

The Little Black Book

by Minerva

When packing up his library Severus Snape comes across a small Muggle-notebook.
It reminds him of times long gone.

Part I

Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's Note: This one-shot is dedicated to my wonderful beta Dreamy_Dragon, who gave me this prompt:

"Snape has a very special book in his library. What is it and how and why does Hermione become involved?"

The Little Black Book

3 June 2042

Mrs Hermione Weasley was a tad surprised when Draco Malfoy asked her for a meeting. Their interactions had been amicable, if a little restrained, when they had met professionally or at various private functions. She knew that Draco, Harry and Ron had shared a box at the Quidditch World Cup 2032 in Bulgaria, but she had never met him in a private capacity before.

Their meeting took place in a quiet little wizarding restaurant after work. Draco Malfoy looked a little worse for wear, but overall his sixty odd years suited him very well. His eyes were red-rimmed with fatigue, and he looked drawn. The unusual openness of his features sent a frisson of fear down Hermione's back.

After they'd ordered, Draco squared his shoulders. "I have only a vague idea of how much this will affect you; therefore, I'll make it quick."

At Hermione's perplexed nod, he continued. "Severus died two weeks ago in Malta. I am the executor of his will and as such have been appointed to give you this."

He withdrew a thick envelope of about six by four inches from a satchel Hermione hadn't noticed before. Putting the parcel on the table, Malfoy looked her squarely into the eyes to gauge her reaction. But his dinner guest was a seasoned veteran of countless Ministry meetings, and although the news had shaken her badly, she kept her reaction neutral.

"I am very sorry to hear this. Was he ill?"

"You know they had moved to Marsalforn ten years ago because the climate was better for him?"

"Yes, Teddy told us."

"The Cruciatus did a lot of long-term-damage. While the move was good for his joints, his nervous system was irreparably damaged. I suppose only his skills as a Potions master kept him alive for so long after the war."

Hermione was trying to keep her hands busy while listening to her one-time nemesis. She was nursing her second glass of wine before dinner arrived while shredding a

bread-roll to pieces. It spoke volumes of Draco's distraction that he neither noticed nor commented.

He continued, "He is was one of the most brilliant minds in potions theory in the last several hundred years. If not for Tom Bloody Riddle, Severus might have revolutionized potions brewing in a way no other master before him had managed. He still did a lot, considering his distractions."

Malfoy's mien took on a sly look. "I was always sure that you had been one of said distractions a long time ago."

"Draco, Draco, do you really think I am going to comment on that?"

Of course, she wouldn't. Ron Weasley knew his friend had had a lover for part of the year she had spent at Salem in a post-graduate course before they'd become a couple. He even appreciated that during that relationship she had learned to shed her inhibitions in a way she never would have with a young man she'd basically grown up with. But he would never understand how his now-wife could have had an affair with Severus Snape. The spy-turned-hero had fairly fled Britain to avoid the media-frenzy. After some months spent in the wilderness of British-Columbia, he had turned up in Salem, promptly running into Hermione, who had her own personal reasons for spending some time away from friends and family.

After she had reversed the Memory-spell on her parents, Mr and Mrs Granger had kept their distance, resenting their daughter's actions. And when Harry and Ginny had begun to talking of getting engaged she had had a long talk with Ronald. He, too, had felt the pressure. They had called all bets off, decided to take a break, and while Ron had signed a contract as second goal string keeper with the Chudley Cannons, Hermione had immersed herself in the academic world at in Salem.

"No, you won't." He raised his glass. "To Severus."

"To Severus. May he rest in peace."

They ate in companionable silence. Over coffee Hermione enquired, "Did you just come home from Gozo?"

"The day before yesterday. Severus had prepared for the eventuality of his death, but still a lot of things needed to be done as Aunt Andromeda didn't want to stay in Marsalforn without him. She came with me; she is going to live in the dowager house. Teddy is still there, closing up the house."

That explained why no one from the extended Potter-Weasley clan had heard about Snape's death. Teddy and his wife Victoire née Weasley had moved to Beauxbatons five years ago when he had been offered the Transfiguration post there.

Teddy or rather Ted now had a solid and loving relationship with his step-grandfather, who had helped raising him since he'd been seven, but he had learned quickly not to talk about it at Weasley family gatherings. And of course, he had no idea that his auntie Hermione might have welcomed news of Severus Snape.

Draco and Hermione finished a second bottle of wine together, reminiscing. Mostly Draco talked about Snape, how different he had been as Head of House, how he had taken him to Muggle London as a child, how glad Draco was that he could make up to him for his horrid sixth year at Hogwarts.

Hermione didn't share any private memories, but was able to brighten Draco's pensive mood when she told him the story of the Half-Blood-Prince's book sans Sectumsempra, obviously.

Only back at home, sitting on the deserted garden bench near the back door, her husband long asleep, did she shed a few tears. The envelope, addressed in Snape's familiar script, contained a little black Muggle notebook and a letter.

Leafing through it, Hermione recognized it as her own from the year 2000, seemingly forgotten at Severus' flat after she had stormed out for the last time.

Marsalforn, 13 May 2042

Dear Hermione,

I know I called you a deranged harpy the last time we met face to face, but I am confident that we would have progressed to first names again, had we attempted it.

This little black book resurfaced when I sorted through my library, trying to decide which books should go where after my death. Do not be disappointed that you receive no other book from me. Most of them go to Hogwarts where your granddaughter will probably be their first reader if Mr Longbottom's reports are correct. The rest is hopefully in good hands with the Unspeakables.

I wanted you to have your notebook back. Firstly, because it contains notes of a rather personal nature, but more importantly because you have managed to achieve most of the goals you jotted down there, at the mere age of 20 nonetheless. I have followed your career cursorily over the years, and while I would not describe myself as someone who gives up easily, I was often astounded by your tenacity in getting things done your way. (Malfoy senior's exasperated letters were most telling!)

But no doubt, there are times when you are despairing because of the meanness, stupidity or simple sluggishness you must face while trying to reach your aims. And that is when I wish you will take your little notebook and gain reassurance from it.

Hermione had to put the letter down at this point because now she was crying in earnest. She felt Severus reach out to her, easily bridging a gap of 42 years of no communication.

Hermione Weasley loved her husband, adored her family and was proud of her achievements, but a few times over the last decades she had allowed herself some what-if daydreams. What if Severus and she had managed to make a go of their passionate and tumultuous relationship? What if they had calmed down enough to join their formidable minds in research? What if she were Mrs Snape now?

She continued reading the letter.

Hermione, I would never have thought it possible to achieve the level of contentment, happiness even, I have reached now: I love my wife, I think I have had a positive impact on Theodore's development (and still an amicable and respectful relationship with him), and I was mostly able to support myself and my family with work I am passionate about doing.

While I am still sure we would have had no future as a couple much less a family those seven months with you initiated the letting go of decades of hurt, fury and anguish.

Your little person (you're mature enough now to know when I am teasing, aren't you?) with your bossiness, your passion, your unshakeable belief in me being a fundamentally good man put me on the right track, led me, after years of rigorous introspection and professional help, towards becoming whole again. For that I will be forever grateful.

Continue to live well,

Severus

Hermione sat on the bench for a long time, never noticing the silent tears running down her cheeks nor the dampness of the early morning hours permeating her business-robos.

When the sky grew pinkish-grey, she blew her nose, tucked the letter carefully into the little black book and rose to greet a new day.

