

A Scandal in Bulgaria

by peskipiksi

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Sibyll Trelawney put down her book and, for the first time in weeks, made her way down to the staffroom. She had been lurking in her tower room, sulking, ever since Professor Snape had insulted her abilities when she offered to read his tea leaves.

She had devised her own special revenge: a modified Transfiguration Spell, with elements of Polyjuice magic. It wouldn't transform Snape into a new man, more's the pity; he would just take on the characteristics of whomever she chose. And the anti-hero of her novel was perfect: arrogant, sardonic and, to quote the author, "All emotions were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind." Oh, yes, Trelawney mused, Arthur Conan Doyle had such a turn of phrase. And the deer-stalker would cover up that awful hair nicely. She couldn't wait to see what her colleagues made of it.

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Being a reprint from the reminiscences of

MR LUCIUS MALFOY

To Severus she is always THE woman. I seldom heard him mention her under any other name since she left Hogwarts. The woman was Hermione Granger, of brilliant mind and, as it turned out, dubious morals.

I had seen little of Severus lately. Since the final battle my life had become increasingly home-centred as Narcissa, Draco and I struggled to readjust to life without the Dark Lord; while Severus, who, it turned out, loathed the Dark Order, remained at Hogwarts buried among his old books. One night it was on the twentieth of March 1999 he made the journey to Malfoy Manor, however, a journey more arduous than most owing to the necessity of crossing the Hogwarts grounds before Apparating.

'Merlin's beard!' I cried on beholding his appearance. 'What on earth are you wearing?'

The costume which had arrested my attention consisted of a tweed cape thrown over his usual black robes and a deerstalker hat covering his distinctive hair. He did not deign to answer, however, merely throwing himself into my best armchair by the fire.

'Married life suits you, Lucius,' he remarked, 'Although I note you have not been able to replace your old house-elf.'

'How on earth do you know that?'

'It is simplicity itself,' said he. 'Your cane has not been polished, and your robe appears inadequately pressed. I deduce that Narcissa is not used to domestic duties.'

Before I had a chance to register my outrage at his arrogance, he drew from his pocket a thick piece of parchment, expensive stuff, watermarked in a language I could not

understand.

'It is from a Bulgarian,' Severus informed me. 'That is the emblem of the Bulgarian National Quidditch Team. And here, if I am not mistaken, comes the sportsman himself. I took the liberty of inviting him here. A more convivial atmosphere to secret-spilling than the school.'

I started violently as the visitor strode into my drawing-room. Whoever he was, he had taken to wearing a Death Eater's mask to conceal his identity.

'You will excuse the mask,' our strange visitor said in a strong East-European accent. *'You may address me as the Count von Kramm.* As I wrote in my letter, I require the assistance of one about whom I have heard great things.' He inclined his head towards my friend.

Snape returned the gesture. 'If Your Lordship would condescend to state your case, I should be better able to *seek* a solution.'

The man tore the mask from his face and hurled it upon the ground. 'You are right,' he cried; 'Why should I attempt to conceal my identity?' But you must understand that my situation is... delicate.

Viktor Krum threw himself down upon my chaise longue and stretched out along it. *The facts are briefly these: some five years ago, during my year at Hogwarts, I made the acquaintance of Hermione Granger.* You will, no doubt, remember her.

'There is a photograph... a series of photographs. They were... how do you say? Explicit. And Miss Granger was underage. They were for our own... amusement only. But now, the Bulgarian Quidditch League taking its lead from Muggle football teams is threatening to dismiss anyone with a less than spotless past. I must have those photographs back or my career is ruined. Also, I wish to marry a young lady of Veela descent. Anastasia would not tolerate a scandal.'

'And Miss Granger?'

'Threatens to send them the photographs. Rather than I should marry another woman, there are no lengths to which she would not go none.'

'These photographs,' asked Snape. 'Are they loose, or in an album?'

'They are in an album,' confirmed Krum. 'A big, leather-bound album.'

In spite of myself, I was impressed. Bookish, Muggle-born Miss Granger appeared to have created the wizarding equivalent of the Karma Sutra. Snape's voice brought me out of the reverie into which I had fallen.

'I will call for you at three o'clock tomorrow, Lucius. I have a free afternoon and *should like to chat this little matter over with you.*'

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At three o'clock precisely, he knocked at the front door of the Manor. *I had to look three times before I was certain it was indeed he* My friend was dressed in Muggle attire: a hooded sweatshirt covered his too-long hair, and his distinctive nose was hidden under a scarf. Throwing himself into a chair, he pushed back his hood, unwound the scarf, and stretched out his legs in front of the fire.

'I am sure you could never guess what I have discovered,' he began.

'I can't imagine. I assume you have been watching the habits, and perhaps the house, of Miss Hermione Granger.'

'Quite so. Our little photographer's muse is now a respectable employee of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. And,' he observed me closely before making his next pronouncement, 'she is married.'

'To whom?' I expostulated.

'To Mr Ronald Weasley, newest recruit to the Auror Office.'

I stared at him, amazed. 'She'd have been better off with Krum.'

'Quite.'

'She cannot love him.'

'I am in hopes that she does.'

'Why?'

'Because if she loves Weasley, she cannot love Krum. If she does not love Krum, she will have no reason to destroy his marriage. However, our concern is not with her marital status, but with the retrieval of those photographs. I shall want your co-operation, Lucius.'

I shall be delighted.'

'You don't mind breaking the law?'

'Not in the least.'

'Or running a chance of arrest?'

'Not in a good cause.'

'Excellent. Now, I intend to cause a scene which will result in me being taken to her house. *Four or five minutes afterwards the sitting-room window will open.* You will then invoke the Dark Mark.'

I raised an admonitory hand. 'Are you mad, Severus? I narrowly escaped being sent to Azkaban a year ago!'

'Calm yourself, Lucius. It will not be necessary to conjure the mark itself. She is Muggle-born. Merely hearing the words will be enough to make her flee the house, taking with her, if I am not mistaken, her most treasured possessions.'

'But her husband is an Auror!'

'He will be at work. She, I happen to know, is at home nursing a cold.'

'Severus, this is sheer folly!'

He gave me one of his dark, penetrating looks. 'Did Dr. Watson flinch from creating a scene which would assist the great Sherlock Holmes in his investigations? We have fought our own Moriarty and won, Lucius. This little adventure is child's play.'

I sighed. All was becoming clear. 'You have been reading Muggle literature again, haven't you, Severus?'

He shrugged and leapt out of the armchair. 'Come, Lucius. We are wasting time!'

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We Apparated to a deserted side alley near Hermione's home. This flat, I understood, had been Hermione's before her recent marriage, and was used during the week by husband and wife as a convenient base for the Ministry.

'Now, Lucius, if you would be so kind as to punch me in the stomach?'

I recoiled. 'What?'

'I must appear to have been attacked and injured,' he explained. 'But, for obvious reasons, I do not wish any injury which would necessitate my removing my disguise.' He gestured at the scarf and hood.

Reluctantly, I drew back my fist and drove it into his midriff.

'Thank you,' he gasped, and staggered out to Hermione's flat, calling for help.

He was taken in by the lady of the house herself. Shortly afterwards I saw him gesture as if in need of air, and the sitting-room window opened, as promised. I raised the cry of *'Morsmordre!'*, but as I had not used my wand, no Mark appeared. I saw Snape's figure at the window, and then heard his voice, disguised, assuring Miss Granger it was a false alarm. Ten minutes later I was relieved to find him once again at my side in the alleyway.

'You did it very nicely, Lucius,' he remarked. 'It is all right.'

'Did you get the photograph?'

'I know where it is.'

'Where?' I demanded.

'Inside the chimney-breast.'

'She hides a photograph album in the fireplace? It will go up in smoke!'

Snape laughed. 'You forget, my friend, that she is talented in producing harmless blue fire. She and Weasley are newly wed; she would not want him to see those photographs. I imagine she has not yet found a more suitable hiding-place. This one is purely temporary. We must call on Mr Krum at The Leaky Cauldron at once!'

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Severus, Viktor and I arrived back at Hermione's flat at eight o'clock the following morning. We were greeted by an elderly house-elf, who opened the door and scuttled backwards to avoid notice by Muggles.

'Professor Snape?' she squeaked. 'Master and Mistress is gone.'

'What!' My friend staggered back, his face even paler than usual.

'They is left for Australia to visit Mistress's parents.'

'I am ruined!' groaned Krum.

'We shall see.' Severus strode past him into the sitting-room, approached the fireplace and plunged his hand into the chimney-breast. He drew out a photograph album and a letter. The album was full of photographs of Hermione, exquisitely attired in each one: in a rose-coloured gown at the Yule Ball, in a scarlet cocktail dress at the Weasley-Delacourt wedding. The letter was addressed to 'Professor Severus Snape. *To be left till called for.*' *It was dated at midnight the previous night.*

"My dear Professor Snape - You really did it very well. You took me in completely. Until after the Dark Mark was invoked, I suspected nothing. But after I gave myself away by starting to the fireplace, I began to think. Viktor would have heard much about you from Karkarov, and we all know you are accomplished at undercover work. Ron and I thought flight was our best option, and Australia seems just about far enough away. As the photographs, Viktor may rest easy. I love and am loved by a better man than he. I keep them only to safeguard myself. I leave some photographs which he might care to possess, and I remain, dear Professor,

Very truly yours,

Hermione Weasley, nee Granger"

My friend's expression was glacial, but Viktor Krum was looking mightily relieved. 'I trust her absolutely,' he said. *'The photographs are now as safe as if they really were in the fire. Pray tell me in what way I can reward you.* Now I am playing Quidditch full-time, I have money.'

You have something which I should value even more highly,' said Snape.

'Name it.'

Severus leafed through the album until he came to the picture of Hermione in the scarlet dress. *'This photograph!'*

And that was how we averted a great scandal which threatened the Bulgarian Quidditch team, and how Professor Severus Snape was outwitted by a student. *And when he speaks of Hermione Granger, or when he refers to her photograph, it is always under the honourable title of THE woman.*

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Sibyll Trelawney had had a most enjoyable week. True, Snape had abandoned the tweed cape and deer-stalker when the hex wore off after forty-eight hours, but Sybill had had the pleasure of hearing everyone in the castle answer any of Snape's questions with 'Elementary, my dear Professor.' In addition, Peeves spent hours drifting after him playing the violin very badly.

Snape had the last laugh, however. A month after Sybill's hex, the Headmaster received a large owl order endowing the 'Severus Snape-Viktor Krum Quidditch Scholarship'. The accompanying letter ran:

"In recognition of a brilliant mind, with grateful thanks for an accomplished piece of detection,

Very truly yours,

Viktor Krum

Seeker, National Quidditch Team of Bulgaria"

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A/N: Based on three old SND prompts: Fairfield wanted Snape as Sherlock Holmes, Amita asked for 'A Scandal in Bulgaria', and Kyria of Delphi's ran: Tired of Snape's acerbic superciliousness, Sybill Trelawney hexes him to dress and behave like Sherlock Holmes. How does everyone react?

All quotes are from 'A Scandal in Bohemia', and any unusual grammar or punctuation is in imitation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.