscurus Books and WhizzHard Books, but neither establishment was hiring, or at least not hiring me. I even tried to apply for jobs well below my comfort zone, such as a clerk at Flourish and Blotts or Quality Quidditch Supplies. All to no avail."

"But you do like books, right?" asked Harry pointedly. "You tried to get a job at a newspaper and at two publishers and at a book store."

"Of course I like books. What kind of question is that? Everyone likes books."

"Well, some of us more than others, obviously," muttered Harry. Then he continued, "And you had a really big library at the Manor, and it was famous; even I know that. So, you must like books a lot, right? And you probably know a lot about them."

"What are you getting at, Pott...Harry?" Potter had insisted that Lucius start using his first name. He tried to remember, although he found it difficult. Still grudgingly, he had to admit that he owed the young man for volunteering to be his sponsor, so if using Potter's given name appeased him, so be it.

"Well, I know someone who's started this project. It's a historical research library for wizards. The project is to research and restore very old historically important documents, books, letters, parchments, family histories and such... well, you get the idea. The problem is there's way too much for this one person to handle alone, and although there's funding for an assistant, a suitable candidate hasn't been located yet. At least no one to meet the high standards required; all the applicants so far have been dunderheads, or so I've been told. But I'll bet you'd be perfect for the job."

Lucius flicked an imaginary piece of lint from his sleeve, not wanting to look too interested too soon. "Hmmm... It does sound like something I would be qualified for. The library at Malfoy Manor was legendary, and there were many priceless historical documents stored there." Lucius became a bit melancholy just thinking of the family history that had been lost; he didn't even know what had happened to it all. For all he knew, the Ministry might have burned it out of spite.

With eyes narrowed, he turned and asked, "Why are you helping me like this, Potter?"

Harry took a sip of his Firewhisky before he answered, "I have my reasons, as I'm sure you know. And if you haven't figured it out yet, I'm sure you will someday. Someday soon, most likely." He reached behind him and pulled open a drawer, and taking out a Muggle ink pen and paper, he wrote something down on it. "Here's the address, go and apply tomorrow." He handed over the slip of paper and added, "Don't say I sent you. Say you heard about it down at the Leaky Cauldron, or something."

"Why don't you want your name used?" asked Lucius suspiciously. "I would think that a reference from the great Harry Potter would make me a shoe in for the position."

"The head of this particular project made it quite clear that my help was not wanted. So, if you say I sent you, it would be more of a detriment than a help. Take my word for it, Lucius. You didn't hear about this job from me."

That meeting with Potter had been just two days past, and although he had acted unconcerned, he'd tucked away the precious scrap of paper for safe keeping.

And so here he was, standing at the door of the Cedric Diggory Memorial Historical Research Library. He hesitated briefly, then pushed the door open and walked in. The foyer was small and somewhat dark, and while perhaps dingy was not the correct word to describe it, he decided it was not exactly appealing either. The chair behind the desk sat empty, and there were brochures sitting in several racks on the desk, for potential patrons, he supposed.

Wandering into the first room to the right, he saw that there were indeed shelves full of books and parchments, as well as boxes and boxes full of who knew what, piled up in the corners of the room. He walked along one wall and noted that everything seemed to be filed in no logical order and was shoved onto the shelves with no rhyme or reason. Walking across the hall, he finally found an actual person. A woman, a witch he assumed, four steps up a ladder, one foot balanced on the fifth step while she examined a large book. She supported it with a hand under the front cover, and the other cover rested on the next rung up. Her perch looked like a recipe for disaster to him, but he couldn't help but admire the curve of her backside, which was emphasized by her foot propped up on the next higher rung. He also noted that she had very shapely legs as well.

Engrossed in what she was reading, she didn't hear his approach. She muttered to herself, "Who would believe tripe like this? Stupid, buggering, butt-fuckers..."

"Hmmm...That's somewhat redundant, don't you think?" he asked.

"Eeeek!" she screeched. The book shifted, and rather than drop the ancient tome, she clutched it to her chest which caused her to lose her grip on the ladder. Without even thinking, he lunged forward to steady her, but instead ended up with the nicely curved backside hitting him square in the face before striking his shoulder and knocking *him* arse over teakettle. He grabbed her legs as she fell against him in an attempt to control her descent, and they both landed hard on the floor with her on top of him.

"Unnnhhh!" he groaned.

She rolled off of him, setting the book down carefully on the floor next to him. "Oh, my god, are you all right?" she gasped while turning toward him to check his well-being. Seeing his face, she jerked back suddenly. "You! What are you doing here, Mr. Malfoy?"

"I was trying to keep you from hitting the floor, Miss Granger," he responded. He clutched his nose. "Damnation, I think you broke by dose."

"Well, you succeeded. I hit you instead of the floor. Thanks for softening the blow. Here, let me help you with that," she said, pulling out her wand.

He reacted badly to having a wand pointed at his face and threw his other arm up in defense and tried to roll to the side.

"Mr. Malfoy, wait. I'm not going to hurt you, I swear. I was only going to heal your nose. I'm sorry you got hurt in the first place." She laid her hand on his shoulder to draw him back towards her. "Now put your hands down please, and I'll fix it for you," she said as she pulled his hands away from his face.

"Are you sure you know what you're doing?" he asked doubtfully.

"Believe me, growing up having to take care of Ron and Harry, I learned quickly how to fix bumps and bruises and minor broken bones," she answered with a smile. "Just stay still for a minute." She flicked her wand at him. "*Episkey*."

With a slight crunching sound Lucius' nose straightened, and he yelped in pain. Hermione summoned a ratty-looking beaded bag from behind the desk, and reaching in past her elbow, she finally pulled out a small vial of potion. "Here, take this. It will take the pain away."

Lucius examined the label before he uncorked the vial; he wasn't that trusting, after all, and swallowed the pain potion down in one gulp.

She fumbled around inside the bag for a moment, and not finding what she wanted, finally pointed her wand into the bag and said, "*Accio bruise-healing paste*." A small tin flew into her hand; she really was prepared for practically any emergency.

"Sit up here," she ordered, practically dragging him up to sit in the chair behind the desk. Stooping before him, she opened the tin and gently dabbed the unguent across the bridge of his nose and across his cheekbones, spreading it carefully with the tips of her fingers.

As she was concentrating on her task, Lucius was able to study Miss Granger at close range, much closer than he'd ever been to the witch. Her eyes, which he'd considered a flat muddy brown, were actually a lovely walnut color with gold flecks, and there was a dark nearly black ring around the iris. Her hair was still wild and curly but less bushy than in her youth, and here too, he noted golden highlights in the strands of brown. There was a smattering of sun-kissed freckles across the bridge of her nose and a rosy glow to her cheeks. Her lips were full, and she worried at her bottom lip with straight white teeth as she carefully but gently massaged the ointment into his skin. The tip of her tongue slipped out and licked across her lip, and he felt an involuntary tightening in his groin.

Good Lord, this girl... errr... young woman was the same age as his son! He should not be reacting to her like this. It was clear that he'd been without a woman for far too long. He jerked back a bit and thumped his head against the back of the chair with a sharp grunt and a wince.

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed as she leaned forward further to thread her fingers through his hair and feel the back of his head. "Did you bump your head when you fell? We both came down pretty hard; you might have a concussion. I didn't even consider that."

While she was examining the back of his head for bumps, his eyes gravitated downward of their own accord to a mesmerizing view straight down the front of Miss Granger's blouse. If there was any doubt in his mind before that she was no longer the little girl he remembered, it was banished at the sight of her breasts dangling before him. And if he wasn't mistaken, he could almost see the edges of her rosy nipples nearly falling out of the cups of her lacy demi bra. Getting even closer, she stepped between his knees to pull his head farther forward in her quest to find any bumps on his head, practically shoving his face into her cleavage as her knee inadvertently brushed lightly against his groin. The tingle he'd felt earlier became a shock wave of lust.

Raising his hands to her shoulders, he gently but firmly pushed her away. "Miss Granger, take your hands off me, please! I am fine, really. You must desist at once."

Hermione jumped back as if burned, her cheeks stained crimson with embarrassment. "I am very sorry, Mr. Malfoy. I should have realized you wouldn't want any assistance from someone like me," she declared sarcastically. She turned away sharply and he saw her swipe angrily at her cheek.

Oh, fuck, Malfoy, you arse! Now you've upset the girl, and she really was just trying to help he thought. He felt like he'd just stepped on a kitten or crushed a butterfly. Pinching the bridge of his now healed nose, he turned to her with a sigh. "Miss Granger, please forgive my rudeness. I do know you were trying to help and I do appreciate it. And truly, I no longer adhere to the same leanings I had prior to the end of the war. Six years of incarceration gave me plenty of time to ruminate upon my past and to see the error of my ways."

Hermione didn't answer for a moment, but then she squared her shoulders, and wiping her thumb beneath her eyes, she turned to face him. Pasting a bright expression on her face, she said, "I hope what you say is true, Mr. Malfoy. I suppose time will tell. Now, what can I help you find?"

He was confused. "I beg your pardon?"

"What can I help you find? I assume, since you are here at a historical research library, that there is some information you seek? As you can clearly see, we are not organized yet, but if you tell me what it is you're looking for, I may be able to find the resources for you."

He felt a stab of disappointment. Granger had obviously already got the job he'd come to apply for, damn it all. "Actually, Miss Granger, I did not come here to do research; I came to apply for a job, but I can see that it has already been taken. I will trouble you no further." He stood from the chair and headed for the door.

She slipped into the chair he had vacated and called to him before he left the room. "What job was it you came here to apply for, Mr. Malfoy?"

He turned, "Obviously, the job you have already taken, Miss Granger, the assistant to the librarian."

She twirled her quill as one corner of her mouth lifted in a small smirk. "You misunderstand, sir. I am not the assistant; that position is still open. Perhaps the time has come for you to prove the truth of your words."

Lucius eyed her speculatively. "If you are not the assistant, what is your position here, Miss Granger?" he asked with a sinking suspicion that he already knew the answer.

"I am the Head Librarian and, thus far, the sole employee of this newly formed establishment: The Cedric Diggory Memorial Historical Research Library. Cedric's family donated a small fortune to fund this project, and I have been trying my best to get it up and running, a daunting task to say the least. So far, I have been unable to find a suitable assistant. What makes you think that you are qualified for this position?" She was now all business as she scooted the chair forward and clasped her hands on the desk in front of her.

He strode back across the room and produced a folder from his pocket, enlarging it before he handed it to her. "My CV, Miss Granger."

Glancing at the folder, she looked back up at him. "Before I review this, I have one question for you, Mr. Malfoy."

He nodded. "And that is?"

"You do realize that if I offer you this position and you accept it, you will be working directly under me."

Her words immediately brought forth, unbidden, a most lascivious image to his mind. It was of him under her, and they were doing anything but working, as she rode him wildly to completion.

"Mr. Malfoy... Mr. Malfoy..."

"Oh, I am most sorry, Miss Granger. You were saying?" Dear Merlin, he needed to find a woman to release all this sexual tension he hadn't even known existed until this very afternoon.

"I was asking you if you would willingly accept me as your boss if you were to be offered this job. In other words, would you work for a Mudblood?" she asked bluntly, her eyes turning cold and hard.

"Please, Miss Granger, such crudity is unnecessary. I have said it already, my mind set has changed. My world...our world...has changed from what it was in my youth and even from five years past. One must change with the times, and so I have. If you see fit to offer me this job, I will do my best to fulfill your requirements. And I would be delighted to work under you." He swallowed as he said the final words, fighting to eradicate the image from his brain.

"Very well, please have a seat, and let me look this over for a few minutes. If you don't mind waiting, and if I find your CV acceptable, I would like to do an interview."

"Right now? I mean here? Today?"

"Is that a problem? I have been trying to fill this position for months and have had nothing but a bunch of dunderheads." She paused suddenly at that statement and eyed him suspiciously. "Did Severus send you over here?"

"Severus? Severus Snape?"

"Yes, of course, Severus Snape. Do you know anyone else named Severus?"

His brow wrinkled, and he replied, "No, I don't, and no, he didn't send me here."

She looked for a moment as if she were going to question him further, but then she just shook her head and Summoned a chair to the front of her desk, indicating that he should have a seat. Pulling a pair of reading glasses from the pocket of her robes, she sat back to look over his CV.

While she was reading, Lucius had time to wonder what that had all been about. She'd referred to his old friend by name, not as Professor Snape, or Mr. Snape, or even just Snape, but as Severus, as if she knew him quite well. She'd also used one of his favorite terms for bumbling idiots, 'dunderheads.' Just how well acquainted with Severus was Miss Granger, and why had he not heard anything of it? Of course he'd not been by to visit Severus since his release. Being rather embarrassed by his circumstances, he'd been putting off a visit to his old friend, but maybe he should see what exactly the old boy had been up to of late.

Lucius sat back in his chair to wait for Miss Granger to finish and couldn't help but notice that she was actually quite sexy in that prim and proper librarian fantasy kind of way. He continued to daydream about nibbling on various parts of Miss Granger's anatomy when he realized that she had finished and was studying him as well. He doubted that she had been thinking along the same lines as he, though.

"I'm sorry, I was wool gathering. Did you ask me something?"

"Why are you here, Mr. Malfoy? Why are you applying for this job? You are so overqualified for this position that it's ridiculous. Severus did send you here, didn't he?"

"I swear to you, Miss Granger, I have not seen or contacted Severus since the Ministry refused him as my sponsor."

A look of enlightenment came across her face as she declared, "Your sponsor. That's it then, isn't it? Harry sent you here; I should have known. You owe him a debt." She handed his folder back to him. "Tell him I said thanks but no thanks. I don't need this kind of favor."

Lucius was puzzled. "I don't know what you mean; this is no favor to Potter. I need this job."

"Oh, really, Mr. Malfoy. So you aren't doing this as way to pay Harry back for offering to be your sponsor?"

"No, Miss Granger, I am not. I am here because I need this job, plain and simple."

Now Hermione looked puzzled. "Surely, with your connections you must have other options. Why would you take a job here if it weren't to repay a debt?"

"I am both pleased and surprised to find that Mr. Potter is capable of being discreet. He has apparently not revealed the terms of my release. As a potential employer, Miss Granger, I willingly divulge them to you. I have nothing. The Ministry has confiscated all of my funds in Gringotts-UK branches, and I am forbidden to leave the country, tied here by a tracking spell. My family estate, Malfoy Manor, has been likewise appropriated by the Ministry. Narcissus has divorced me, and my son has disowned me."

"Draco? Draco never..."

"Oh I don't blame him. He needed to make his own way after the war, and distancing himself from me was probably a very wise move. I do not hold it against him and truly hope we may be able to reconcile in the future. In addition to these terms, I have also been bidden to obtain employment within a time span of twelve months. I thought this would be the easiest of the terms to meet, but alas, I was quite wrong. As you can see from reading my file," he waved his hand over the folder lying open on her desk, "I have a great deal of experience in many areas, aside from being a former Death Eater, but every job I have applied for has been denied me. Former business associates want nothing to do with me, strangers want nothing to do with me. I can't even get hired for a menial job as a clerk at Flourish and Blotts. If I don't find something within the next four months, I will be forced to make a choice between having the Ministry assign me a job, which I have no doubt will be something intended to humiliate me...it has been hinted that Argus Filch will be retiring soon...or I will face being taken back into custody and most likely interred in Azkaban."

Lucius sank back into his chair. "In fact, the more I consider it, I now truly believe the Ministry has set me up. They wanted me to fail from the very moment they released me. So, you see, Miss Granger, I did not lie. And it is not to repay a debt. Indeed, I am indebted to Potter for pointing me in this direction. The simple truth is I need this job."

Hermione was silent for several moments. Just when Lucius decided he might as well leave, she opened a drawer and pulled out several forms. Without a word, she began filling them out.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"This is a form for a trial position. It is what all the dunderheads... err... that is, the other job candidates were offered to start. Sixty days trial, and if at the end of that time I am happy with your work and you wish to continue, then we will renegotiate the terms. If that is agreeable to you, please sign and date here at the bottom." She handed him her quill.

Lucius pulled the papers over to him, bent to sign, but then hesitated. He cleared his throat. "In all likelihood, you may be risking your own position if your funding is in anyway related to the Ministry, so perhaps it is not even fair for me to ask this of you."

Hermione smiled. "All of my funding comes from a private trust set up by the Diggory family. I don't give a flying fuck about the Ministry, and they have no influence here. They are all a bunch of bloody bastards as far as I'm concerned, and if hiring you pisses them off then so much the better for me. Sign the papers, Lucius."

He was surprised by her use of his given name until she added, "If we are to work together, the first rule is: you will be Lucius and I will be Hermione. We will not stand on formality here. Sign the papers, Lucius."

"Gladly, Hermione," he replied as he signed with a flourish. "Gladly."

TBC

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 7

In order to be released from custody, Lucius is required to obtain meaningful employment. What better job could he find than working in a research library as the librarian's assistant? Now all he has to do is convince the librarian that he's the man for the job.

This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ. Note: rating and warnings are for later chapters.

AN: This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ (I post on LJ as madeleone). Many thanks to my betas: Softobsidian, who beta'd it for the fest, and Clairvoyant, who is polishing up the rough edges.

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter. I make no money here.

It had been seven weeks, and Hermione could not believe she had actually hired Lucius Malfoy. And even more surprising was the fact that he'd turned out to be a gem.

He worked diligently and actually seemed to know what he was doing, unlike all of the previous applicants who had not lasted this long before either quitting or being fired. Thus far, he'd proved to be full of good ideas, such as reorganizing, redecorating, and brightening up the foyer to make it more appealing to patrons. He'd suggested they work on organizing and shelving the newer books first and save the older books, first editions, parchments and scrolls for later, as they would require more care and possibly restoration. At least they would start filling their shelves with information available to the wizarding public.

Most surprising of all, he was a very hard worker. Hermione imagined that he had led a pampered life and thus would not be inclined to do any real work. However, he didn't hesitate to pitch in, even when physical labor was involved, such as moving and sorting the boxes that contained some very old specimens, fragile with age, that they dared not use magic on. She definitely had no complaints about his work, other than he seemed to drift off at odd times for no apparent reason. She would be talking to him and look up to see him gazing at her with a half smile and a dreamy look on his face, as if he were miles away. Woolgathering, he called it. She merely put it off as a quirk from his years spent in confinement and overlooked it whenever it happened.

In the seven weeks he'd been there they had made tremendous progress, and she had to admit it was mostly due to Lucius' efforts. While Hermione loved her job, she tended to get distracted being surrounded by so many books. She would be sorting and would discover an interesting passage in a book, and before she knew it, several hours had passed. Working with Lucius kept her on track; if he noticed her involved in a fascinating piece of work, he would gently remove it from her hands and set it on her desk for later.

He was nearly always there before she arrived in the morning, and often was still sorting and shelving books when she left at night. One night she returned late to pick up some files she'd forgotten and found him comfortably ensconced before the fireplace in the one of the reading rooms, book in hand and a pot of Darjeeling at his side. She said jokingly, "Lucius, I am beginning to think you have secretly moved in and are living in one of the empty rooms upstairs."

"Now, that is not such a preposterous idea," he replied. "This is so much more enjoyable than the flat the Ministry keeps me in. I might actually try to get that negotiated into my terms once my two months are up." Although he looked away quickly, Hermione recognized his look of longing at the idea.

"If you dislike it so much there, why not move?" she asked, puzzled why he would stay in a place he so clearly disliked.

"I had only the stipend they provided, and they deducted rent for the flat from it. That left me little enough to live on, much less save enough up to pay for something else," he explained quietly. "Since my contract with the library is on a two month trial basis, the Ministry has required me to remain in my current location until I have some assurance of permanent employment."

Hermione felt ashamed that she had not considered his situation before. He was a proud man, raised in a wealthy pureblood society, and having to live now on the dole from the Ministry and under its scrutiny must have been extremely demeaning for him. "I'm sorry I didn't realize, Lucius. I could have easily confirmed your employment in advance of the two month period, or at the very least offered you an advance on your wages," she said softly.

He waved her suggestion aside. "Unnecessary. I have been spending most of my time here of late and enjoying it immensely. I really only return there to sleep, so that makes it bearable.

"Oh, I forgot to mention I will have to take a couple of hours off tomorrow morning. My monthly meeting with my MAF is tomorrow."

"MAF?"

"Oh, sorry, my own little term of endearment for my parole monitor. MAF...Ministry-Appointed-Flunky."

Hermione laughed. "Come in whenever you get done, Lucius. I know how things run down there; sometimes I think they make people wait just because they can. It gives the MAFs a sense of power over all of the rest of us peons."

~*~

When Lucius arrived to work the next day, he was quite late and clearly in a bad mood. Hermione pressed to find out what was wrong, and he snapped at her, bluntly telling her to mind her own business. She went off in a huff to work on her monthly budget reports. Lucius spent several hours in the attic, going through piles of discarded furniture to sort out what was usable for downstairs. Hermione went up to check on him once and found him alternating between blasting some of it to pieces, only to cast a Reparo on them so he could blast them again. She quietly shut the door before he could see her and left him to his own devices.

They pointedly ignored each other for most of the afternoon. Then they were forced to deal with one another to work on a collection of privately donated material. They argued intensely about the best way to archive it. Hermione favored filing everything strictly chronologically, but Lucius wanted to divide the documents into topics alphabetically first, then cross-reference chronologically. Each method had its own merits but neither wanted to give an inch.

She at first tried to discuss it with him rationally. No matter what she said, he found fault with her reasoning. He just kept picking away, nipping and snapping at her until they eventually ended up in a shouting match, which somehow then spiraled into name calling.

"I don't understand how you got this job when clearly you are nothing more than a silly little girl who thinks she's oh so clever but probably doesn't know the difference between truly valuable historical information and a copy of *Hogwarts: A History*," he sneered.

"Well, I'd rather be a silly little girl than a pompous, overbearing, pretentious prig. Just because you can trace your family tree back to the days of the founders, you think that you're somehow better than everyone else...but in actuality, it only makes you a pompous, overbearing, pretentious prig."

"Better a pompous prig than a filthy little M..." Lucius stopped himself, nearly choking on the hateful words. He looked up to see Hermione's eyes go wide with hurt before they filled with tears that she fought to contain. "Oh, bloody hell... Hermione, I'm sorry, I didn't mean..." he reached out for her, but she jerked back.

"No! Don't touch me," she cried, turning away from him.

She saw from the corner of her eye Lucius' hand reach out for her. It hovered there as if he wanted to touch her, comfort her, but then he snatched it back, spun on his heel and left the room. Seconds later, she heard the front door slam loudly. She collapsed into a chair and buried her face in her hands as the tears she'd tried so hard to withhold burst forth.

After she'd had a good cry, Hermione had time to reflect. It wasn't because he'd used *that* word--well, in reality he hadn't--he'd stopped himself. But he'd almost said it, in anger, in the heat of the moment, and they both knew it. Yet he'd stopped himself, so that had to count for something. The hated invective that a few years ago would have spewed from his mouth with no compunction whatsoever had stuck in his throat and nearly choked him. But it wasn't the word itself that had upset her; she'd been called that and worse, and it hadn't brought her to tears, it only made her angry. It was the fact that it was *him*, it was Lucius, nearly saying it that had hurt so much. And she realized in that moment that, in the short time they had been working together, she had come to care for the man. She'd somehow come to respect him for the changes he'd made in himself, admire him for his intelligence and his pride, and appreciate his bloody stubbornness.

Dear Merlin! She was falling in love with the man. A Slytherin! Again! How could this be happening? First Severus and now Lucius. Why couldn't she be attracted to a nice, steady, down-to-earth Hufflepuff? Maybe there was some kind of curse, a link, a secret attraction, between members of the two volatile houses. As unlikely as the pairings were, so many of her Gryffindor friends had ended up with Slytherins. Ron with Pansy, Neville with Millie, Ginny with Blaise, and Harry...dear, sweet Harry--was paired off with the ultimate Slytherin.

Hermione knew that whatever had set Lucius off, it wasn't whether to archive the Bagshot documents alphabetically or chronologically, but it was something that had happened at the Ministry earlier today. She knew she needed to get him to talk to her. But after the way he had stormed out earlier, she wasn't so sure he would even come back to work tomorrow. He might believe he had committed an unforgivable offense against her and decide not to return at all.

She decided she needed to find him...now...tonight. She gathered her things: her wand, her beaded bag that, even after all these years, she never went anywhere without, and her cloak. She stopped with her hand on the doorknob. Sweet Circe, she had no idea where Lucius lived. All she knew was that it was in a flat provided by the Ministry, somewhere he hated to be. Thinking for a moment, she considered Floo-calling Harry; as Lucius' sponsor he would most likely know his address. But then she would have to explain why she was so desperate to find him after working hours. Then in a palm-to-forehead moment, she rushed back to her desk and pulled out his employment papers. There it was: 310 Belladonna St. #4-C, Knockturn Alley.

Knockturn Alley? She hadn't even realized there were flats for rent there, much less something suitable for the Ministry's purposes. Copying the address down on a scrap of paper, she rushed off, hoping that Lucius had gone home to his flat and wasn't out somewhere drowning his sorrows. She didn't fancy hanging around in that neighborhood waiting for him to come home. She briefly considered asking Harry to go with her, but quickly rejected the idea, as it would require to her to explain why she was bothering to look for Lucius at this time of night. No, she would have to go alone.

She Apparated to Diagon Alley and discreetly checked the Leaky as well as a couple of the small pubs that had popped up in the Alley in recent years. But there was no sign of Lucius in any of them. With a sigh, she transfigured her deep russet robes to black and pulled the hood up over her head as she headed for Knockturn Alley.

She paused at the entrance; it was a scary place to enter even during the daytime, but at night it was terrifying. Gathering her Gryffindor courage about her and pulling the hood even further forward to hide her face, she ventured forth.

About halfway down the first block, she saw a man standing in the street leaning against a lamppost. Approaching him, she asked in a raspy voice, "Where's Belladonna Street?"

Eying her closely, trying to see her face within the depths of her hood, he sneered, "Who's wantin' to know, deary? Information around here ain't free, and it don't come cheap neither."

In a flash her wand was at his throat. "It's none of your concern who wants to know, now is it *deary*? Is your life a high enough reward? It's a simple question; answer me and I'll let you live." She'd learned from Severus never to show fear, never let 'em see you sweat. When under the gun, stay cool, calm, and collected.

The slimy little bastard trembled beneath her wand. "Sorry. Sorry, mum..." The little worm was singing a different tune now. "Belladonna's clear at the back of the Alley. Go down to the end and turn right down Nightshade, and go almost to the end. Belladonna only goes to the left."

Hermione patted the thug's shoulder and replied, "Now, that's a good boy, I knew you could be polite and helpful with the proper motivation. Here, sonny..." she handed him a coin. "Here's a sickle for your trouble. Remember, you didn't see me here tonight."

"No, mum, no. I din't see nothin', I din't. Nothin' a'tall," he mumbled.

"Good boy," she whispered as she pressed another sickle into his palm before he stumbled away into the darkness.

"Oh, fuck," whispered Hermione to herself. "Of course, it simply has to be in the deepest, darkest, skankiest corner of Knockturn Alley. No wonder Lucius hates living there; I really do despise the Ministry."

Hermione carefully made her way, keeping to the shadows, avoiding contact with anyone loitering around. Once she turned down Nightshade, the atmosphere became even more dark and oppressive. She got the creepy-crawlies; it felt as if eyes were watching her from every corner, as if there were hands just waiting to grab her and do Merlin knew what to her. It was all she could manage not to bolt and run screaming back the way she had come. When she started down Belladonna Street, she felt a cold bead of sweat slipping down the center of her spine and she suppressed a shudder.

"Almost there...almost there, just a few more minutes. Oh, sweet Circe, Lucius better be there, or I am truly screwed, blued, and tattooed," she muttered under her breath. She had no idea what the phrase meant at all, but her Grampa Granger used to say it a lot when he was in deep shit with Grams. It seemed to fit the occasion.

Using her wand to cast a very dim Lumos, as she didn't want to draw attention to herself, she checked the numbers. Address number 310 turned out to be a little more than a dosshouse; the sign out front said, 'rooms to rent, cheap: by the hour, day, week or month.' It was situated between what appeared to be a bordello on one side, if the *ladies* loolling about in the doorway and leaning against the building were any indication, and a pawn shop on the other side; the proprietor, sitting out front and having a fag, looked to be part troll and not someone to be messed with. That explained how he managed to stay in business in such a rough part of town.

Happy to get off the street, Hermione entered and looked around the lobby of the boarding house. It was horrid, absolutely horrid. To think of Lucius...proud, refined, cultured, pureblooded Lucius...her Lucius...in this dismal place made her want to choke someone. And it might be him. Why hadn't he said anything to her or to Harry? If Harry had known, he never would have allowed him to live in this pigsty for as long as he had.

She stepped up to the counter and rang a tinny sounding bell sitting there. There were rustlings behind a doorway covered by a curtain, and finally, a scrawny pimple-faced young man, who reminded her a bit of Stan Shunpike, stepped through. He was buttoning up his trousers, and he slapped a faded and well-worn copy of Play Wizard on the counter. It was opened to the centerfold of a busty blonde witch, and that left nothing to the imagination as to exactly what he'd been doing in the back room.

"Yea, whaddaya want?" he snarled.

Keeping her hood up, Hermione grimaced and using the tip of her wand, she shoved the magazine over the back of the counter onto the floor. "Malfoy's room. Where is it?" she asked in the same raspy voice she'd used earlier.

"I ain't allowed to give that out withouts his say so."

Hermione's wand angled subtly until it was pointing directly at the clerk's crotch. She said nothing, but her toe began to tap impatiently.

"Errrr... But I suppose fer a lovely lady such as yerself... Up the stairs, third floor, number four. It's in the back, on the right."

She walked back toward the bottom of the stairs. Her wand never wavered, and she kept staring at him until he bent and picked up his 'reading' material and ducked back behind the curtain. Heaving a sigh, Hermione moved quickly up the stairs. Luckily, she encountered no one on her way, although she did hear some very odd noises behind several of the doors. Not wanting to know, she just hurried to the third floor.

Reaching her goal, she paused to catch her breath, clutching her hand to her chest, as if that alone would quiet the pounding of her heart. Finally, assured that she could breath without gasping, she proceeded down the hallway until she came to number four. She tapped lightly on the door, not wanting to call attention to herself from any of the other rooms. No one answered, so she tested the doorknob. It was locked, of course, and she could sense Lucius' wards in place. She laid her forehead against the cool wood and suppressed a little sob.

"Lucius, please be in there, please answer the door. Please, Lucius, please," she whispered desperately. Taking a chance, she knocked a little harder.

"Well, well, well. What have we here?" crooned a slick voice behind her, from the doorway across the hall. She detected a bit of accent...Irish maybe. "What a juicy little peach you are, Tidbit. What's a sweet little thing like you doing in a place like this, and what might yer business with his lordship be?"

Hermione's heart sank, but she squared her shoulders, and with Severus' mantra *never show fear* ringing in her ears, she turned to face her adversary. There stood a great bull of a man, salt and pepper hair hanging lankly to just above his collar. He had a sneer on his lips and a patch over one eye covering a scar that bisected his face from above his left eyebrow clear through the patch to mid cheek on the right side.

She replied coldly, "My business here is no concern of yours, sir. I suggest you return to your room, close the door, and forget you ever saw me."

He stared at her through the gloom of the hallway, as if he were trying to get a glimpse of her, but her hood was still in place, pulled well forward to hide her features. He responded with a sharp bark of laughter. "Oh, you are a feisty one, sweet thing. But I do like my girlies feisty, I do. By the time I'm done with 'em, though, there's hardly ever any fight left to 'em."

He made a menacing move toward her and Hermione's wand instantly appeared in her hand, pointed directly at his heart. "I said return to your room. If you value your life, you will leave me alone."

"Is that supposed to scare me, little girl? I gobble up sweet, juicy little peaches like you for breakfast."

"Yes, as a matter of fact, you should be afraid, very afraid. You see, I have battled monsters far, far worse than you and won. I grind up putrid little pukes like you and toss them in the gutter where they belong. Now get the fuck away from me, and I'll forget that you bothered me; otherwise, I *will* make you very sorry you ever thought to look my way."

His eyes shifted down the hallway, but suspecting a trick, Hermione kept her wand aimed directly at him. She heard the distinctive click of dragonhide boots coming towards her, and hoping beyond hope that it was who she thought, she dared a quick glance and was relieved to see Lucius approaching. He stepped between her and the hulk in the opposite doorway. Hermione still didn't lower her wand, but instead, she stepped slightly to the side and kept it trained on him, making sure he knew he was still in her sights.

"Mordecai, are you harassing my guest?" asked Lucius smoothly.

"Harassing, Lucius? No, of course not. Admiring is more like it, and a lovely little tidbit she is," responded the man.

"Indeed," was Lucius' only response.

"Whatever you paid for her, I'll gladly double it," he offered genially.

Hermione huffed in indignation.

"The lady is a friend and definitely not for sale, Mordecai. Not at any price"

The brute looked disappointed and looked for moment as if he might argue the point.

"You'd best take her at her word, Mordy. She's a very powerful witch, and she truly has battled monsters far worse than either of us... and won."

The man looked from her to Lucius and back and finally gave a slight nod and retreated into his room. He paused before closing the door to add, "If you ever change yer mind, Lucius, I'll give you three times whatever you think she's worth. She is a lovely little peach."

"She is indeed, old friend. You may be sure I'll keep the offer in mind," replied Lucius.

As the door clicked shut, he rounded on Hermione. "What the fuck were you thinking! Coming down to this godforsaken place in the middle of the night is sheer madness," he snarled in a gruff whisper.

"I..."

"Shut up! Don't say anything until we get inside; it's not safe to stand around out here and chit-chat. Keep your eyes open while I dismantle the wards, and especially keep an eye on Mordecai's flat. I don't trust him as far as I can throw him."

TBC

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 of 7

In order to be released from custody, Lucius is required to obtain meaningful employment. What better job could he find than working in a research library as the librarian's assistant? Now all he has to do is convince the librarian that he's the man for the job.

This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ. Note: rating and warnings are for later chapters.

AN: This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ (I post on LJ as madeleone). Many thanks to my betas: Softobsidian, who beta'd it for the fest, and Clairvoyant, who is polishing up the rough edges.

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter. I make no money here.

Within a moment, Lucius had dropped the wards and opened the door. Grabbing her arm, he jerked her inside. He immediately locked the door and reset his wards, adding a few more for good measure. Once he was satisfied, he turned back to Hermione, meaning to give her a piece of his mind.

"Hermione...", he started, but before he could say another word, she launched herself at him and clung to him like a limpet. He then realized that she was shaking badly and her breath was coming out in shuddering little sobs.

He'd been shocked and furious to find her there in his hallway, much less in the midst of a confrontation with Mordecai Jones, who was probably the biggest crime lord in Knockturn Alley. A tough thug who had been known to make wizards disappear out of mere spite, and she had called him a putrid little puke and basically threatened to kick his arse. Thanks to the gods he'd arrived when he had, or who knew what could have happened? He'd thought that she was being an arrogant Gryffindor, going up against Mordy. But he now realized, if her reactions were any indication, that she'd been terrified and trying to tough it out.

"Shhhh... it's alright now. It's okay... Shhhh, sweet baby, shhhh... It's all over now. I've got you." He soothed her, but her trembling didn't stop, and if anything, it got worse. She kept making these pitiful little whimpering noises that made his heart ache. He scooped her up and sat in the armchair, holding her in his lap. He Summoned a blanket off his bed to wrap around her. He held her there, patting her back and stroking her hair, all the while whispering words of comfort. "Shhhh... You're fine, just fine. Hold on to me... That's a good girl. Shhhh... You're safe now, and I won't let anything happen."

After several minutes, her tremors began to subside. Lucius pushed her hair back and tilted her face up so he could see her eyes. With his thumb under her chin and his fingers splayed across her throat, he could feel her pulse beating erratically. "By all that's holy, what were you thinking to come down to this hellhole in the first place?"

"After the way you left, I was afraid you wouldn't come back at all. I just had to find you, to talk to you. I didn't know it would be this bad here, and I figured I could Apparate away if I needed to. I didn't realize..."

"New rule here: no one can Apparate from Knockturn. The Ministry has Anti-Apparition wards up. Only the Aurors can breach them. It makes it easier for them when they are pursuing criminals."

"Well, yes, I realize that now, but I had no idea of it coming in. By the time I figured it out, it was too late to turn back. I just hoped and prayed that you would be here when I finally found the place." She made no move to get off his lap; in fact, she snuggled closer and laid her head on his shoulder. "By the time your creepy neighbor accosted me, I was sure I was going to be raped or tortured or murdered or all of the above. It's been years since I've had to deal with something like this; I'm a librarian, for god's sake. All I could think of was that Severus used to tell me to never show your fear. People like that feed on your weaknesses, so don't reveal them. He told me once all was said and done you could have a meltdown but not during."

Lucius' arms tightened around her. "Yes, well, I think it's safe to say that Severus would have been proud of you tonight, love. Standing out in that hallway, I had no idea at all that you were frightened. Foolish, yes--to be confronting and taunting Mordecai Jones...but frightened... not a clue. Not one."

She smiled at his words, then yawned so loudly he heard her jaw crack. She nuzzled into the curve of his neck and mumbled, "I really need to talk to you, Lucius, but I'm just so knackered I can't even think straight right now... I wanted to tell you... tell you that..."

Looking down, he realized she had fallen asleep. Not surprising; terror tended to drain one. He'd been exhausted nearly every day those last two years of the war. He studied the way her long lashes lay like twin black fans against the paleness of her cheeks and noticed that, even while sleeping, she nibbled on her bottom lip, sometimes sucking it between her teeth. He lifted his wand, and with a flick, he enlarged the bed and folded back the covers. With her robes still covering her, he charmed her clothes off and one of his shirts onto her like a nightshirt. Then he spelled her robes off her as well.

Lifting her in his arms, he carried her to the bed and set her down on it. He tried to pull away, but she clung to him and whimpered in her sleep. "Don't go... Stay." So, he slipped out of his clothes and donned a pair of sleep pants, more for her modesty than his, and lay next to her, pulling the blankets up over them both. She curled into his body, snuggling as close as she could get, one leg insinuated between his, an arm thrown across his chest, holding him tightly.

Lucius slept more soundly than he had in years. At least, he did until the erotic dreams started. They played off all the 'woolgathering' fantasies he'd had since he'd started working with Hermione. He felt her hands running over him, sliding down to caress his torso, over his stomach, down to his groin, teasing all around his cock but never quite touching it. Then her fingers moved to his thighs, over and between, finally tickling and gently squeezing his balls.

In his dream, the bed shifted as she moved down, and she tugged at his waistband as she whispered, "Lift up, love." He, of course, did as she asked, and she slipped them over his hips, pulling them off. Then he felt her moving up his body, her hair dragging over his legs as she settled between them. One palm grasped the base of his cock to slide to the tip and back down as she simultaneously rolled his balls between the fingers of her other hand. He groaned aloud and muttered, "Oh, sweet Hecate! Yes!"

A second later, her mouth closed over the end, slid down as far as she could go, and sucked her way back up as her tongue teased around the tip, flicking back and forth over his glans. He very nearly levitated off the bed.

His eyes flew open and he realized in that instant this was no erotic dream but the real deal. Lucius shot to a half-sitting position, propped up on his elbows, and gazed down at the naked witch between his legs. "Hermione, what are you doing?"

She giggled and nearly choked as she pulled off briefly to answer him. "It's called fellatio, Lucius; now lay back and enjoy," she said as she reached up with one hand to shove him down onto the bed and returned to her task. She licked her way up his shaft, circled the end, probed the slit with the very tip of her tongue, taking her time to explore and play, asking him what kind of things he liked best. She finally established a rhythm, slowly sliding him nearly to the back of her throat, hollowing her cheeks and sucking as she pulled back, her tongue working him the whole time. As he got close, he became more vocal, moaning and spewing filthy words, urging her on.

His sack tightened in her fingers, and he cried, "Gods, Hermione, I'm going to..." He tried to ease her away, but she refused to be moved. "Fuck! I'm coming... Oh, my sweet girl, I'm coming!" It felt to him as if it went on forever, but in reality, it was most likely only a matter of seconds, and then his entire body went slack. Seconds later, he opened his eyes to gaze down at her, and she stared back at him with a self-satisfied look in her eyes and a saucy little grin on her face. Never taking her eyes from his, she slithered up the bed. It was true; he wouldn't have believed it if he hadn't seen her with his own eyes. The Gryffindor Princess actually slithered up and draped herself half across his body. Her leg lay over one of his, which put her pussy so close to his hip he could feel the heat and wetness of her against his skin. Twining one arm across

his chest and the other around his neck, she pulled him close for a kiss. He could taste himself on her tongue, and he liked it. He deepened the kiss, never wanting to let her go.

A moment later, he broke the kiss, and looking up at her, he placed kisses on her forehead, her chin, both cheekbones and the very tip of her nose. "Don't even think the fact that was best blow job of my life is going to get you out of trouble for coming down here alone last night," he warned.

"It wasn't a bribe for last night, Lucius." She stopped suddenly, as if she'd just realized what he had said. "Wait... really? The best?" Her face lit up with a crooked little smile of accomplishment.

"Don't fish for compliments, darling; it's not attractive," he admonished, trying to keep the smirk off his face.

He toyed with her hair, her wild, curly, beautiful, untameable hair. His other hand explored her, from her luscious breasts down to the curve of her hips and over her arse. Although he didn't even think she was aware of it, her hips were unconsciously undulating against him, pressing her mound into the sharp curve of his hipbone, and he suddenly realized he could smell the scent of her arousal. Poor baby, she'd been so generous to him, and she was probably aching for fulfillment.

He rolled her onto her back and propped himself up on one elbow to gaze at her body. "Oh, my dear, what absolutely lovely tits you have. Do you know how long I've wondered what color your pert little nipples were?" he asked as he ran the tip of his finger over and around her nipple, watching it pucker to a tight little bud.

"Well, hopefully not since the first time I met you," she replied jokingly.

He frowned for a moment, unsure of her meaning. Then he recalled the very first time he had ever seen her, Draco's nemesis, the indomitable Hermione Granger. It had been Draco's second or third year at Hogwarts when they were buying his school books in Flourish and Blotts.

"Good Lord, woman!" he roared. "Of course not; you were a mere child then. It was the day you broke my nose when I came to apply for the job."

"That was not my fault; you startled me!" she defended.

"Well, be that as it may, it was when you were examining the back of my head for bumps. When you bent forward, I could see straight down your shirt."

"You were looking down my shirt at your job interview?"

"Not intentionally. But they were right there in front of me, and any man would have looked," Lucius protested, smiling fondly at the memory. "You wore a low cut lacy bra, and I thought for sure these little gems were going to pop right out. Bit of a disappointment when they didn't. I've wondered ever since what color they'd be."

He bent to nuzzle the tip of one breast with his mouth before finally closing his lips over it and suckling. Hermione moaned low in her throat and pushed towards him, encouraging him to continue. After several moments of worshipping her breast, Lucius pulled back for a moment, disengaging with a pop as she gave a slight whimper of disappointment. "Glad I finally got to find out for myself, though. They're even prettier than I'd imagined," he said before he continued on the other side. She sighed her approval as she twined her fingers in his hair and held him close.

As his lips continued to pay homage to her glorious breasts, his hand moved south to explore her more intimately. He found her wet and slick. She was so hot and sexy that his old todger quickly rose to the occasion, eager for another go. He slid two fingers through her slippery folds and up inside, and crooking them forward slightly, he pumped his fingers in and out while his thumb circled her clit.

Hermione moaned. "Uhhnn... Lucius. Oh, gods... Please..."

"What do you want, sweet girl? Tell me what you want, and I'll give it to you."

"Oh, god. You. I want you, Lucius. Your cock, inside me... Please, please fuck me." Hermione was nearly sobbing in her desire.

"Yessss!" he breathed. "Take it, take what you want. Here, straddle me, ride me." She swung her leg over, and he helped her get in position, his fingers still buried in her cunt. When he pulled his fingers out, his hand was drenched with her juices. He eagerly licked at it, sucking his fingers. The sight of him cleaning her juice from his fingers made her moan again, and she grabbed his hand and sucked on his finger just like she had sucked on his cock earlier. After she'd sucked it clean, she raised up on her knees and positioned him at her entrance. He surged up at the same time that she pushed down and he was buried to the hilt. She paused there, breath held, savoring the feeling.

"Ohhh... gods... Lucius, you feel so good."

"Oh, sweet Hecate. Yes," he said. "You look simply marvelous there astride my cock. And it feels just as I'd imagined."

Hermione giggled a bit. "You imagined this too, did you?"

"Oh, lord, yes. The same day I first saw your breasts. Move a bit there for me... Oh gods, yes... just like that," he said as she raised up and dropped back onto his hard cock.

"Wait, Lucius. Are you saying you imagined this too, us together like this, doing this, on that day you came to apply to the job?"

He chuckled low in his throat, the sound gruff and sexy and just a tiny bit sinister. Hermione shuddered, and he took pride in the thought that he could affect her so. "Oh, yes. You had asked me if I would be willing to work under you, and this particular scenario immediately sprang into my mind. Me under you, but we weren't working, at least not at anything library related." His hands rose to cup her breasts, to pinch and tease her nipples. "I've imagined you like this, us together, ever since that day. But I never really expected my wish to come true."

Hermione rose and fell on his cock, moving almost in slow motion. "You have quite the naughty imagination, sir." She leaned forward to whisper in his ear, "And I'd love nothing better than to make all your wicked wishes come true, you dirty boy." She pulled back just a bit, balanced one hand on his chest as she brushed his hand away from her breast and cupped it in her own hand; presenting it to Lucius like an offering, she rubbed her nipple across his lips. "Suck it!" she ordered.

He complied, muttering, "Oh, dear Merlin, another fantasy down. Are you sure you aren't a Legilimens?" Then she was riding him hard as he sucked her breasts, first one and then the other. He ran his hands over her body, squeezing her arse and pushing her onto his cock as she urged him on with filthy words. Just when he knew he couldn't hold out even one second longer, he felt his orgasm overtake him, and Hermione cried out his name, collapsing on him with a satisfied groan.

"Oh, dear god, Malfoy. You're going to kill me," she mumbled just before she dozed off in exhaustion.

Lucius gathered her close and whispered against her hair, "I beg to differ, Granger. I think it's just the opposite. You're bringing me back to life."

~*~

Hermione didn't sleep long, and when she awoke, she had a chance to look around Lucius' flat. A quick perusal showed that the 'flat' was actually only one room and a rather small room at that. She could tell he had made the best of what there was. The bed they were lying in was a full size, but Hermione was quite sure when she had entered the room with Lucius last night it had been the size of a small love seat, so she assumed he transfigured it each night. The armchair where Lucius had held her sat next to a window that she knew was an illusion, as it looked out over a sunlit gardens rather than the alley next to the bordello. In the corner was a narrow ceiling-high book shelf, and next to it sat a lovely antique drop-down desk and matching chair. Across the room, a small drop-leaf table held a bowl of fruit, a tea set, and a packet of biscuits. Everything was neat and orderly. Hermione's heart was nearly breaking at the thought that Lucius had been freed, only to be held captive in this tiny one-room prison.

Turning her head, she realized that he was awake and watching her.

"What are you thinking?" he asked, his voice gruff and his eyes betraying his embarrassment.

She smiled gently at him and replied, "I'll tell you what I am thinking. I am thinking you have absolutely nothing to be embarrassed about. I am thinking that you are an amazing wizard to have created this little haven of tranquility in this cesspool of a place and to have somehow managed to keep your sanity over the last ten months. You don't deserve this, Lucius; you served the time they deemed suitable as your debt to society. I am thinking they took all your worldly goods, and even your family heritage, and they are still trying to punish you by forcing you to live in this dismal place. And I'm sure now that you were right, that they were somehow hindering you from finding a job. I'm thinking that someone at the Ministry needs to be taken to task for these petty acts of revenge, and Hermione Granger is just the witch to do it. I intend to find out who is behind this, and believe me, they won't know what hit them."

Lucius hand reached out to stroke her cheek. "You would do that for me? Why? Why would you risk your good name and reputation defending a former Death Eater? One who just a few short years ago would have liked nothing better than to see you driven from the wizarding world, who in truth would have gladly done it himself."

"No, you're right, I wouldn't do it for that man," she answered.

Lucius' hand dropped from her face, but she caught it in her hand and laced her fingers in his as she continued. "But I would do it for the Lucius Malfoy I have come to know and care for. The man who knows his world has changed and is who willing to change with it. The man who I have come to admire for his work ethic, his intelligence, his integrity, his pride, and yes, even his bloody Malfoy stubbornness. For that man, my love, I would risk everything."

Lucius leaned in to frame her face with his hands and kissed her deeply. Pulling back, he said, "I don't deserve you."

"You're probably right. But you're stuck with me," she teased.

After a few more heated kisses, Hermione pulled back to say, "As lovely as all this snogging is, I really need the loo. Please tell me I don't have to go downstairs or something."

"You're in luck," he declared. Rising from the bed, he threw open a door she had mistakenly assumed was a closet. It wasn't much bigger than one, but it did hold a toilet, a sink and a teeny, tiny shower stall. She couldn't believe Lucius could even fit his wide shoulders into the shower. There would definitely not be any joint showering going on here, but at least she could pee and have a wash.

By the time Hermione finished showering and getting dressed, Lucius had a pot of tea ready, as well as a basket of fresh croissants with strawberry jam. They were flaky and still warm. "Oh, Lucius. I hadn't realized how famished I was; these are delicious. Where did you get them?" she asked as she gobbled down a second one and seriously considered a third.

"A gift from Mordecai," he responded as he buttered a croissant.

"What?" she gasped, nearly choking on her tea.

"Believe it or not, there's a bakery over on Nightshade that makes the most delicious scones and croissants I have ever eaten. So delicate and flaky, they simply melt in your mouth." At Hermione's irritated look he continued, "Oh, don't worry, they aren't poisoned or anything. Mordy and I often share a bit of breakfast together."

"But I thought last night you said you didn't trust him," she said as she sipped her tea.

"Oh, I didn't, especially not where you were concerned. It was clear he wanted you for himself, and after the way you insulted him, I was a bit worried he might attempt some sort of retribution. But it appears that he finds you cute and your impertinence refreshing. Plus, he now believes that you are officially mine and, therefore, off limits to him. He says you will be good for me. I believe his words were something to the effect of, 'Tidbit is just what you need to put the spring back in your step, old man. She'll keep you on your toes; there's no doubt about it. A word of warning, though, since I know you're a bit out of practice; the walls are thin and a Silencing Spell wouldn't be a bad thing to remember...just for future reference.'" Lucius repeated this conversation with a huge grin on his face. "Then he offered the basket of baked goods as a gift for you. He said that after such a vigorous night, you would surely be in need of sustenance... Tidbit."

"Oh, dear Merlin!" she exclaimed, her face buried in her hands. "No Silencing Spell. The entire house must have heard us."

Lucius laughed at her reaction and helped himself to another croissant. "I find myself in need of sustenance too."

~*~

After breakfast, Hermione finally learned what had made Lucius so angry after his meeting with his MAF. It turned out that since he had started working at the library, his Ministry stipend had been rescinded. No big surprise there.

What he hadn't known was they had simply continued to confiscate his rent from his library check. But instead of just taking an amount equivalent to sixty percent of his monthly stipend, they had decided he now owed them sixty percent of his total income for rent on the tiny flat. In addition, they had even created a variety of other taxes and fees to levy against him.

When he informed them he would simply move from the flat, they produced some trumped up documents stating that as a condition of his parole he was required to live either with his sponsor or in the Ministry-supplied housing until such a time as he had managed to save the equivalent of two years rent. With the amounts they were taking from him, he would never have the amount they demanded in the bank.

Hermione was furious! If it hadn't been Saturday and the Ministry offices closed, she would have stormed down there and torn someone apart. "It is crystal clear that they are doing this on purpose, Lucius. It's just as you suspected. I'll admit, I thought in the beginning you were just being paranoid, but someone is surely out to get you. They don't intend to let you get on with your life at all."

"I agree, my dear, but what recourse do I have? It's the bloody Ministry; if I challenge them, they may revoke my parole. And I would do almost anything not to go to Azkaban, even if it means living in this dismal little place."

"Give me those papers, Lucius," she demanded sitting down to read them carefully. After a bit, she asked, "Wouldn't you even consider living with Harry? I'm sure he would let you stay there."

"With Potter?" He grimaced and shook his head. "I would rather not. I am already so far in his debt... I suppose as a last resort perhaps, but I'd really rather not."

Hermione sighed. Men...they were so difficult...putting such store in debts of honor and who owed what to whom. She continued reading. After going through the whole sheaf of papers several times, she kept coming back to one particular passage. Suddenly, she whooped, "This is it, Lucius! I've found your way out."

"What... Where?" he demanded.

"Here... It says you must live with your sponsor or in Ministry-approved housing. But this clause states that if it is a requirement of your job to live on site, that is an acceptable alternative."

"But it's not a requirement of my job," he said bluntly.

"Your two month trial contract expires next week, and although I haven't, as yet, mentioned it to you, I really do think we need someone to stay on site. We have all those

valuable historical documents and such; we really need someone there, don't you think?" she asked with a sly grin on her face.

"Why, yes, I do think that is an excellent idea." Lucius smirked as he took the papers from her to read the page containing the clause. Then a frown marred his face, "But it says if I were to live on site, they will still deduct a portion for administrative expenses. You know, Hermione, they are just going to siphon off everything I earn."

"Maybe not, Lucius. Read this part up here." She pointed to another section. "In the past you, were well known for being a generous benefactor, a philanthropist, right?"

"I don't see how this is helpful. It says that I am allowed to make tax-free charitable donations. They are already stealing most of my income, so how can giving the rest away help me?"

"Because," explained Hermione with an evil grin, "you are allowed to donate the money before they deduct their fees and taxes. The Cedric Diggory Memorial Historical Research Library is set up as a trust...it runs on donations. You believe strongly in the importance of the library, Lucius, do you not? If you were to generously donate a good portion of your wages to the library, the Ministry would look foolish to object."

"Although I would gladly donate to the library, Hermione, I don't see how that helps prevent me from ending up penniless."

"As the head librarian, I am in charge of the budget for the library. If you were to accept the permanent position as the librarian's assistant, then of course it would be necessary for you to have access to certain funds. Petty cash, let's call it."

"Hermione, I can't let you do anything that could jeopardize your position. If the Ministry suspected you of diverting funds to me under the table, they could bring you up on charges. I certainly won't allow that."

"It won't be under the table or illegal, Lucius," she assured him, setting the papers aside and settling herself on his lap. "I hadn't told you this before, but I've already talked to Amos Diggory about hiring you permanently. In spite of past circumstances, he knows that you have a great desire to preserve the history of our world. He told me he was very pleased to have you on board. I'm sure if we go to him and explain the situation, with his cooperation we can make this work. Amos is no fan of the Ministry bureaucracy himself since he had to deal with it for years before he retired. He'll be on our side. I know he will."

Hermione kissed and nibbled her way up Lucius' jaw until she was sucking on his ear lobe. "So what do you say, Mr Malfoy?" she whispered in his ear. "Are you willing to accept a permanent position under me?"

"Ummmm... I think that could be arranged, as long as it was clearly understood that sometimes it would be *you* under *me*," Lucius answered, sliding a hand under her blouse.

"Oh, I can guarantee it, Lucius. In fact I absolutely insist on it," replied Hermione. She gasped as he popped the front closure of her bra, and her breasts spilled forth. He tweaked one nipple just as he suckled on her neck. "Oh, Lucius...", she moaned squirming a bit. "Oh... Oh... Oh, dear... Don't forget the Silencing Spell."

TBC

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 of 7

In order to be released from custody, Lucius is required to obtain meaningful employment. What better job could he find than working in a research library as the librarian's assistant? Now all he has to do is convince the librarian that he's the man for the job. This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ. Note: rating and warnings are for later chapters.

AN: This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ.(I post on LJ as madeleone). Many thanks to my betas: Softobsidian, who beta'd it for the fest, and Clairvoyant, who polished up the rough edges.

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter. I make no money here.

Hermione insisted that Lucius either pack up or shrink the belongings that he wanted to keep and bring them with him. She was adamant that he had spent his last night on Belladonna Street.

While Lucius went downstairs and bullied the clerk to make sure any stray messages would be forwarded to the library, there came a knock at the door. Being cautious, Hermione pulled out her wand and approached the door. "Who's there?"

"Why, it's just me, Tidbit, the putrid little puke from across the hall," came the reply.

She rested her forehead against the door frame and considered not answering, just waiting for Lucius to return to deal with the man. But then she had a thought, and standing tall, still brandishing her wand, she opened the door and faced Mordecai Jones.

"Mr. Jones, I do hope you will accept my apologies for my rudeness last night. I was distraught and worried about Lucius, and in the heat of the moment, I may have said things I shouldn't have. I am sorry if my words were hurtful to you. Please forgive me."

"Well, now that's quite the pretty apology from such a feisty little peach," he purred, taking a step towards her and tracing his finger down her cheek.

Hermione jerked back and leveled her wand. "And that's all I am offering, Mr. Jones, a sincere apology. You will kindly keep your hands and any other body parts to yourself."

He burst out into a deep belly laugh."Now there's that saucy little tidbit I admired so much last night. You can call me Mordecai, love, or Mordy if you prefer."

"Thank you, Mordecai. Please feel free to call me Hermione."

"Oh, I figured out who you was already, Miss Hermione Granger. Lucius told no lies when he claimed you was a very powerful witch. 'S very polite of you, 'tis, but I like

callin' you Tidbit, so to me, Tidbit you'll always be."

Hermione studied him intently for a moment, then said, "Mordecai, I'm going to ask a favor of you, so I will give you leave to call me whatever name you wish."

He looked a bit suspicious, but nodded. "What is it?"

Hermione quickly explained a bit about the situation with the Ministry and that Lucius would be moving to the library. "I don't know if whoever is doing these things is just trying to annoy him or if they have a more malicious intent. It does occur to me that if someone truly wanted to do him harm, forcing him to live here in Knockturn would give them the opportunity to ambush him and make it look like some random crime."

"You make a good point, girl. That could well have happened, except for the fact that I've had my boys keepin' an eye on 'is lordship. He don't know that yet though. Just what is it you want from me, Tidbit?"

"The Ministry needn't be informed of Lucius' move for at least a week. I know you have a great deal of influence down here, and I'd just like you to keep an eye on his flat. If you see or hear of anyone snooping around who seems like they might intend him harm, I want you to let us know about it. Maybe we can catch whoever is doing this."

He didn't answer right away, so Hermione added, "I would be more than happy to pay you for any information you discover."

Mordy looked offended at her offer of payment. "Friends doesn't charge friends fer helpin' out, Tidbit. My feelsins is hurt that you think I would."

"I'm sorry, Mordecai; it appears once again I have misjudged you," said Hermione with a small smile. She turned from him to get a piece of paper and a quill to write down the address of the library.

"You shouldn't oughta turn your back on someone like me, Tidbit. You make yerself an easy target."

Turning back to him, Hermione merely handed him the address. "Friends trust friends, Mordecai. You have declared yourself my friend, and I believe you are sincere. Therefore, I have no reason to fear you anymore, do I?"

With a chuckle he said, "That you don't, girl. An' tha's the truth, I swear."

"Good," said Hermione, offering her hand. Mordy shook it, and as they sealed their deal, Lucius arrived.

"Mordecai...Hermoine, what's going on here?" he asked, observing the odd pair.

"Nothing bad, Lucius," said Hermione, moving to stand at his side. "Mordy has agreed to keep an eye on the flat and let us know if any suspicious characters come around."

"Hermione, really. I have lived here for nearly ten months. They've had ample opportunity to do me harm if that was their intent. Mordecai, I don't think there is any need for you to put yourself out in this matter."

"Lucius, she has a good point...it's some contemptible little fuck down at the Ministry what's been makin' yer life miserable. Who's ta say they won't try to do more? 'Specially if they figure yer movin' out of their reach. An' ta tell you the truth, Lucius, that they haven't already tried anything might have more to do with the fact that I've had my boys keepin' an eye on you when you was comin' and goin'. No one would dare to harm you, knowin' you was under my protection."

"Why would you do that, Mordy? I never requested your protection."

"No, you didn't, but you had it anyways. Yer a fine gentleman, my friend, but you don't belong in a place like this. And even though I know you can handle yerself in a rough crowd, I'd never trust those Ministry pricks. They sent you down here; they've never sent any other parolees down to Knockturn to live. If anything, they try to keep 'em away from us. There just might be something to Tidbit's concerns. Besides, man, yer woman is worried about you. If it gives her a bit of peace to know that someone is lookin' out fer suspicious activity, then suck it up and accept it. Yer a lucky wizard that she cares fer you so much," insisted Mordy.

Lucius looked down to meet Hermione's gaze. Wrapping an arm around her waist, he pulled her close to his side and held her possessively. "You're absolutely right, Mordy. I am a lucky wizard...a very lucky wizard, indeed."

~*~

Lucius moved into a suite of rooms upstairs, towards the back of the library. It consisted of a large sitting area, which they furnished with things from the attic; they found a nice matching set of wing chairs along with a sofa and table to place before the fireplace. There were shelves for his books and room enough for his antique desk. They set up his drop-leaf table and chairs in one corner of the room, near the back stair to the old house's kitchen. He also had a luxurious bathroom, at least as large as his flat had been, and a bedroom that was three times that size.

After living in tiny cells for six years and then in the flat for nearly ten months, it felt like a bloody mansion. In fact, once Hermione had got him settled in and Apparated home for the night, he felt a bit lost with so much space to wander in. Between his own rooms and having the run of the library as well, Lucius almost felt like he was back at Malfoy Manor.

Once he'd patrolled the entire building, making sure everything was locked and warded for the night, he settled in for a good night's sleep. But after tossing and turning for awhile, he knew sleep was not going to come easy for him. Lucius lay on his back, his hands clasped behind his head, staring at the ceiling. The bed, which had looked so comfortable and inviting earlier, now seem huge, cold, and empty with just him in it. Just as he was considering getting up and having some herbal tea to help him sleep, he heard a pop of someone Apparating into the building.

He snatched up his wand, but then realized that the wards hadn't sounded an intruder alarm, so he was fairly certain of who had just entered the building. Lighting the candle on the nightstand, he turned on his side to face the door, propped his head on his hand, and waited. He was rewarded within a few minutes with a light tapping on his door.

"Lucius?" she called quietly.

"Yes, Hermione, come in," he answered. "Is something wrong? Are you all right?"

She opened the door and peeked around the edge. Her eyes grew round at the sight of him in bed, his blond hair tossed back over his shoulder with his chest bare, the covers draped across his hips. "I'm sorry... I didn't mean to disturb you... I just..." She stopped and looked a bit embarrassed.

"Just what, my dear?"

"I wanted to give you your privacy. I thought you'd want to have the first night to yourself, to enjoy your new space. But... I couldn't sleep... I was...,," she hesitated.

"You were what?" Lucius prodded.

"I was lonely... I missed you," she replied so softly he could barely hear her. "I'm sorry, this was stupid of me. I'll just go."

"Stop! Don't you dare leave," he commanded, raising up slightly. "Get over here right now, you silly girl," he said, patting the bed next to him.

She smiled shyly at him, "Really?"

"You. Here. Now. Naked."

Hermione dashed across the room, shedding her clothes on the way. By the time she got to the bed, she'd dropped her outer cloak and jumper and was toeing off her shoes. She then danced from foot to foot as she pulled off her socks. She slid her jeans and knickers off in one fell swoop and pulled her tee shirt over her head, revealing that she hadn't bothered with a bra. This brought a huge grin to Lucius' face as he slid back, giving her room to climb into the bed with him.

Seconds later, he bellowed, "Holy Mother of Merlin, woman! Where in the hell have you had your feet? They're as cold as a block of ice!"

"Sorry." Hermione giggled as she snuggled close. "I was hoping you would have some ideas on how to warm them up for me."

"Oh, I have a plan to get your blood pumping, my girl, have no doubt about it. By the time I'm done with you, we'll both be as warm as toast."

Damn straight. As warm as toast, and afterward they both slept like babes.

~*~

Hermione scheduled a meeting at the end of the week with Amos Diggory. He came to the library to meet with both Hermione and Lucius and to take a tour to see the progress they'd made thus far.

To say that he was pleased would have been an understatement; he was amazed at how much had been accomplished since Lucius had taken the assistant librarian position. There were three rooms full of resource materials, cataloged and shelved accordingly. There were also several groups of historical family documents, either donated by the families themselves or obtained by Amos or Hermione, which were now archived and available for genealogical or historical research.

While Hermione and Amos adjourned to her office to go over the budget and to discuss an upcoming benefit planned for the library, Lucius excused himself, offering to make tea for the three of them. While he was busy, Hermione quickly apprised Amos of Lucius' situation and what she believed was going on.

Lucius returned and the three discussed at length how to work around the restrictions put on him. Amos was on board with Lucius living on site and had some good ideas of his own. Instead of offering Lucius an increased salary, for the Ministry to take, Amos suggested they give Lucius an expense account for things such as wardrobe, travel expenses, supplies, etc., all for work purposes, of course. He also pointed out that since Lucius would be living on site, meals should be included as part of his compensation. Amos also insisted that he would supply a house-elf to take care of the domestic duties of cleaning, preparing meals, and such. Fearing Hermione's objections, he quickly explained he would gladly pay whatever wage she could manage to negotiate the elf to accept.

They also arranged for Lucius to donate seventy-five percent of his income to the library. Amos agreed, at Lucius' insistence, to accept fifteen percent as a real donation, but said he would put the rest of the money aside in a fund for Lucius. Once they had worked out who was the source of all of this interference and had got it set right, then Amos would release the funds. This part, of course, was in the form of a gentleman's agreement between the two men, as there would be nothing in writing; it was sealed with a handshake between them. Hermione agreed to draw up the rest of the terms, and they would meet again at the end of the week to finalize the contract.

Before Amos could leave, Lucius spoke. "Amos, if you wouldn't mind, I would like a moment to speak with you privately?" At Amos' nod of agreement, Lucius turned to Hermione. "If you would excuse us, my dear?"

He hadn't mentioned to her that he planned to speak to Amos, and she was clearly nervous. Hermione glared at Lucius but, in the end, didn't object. He gave her hand a squeeze and, with his eyes, pointed her toward the door. She gathered up the tea tray and headed out. Lucius closed the door behind her and cast a privacy spell.

Sitting behind the desk in the spot Hermione had vacated, Lucius thought carefully before he spoke. "Amos, we have known each other for a long time and have often been on opposite sides of many issues. I want to acknowledge, here and now, that in many of those instances you were right and I was wrong."

Diggory looked surprised. "Lucius, there is no need to rehash the past or to apologize. Hermione has assured me that you are a changed man, and if she, of all people, is willing to accept you and wants you here, then that is good enough for me."

"I know for a fact that whatever else is in the past, you have always believed in preserving the history of our world. The Malfoy family archives were exceptional, your library magnificent. I founded this library in my son's name because I want the past to be remembered. Politicians...governments, often...only want the people to know certain things. My son was a victim of Voldemort's wrath, murdered by Peter Pettigrew on his master's order, as if he were nothing. But if the Ministry had had their way, Cedric would have been their victim as well because they would have erased him from the history books as if he'd never existed. Bad publicity...that's all he was to them. My boy *did* exist, and he wasn't nothing; he was a good, bright, talented boy with a brilliant future ahead of him, a boy who was snuffed out before his time. I intend to make sure that the history of all of our world, both the good and the bad, is preserved so that future generations will know the truth." Amos choked up as he spoke of his only son.

Lucius, rose to pour two brandies and handed one to Amos. "You are doing a good thing here, Amos, by preserving the past. And you are right, the Ministry has their own agenda, and it is not always in the best interest of the people they claim to protect."

Amos discreetly wiped his eyes. "Thank you. I do it in Cedric's memory and in memory of all the innocent victims of the war. So, is that why you wanted to speak to me, Lucius, to acknowledge our past differences and put them to rest?"

"No, not entirely. There is something I wanted you to know. This job is a means to a new life for me. There aren't many people who would give an ex-Death Eater a second chance, Amos, and especially not someone whose life was decimated by that madman. I regret many foolish decisions I made in my youth, but none more than the one that led me down that path. I want you to know how much I appreciate the chance you have given me here, but if what I am about to tell you changes that, then so be it. I won't start a new life on a lie, and I especially won't jeopardize Hermione's position or her future here."

"That's the issue, you see. Hermione and I... That is to say... we have been... errr... We are..."

"A couple," concluded Amos.

"Yes, we are," said Lucius with a sigh of relief. "Did she tell you already?"

"No, but it is obvious to anyone with their eyes open."

"This has developed just since I started working here," Lucius hurriedly assured him. "I don't want you to think that she was favoring me by offering me this position. When I started, we were little more than strangers, aside from our encounters in the past, which certainly were not conducive to a personal relationship."

"Well, it is a bit surprising, when taking both your pasts into consideration, but not totally unexpected. You two do have a great many things in common: you're both intelligent, logically thinking people; you're both bibliophiles; you're both stubborn with strong personalities; you both have extremely strong magic." Amos ticked off all of the things they had in common.

"You don't think the fact that she's..."

"A Muggle-born?" asked Amos with a frown.

"NO!" Lucius practically shouted. "That is certainly not an issue. I was going to say, the fact that she's so much younger than me."

"Oh, that." Amos waved his hand as if the issue were nothing. "Normally, I might wonder, but as it's obviously no problem for Hermione based on her past relationship, I don't see how that would even be an issue."

Lucius suddenly eyed Diggory suspiciously, "What exactly do you mean by that?"

"Look at all the time she spent...what was it? Three... four years...with Severus..." Lucius was shocked. Hermione had mentioned Severus a time or two, but had never indicated that she'd had a long-term relationship with him. Amos didn't notice Lucius' reaction and continued, "I actually felt bad about the breakup, like I was bit responsible for it, you know?"

"No, I don't know. Why don't you explain it to me, Amos? How were you responsible?"

"Well, she might still be there if I hadn't offered her the job here. I actively pursued her for it, actually, as Hermione was the one I wanted above all the others to run Cedric's library. So, she and Severus might still be together if she hadn't accepted. Rumor has it that he refused to continue a long-distance romance again. That was why he'd got her Madam Pince's position in the first place, you know. After their first year together, and having to travel back and forth when she worked at the Ministry, he'd finally got her settled into Hogwarts, right where he wanted her. Then I came along and offered her this job, and when she took it, he gave her an ultimatum...the job or him. Or at least that is how the rumor goes."

"She took the job," said Lucius, stating the obvious.

"Foolish move on his part, if it's true, in my opinion, anyway," offered Amos. "If you're lucky enough to win a woman like Hermione Granger, you hang on to her with both hands. Maybe that's what he thought he was doing, by trying to keep her there with him. He shouldn't have backed her into a corner, though."

"I'll admit, the first few months here, I wasn't sure she was going to stay. It was obvious she loved the job, but she was also very sad. Now she seems to be adjusting. Since you've been here, Lucius, she's been happy, and I'm glad for that."

Lucius took all this information in, not sure what to make of it all.

Amos stood and collected his briefcase, preparing to go. He shook Lucius' hand. "Don't worry about those bastards at the Ministry, Lucius. We'll work a way around their dirty tricks."

"Once upon a time, we were those bastards at the Ministry, Amos," replied Lucius.

Amos chuckled and nodded. Looking Lucius directly in the eye, he said, "Lucius, don't toy with her. If this thing with Hermione is some kind of game..."

Lucius shook his head with a small smile. "It's not a game, Amos. I'm in deep and so far over my head...I fear I may never find my way out. But to tell you the truth, I don't think I care. I like it here."

~*~

Hermione entered the room to find Lucius leaning back in her chair, his feet propped on the edge of the desk, sipping a firewhisky, and staring pensively at the ceiling.

"Lucius?"

When he didn't answer, she stepped forward and laid her hand on his shoulder. "Lucius, are you all right?"

His eyes shifted to hers, and he nodded slightly, laying his hand on top of hers and giving it a little squeeze. "Amos knows... about us, that is."

"Oh," she gasped, quickly looking away. "I'm sorry if that upsets you." She tried to pull her hand out from under his and step away, but he held on to her as he set his glass down and sat up straight in the chair.

"Hermione, what on earth is going on in that twisted labyrinth of your brain?" he asked as she continued to avoid his gaze. Lucius pulled her over to sit on the edge of the desk in front of him, trapping her right between his legs. He slid close enough to caress her cheek with his other hand, then tipped her face so he could look into her eyes. He could tell that she was embarrassed by his close scrutiny of her and was probably wondering if he possessed any skill at Legilimency. Did she believe that he did not want others to know about them? That despite all his claims that his beliefs had changed, he might perhaps be ashamed to be associated with a Muggle-born?

"You silly chit. You can not seriously be thinking what I think you're thinking."

She gnawed at her bottom lip. "I might be. What is it you think I'm thinking?"

"That for some ridiculous reason, I would want to keep us a secret. That I am somehow ashamed for it to be known that I am with a brave, beautiful, brilliant witch who is half my age and drives me to distraction," he said. His hands slid down her arms to wrap around her hips and rub over her arse. Then he stood, so close she could feel the hardness of him pressing into her.

Hermione's hands rose to wrap around Lucius' neck, her fingers threading through his hair. "Yes, I might have been thinking something along those lines," she answered breathily.

"You know, for the most intelligent witch I've ever known, you can be really thick sometimes."

Her face was like an open book. He could see the relief roll over her like a wave, as she realized that he didn't care who knew about the two of them.

"Ummm... I like it when *you're* thick." She giggled, running her hands down the front of him and squeezing his bulging erection, causing his eyes to roll back in his head.

"Guhhnnnn...", he groaned. "You are incorrigible, witch," he whispered into her ear, before he licked her neck and nibbled his way to her earlobe.

"Oh, Lucius, take me upstairs now, please," she gasped as he sucked on that spot where her shoulder met her neck, and he rutted against her.

"Upstairs, hell! I can't wait that long," he muttered. He pulled at her clothes and slid his hand beneath her skirt to move her knickers aside, finding her slick and ready for him.

She bucked against his hand. "Oh, gods! Neither can I... Please, Lucius... I need you... please."

They didn't bother with a Silencing Charm, but at least they'd remembered to lock the doors of the library.

~*~

They made it upstairs eventually. Lying in his big bed, snuggled close and totally satiated, Hermione ran her fingers lightly over Lucius' shoulder and down his arm, rather like she was petting him. "So, how did Amos find out about us?"

"I told him, but he had already figured it out on his own."

"You told... but why?" she asked, rising up on her elbow to look at him.

"Because I didn't want there to be any repercussions for you if it were to become known later. I didn't want him to think you had hired me simply because we were together. Surprised the hell out of me when I told him, and he said it was obvious to anyone with their eyes open. I thought we were being totally discreet." He sat up too, to face her. "Quite honestly, love, I would have thought you would not want others to know that you were involved with someone like me...a former Death Eater and an old man."

Hermione laughed. "The only people I might be worried about telling are Harry and Draco. I'm just not sure how they're going to react. But as far as being a former Death Eater and an old man, you are hardly old; sometimes I fear I don't have the energy to keep up with you. And no one would be shocked by us, based on my past association."

"Yes, that's what Amos said. I had no idea you and Severus had been in a relationship."

"Lucius, my time with Severus was common knowledge. I wasn't trying to keep anything from you," she said, frowning. "Is this going to be a problem for you?"

"No, I was just surprised. I really had no idea. While I was in custody, I wasn't allowed media: newspapers, magazines, or anything of that sort. And I haven't heard from Severus for years. He was still recovering directly after the war, and by the time he was well, I'd been sent away. I wrote to him several times and Draco as well. I assumed they wished to distance themselves from me, and I fully understood that. I never received any replies, at least not until I asked him to be my sponsor to obtain my parole. He agreed, but then of course the Ministry overruled."

Hermione sat straight up in the bed, pulling the sheet up to cover her. "No, Lucius, that's not true at all. I know for a fact that Severus wrote to you several times in the time we were together. He was disappointed when you never replied. And the same is true of Draco."

Lucius wrinkled his brow and he asked somewhat harshly, "So, are you telling me that you have contact with Draco and that you are on good enough terms that he would tell you of this supposed correspondence with me?"

It was Hermione's turn to look puzzled. "Of course; I see Draco very often...whenever I go to visit Harry."

"I don't understand. Are you saying that Draco and Potter live together? As in they are roommates?"

She looked at him in shock. "Yes, they do live together and, no, not as in roommates, but as in they *are* together." Hermione ducked her head slightly to look into Lucius' eyes. "Dear Merlin, you had no clue at all about any of this, did you?"

He shook his head dumbly, looking shell shocked.

"Lucius, someone has been interfering with your life, and not just since your release, but for years, it appears. I know for a fact that Draco wrote to you about him and Harry. He didn't want you to read it as gossip and be hurt; he wanted to be the one to tell you. When he didn't receive a reply or even an acknowledgment, he was devastated. He assumed it was a sign of your rejection. But he still cares, love. In fact, it was Draco who asked Harry to be your sponsor when the Ministry rejected Severus. He knew there was no way in hell they would be able to turn down Harry Potter."

"When you first told me that Draco had disowned you to protect his own reputation, I knew it wasn't true. I guess I just assumed that was what you wanted people to believe, that the estrangement was Draco's choice. If I'd realized, I would have let you know, I swear."

Lucius covered his face with his palm as he struggled to compose his emotions. Finally, he raised his head and looked into Hermione's eyes. "I want to see my son...now...tonight."

"Of course, Lucius. Let's get dressed, and I'll Floo-call Harry to make sure they're home. I'll go with you," Hermione said as she got out of bed and started to gather her clothes.

"There's no need for you to go. I'll be fine going by myself."

"Oh... All right, if you don't want me there, I understand." She hurried to exit into the bathroom, but before she made her escape, Lucius grabbed her and spun her around into his arms.

"Stop that!" he commanded, giving her a little shake.

"What?" Her voice was soft, and she was working very hard to keep it even.

"You know damn well what. You're doing it again. What must I do to convince you that I have no wish to hide that ~~w~~*are* together?" he demanded. "And I don't give a niffler's nut who knows, be it Amos Diggory, Molly Weasley, Kingsley Shacklebolt, Severus-fucking-Snape or anyone else in the entire wizarding world. But earlier, you expressed concern about how Harry and Draco would react, and I don't want to rush you into a situation you aren't ready for. If you go there with me tonight, I won't be able to pretend that you are nothing more than a concerned employer."

"Oh, Lucius," she cried, throwing her arms around his waist and hugging him. "I don't mind telling Harry and Draco, really. I'll admit to being a little apprehensive. Draco will hover and ask if I'm sure I know what I'm getting myself into, and Harry will smirk and tell me, 'I told you so.'"

"I told you so?"

"After you started working here he told me once that I'd best watch my step because he'd learned the hard way that Slytherins were downright irresistible," she said with a wicked grin. Her hands began to wander from his waist to his delectably firm derriere to knead those buns of steel.

He firmly set her away from him with a stern look in his eye. "No more of that, my girl, at least not right now, or we'll never leave this bedroom. And as much as I'd love to stay here all night and see how many times I can make you scream my name, I really do want to see my son for the first time in nearly seven years."

"Not, a problem, dearest, I totally understand, but I might hold you to that plan. Or perhaps we'll play it the other way around, and you'll be screaming my name," she replied with a saucy grin.

TBC

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 of 7

In order to be released from custody, Lucius is required to obtain meaningful employment. What better job could he find than working in a research library as the librarian's assistant? Now all he has to do is convince the librarian that he's the man for the job. This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ. Note: rating and warnings are for later chapters.

AN: This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ (I post on LJ as madeleone). Many thanks to my betas: Softobsidian, who beta'd it for the fest, and Clairvoyant, who is polishing up the rough edges.

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter. I make no money here.

Hermione had prepared Harry only briefly, telling him that she and Lucius were coming by and that Draco should be prepared to see his father. She did take the time to assure him that nothing bad was going to happen.

Harry had agreed for them to come over but asked that they wait an hour or so. Hermione was sure he wanted a bit of time to prepare Draco and calm him if need be. That hour seemed like an eternity to Lucius.

Hermione Floo'd in first to find both Draco and Harry waiting across the room together, facing the hearth, with Harry's arm thrown protectively around Draco's shoulder. She quickly stepped forward to give both of them a hug and squeezed Draco's hand, whispering, "It's going to be fine, Draco. Trust me."

Moving back to the fireplace as Lucius stepped through, she gave his hand a squeeze as well and leaned up to whisper in his ear. He nodded and turned to the boys. "Harry, thank you for allowing me to come into your home."

Harry nodded but didn't speak. Hermione left Lucius' side to stand next to Harry. She tugged gently on his arm. He let the other one drop from Draco's shoulder but stayed close, his hand resting in a protective gesture on Draco's back. She could see Draco's jaw clench as he tried to keep himself under control. Looking up at Lucius, Hermione's heart ached for him. The naked emotion was clearly displayed there. He was seeing his son for the first time in almost seven years and had believed for that entire time that his son had willingly abandoned and disowned him.

"Draco," Lucius voice cracked. He took two steps forward but stopped, unsure. "My son..."

Harry's hand, still on Draco's back, gave him a gentle shove forward, and in an instant, Draco was in his father's arms sobbing as tears also streamed down Lucius' face. Lucius held him tight and kept murmuring, "My son... my son."

Hermione's own face was wet with tears as well; she again tugged on Harry's arm and whispered, "Let's give them some privacy, shall we?"

~*~

The two friends sat in the kitchen drinking tea and eating Kreacher's excellent ginger biscuits while Hermione brought Harry up to date on everything. Harry was absolutely livid when he learned the extent and duration of the manipulations perpetrated, theoretically, by the Ministry. When Hermione revealed the conditions in which Lucius had been living all this time, she thought Harry was going to explode. As Lucius' sponsor, he had been given a completely different address, which was nowhere near Knockturn Alley. He and Draco had personally checked out the suitability of the flat prior to Lucius' release.

Once Hermione calmed him down, she convinced him not to rush down to the Ministry to make heads roll. She suggested that they not tip off Lucius' tormentors just yet, but instead, let them feel safe for the time being until they could unravel it all and nail the culprit or culprits. She also passed on information they had received from Mordy that there had been several suspicious incidents over the past week around Lucius' flat, with an actual break-in attempt at three in the morning that Mordy had personally disrupted. Hermione was fairly sure, however, that as soon as it became common knowledge that Lucius was now living on site at the library, the flat would no longer be a target.

Harry was more than a little annoyed that Hermione and Lucius had not been more forthcoming with this information, as he could have set up surveillance on the flat. And he nearly went spare when he learned that Hermione had actually gone alone to Knockturn in the dead of night, looking for Lucius, *and* that she'd had a personal run-in with Mordecai Jones himself.

Harry grabbed her by the shoulders and gave her a shake. He hugged her close, pushed her away, and shook her again. "Hermione, you utter idiot, what were you thinking? You should be punished for acting like a recalcitrant child!"

Hermione was surprised that Harry even knew the word recalcitrant and had actually used it correctly in a sentence.

Standing in the doorway, Lucius cleared his throat and interrupted, "What is the meaning of this? Potter, remove your hands from her this instant."

Draco placed his hand on his father's arm and reassured him, "Father, Harry would never hurt Hermione."

"Draco is right, Lucius. But I am very upset to hear about Hermione's little jaunt down to Knockturn Alley last week. In the middle of the night, no less."

Upon hearing this, Draco exclaimed, "Hermione, what were you thinking?"

Lucius stepped up and removed Hermione from Harry's side. Moving to the chair by the table, he sat there and pulled her onto his lap, overtly laying claim to her. This action elicited twin grins from Harry and Draco. "Hermione went down there in search of me. And although I am quite in agreement with Harry's assessment, any punishment will be my responsibility."

"Lucius," she gasped in indignation.

"Wait," said Draco, "Why didn't she just come to your flat? Why was she looking for you in Knockturn Alley?"

With a sigh, Hermione moved to her own chair, and they spent the next hour going over all the details and comparing notes between the four of them until they were all on the same page.

Lucius expressed some concern about Hermione's safety at the library, but she insisted that there was little risk there with it being a public establishment. She thought that Lucius was clearly in more danger out in public. She pointed out that the fact that he hadn't been attacked in Knockturn Alley had merely been as a result of Mordy's protection from behind the scenes.

Harry agreed with Lucius...better to be safe than sorry. "I'll come around the tomorrow and set some special security wards around the library and specifically around Lucius' rooms. These wards have been specially developed for the Auror's department, and no one else has access to them."

"No one else unless they're Aurors too," muttered Hermione.

"Hermione...", said Harry warily.

"Harry, you don't know. We have no idea how high this goes or who might be responsible. It could be anyone. There are plenty of people who still think that anyone who was even remotely associated with Tom Riddle, in any way, should have been left to the Dementors."

"You're right," he agreed reluctantly. "We'll keep this just to ourselves for now."

"I agree with Hermione, for once," offered Draco. "I think the biggest danger to Father is when he's out on his own. You should go nowhere alone, Father. You should have someone with you at all times."

"Draco, for Merlin's sake, I am a grown man! While I am angry at all the manipulations, there has been no physical threat against me."

"Yet!" exclaimed Hermione. "They have been happy thus far to torture you from afar, but once they realize that is no longer possible, things may escalate. Just the fact that Mordy caught someone trying to break into your flat is proof of that. Please don't make light of this, Lucius," she begged.

"She's right, Father," said Draco. "I've just got you back after all this time, and I don't want anything to happen to you now."

Lucius looked from Hermione to Draco to Harry. The first two looked worried. Harry just shrugged. "They care," he said.

Lucius sighed. "All right, I will promise to take all this seriously. At the very least, I won't go anywhere without informing one of you," he conceded. "But I've had enough of all this plotting and planning for tonight."

Standing, he held his hand out to Hermione. "Come along, my girl, it's time for me to take you home."

"Hermione, maybe you should stay here with us rather than at your house," said Draco, obviously assuming that Lucius was taking her home ~~to~~ her home.

Hermione flushed, the heat rising in her cheeks. "Errrrm... I've actually been spending most of my nights lately at the library with Lucius," she admitted.

With a broad grin, Harry turned to Draco and held out his hand. "You owe me ten galleons."

With a roll of her eyes, Hermione pulled Lucius out of the room.

~*~

Things were quiet for the following week, aside from the fact that Lucius' new contract with the Diggory Foundation nearly caused his MAF, Miss Ambergris Entwistle, to have a nervous breakdown.

She honestly didn't know how to deal with it, nor with the fact that Lucius showed up for his monthly meeting with his sponsor, his supervisor, and his employer. Lucius spoke barely a word the entire time as his entourage took over for him. Miss Entwistle hemmed and hawed and mumbled things like 'most unusual circumstances,' and 'never in all my born days,' and 'oh dear... oh dear.'

She objected to the portion of the contract that allowed Lucius' expense account spending. At this, Amos objected, asking, "How does the Ministry expect Mr. Malfoy to perform his job duties as my assistant librarian when they are claiming such an exorbitant amount from his checks in taxes, fees, and penalties that he cannot even afford to buy decent robes? His position requires him to work with the public; he needs to be decently clothed. The Ministry has overstepped its bounds, and I can assure you that I will be looking into this matter."

Quite flustered, she then tried to tell Lucius that he was only allowed to donate ten percent of his income, not seventy-five percent. But Hermione whipped out the copy of the files Miss Entwistle had given Lucius the month before at that last fateful meeting. "As you can clearly see, Miss Entwistle, nowhere does it state that his tax-free charitable donations are limited to a mere ten percent. Mr. Malfoy is well known for his past philanthropic endeavors. He feels that his needs are now few, considering the generous benefits Mr. Diggory has offered him, and he believes in the philosophy of The Cedric Diggory Memorial Historical Research Library. Surely you cannot object to that?"

Miss Entwistle mumbled something unintelligible under her breath and proceeded to object to Lucius moving out of his flat to stay on site at the library. "It states clearly in your probationary contract, Mr. Malfoy, that you must live either with your sponsor or in the Ministry-approved flat provided for you. You are in violation of your contract."

Hermione jumped forth and again whipped out Lucius' copy of the probationary contract. "I beg to differ, Miss Entwistle. It clearly states in section four, paragraph three, under the definition of employment clause, that if Mr. Malfoy's employer requires him to live on site for the performance of his job, then the Ministry will grant an exception in regard to his living arrangements."

"I see nowhere in Mr. Malfoy's original contract that he would be required to live on site," Miss Entwistle said pointedly.

"That contract is a probationary one that we offered for the first two months. Once it became clear that Mr. Malfoy was suited to the job and willing to take on more responsibility, we asked him to move on site," explained Amos. "Being a historical research library, we have many valuable historical documents and artifacts. I really feel better having someone in residence at all times. And since we run on charitable donations, we must watch our budget, so this was a perfect solution."

"Hummmph!" Miss Entwistle pursed her lips tightly, as if she had just tasted something sour.

Then Harry stepped forward, and placing his palms on her desk, he leaned a bit threateningly over her. "As Mr. Malfoy's sponsor, I have a question as to why I was given a false address and shown a flat that he was never allowed to occupy. Only now, nearly ten months later, I discover that he has been living in a cheap dosshouse in the deepest corner of Knockturn Alley. Is this what the Ministry of Magic calls appropriate Ministry-approved housing? I think we will need to speak with your supervisor, Miss Entwistle."

Poor Ambergris 'eeeeep'ed' pathetically and ran from the room. From that point on, they dealt strictly with her supervisor, Mr. Murgatroyd, who was a short, rotund man with a bit of a lisp and who didn't seem to have a clue about anything. He merely approved everything they asked him to and apologized over and over for any 'misunderstandings.' He agreed that from that point onward, Lucius would only have to report to Harry and would no longer need to report to the Ministry representative. Hermione pointedly requested that he put it in writing, and she refused to leave until he did.

~*~

Over the next couple of weeks, there had been no further incidents or threats toward Lucius, and Hermione didn't think life could get much better. She had a job that she truly loved. She spent her days organizing the library and working with Lucius, and she spent her nights shagging him silly. He kept teasing that she was going to wear him out, but she noticed that he never turned her away, and more often than not, he was the initiator.

Late one afternoon, Hermione had dozed off at her desk while reviewing unbelievably boring budget proposals. She was exhausted from the night before. Lucius had kept her up half the night, performing sinfully erotic acts upon her body, bringing her to the very edge of orgasm, holding her there, then backing off and soothing her gently, only to start the process all over again until she had been literally begging him for release. He'd finally granted her request, thrusting into her over and over until she came apart around him. Even then, he'd managed to hold himself back by sheer strength of will until she came for him a second time, and then he'd allowed himself to follow her over the precipice.

She awoke now from her doze. She was slumped forward, her forehead nestled on her arms resting on top of the budget files. She felt a hand gently brush her hair aside, and she smiled as his soft lips nuzzled her neck, his warm breath sending chills down her spine.

"Mmmmmmm...", she moaned, squirming slightly in her chair as she continued to feign sleep.

She felt his hands gently slide up and down her sides until they slipped under her jumper to cup her breasts. He released the front catch on her bra so he could fondle and squeeze her breasts firmly, just as she liked. Then he pinched and plucked at her hard, tight nipples. At the same time, he sucked lightly at that sensitive spot just in the

very middle of her neck.

"Mmmmm... Lucius," she mumbled softly. He suddenly stopped suckling at her neck.

"Lucius?" he growled.

Hermione groggily opened her eyes and was shocked to see Lucius standing, not behind her where she'd believed him to be, but in the doorway, across the room, his mouth agape.

"Lucius!" she exclaimed.

"What do you mean Lucius?" The voice came from directly behind her.

Hermione reared suddenly into a sitting position. The back of her head collided firmly, with a resounding crack, against a rather large nose.

"Owwwww! Fuck, that hurts! I think you broke by dose."

"Severus!" exclaimed Lucius. "What in hell are you doing?"

"Lucius," Hermione cried as she jumped to her feet, trying to rub the back of her head and pull down her jumper while also trying to rearrange her bra. She hurried to his side. "I fell asleep at my desk, and when I woke up..." She looked back at Severus still holding his nose. "I thought he was you, kissing my neck."

Rounding on Severus, she demanded, "Just what *did* you think you were doing? I haven't seen or heard anything of you for damn near a year, and you think you can just waltz in here, sneak up on me while I am sleeping, and start nibbling on my neck and playing with my breasts!"

"Well, you never objected to me playing with your breasts before, or nibbling at your neck, and you can't deny that you were enjoying it at the time," he snarled.

"That's because I thought you were him," she exclaimed, pointing at Lucius. "What did you expect would happen? Did you think you could ignore me for ten months, three weeks, and five days and I would just be moping around here in London, pining for you, waiting for you to come around? Well, you'd better think again, Severus Snape! I've managed to get on very well without you; I have a life, a job, a home, and a lover."

As if to prove her point, she lunged at Lucius, kissing him hard. Unprepared for her amorous attack, Lucius stumbled back a bit and nearly lost his balance. Recovering quickly, he wrapped his arms around her, holding her close as he kissed her back. Finally, he maneuvered her around to pin her to the wall with his weight. Soon, she was practically climbing up his body as she wrapped her legs around his waist and rubbed against him.

"Oh, for the love of Merlin! Get a room!" barked Severus.

Hermione pulled back, a bit dazed. She had started this to taunt Severus but had honestly got lost in the moment. She slid rather ungracefully down Lucius and made an attempt at straightening herself up. "Umm... sorry...", she mumbled, her eyes downcast as she felt warmth flood her cheeks

"I guess we did get a bit carried away for a moment there," admitted Lucius. "So very sorry about that." But he didn't look or sound very sorry at all; in fact, he looked rather self satisfied.

"Well... I do remember that she can have that effect on a man. She certainly did on me," Severus muttered, looking not anything at all like the formidable Headmaster that he was, but more like a little boy who'd just lost his most treasured possession. "Are you at least going to heal my nose?" he asked petulantly.

With a huff, Hermione replied, "No, Severus. Actually, I don't think I am." And with that, she swept from the room, leaving Severus and Lucius to stare dumbly at each other.

~*~

After a couple of minutes of uncomfortable silence, Lucius produced his wand.

Obviously unsure of what to expect from his friend, or perhaps his former friend, Severus pulled out his wand too.

"Oh, for fuck's sake, put that away, you idiot," snapped Lucius. "I'm only going to fix your nose."

Lucius raised his wand to cast Episkey, the act reminding him of how Hermione had healed his own nose those many weeks ago. With a crunch, Severus' nose shifted back into place and healed itself as he grunted in pain. Pulling a vial of pain potion from the deep pockets of his robes, he gulped it down.

"Since when have you become such a dab hand at healing spells?" he inquired.

"Since our dear little witch broke my nose and healed it with that spell in this very room not more than three months ago," replied Lucius.

"She broke your nose too?" questioned Severus. "Wait... Our witch?"

"In a manner of speaking," replied Lucius. "As in first, she was *your* witch, but somehow you were incapable of keeping her. Now, she's *my* witch, and I do intend to keep her. So loosely, in essence, she might be considered 'our' witch." Lucius considered the issue and eyed Severus speculatively. "It is an interesting thought, though, the three of us together, isn't it? From her reaction to you and her abrupt departure just now, I can't help but think she still has feelings for you. And while I have absolutely no intention of giving her up, I might be willing to let you try to convince me to share her affections. But only if that is her choice as well, of course."

Severus looked hopeful for a brief moment but then shook his head. "I doubt she'll ever forgive me. I shouldn't have backed her into a corner. I thought we'd argue, have fabulous make-up sex, and work out some sort of agreement. But being the Gryffindor that she is, she took me at my word and left."

"Well, yes, not the wisest move on your part, old man. But then you never have made logical decisions in matters of the heart, have you? If that's all there was to it, why have you not even tried to make it right in all these months?"

"I don't know," Severus replied. "I thought at first simply to give her time to cool down. Then when I didn't hear from her at all, I let my pride and stubbornness take control. I guess you're right, I *don't* make very good decisions in matters of the heart." Severus narrowed his eyes and stared at Lucius. "Were you serious before...about sharing her affections?"

Lucius was surprised that Severus would even consider the possibility, as he was known to be an extremely possessive man. In the short time he had been with Hermione, Lucius had realized that she had a very adventurous nature and enjoyed sex immensely. In just the few weeks they had been together, they had got up to all sorts of things together. A ménage à trois might actually appeal to her. And he couldn't help but think that the idea of two wizards who both cared for her deeply, worshiping her like a goddess, both in bed and out, might hold some attraction for the witch.

He had a feeling that deep down Hermione honestly still had feelings for her former lover. He'd had no idea before, but the fact that she'd obviously kept track right down to the day how long had passed since their break-up spoke volumes. Although he would admit it to no one, most especially not Severus or Hermione, Lucius' worst fear was losing the little witch he had come to care for. He would rather take the chance of developing a three-way relationship between his long-time friend and Hermione, both people he cared for, than take a risk that she might, in the long run, end up choosing Severus and leave him behind.

Lucius decided to proceed with caution. "I might be willing to consider the possibility eventually, but only if Hermione is completely amenable to the idea. I have no intention of trying to coerce her into agreeing. And I am sure some sort of penance on your part might be required." If he was going to promote this idea, he might as well get something out of it, and watching Severus squirm would be amusing indeed.

"Penance?" said Severus, one eyebrow raised.

"Well, I'm sure in Hermione's mind you do have a great deal to atone for, my friend," said Lucius with a sly smile. "Might I assume from that hard-on you were sporting after seeing Hermione and I kissing that you still enjoy... watching?"

"What's your point, Lucius?" Severus growled in response.

"Well, it occurred to me if Hermione were to agree to such an arrangement, as your punishment you might be required to observe the two of us together for a predetermined period of time. Of course, you would not be allowed to participate until she decides you have suffered enough. I dare say, for you, the suffering won't be so very bad, as you will be partaking in an activity that you secretly enjoy. Although personally, I can't help but imagine it would indeed be torture for you to merely observe and not join in. Penance, my friend. Penance."

Severus answered with a grin. "If she did agree...eventually...I would be willing to accept these terms."

Lucius was surprised that he had agreed so readily. He figured that Severus must have had his own fears and doubts as to his ability to win back Hermione's affections. Just to make sure they were on the same page, he elaborated, "You do realize that this will take some time; I am not going to spring this on her overnight. And I was thinking of this arrangement not as a one-time deal, but more as something for the long-term. Perhaps permanently even, if all of us are agreeable."

"Sounds perfect," agreed Severus.

"Wonderful. Now let me bring you up to date on other events. There has been mischief afoot, and not just of late, but apparently, it has been going on for years. If that is the case, then those around me could be at risk, including our witch. I'm going to need your help, Severus."

~*~

Hermione wandered back downstairs in search of Lucius. She was shocked to find him not only in the same room she'd left him in earlier but in the company of the very same wizard she'd stormed out on.

"Lucius?" she asked, tentatively.

"Hermione, sweet, come join us," called Lucius in a tone of voice that told her the two men had been sharing a few glasses of firewhisky in her absence.

When she hesitated in the doorway, Lucius came to her and gave her a reassuring hug. "Why is he still here?" she whispered, looking past him to Severus, who was studying the two of them intently as he sipped his drink.

Asking Severus to excuse him for a moment, Lucius led her out into the hallway and closed the door.

"Lucius, why is Snape still here?" she repeated.

"Hermione, I know the two of you have had a serious falling out. And knowing your feelings... I probably should have made him leave... but honestly, he has always been my very good friend. I have missed his company. I'm sorry if this upsets you. Is this going to be a problem?" He studied her reaction. Holding her hands, he said, "If it makes you uncomfortable, I will ask him to leave. There is no question that if I must choose, I will most assuredly choose you."

Hermione thought for a moment but then shook her head. "No, you're right. Severus is your friend, and he has been for a very long time. That would be like you asking me to turn away Harry, or choose between the two of you; that just wouldn't be fair. I won't do that to you. I will try to accept it, but perhaps it would be best if I just stayed out of the way when you two are together."

"No, I don't want you to do that either. Hiding behind closed doors, meeting in clandestine pubs or out of the way places, and worrying that you will be upset does not sound like a recipe for a stable relationship. He has assured me that he is sorry for his actions in your past, and he wants to apologize. Won't you at least talk to him?"

She hesitated. "Lucius, I don't think that is a very good idea."

"Hermione, the two of you cared for each other once, so there must be at least the possibility for a bit of affection for one another." She could tell by the look on his face that he was about to play his trump card. "I've spent so many years alone. Could you not at least try to be friends? For me?"

She could see nothing but trouble coming from this, but with a sigh, she acquiesced, "Very well, yes, for you."

Hermione allowed Lucius to lead her back into the reading room, where he pulled her down snugly next to him on the sofa. After a few awkward moments of silence, Severus offered apologies, both for his actions earlier as well as for his ultimatum of ten months prior. Hermione graciously, if a bit hesitantly, accepted them.

Severus Snape humbled was something she'd never expected to see. Truth be told, she wasn't entirely sure that she had, even now. For although his words seemed sincere, they were delivered in bits of snarl and growl and snark. Which is to say in Snape-ish. Luckily, Hermione was quite fluent in Snape-ish and had no trouble translating the whole mess.

While the evening didn't end with them becoming bosom buddies, at least they were now on speaking terms. Still, later Hermione couldn't help but wonder why the night that Severus Snape returned to her life was the night all hell broke loose.

~*~

After making the rounds to check that the library was secured for the night, Hermione and Lucius retired for the evening. His lovemaking was sweet and tender, and he held her in his arms possessively until they both fell asleep.

At two fifteen, Hermione was jolted out of a sound sleep. The wards were screeching, signaling a breach, with the security signal squealing an alert that intruders were in the building. Lucius was out of bed in a flash, pulling up his trousers and grabbing his wand, and he rushed out over Hermione's protests.

"Shit!" she swore as she grabbed her dressing gown and her wand. "Why is it men never listen to reason?" She raced out into the hallway, unsure whether to go down the front stairs or the back way through the kitchen. Before she could decide, a tiny figure popped into being directly in front of her. She yelped and nearly tumbled backwards before she realized it was the newly hired House-elf, Sukie, brandishing a huge butcher knife.

"Sukie, for Merlin's sake! You nearly scared the life out of me. What on earth are you doing here with that knife?"

"Master is saying for me to be protecting you, Mistress, so that is what I be's doing," declared the little elf with a bloodthirsty look on her face.

"Well, you stay right over there and guard those stairs and try not to stab anyone. Just use your magic if you have to and make sure no one comes up from the kitchen through here. I am going down to check on Master Lucius."

"I doesn't think Master will be liking that idea, Missy," complained Sukie.

"I really don't care what Master likes, Sukie; just stay here unless I call you," ordered Hermione as she took off at a sprint down the stairs. She nearly collided with Lucius on the landing where he had paused to Accio the rest of his clothes.

"There were two of them. I threw up an Anti-Apparition Jinx and they ran out through the front door. They'll be able to Disapparate from the street, but I think if I hurry, I can pick up a trace and follow their trail," he explained. He pulled on his socks and boots and threw on his shirt before rushing back down the stairs with Hermione following in his wake.

"Lucius, wait! Don't go after them! I don't think that's a very good idea. We should call the Aurors and let them handle this," she insisted.

"By the time they get here, any trace of their trail will be long gone," he responded as he headed out the door.

"Lucius Malfoy, are you mad? This could be a trap just to get you to go after them on your own. You promised Draco and me you wouldn't do anything foolish. Don't do this!" He was already headed down the long alleyway to the front gate at a run.

Hermione was furious. "Gods-be-damned-idiot-of-a-man!" she muttered as she slammed the front door and dashed in to her office to use the Floo. She'd planned to call Harry, but hesitated just as she was going to throw the Floo powder in. What if Lucius did something illegal? If she called Harry he would have to make an official report, and Lucius could be arrested. After thinking for a moment, she threw in a pinch of Floo powder. "Mordecai Jones rooms, Knockturn Alley."

Kneeling by the fireplace, she called out, "Mordecai, are you there?"

"What... Whassat... Who's there?" he mumbled. It sounded as if he'd been sleeping, which was a logical assumption at two-something in the morning, but with the residents of Knockturn, one never knew.

"Mor... Mordy, it's me Hermio... err... Tidbit..."

"Tidbet? Whass wrong, darlin'? Are ya okay?"

"We've had a break-in here; Lucius went after them. I'm afraid he might be in trouble. Can you come? Please, Mordy. I don't want to call the Aurors; if Lucius does something rash, it could get him into even more trouble."

"Give me a sec to get decent," he replied. Within a minute or two, he said, "Step back from the Floo, peach, I'm comin' through." He stepped through, pulling his eye patch into place. Hermione stood before the huge hulk of a man, wringing her hands and looking ready to spit fire at the same time. Instead, she threw herself into his arms and hugged him tight.

"Mordecai! Thank you. I just didn't know what to do. I didn't want to make the situation worse by calling in the authorities. The pig-headed prat! I told him not to go, that it could be a trap, but he simply wouldn't listen to me."

"There, there, Tidbit, calm down and tell ol' Mordy what happened," he said, settling her on the sofa to the side of the fireplace.

Before she could explain the situation, the fireplace flared to life again with green light. Hermione jumped to her feet, and Mordy pushed her behind him to step between her and the Floo with his wand drawn.

At the same instant, a tall, dark figure came through the Floo. Upon seeing Mordy's wand pointed in his direction, he, too, pointed his wand.

"No!" screamed Hermione, throwing herself in front of Mordy and casting a Shield Charm as both men fired off spells at the same time.

TBC

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 of 7

In order to be released from custody, Lucius is required to obtain meaningful employment. What better job could he find than working in a research library as the librarian's assistant? Now all he has to do is convince the librarian that he's the man for the job. This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ. Note: rating and warnings are for later chapters.

AN: This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ. Many thanks to my betas: Softobsidian, who beta'd it for the fest, and Clairvoyant, who is polishing up the rough edges.

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter. I make no money here.

"Hermione!"

"Tidbit, no!"

Her shield absorbed Severus' curse, but Mordy's ricocheted back at her. The only thing that saved her from catching the full brunt of it was the fact that, realizing what she'd done, he'd jerked his wand up at the very last millisecond. It had saved her from a direct hit. Still, the backlash knocked her out. Mordy managed to catch her before she hit the ground, sinking to the floor with her cradled in his lap.

Ignoring the wizard with his wand still pointed at him, Mordy brushed Hermione's hair back. "Tidbit? Are ya all right? Sweet peach? Say somethin'.... Talk to old Mordy, won't ya?"

Severus lowered his wand and knelt next to the two. He cast a diagnostic over Hermione. Then he placed his fingers at her throat, checking her pulse, as if to reassure himself that the readings were right. "She's merely stunned; she will be fine."

"No thanks to you, Snape," growled Mordecai.

"It was your spell that stunned her, Jones, not mine," Severus defended himself.

"Yea, well if ya hadn't come bustin' through the Floo, without so much as a 'by yer leave,' I wouldn'ta drawn my wand on ya."

"I was invited here by Lucius. He sent his Patronus, telling me to come here to make sure that Hermione was safe. Now that I am here, you may go."

"I don't care that 'is lordship sent fer ya, Snape. I'm here at her request. Tidbit called *me* fer help, not *you*. She'll be the one what tells me to go."

"Lucius is my friend, and I care for Hermione, as well. I will look out for her."

"At the risk of repeating myself, mate, she didn't call ya, did she? She called me, and until she tells me different, I stay..."

Hermione groaned, "Will you two stop arguing? You sound like dogs fighting over a bone. I am not a bone!" Sitting upright, she batted away both their helping hands, and using the couch, she levered herself up to a stand. However, once up, she swayed dangerously on her feet and quickly sat down hard. "We need to figure out what happened here tonight and where Lucius is before he does something extremely foolish."

Hermione quickly reviewed what had happened and asked both the men for suggestions as to the next move. She refused to call the Aurors about the break-in until she knew that Lucius had not done something illegal.

Severus went to investigate the wards to see where and how the intruders had got in and to see if they had left any clues as to their identity. Mordy left to gather his minions in Knockturn Alley and check for rumors of any unusual activity. While the men were busy, Hermione went back upstairs to get dressed in something more substantial than her robe.

Hermione found Sukie there still guarding the stairway to the kitchen, and she sent her downstairs. Hermione told her she might need to prepare food, tea, or coffee for the men who were helping to search for her master. "Sukie, put the knife away, as well. It wouldn't do for you to stab Mr. Snape or Mr. Jones by accident."

Just as Hermione finished dressing, a tapping came at the bedroom window, and she discovered a small tawny owl she didn't recognize. She removed the note from the little bird's foot and offered him an owl treat.

Ripping open the missive, Hermione read it quickly. She collapsed into a chair, nearly weeping for joy. Lucius was alive! But perhaps not out of the woods yet. According to the note, she needed to come at once. Gathering her wand, cloak, and of course, her beaded bag with all of her emergency supplies, she headed back down the stairs, careful to avoid any interference.

~*~

Severus had searched the entire building for clues as to who was responsible for the break-in. He'd discovered how they'd got in, but still had no idea as to the who or why. The house the library was in had originally been of Muggle origin; back in one corner of the cellar, there was an old coal chute, which had been blocked off, but not warded. How the perpetrators had known about it, he had no idea, but they had discovered that one weakness and used it to their advantage.

Mordy showed up shortly after Severus had returned to Hermione's office, and the two men grudgingly exchanged information. Unfortunately, none of his contacts had anything of significance to report as yet.

Just as they started to wonder about Hermione, Sukie appeared in the office with a tray of food and drinks.

"Sukie, where is your Mistress?" asked Severus.

"Missy Hermione be's telling me to gets food for you gentlemens. She be's getting dressed." The little House-elf looked up worriedly. "Missy should have come down by now. Sukie will take a tray up and check on Missy right now."

"You do that, Sukie. And tell her Mr. Jones is back, and we have to make plans."

Just seconds after Sukie popped out of sight, Lucius came striding through the door. "Severus! Good, you're here. And Mordy too? What brings you here in the middle of the night, old friend?"

"Tidbit does. She called me; worried about you, she was, Lucius. Seems she didn't want to call her friend Potter fer fear he'd have to make an official report. An' she was worried ya might do somethin' stupid to get yerself tossed in the clinker."

"She worries too much," replied Lucius. "I merely picked up a trace of their Apparition trail and followed the culprits, but they made multiple jumps and then separated, and I lost their trail."

Helping himself to a cup of tea, he looked around. "Where is Hermione?"

At that instant, Sukie popped back in with a note in her hands, looking excited. Upon seeing Lucius, she looked at first thrilled, then instantly horrified. "OH, NOES!" she wailed, tugging at her ears. "Missy is gone! Sukie should have checked on Missy Hermione earlier!" Dashing to Hermione's desk, the elf began banging her head against it in self-punishment.

"Sukie, Sukie, stop this instant!" ordered Lucius. "I forbid you to punish yourself. Now tell me what you mean. Where is Hermione?"

With big tears rolling down her face, the little elf handed Lucius the note. "Sukie was happy to finds the note that is saying that Master safe. But Master is here, and Mistress is gone to find him. Something is not right. Sukie is thinkings Missy Hermione was tricked!"

Lucius snatched the note from Sukie's fingers. He read it quickly, and his face fell. Lucius collapsed into Hermione's chair, and he clenched his fingers in his hair, trying to think.

"What? What's it say?" Severus and Mordy demanded, both at the same time, as they lunged forward to grab the note.

Hermione,

I don't know what this is all about, but Lucius has asked me to send you this note. He is well, but injured. He's come to my home seeking a safe haven until you can come to him. He bids me tell you to come at once and tell no one. He stressed that, most specifically, for the safety of us all. Tell no one! We await your arrival; come quickly.

AET

"Fuck!" swore Mordy. "As ya clearly didn't send this, then yer elf was right. Tidbit was tricked."

"Who is this 'AET,' Lucius? It must be someone Hermione knows well. There's no mention of an address or a name, yet she left in the dead of night without telling anyone. She obviously knows where they live, and it's someone she trusts."

"Yes, you're right, Severus. But I have no idea who it could be.... Still, it does seem familiar, as if I should know. Damn it all to nine levels of hell!"

"Floo-call Potter," ordered Severus.

"Potter?" asked Lucius dumbly.

"If it's someone Hermione knows personally, there's a good chance Potter will know who it is."

"You're right. Of course, that's true," said Lucius as he went quickly to the Floo and threw in a pinch of powder. "Harry Potter's home," he called clearly. Then bending, he shouted, "Harry! Draco! It's Lucius. There's been a break-in here at the library. Hermione is missing, and I need you to come at once."

Within seconds, Harry's tousled head appeared in the flames. "What the hell do you mean missing?" he demanded.

"Just get over here, and I'll explain everything," snapped Lucius.

~*~

Hermione departed from the library without a hitch. No one had seen her leaving or knew where she'd gone.

Hermione felt a bit guilty approaching the house. She'd spent quite a lot of time here following the war. Since then, though, she'd fallen out of touch with the woman who lived here. They'd been fairly good friends for a while, but that friendship had faded considerably once she'd started seeing Severus.

Hermione knew that her friend had very strong feelings concerning people she considered questionable. And she was one who thought anyone even remotely connected with Riddle deserved a Dementor's Kiss. The witch had become rather obsessive in her beliefs, which is what had driven Hermione away from her in the first place.

Coming up the front steps, Hermione was just about to knock on the door when she realized that it was slightly ajar. Worried that the thugs Lucius had been following had found him there, she pulled her wand and proceeded cautiously.

She pushed the door open partway and looked inside. It was dark, and she didn't want to call attention to herself by casting a Lumos, or by calling out to Lucius. She moved carefully inside and down the hall. She'd only taken a few steps when the door behind her slammed shut loudly. Hermione spun around with a muffled shriek.

Seeing the witch who had sent her the note, Hermione lowered her wand as she clutched her chest. "Shit, Annie, you nearly scared the life out of me! I thought that you and Lucius might be in danger when I found the door open. Where is he? You said he was injured."

"So, it's true then. You are with Malfoy now. I had hoped the rumors I heard were a lie. How could you, Hermione?"

"How could I what, Annie?" asked Hermione. She studied her old friend closely. Taking in Annie's disheveled hair and dark, wild eyes, she noticed for the first time how much Annie resembled her sister.

"How could you betray the Order and all they stood for, to take up with Death Eater scum? First, it was Snape..."

Hermione interrupted, "We've had this conversation before. Severus was Dumbledore's man to the bitter end. He may have joined the Death Eaters when he was hardly more than a lad, but he quickly realized his mistake and spent the rest of his life trying to make up for it."

"So he says," Annie sneered. "How do you know he wouldn't have used the same story, in reverse, if Riddle had won? He could have claimed that he was a spy for the Dark Lord all along. Perhaps he was just playing both sides, so no matter who won, he'd come out on top."

"Harry saw his memories. They weren't faked; Ron and I both saw Severus give them directly to Harry," said Hermione patiently.

"And now you're sniffing after Lucius like a bitch in heat, like a Death Eater whore. Are you going to defend him too? Try to convince me he just made a little mistake? He was there in the thick of it all, one of Voldemort's henchmen, and now you've gone over to his side. I never would have thought it of you, Hermione." She sounded disappointed.

"Annie, please... Lucius has paid his dues; he spent the last six years of his life in jail. He lost his wife, his home, his family fortunes. It was proven that he never killed anyone in Voldemort's service. In the end, he was just trying to protect his wife and son."

"Awww... poor little Malfoy," she mocked. "Lost his wifey, did he? Only because she got smart and left him in the end, but she's still alive at least. My husband's dead, and my child as well... both lost to the likes of that filth."

"A lot of people lost friends and family in the war, Annie..."

Before Hermione could say anymore, the older witch made her move. "*Expelliarmus!*"

Hermione's wand flew from her hand. "What are you doing?" she gasped in outrage. "No!" she cried out seconds later upon seeing the woman snap her wand in two and drop the pieces to the floor.

"I'm dealing out justice, you traitor," Annie answered calmly as she pointed her wand at her former friend. "*CRUCIO!*"

~*~

Harry arrived at the library within minutes.

"Where is Draco?" asked Lucius before Harry had a chance to speak.

"He's still at home. My godson, Teddy Lupin, has been visiting for a few days. Draco will be along as soon as he can arrange for someone to come sit with Teddy." Looking around, he saw Snape and Mordecai Jones both present. Harry clenched his jaw and rounded on Lucius. "What the bloody hell has been going on here? And where the fuck is Hermione?"

Lucius quickly reviewed the events of the night. Snape and Jones explained their involvement. After hearing it all, Harry rubbed his hands over his face and through his messy hair, making it even messier, if that were even possible. "So, you are telling me that even though you gave Hermione and Draco your promise that you would not go off without letting someone know of your whereabouts, you took off in the middle of the night on a wild goose chase? You left Hermione here alone, unprotected, and then..."

"Hermione is not exactly helpless, Potter. And Lucius did send his Patronus, asking me to come here at once," said Severus in his friend's defense.

"And 'tisn't like Tidbit was kidnapped; she left this house on her own," added Mordy. "The girl needs a keeper, is what she needs."

"Don't you dare try to make this Hermione's fault!" shouted Harry. "She went down to Knockturn Alley that night for you," he said, stabbing his finger at Lucius. "Because she cares. She didn't call the Aurors when you went haring off tonight because she was trying to protect you. Because she cares. She went off on her own without telling anyone because she thought you were hurt and in danger. Because she cares. That's Hermione. When she cares about someone, she'll do anything for them, even at the risk of her own life."

"She'd even go so far as to follow her best friend on a crazy Horcrux hunt and go up against the darkest wizard of our time," said Draco, clasping his hand on Harry's shoulder and giving his father a little wink. He'd come in unnoticed during the midst of Harry's tirade. "Hang in there, Harry. We all care about Hermione. We'll get her

back."

Harry returned Draco's handclasp and sat. Swallowing hard, he looked at the other three men. "I shouldn't have lost my temper. It's just... she's very important to me... She's my family."

"Draco's right that we all care about her," offered Severus. "We will find her."

Mordy cleared his throat. "I meant no disrespect, Potter. I di'n't. Tidbit's a peach. Been good to me, she has; more than I d'serve, to be sure."

"All right, gentlemen. Down to business, then. We have work to do." Harry Potter transformed before their eyes from the worried best friend of Hermione Granger to the top Auror in the department. Within minutes, he had delegated jobs and set up a plan of attack.

They agreed the Aurory proper would not be notified. The whole thing had something to do with Lucius, and it was quite clear that someone with influence within the Ministry had been manipulating things for years. Harry put together a very specific team of people he trusted implicitly: Zabini, Bones, Davies, and Ron Weasley. Each had areas of special expertise, and each he would trust with his life or Hermione's.

Other than his initial recounting of the facts upon Harry's arrival, Lucius had sat silently throughout. As everyone set off to carry out the tasks assigned, Harry approached him.

"You were right," said Lucius, his voice flat. "I gave her my word, and I went off anyway. She told me not to go, but I ignored her. I left her here alone, unprotected but for a house-elf."

"No. Snape was right. Hermione's not helpless; she's a very powerful witch. And Jones was right too...she went of her own free will; no one carried her off. I overreacted, and I shouldn't have blamed you."

"You said that she's important to you, that she's your family," said Lucius. Harry nodded in response. "She's important to me as well, very important... but I... I never told her..."

Harry clasped his hand on Lucius shoulder, offering support, just as Draco had offered to him earlier. "Then when we get her back...you make damn sure you do." Lucius nodded. "Now come on, you're partnered with me. I want to interview the house-elf first and check your room for clues."

~*~

Harry glanced at the note. The handwriting, disguised by a charm or possibly a Quick-Quotes Quill, was no one's that he recognized, and the signature meant nothing to him. He could not place any of Hermione's friends with the initials AET. He and Lucius had interviewed a distraught Sukie and didn't get much there, other than being able to estimate the approximate time that Hermione had left.

They did find an owl feather in the bedroom, and Lucius confirmed that neither he nor Hermione had received any owls there recently, so odds were it was from the owl who'd delivered the note. Once analyzed, that might lead them to the source. Roger Davies arrived, and Harry gave him the feather and the note for analysis. Harry kept a copy of the note for Lucius to study, as he kept insisting that there was something familiar about it.

Minutes turned to hours, and no solid leads turned up. The teams began returning, one by one. Both Lucius and Harry were hard pressed not to show their discouragement. It was now mid-afternoon, and nearly twelve hours had passed since Hermione had gone missing. Harry knew that the more time that passed without any leads, the slimmer their chances of finding her became. He didn't tell Lucius this.

Severus and Blaise were the first ones back. They had been tracking the coordinates from the read-outs on Lucius' wand, following the Apparition trail of the two thugs who had broken into the library.

Next came Mordy and Ron, who had been checking Mordy's connections in Knockturn Alley. Earlier, Mordy had sent forth his network of eyes and ears to turn up any signs of Lucius, and now he'd given them Hermione's description. They had one report of a witch who could have been Hermione Apparating into an area near a Muggle neighborhood. It was a slim chance, but they were cross-referencing it with the coordinates that Snape and Zabini had come up with to see if there was a connection.

Davies came back with his reports. The owl was a small tawny owl, very common, and thus it was hard to identify a specific owl. He did provide them with a sketch of the owl with approximate size and accurate coloring noted. Harry studied the sketch closely, his brow furrowed.

Roger went on to the analysis of the note. Luckily, the author had handwritten the note, then charmed the writing to disguise it. A Quick-Quotes Quill would have been a dead end. But Roger had been able to reverse the charm, revealing the original handwriting. Lucius studied the note with a sinking feeling. The handwriting seemed so familiar but he still couldn't quite place it. AET... Who the hell was AET?

Harry took the note from him and immediately paled. "Oh. Fuck me!" he gasped.

Ron looked up from the desk where they'd still been working on the map coordinates. "Harry?" he asked worriedly.

Before Harry had a chance to respond, Susan and Draco came through the Floo in rapid succession. Susan Bones was an Unspeakable and had a top-level clearance, able to go just about anywhere in the entire Ministry. She explained that she and Draco had overheard a report of Unforgiveables being used in a Muggle neighborhood, and when Draco thought the address sounded familiar, they decided to follow up. Draco looked shaken and a little grey around the edges. Stepping into the center of the room, he withdrew his hand from the folds of his cloak and held out two thin pieces of wood.

"Nooo!" cried Lucius in anguish upon seeing the remains of Hermione's wand in his son's hand.

~*~

"It was Andromeda's house, wasn't it?" asked Harry dully. "Just now, I recognized the handwriting and the sketch of her owl."

Draco nodded in reply.

Clutching the remnants of Hermione's wand in his hand, Lucius choked out, "The Unforgivables... What curses were detected?"

"It was the Cruciatus," said Susan.

Lucius sucked in a deep breath and let it out, all in a long sigh, his eyes closed in relief. "No Killing Curse, then?"

Susan gasped, "Oh... Oh, my gods, no! Mr. Malfoy, I'm so sorry. I should have explained that at once."

"But why?" asked Harry. "Why would Andromeda do this? Maybe she was forced to write the note. Maybe she's been abducted and is being held too."

"No, it's her. I'm sure," said Lucius. "It all makes sense now. AET, Andromeda Elladora Tonks. I should have known, but I didn't recognize the T. I still think of her as Black. Before I was betrothed to Cissy, Annie and I used to correspond for a time. She used to sign her letters AEB, and that's why it seemed familiar, but I just couldn't place it. I learned later that she had hoped for a match between the two of us. She was furious when my father arranged my engagement to Narcissa. I thought she and I were just friends; I didn't think of her that way."

"And you think she would go to these extremes over some petty jealousy from years ago?" asked Ron doubtfully.

Lucius shook his head. "No, it's more than just that. Andromeda has hated me for a very long time. She blamed me for her alienation from her sister, her family. She felt that if we had not been so closely tied to the Dark Lord, her marriage to a Muggle-born would not have been so harshly judged, and perhaps her family would not have disowned her."

"But, Annie wouldn't hurt Hermione," objected Harry. "They were good friends. Hermione lived with her for nearly a year and a half after the war and helped her care for Teddy. Even after Hermione moved out, they were still close. It doesn't make sense."

Severus spoke up, "Andromeda has become increasingly unstable over the years, dwelling on the deaths of Ted, Nymphadora, and Lupin. When Hermione started seeing me, Andromeda cut her off completely. In spite of everything, she considered me tainted by my time spent as a Death Eater. She tried to convince Hermione that I had never really changed sides, that I was working for Riddle all along."

"Was this woman the Mrs. Tonks who was Nymphadora Lupin's mother?" asked Roger Davies. At Harry's nod, Roger continued. "She's a real odd duck down at the Ministry. She's always saying things like the Death Eaters are going to come back and we all need to be ready, vigilant she says. She's really very strange. I've heard tell..." Suddenly, he stopped. "I'm sorry, but I shouldn't say any more. It's probably just gossip, after all."

"No, Roger. She's our number one suspect," said Harry. "We need to know as much as we can about her. She's obviously not the woman some of us remember her to be."

"Well, rumor has it that she's been reprimanded several times for messing around in departments and areas that have nothing at all to do with her job: switching files, bribing underlings, that sort of thing. Recently, I heard she changed the records on some guy's terms of parole. They say she never gets fired because the higher-ups feel sorry for her because of her having lost her family in the war. Plus, they say she has very influential connections."

"I believe that would be you, Harry," said Draco.

"Shit!" swore Harry.

~*~

Hermione awoke shivering in a strange place, lying on a cold stone floor. She'd been in the basement in Annie's house before, and this wasn't it. She must have been moved somewhere else while she was unconscious.

Hermione dragged herself to her feet; her body ached all over from the torture she'd endured. She wasn't sure how long it had lasted. She didn't think it was as long as when she'd been tortured during the war, but obviously, it was long enough to make her black out. Merlin! She'd thought that she would never have to go through anything like that again.

The witch had gone insane. The grief of losing her husband and daughter in the war must have festered for years, finally driving her over the edge. Hermione began carefully exploring her cell, hoping against hope to find a way out before the woman came back.

After circling the room several times, she came to the conclusion there was no way out, except the way she was brought in...through the door. The cell was fairly large, as cells went, about nine by five meters or so, with solid stone walls and floor, ceilings over three meters tall, iron bars for a door. There was only one tiny slit of a window on one side of the room, high up at the top of the wall. It was about a meter long but only about twenty centimeters tall, and there was no way she could fit through that, even if she could reach it, which she couldn't.

She'd discovered a toilet in the corner, although it was little more than a raised seat over a pit in the floor. Primitive, but better than going on the floor. Next to it was an ancient sink that spewed greyish-colored water that smelled a bit sulfurous. She was afraid to drink it, but at least she had the option if she got truly desperate. In the opposite corner, she found an old canvas army cot that was musty and mildewy. At least it seemed solid enough to hold her and was up off the cold stone floor.

By the rumbling in her stomach, Hermione figured it must be late afternoon. She stared up at the tiny window, trying to determine the time by the amount of light it shed. Concentrating so hard on the window, she didn't hear her captor approach. Annie cackled behind her and shoved a tray under the door of the cell with what looked like a bowl of watery soup, some bread, and a small pot of tea.

"You'd never fit through there, and it doesn't open anyway."

Hermione flew to the door and clutched the bars. "Annie, you have to let me go."

"Let you go? Oh, no. I don't think so. You're one of them now, so I have to punish you."

"Annie, no. Please. I'm Hermione; I'm your friend."

The witch pointed her wand at Hermione with a wild look in her eye. "You're no friend to me, Hermione Granger. You're nothing but a filthy Death Eater's whore now, you little slut. Sniffing after them, rutting with them. You'll get what's coming to you. I'll make sure of that."

"Annie, listen to me; I'm Hermione. I'm still your friend. I was your daughter's friend. She wouldn't want you to do this...please listen to me."

"You filth! Don't you dare mention my daughter! I don't ever want to hear you speak of her; you aren't even worthy to say her name, you whore*CRUCIO!*"

Hermione fell to the floor, writhing in pain, and she tried not to let herself scream, but in the end she had no choice. This was much worse than the day before. Either Annie was getting better at casting the curse or was just angrier today than she had been before. She held it for what felt like several minutes. Just when it was easing and Hermione thought the worst was over, she cast again. "*CRUCIO!*"

Hermione screamed so long and so loudly that her throat became raw and hoarse. She could understand now how Neville's parents had been driven insane. How long could this go on before the same happened to her? She started to lose consciousness, and she welcomed the oblivion.

"*Rennervate!*" Annie revived her. "Oh, no, you don't, you little bitch. You're not getting off that easy. I'm nowhere near done with you yet*CRUCIO!*"

Oh, dear gods, yesterday's session was a little slap and tickle compared to this. She was going to die here with this crazy woman. No one would ever know what had happened to her. She would just disappear, and no one would ever know. Lucius, Severus, Harry...none of them would ever know.

Finally, it was quiet. Was she dead, she wondered? No, not that lucky, apparently. Everything hurt. She couldn't move, but her body was still shaking. Aftershocks, she guessed. She'd vomited all over and was lying in her own sick, but she couldn't gather enough energy to roll out of it. Hermione assumed she was alone until she heard the voice of her tormentor behind her. Ohgodohgodohgod, not again, not again. She whimpered in fear and felt a hot gush as she pissed herself. She couldn't take any more; she truly couldn't.

But the curse didn't come again. The voice just muttered, "Now look what you've done, you naughty girl; you've spilled your tray. Well, you won't get another until tonight...if I'm feeling generous. Maybe tomorrow, if I'm not." Annie chuckled evilly as she watched Hermione shivering on the floor. "Hmmm..." The door creaked open on rusty hinges. "Here, I wouldn't want you to catch a chill," Annie said as she tossed something over Hermione. Then the door clanged shut, and the lock clicked as the sound of her footsteps echoed up the stairs.

Hermione was alone now. Still alive, it seemed, but unsure as to that whether that was a good thing anymore. She dragged herself to her hands and knees; she had to get off the cold floor before she developed hypothermia. Clutching the blanket to her, Hermione crawled to the cot, inch by inch, and heaved herself onto it. Just before she blacked out, she pulled the blanket over her head and realized it was no blanket at all, but her own cloak. A surge of excitement engulfed her, but not enough to stave off

unconsciousness. Still, if luck was with her and she managed not to die before she woke up, there was a chance that her beaded bag was still shrunk and hidden in the secret pocket of her cloak.

TBC

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 of 7

In order to be released from custody, Lucius is required to obtain meaningful employment. What better job could he find than working in a research library as the librarian's assistant? Now all he has to do is convince the librarian that he's the man for the job. This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ. Note: rating and warnings are for later chapters.

AN: This was originally written and posted at the 2011 Lucius Big Bang fest on LJ (I post on LJ as madeleone). Many thanks to my betas: Softobsidian, who beta'd it for the fest, and Clairvoyant, who has polished up the rough edges.

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter. I make no money here.

"Are we in agreement then that Andromeda Tonks is our most likely suspect?" asked Harry of the group. Everyone agreed; it did seem to be the most logical conclusion. "Well then, now that we aren't worried about tipping our hand, we need more manpower. This investigation is about to go full scale. I'm calling in the rest of the Auror Department. Ron, I want you to go to the Ministry and brief the squad with everything we've gathered so far; you'll be team leader. Next, the one thing Andromeda is going to want is her grandson. Blaise, I need you to put together a team and go to my house to guard Teddy. Try not to scare him, though, and don't say too much; he's a smart kid, and he'll figure out something's up. Roger, Susan, thanks for helping. I can always count on you guys down in the Department of Mysteries."

As the others left, Harry turned to the group who remained. "We need a plan. Any ideas where Andromeda would take Hermione? Where would she hide out? Where would she feel safe?"

"I've barely spoken to her in years," declared Lucius. "I have no idea where she would go. And the woman's insane. I don't have a clue what might be going on inside that twisted head."

"We could ask Mother," Draco suggested. "Maybe there's some secret place they went as children, or a special family place."

"Great idea, Draco," said Harry. "You and I will go take care of that. Lucius, I really think you should stay here; there's a chance Andromeda might send another note, maybe even a ransom demand. If you hear anything, contact me at once with this galleon." He handed Lucius a Protean-charmed galleon like the ones Hermione had charmed years ago for the DA; they were standard Auror issue now. "Snape, Jones, you two keep an eye on Lucius here."

"Sure thing, Potter," agreed Mordy. As soon as Harry and Draco had left, Mordy turned to Lucius. "Yer not really gonna sit round here like some trained lap dog while that daft bint's out there throwin' Crucios at Tidbit, are ya?"

"Not likely," snarled Snape. "And there's not a chance in hell that Andromeda's going to send a ransom demand."

"I agree, and no, Mordy, I don't plan to just sit here and wait," said Lucius grimly. "I do have a couple ideas. I just pray one of them is the right one."

~*~

When Hermione woke up again, it was dark. The shaking had stopped, except for an occasional spasm that wracked her body without warning. She hurt everywhere. And she was a mess, dried up puke all over her, knickers and skirt still damp and smelling of urine. Ugh! It was awful. She slowly turned over, groaning with each slight movement. Hermione was surprised to see, in the dim light shining from the stairs, a dinner tray left by the door. Apparently, Annie had been feeling generous after all.

Hermione knew she had to eat and drink to avoid becoming weak and dehydrated, but was leery of anything her captor had left. Still, she had little choice. Carefully sitting up on the edge of the cot, she suddenly remembered her cloak! Looking up quickly to make sure that Annie wasn't lurking in the shadows watching her, she gathered the cloak to her and began searching for the hidden pocket.

"Oh, please be there, please be there," she whispered as her fingers felt carefully along the inner seams. Then her hand slid into the pocket and closed around the small beaded bag, the size of a coin purse. Her emotions crashed. Her wand had been snapped, she had no way to enlarge the bottomless bag that had everything she might possibly need. It was like having the world at her fingertips, but not being able to touch it. She was capable of some wandless magic, but only small spells, nothing like enlarging the bag.

Hermione had to sit for several minutes, fighting off the urge to cry, knowing it would do her no good and would only exhaust her when she needed to conserve all of her energy. Finally, she pulled herself together and shuffled over to the tray. Her joints and muscles were so stiff she moved like an old woman. The tray held a small pot of tea, now cold; a couple of slices of bread, now stale; some cheese, a pear, and a jug of water. She nibbled at the pear first, as that seemed the least likely to be tampered with. It tasted like ambrosia, sweet and juicy. She wanted to gobble it down in big bites, but she forced herself to eat it slowly to see if her stomach would accept the food. By the time she had finished it, she didn't care if Annie had dosed the tea or water or food with anything. She'd had nothing in over twenty-four hours, and she was starving. Besides, she told herself grimly, why would Annie poison her? Then she'd have no one to practice her Crucio on, and she was getting so damn good at it.

She tried to clean up the mess off her clothes, without much success, using the smelly water from the sink. It didn't seem as bad as earlier; either she was getting used to it, or maybe running the faucet was cleaning the stagnant water from the pipes. She rinsed out her knickers and hung them on the edge of the sink to dry. She considered taking off her skirt and trying to wash it out as well, but the sink was just too small, so she just dabbed it off as best she could.

Returning to sit on the cot, Hermione fingered the tiny beaded bag like a talisman and desperately wished she had a wand. Then suddenly, she remembered. For years it had stayed in the bottom of her bag, forgotten. Ignored, more like it, mainly because even holding it gave her a creepy feeling and she didn't want to think about how and when it had come to her. Yet she couldn't bring herself to dispose of it either...Bellatrix's wand. It had really never worked well for her, not like a proper wand should. Would it come to her if she tried to Summon it with wandless magic? She looked nervously toward the door and the stairs beyond. No sign of Annie. If she had any chance of escape, she needed a wand. *Well, Hermione*, she thought, *nothing ventured, nothing gained*.

Opening the tiny drawstring on the bag, she held her hand above it and said, "Accio wand!" Nothing happened, nothing at all. "Shit!"

She tried again, more firmly. "Accio Bella's wand!" There. Down in the bottom of the bag, was that a wiggle?

Concentrating hard and trying to draw forth all her magical powers, she tried once more. "Accio Bellatrix Lestrange's wand!" The bag convulsed, and the tip of Bella's wand slid through the opening of the bag. In her excitement, Hermione nearly forgot to grab it before it slid back in.

As she held the wand in her hand, it didn't feel as wrong as she remembered. Or maybe it was she who was different from all those years ago...not as young, not as innocent. The wand had the same core as hers, dragon heartstring, but it was a bit longer and walnut instead of vine wood. Would it work for her now against its former owner's own sister? It was the only chance she had.

The first thing she wanted to do was clean herself up better, as she still felt disgusting, but then she reconsidered. Surprise was the greatest weapon she had, and if Annie came down here and found her all clean and fresh, the jig would be up. So instead, she worked on enlarging the bag, and it sort of worked. But while the bag got bigger, it was still too small to get her hand into. Still, she could Summon what she needed, so she retrieved potions to ease her aches, clear her mind, and strengthen her. There was nothing that would remove the aftereffects of the Cruciatus Curse, but she felt a hundred times better than before.

She tried to unlock the door, but Alohomora didn't work. Hermione wasn't sure if it was because of the complex charms that Annie had used, or because Bella's wand simply didn't like her. She sat back to wait, figuring she might only get one chance with the unstable wand.

She wondered what was happening out there in the real world and felt a sting of tears at the back of her eyes. Surely someone must be looking for her by now: Lucius, Severus, Harry... someone? But was Lucius even alive? Had Annie captured him or already killed him? No... she couldn't think that! He is alive...he must be. She had to believe that, or surely she'd go mad.

~*~

In the end, Mordy went back to Knockturn Alley to run surveillance over a number of areas that Lucius suspected might appeal to Andromeda. He would send out his spies and bring any leads to Lucius' attention.

Lucius and Severus narrowed the list to three top choices: Rosewood, the Rosier family estate, belonging to the Black sisters' maternal grandparents; Raven Hill, the country home of Pollux and Irma Black; Malfoy Manor, now closed up and in possession of the Ministry.

"Do you really think she would go there...to your home?" asked Severus. "It would give you a distinct advantage, you knowing it so well."

"Since she works at the Ministry, she could get access to the estate, just as she has obtained access to so many things concerning me. And considering it was the Dark Lord's headquarters for that last year, she might find it oh so apropos for dealing with what she considers Death Eater scum. I think she would like nothing better than to lure me to my own family estate and murder me there."

"The woman is mad, but I don't think she is reasoning anything out."

"You may be right," Lucius responded. "But these are our best choices. I'll take Malfoy Manor as you were correct that I know it the best. You check the Black estate. If I find anything at all, I will contact you and vice versa. If we find nothing, we will meet in the forest just north of the Rosier estate."

"Agreed," responded Severus.

~*~

Lucius had been so sure he would find Andromeda at the Manor, but there had been no trace of her at all there nor any signs of recent activity. He'd heard nothing from Severus, so he Apparated to Rosewood. He sent a message to Severus via his Patronus and then set off to patrol the perimeter of the property.

He yawned, rubbing his hand over the rough stubble on his face. Sweet Circe, he was tired. It was nearly dawn; he'd been up more than twenty-four hours and had only slept about three hours the night before. He hoped Severus had some potion tucked in one of his pockets that would perk him up. Suddenly, Lucius stopped and rubbed his eyes. Was he seeing things, or was that a light moving inside the house? It should be deserted, but perhaps there was a caretaker. He moved in closer to check.

Mere seconds later, "Expelliarmus!" Without warning, his wand flew from his hand.

"Oh, fuck!" he cried.

Standing in a side entrance stood his ex-sister-in-law. His wand was in her hand, and an evil glimmer was in her eye, which eerily reminded him of his other ex-sister-in-law, the dead one. She'd been certifiable as well. *Definitely must run in the family*, Lucius thought. *Although, Cissy seems normal enough*. He certainly hoped these appalling genes had skipped Draco...and why in bloody hell was he standing here worrying about Draco's genes when he was most likely going to die in the next few minutes?

"I knew you'd come looking for your little whore. She's waiting for you downstairs. If you behave yourself, I might even let you see her before I deal out your sentence... Move, scum!" she cried, pointing him down the long flight of steps leading to the dungeons.

Where in hell was Severus when he needed him?

~*~

Hermione heard the shuffling steps descending the stairs and lay perfectly still on the cot. She had thought about trying to stun or overpower Annie, but she just didn't trust the damn wand. What if she managed to stun her, but Annie was still outside the cell? If Hermione couldn't get the door unlocked, then she'd be stuck in here regardless. She'd decided to fake unconsciousness in the hope that the crazy bitch would come inside the cell. She figured even if Bella's bloody wand wouldn't do magic for her, Hermione could at least stab her with it, if Annie got close enough.

She heard someone enter the room and rush to the door. "Hermione! Are you okay? What have you done to her?"

Oh, shit! Annie had Lucius. And she'd obviously disarmed him too. Hermione wanted to jump from the cot and run to the door, but she dared not. She had to stick to the plan.

"She's not moving!" cried Lucius.

"I didn't kill her, not yet anyway. Just a half dozen rounds of the Cruciatus, so she's probably a bit knackered after that, don't you think?" She giggled as if she'd just made a joke. "Move over, and don't try anything, or you'll regret it, Malfoy," Annie said, her voice shaking a little. Hermione couldn't tell if she was worried or excited. "Out of the goodness of my heart, I'll let you check her yourself."

Unlocking the door, she shoved him through. "Go on then."

Lucius stumbled to the cot and fell to his knees. "Hermione, sweetheart, wake up." He gently brushed her hair back from her face. "Hermione, speak to me."

As Lucius leaned down to hug her, Hermione took a chance and pressed the wand against his hand. He pulled back cautiously and looked down at her. He was between

her and the doorway, thus blocking Annie's view.

Hermione mouthed the words, speaking almost silently, "It's Bella's wand... Was hidden... It won't work right for me... Will it work for you?"

Lucius nodded imperceptibly. "I think so," he mouthed in return.

"Lure her closer."

"What's going on in there? Is she breathing?" snapped Annie.

"Barely. I don't know what's wrong with her. You're going to have to cast a Rennervate or get her some potions or something."

"Seems a bit of a waste, as I'm going to execute you both anyway. Still, I probably should bring her around so she can enjoy the show. Isn't that right, dear Lucius?"

She pushed the door open and came up behind him. "Get out of my way then so I can wake her up."

Lucius wrapped both hands around Hermione's on the wand. Then he bent down as if whispering words of love to her. "Stupefy... together."

Hermione gave a tiny nod and in the next instant Lucius lunged to the side. They aimed the wand point-blank at Annie. *STUPEFY!*

The bolt of pure magic that shot from Bella's wand was so strong the witch flew back and slammed against the wall, her wand flying from her hand. If the spell hadn't knocked her unconscious, the impact with the wall surely would have. Just to be safe, Hermione cast, "*Incarcerous!*" She Summoned Annie's wand to her.

Lucius pulled himself up from the floor and gathered Hermione into his arms. "Sweetheart, I thought I'd lost you." His lips closed over hers, and he kissed her as if he would never let her go.

Hermione kissed him back, but suddenly pushed him away. "Unggggh! Lucius I'm disgusting. I feel filthy, and I... I smell. There's sick crusted to my clothes and... and..." she lowered her voice to a whisper, "... and my skirt smells of pee." She dropped her eyes in embarrassment.

He tipped her face up to his and kissed her soundly again. "You silly, silly girl. To me, you're absolutely the most beautiful thing in the world." He scooped her up into his arms. "I love you, my sweet girl."

"Oh, Lucius. I love you too," she sighed as she wrapped her arms around him, holding onto him tightly.

Just then, Severus burst through the door, wand drawn, and crouched down in a defensive stance. Taking in the scene at a glance, he stood up. "Well, damn, looks like I missed the party."

He stalked over to the pair, Hermione still in Lucius' arms. He looked meaningfully at Lucius before proceeding. Lucius seemed to understand, and gave him a nod. Severus leaned in, threading his fingers through her hair, kissing her firmly on the mouth. When he pulled back, he said, "Thank Merlin, you're safe. If you ever do something that stupid again, I'll paddle you myself."

As he stomped away, Hermione just stared after him open mouthed. When her eyes turned to Lucius, he simply smirked. "It is quite possible that ~~they~~ have given Severus the impression that at some future point in time... we might be willing to consider the idea of... well, the idea of the three of us... together."

"Lucius!" she gasped.

"Well... it is a most interesting... proposition," he said with a sly grin.

Just then they heard the rumble of steps from above. "It appears that Severus has called in the troops. That will be Harry and his Aurors."

Lucius carried her out of the cell, meeting Harry coming down the stairs. "She is fine. You may hug her..." He paused as Harry did just that. "Now, I am taking her home to a warm bath and a hot meal and then tucking us both into bed for an indecently long nap. You may come to the library to get a statement, but not before two at the very earliest. We are both knackered beyond belief." Without saying another thing, he carried her out the door and Apparated them both away.

~*~

Two months later.

Lucius looked over at Severus with a knowing smirk. Severus didn't realize it yet, but tonight was the night that his period of penance would come to an end. When Hermione finally got her Gryffindor courage pumped up enough to accept the idea of the three of them together, Lucius had managed to convince her to allow him to dole out the penance Severus had agreed to.

They'd only had two sessions so far, and tonight would be the third and final one. After tonight, they would move ahead with their relationship on an equal footing between the three of them. Truth be told, his soft-hearted lioness would have forgiven Severus before they even started, but that simply wouldn't do. He'd wanted to make the old boy suffer a little bit at least. Severus had hurt their girl rather badly, after all, and Lucius felt he needed to pay the piper. And though he would have loved to make Severus squirm a little longer, he knew in reality that paybacks would be demanded from his friend at some point in time. So, it was probably best not to carry things too far.

Lucius reflected on the previous sessions. The first night he had allowed Severus, fully clothed, to sit in a darkened corner of their room. He had only been allowed to watch. He had not been allowed to speak nor to touch them. He had not been allowed to touch himself either, for that matter. Lucius had explained he could stay and watch as long as he liked, but if he wanted relief, he would have to leave and go to the guest room. Severus had lasted a grand total of eleven minutes and forty-seven seconds before he stalked out of the room.

By the second session, Hermione had felt more at ease with the idea of Severus playing the voyeur. When he'd arrived, fully clothed, he retreated to his corner, and Lucius had informed him of a change in the rules. No more darkened corner and no more clothes. They were naked...he must be too. Lucius had explained that they both wanted the opportunity to watch him watching them. He had been allowed and encouraged to touch himself this time; however, before he could, he had to first ask permission. Severus had grimaced and glared steely eyed at Lucius, but had agreed to the new terms. Then Lucius had given him an evil grin and added that Severus was also not allowed to come until Hermione and Lucius *both* had.

Of course Lucius had gotten off, early on, by having Hermione suck his cock. He had held back as long as he could, knowing that Severus wouldn't want to humble himself to ask permission. But finally, as Lucius had reached the brink, with Hermione's lush lips sliding up and down his prick and her cheeks hollowed, Severus had caved in.

"Ahh... dear gods. Please, may I touch myself?" he had finally asked quietly.

At just that moment, Hermione had firmly rolled Lucius' balls in her fingers as she'd taken his length into her mouth. "Yeeeeesssss!" Lucius had hissed.

Damn, he hadn't meant that as permission, but Severus had taken it as such. She'd double-crossed him, the tricky little witch. She had looked up at him with a knowing twinkle in those big brown eyes, and as he'd come, she had swallowed every drop.

Well, the deal had been Severus couldn't come until they both had. So Lucius had made sure that it was good long while before he pushed her over the edge. He knew just how to take her there before pulling back to make her wait. He loved playing with Hermione's body. It was like a fine instrument, and the sounds she made, the moans, squeals, tiny whimpers, were all like music to his ears. He especially loved it when she whispered filthy, dirty talk. In the end that night, she had begged and pleaded for him

to let her orgasm, and he had come again as he'd pounded into her yielding body. The instant she had come, Severus had bellowed his release as well.

In Lucius' opinion, it had been a most delightful evening and a fun time had been shared by all. Most especially him.

For tonight's session, Lucius moved the chair much closer to the bed. "There you go, Severus. I want you closer tonight so you'll have a better view. Hermione, why don't you make our friend comfortable?"

Severus had forgone all of his many layers and wore only a black dressing gown and flannel sleep pants. Hermione stepped forward with a shy smile and untied the belt of his robe. Reaching up, she slipped one side off his shoulder, then the other, and taking the robe off, she lay it across a chair by the door. Coming back to stand before him, she hooked her fingers in the elastic of his pants and slid them all the way down until she was kneeling in front of him. As he looked down at her there, his cock twitched and hardened. Hermione stood and gently pushed him down in the chair before stepping back to stand next to Lucius.

"Here are the new rules for tonight. If you follow them like a good boy, you may receive a reward later. I realize how difficult that may be for you, Severus. You always were more of a 'bad boy,' weren't you?"

"It takes one to know one," muttered Hermione.

Giving her a look, Lucius continued. "Tonight you may touch yourself as you like; no permission is required. However, you still may not come until I say. Did you bring the potions I requested?"

"In the pocket of my robe."

Lucius stepped over to retrieve them and set them on the bedside stand. Hermione picked one up, holding it to the light to examine it. "You didn't say anything about potions. What are they for?"

Lucius responded, "Merely a stamina potion for Severus and myself. I just wanted to be prepared, my dear."

"Lucius," she said with a worried little frown, "I know for a fact that neither one of you needs those. Are you trying to kill me?"

Severus chuckled as Lucius replied, "Not at all, my sweet. Not at all. You're probably right. I'm sure we won't require them at all. But we'll keep them on hand, just in case the need arises."

He removed her robe and folded back the covers. Then he patted the bed, indicating she should lie down. "Let's get you settled, shall we?" Hermione climbed up on the bed and lay in the center. Lucius studied her for a moment and glanced over at Severus who looked very interested. Opening the drawer on the nightstand, he extracted two silken scarves and tied them loosely around her wrists, then to the corners of the headboard. "There now, just relax and enjoy. Tonight is going to center all around your pleasure."

Lucius removed his own robe and climbed onto the far side of the bed so he wouldn't block Severus' view of the proceedings. Lucius kissed her forehead, her chin, each cheekbone, and then he took her mouth. Gently at first, he teased her with the tip of his tongue, and then as she opened to him, he deepened the kiss. His hands grazed lightly over her body until she was straining up towards him. He pulled back and soothed her, "Shhhh... easy, love. Let's not get ahead of ourselves."

Lucius continued to run his hands over her shoulders, up her arms to where her wrists were bound, and back down. They slid lightly over her collarbones and down to the notch at the base of her throat, then ghosted over her breasts, coming close but not quite touching. He glanced over at Severus, who was watching intently, but he hadn't touched himself yet, even though he was clearly as hard as a rock. *Saving himself*, Lucius thought.

"She has beautiful breasts, our witch, doesn't she?" asked Lucius.

"Oh, yes," agreed Severus. "They're perfect, round and so firm, and just the right size for my hands and my mouth. I've always loved her breasts." He licked his lips as if remembering the taste of them.

Hermione blushed. "I'm right here," she said as if they shouldn't be talking in such a way.

"Everything we're saying is true; you always did have issues with self-esteem," said Severus. "I like your breasts very much along with all the rest of you, of course."

"I agree," said Lucius as his fingers teased just around her areola and circled lightly while her nipple tightened into a hard little bud. "And she is so very sensitive," he said, pinching it gently, rolling it between his thumb and forefinger before pinching it again, harder. Hermione moaned in response.

"Yes, very sensitive and so responsive," said Severus, sliding his hand down to touch his own nipple.

Lucius proceeded to worship Hermione's breasts, licking and nuzzling all around them, kissing, nipping, and suckling them until she was groaning aloud and straining at her bonds. He backed off a bit to give her time to recover. The whole time, he watched Severus out of the corner of his eye, gauging his friend's reactions. He'd advanced to touching his cock and lightly squeezing his balls.

Lucius slid his hand down Hermione's body, over her stomach, to cup her mons. His middle finger slipped between her folds to find that her pussy was drenched. He'd suspected as much. He slid his body down the bed. "Open for me." She instantly moved her legs apart, and leaning over her, he inhaled the perfect, musky-sweet scent of her arousal. It was like perfume in the air, and glancing up again, he saw Severus' nostrils quiver. That Potion master's trained nose of his had picked up the scent. Lucius smiled to himself.

Sliding farther down between her legs, he parted her folds with his thumbs and ran his tongue over her, eliciting a little squeal. Turning his face slightly, he said, "Severus, you may come as soon as Hermione does. But I want you to come all over those gorgeous tits we both love. And Hermione, I want you to watch Severus as he gets himself off."

Lucius went back to worshipping her pussy, much in the same manner as he had worshiped her breasts earlier, licking up and down, spearing his tongue through her folds, and flicking her clit back and forth with the tip. First he slid one finger into her, and as she tightened around him, he added another. Crooking them forwards just a bit, he rubbed against the rough spongy little patch there and he suckled at her clit at the same time. Lucius didn't plan to draw this out too long, not like the last time. He had other delicious plans for the rest of the evening. This was only the beginning of Hermione's initiation into ménage à trois. As she obviously approached her peak, out of the corner of his eye, he could see Severus pumping viciously at his cock.

Her eyes were glued to Severus, watching his face and his hands sliding up and down his cock. Hermione groaned and started to babble as she was prone to do just before she came. "Oh, gods... Oh, Lucius! Please... please, make me... make me... Oh, gods... I'm... Oh, fuck..."

As Hermione shouted her release, Severus pumped thick pearly ropes of come all over her tits. Lucius surged up and rammed his cock home into Hermione, but unlike his partners, he didn't climax, but instead, he intentionally held himself under tight control. Gritting his jaw, he lost himself in the sensation of Hermione's hot, tight cunt convulsing around his cock. Once her body had calmed, he began slowly pulling almost all the way out, pushing back in so very slowly, then sliding out again. Slowly, over and over.

Severus stood holding onto the bedpost for support, looking as if he'd just shot all his brains out the end of his cock instead of his seed. Lucius swiped some of the come off Hermione's left nipple onto his thumb, and reaching up, he rubbed it against her lips. Like a baby bird, she opened, licking it off as she sucked his thumb into her mouth.

Looking up at Severus with a twisted smile, Lucius admonished, "Severus, look what a mess you've made of our girl. I really think you need to clean her up."

Severus looked down dumbly, then nodded and moved toward the bathroom to get a washcloth. "No, Severus. Clean her up yourself."

Severus appeared briefly confused at first, but when understanding dawned, it became clear he was not averse to the idea at all. Eagerly he climbed up on the bed and proceeded to lick, suck and clean every last bit of his come from Hermione. And even after he'd cleaned every drop, he still continued to suckle at her nipples, her breasts, her neck, and kiss her mouth. During all this, Lucius was fucking Hermione soundly until she climaxed again, and this time he didn't hesitate to join her.

Lucius allowed himself a brief respite, lying close to Hermione, on her left side as Severus lay on her right. Hermione dozed and looked happily satiated. As far as Lucius was concerned, however, this was only the beginning. He had so much more planned for the night.

Lucius untied her left wrist from its silken bond and asked Severus to do the same with her right wrist. Hermione snuggled down with a smile on her face. As Lucius began tracing his fingers down her side and over her abdomen, she tried to push his hands away. "Mmmm... Lucius, don't. I'm tired," she mumbled.

Lucius chuckled a rather evil chuckle as he secured both her hands with one of his, preventing her from interfering. His hand dropped to play between her legs as he warned, "Don't get too comfy just yet, my girl. We are nowhere near done with you."

Hearing this, Severus immediately perked up; he'd obviously thought the evening's activities were done as well. Hermione's eyes popped open, and she looked nervously from one man to the other. Though she tried to hide it, Lucius could detect her growing excitement by her increased breathing as well as by the pulse at her throat. Her body was practically buzzing like a Muggle electrical current.

"Severus, I have a challenge for you," murmured Lucius, as he studied his friend.

"What sort of challenge are we discussing, Lucius?"

"I've thought of a task for you. If you complete it successfully, your penance will be paid in full."

"Sounds interesting, tell me more," said Severus.

"Our sweet girl has had two lovely orgasms, and she thinks she's ready to call it a night. I challenge you to make her come again. But here's the catch; you may not fuck her, not yet at least. You may only use your hands and your mouth."

Hermione twitched a little, and a needy little whimper escaped from her throat.

"If you do succeed in your task, your penance will be complete. After that, you may fuck her to your heart's content."

Severus looked quite confident. "And your role in this, Lucius?"

"Oh, I shall merely be an observer for now. Although, I might assist if you request. I shall, however, reserve the right to participate fully a little later on."

"Oh, I will most definitely accept your challenge, my friend," Severus agreed with a crooked smile. "You may observe, and if I want your help with anything, I'll be sure to let you know."

Severus knew her body well, of course. They may have been apart for a year, but there are some things a man never forgets. The scent of a woman, the feel of silken skin, the sounds she makes in the throes of passion. He knew all of the places she liked to be touched and just how she liked it...how hard or how soft.

Observing the pair, Lucius discovered he rather liked the role of voyeur. Severus was drawing it out intentionally, he realized. It was clear Severus could have quickly pushed her over the edge, but he was teasing her, making her wait. Perhaps Severus was extracting a bit of penance of his own upon Hermione for staying away from him for so long.

Forgetting that he was only supposed to be observing, Lucius nuzzled her earlobe, then nibbled and sucked it a bit. He pulled back and lay next to her, watching. He knew she was very close, and he knew that Severus knew it too. Lucius couldn't resist, and his fingers wandered up and toyed with her nipples, tweaking them, pulling a bit. After catching Severus' eye and his unspoken approval, Lucius bent and suckled at her breasts, first one and then the other.

Severus pumped his fingers in and out of her body and made good use of his mouth and tongue. Hermione began muttering her litany of gibberish that was a sure sign she was about to lose all control.

"Oh, gods... oh, baby, please... fuck, yes... fuck...oh, god, Severus... Lucius, don't stop... make me... oh, you fucking bastards... finish it.. gods... now, now, noooooooooow!" Then she practically howled for them as she tumbled over the edge. Lucius noted that Severus looked as pleased with himself as if he'd won the war single handed... oh, wait, he actually had done that pretty much. Lucius chuckled and knew that he himself probably had a big grin and looked a little sappy as well.

Lucius watched Severus move up Hermione's body and gently kiss her eyes, her cheeks, and her lips before he reverently entered her body. Lucius had been worried that he would be jealous, watching the two of them together. He was now surprised that seeing Severus making love to Hermione felt right. After a few moments, Lucius moved to one side and told Severus to roll over onto his back.

Severus did as he asked, pulling Hermione into position on top of him. Lucius moved behind them, running his palms over Hermione's bum, soothing her, calming her. Then his fingers teased at her rear as he spread the lube generously. Looking back over her shoulder, she gasped when she realized what he intended. With a sexy smile, she urged him on, "Oh fuck, yes! Dear gods, Lucius... Do it! I want you so much... both of you together. I need you both!"

"You shall have us, love," promised Lucius as he used his fingers to prepare her.

Hermione continued to respond to his directions, pushing back when he told her, going slowly, holding still when he said. Severus held her and encouraged her through it all; he distracted her when she needed it. When Lucius' cock was finally buried balls deep in her hot little arse and he was rather wishing he'd taken a bit of that stamina potion, they all began to move.

Slowly at first, he and Severus moved in counterpoint. Then as their rhythm increased, they ended up thrusting into her simultaneously until they were both pounding hard. She convulsed around them, and in a cloud of passion, they all spiraled out of control. Lucius' eyes locked with Severus', and they both knew in that instant they had found something special with their sweet girl, their woman, their witch. Something worth having, worth sharing, worth keeping... forever.

~fin~