

Maxit

by Minerva

What happens with Britain's wizarding world when Muggle Britain leaves the European Union?

One Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's note: Please bear in mind that this little plot bunny is in no way intended to disparage anyone's opinion on Great Britain's plans for a referendum on whether to leave the European Union (Britain's Exit = Brexit). The bunny bit me after watching a satirical program where Brexit came through, but Scotland wanted to stay in the EU and finally left the United Kingdom, plunging the rest of the UK into a deep recession. Many thanks to my wonderful beta Dreamy_Dragon! The world of Harry Potter belongs to J.K.Rowling; I make no money from writing this.

Maxit

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"Granger! Stop that infernal pacing and muttering!"

"But, Severus, haven't you heard? There's to be a referendum about the European Union in Muggle Britain! This is a disaster after the campaign the *Prophet* ran against my department's work towards a wizarding European Union!"

"Will you calm down before I hex you! There's a good chance either no one in the wizarding world will notice or the whole thing will come to nothing anyway. Some of the Tories will bluster and blunder, but when it comes down to the actual referendum, common sense will prevail."

"Not to mention greed. My accountants calculated the possible impact of the Muggle side on Malfoy Industries alone. They only had time for a rough estimate, but even so it is clear that I will have to relocate. Personally, I am fancying France. Miffy, please bring tea for three. And Ms Granger's favourite biscuits."

"Do not mollycoddle me, Lucius! I have been working on the better integration of Magical Europe for the last eight years! I have turned a ghost department created to placate a bossy know-it-all Muggle-born into something that has had a huge impact on a lot of people in wizarding Britain; student exchanges have become the norm instead of something for the very rich, the economy has had a growth rate unparalleled in wizarding history..."

"Hermione..."

The woman started. Snape did not use her first name as a rule. He had done so only twice in their adult relationship (and never before).

The first instance had been in the year 2001. Hermione had sat desolately in a Muggle café near the entrance to Diagon Alley on a Sunday evening. A sudden burst of rain had swept her former Potions master into the establishment, carrying two bags of Muggle books. He had hesitated only a moment before joining her on her table as all other seats were taken.

They had met a few times at Order meetings after Snape's recovery. After he had brushed off her attempt at an apology for leaving him in the Shrieking Shack with a brusque, "What kind of a spy would I have been if a child, even a precocious one thrust into a war far too early, would have seen through my charade and acted accordingly? You did what you had to do admirably, keeping Potter alive for his final confrontation with Voldemort. Rest assured I bear you no ill will. At least not for the Shrieking Shack, but for the burnt robes I'll reserve judgement." The last sentence had been said with a slight smile, whereupon Hermione had burst into tears in earnest.

Thereafter, they had managed to work together as fellow Order members; Hermione's skill at collecting and organising facts was yielding spectacular results when it was combined with Snape's knowledge about the Death Eaters' organisation.

Severus had ordered tea, and after some small talk about the weather, he had uttered with only minimal resignation, "If you need a sympathetic ear, I am prepared to listen."

He had heard a rather depressing tale. Hermione had managed to restore her parents' memory completely no mean feat in itself but not their trust. The rift had been too great, and when Snape had met her at the café, she had just spent a weekend with them, finally accepting the full impact of her actions. The Grangers would never be closer than a favourite but distant aunt and uncle, always wary of magic, never again trusting their daughter fully.

After a few minutes of listening to Hermione's bouts of self-recrimination, he had stopped her. "Hermione, they were targets. Certain ones. You got them away a few days before an attack. Get over it and be pleased that they are alive. From your viewpoint now do you think that they would have moved away far enough soon enough if you had told them so?"

"No, I don't think so. But maybe I should have told them more about my life and the oncoming war earlier."

"If they had known the full extent of the danger you had been in, they would have withdrawn you from Hogwarts after your first year. I do not think that a witch of your magical prowess would have managed to remain undetected in a Britain ruled by Voldemort. Your parents may have lived, but you would have been enslaved at best, or killed at worst. Do you truly think that a better solution than the quite ingenious one you found?"

She had pulled herself together then and had thanked him before leaving.

The second instance had been more than eight years ago, some months after she had turned down Ron's umpteenth proposal for good and had thrown herself into her career with even more vengeance fully knowing that she may well have turned down her only chance at having a family of her own. Hermione had tried dating, but had found out what she had subconsciously known all along. The men she went out with were either looking to date and possibly bed a war heroine for the thrill of it or for revenge. And all closer acquaintances with whom she would have been able to be just Hermione were already spoken for (not that she fancied one of them). She had been in love with Ron briefly, but soon enough had found out that they worked better as friends. Theoretically, his approach to life might have balanced out her own nicely, but in real life it didn't work.

Therefore, she had put her mind to work with even more ferocity to avoid brooding.

Only when she had waited for an elevator in the deserted Ministry lobby, had she realised how late it had become. When steps had been heard from a corridor, she had tensed, but relinquished the tight hold on her wand upon seeing Severus Snape. He had greeted her with a nod and settled to wait beside her, shrinking the rolls of parchment he'd been carrying.

"Did you file a patent?"

"Yes. Or rather an addendum to one already filed. We have developed an alteration to the Were-Be-Gone Potion that makes it safe to be consumed by children."

"That is wonderful news!"

A few months after his recovery, Severus Snape had vanished for some years, making only rare appearances in Wizarding Britain. No one knew where he'd been or what he'd done, but personally Hermione thought that first it was nobody's business but his own and second if he'd lain flat on his back doing nothing, he'd probably needed it after the last twenty years.

Snape then had resurfaced with a bang, obtaining a contract as a consultant and brewer for St Mungo's Potions department and heading the research department of "Dove". The latter was a foundation built with reparation payments from Death Eater families, mainly the Malfoys. While her and Harry's testimonies had helped clearing Narcissa and Draco, Lucius Malfoy had avoided Azkaban by the skin of his teeth and had been fined heavily. The family had managed to keep the manor in Wiltshire, but had lost most of their other assets.

Since then, Hermione had come to know the Malfoy patriarch and had learned that the family was by no means destitute because the Ministry had not seized their Muggle investments.

The first research project for "Dove" had been finding a cure for lycanthropy, something Snape had been working on for years, but had never had enough time and funds to reach a solution.

After two years, the potion had been ready for testing. It had worked well with grown-up wizards, but hadn't been deemed safe for children. There were quite a lot of youngsters who had been infected in the last two years of Voldemort's (and Greyback's) reign of terror.

The lift had arrived, but the rumble had come from Hermione's stomach. Snape had raised an eyebrow. "I was about to find a café for a late dinner; would you care to accompany me?"

She hadn't needed long to decide as her flat contained a tin of baked beans and some ready meals. They had found a café off Charing Cross Road. Dinner and the conversation had been good but ever so often Hermione stared into space in between topics.

"Spill it, Hermione, what is weighing on your mind?"

She had looked at him squarely, truly seeing the man instead of the teacher, a comrade, a friend even for the first time. "I know that I can talk to you, but considering what you've been through I am sure I do not know a tenth of it voicing my problems sounds like whining to me."

"Don't do that to yourself. I only have realised in retrospect that, while my time at Hogwarts during the second rise of Riddle wasn't easy, I had some offers for sympathetic ears from Order members on the staff that I should have taken. From Albus, from Minerva, from Poppy, from Filius even."

"Right. In short, I have made a decision I know to be the right one, but I can't help wondering if by making it I have denied myself the chance to have a family. I know I should not marry Ron we are better friends than lovers but..."

"Please, you're what twenty-six? You can bear children until you're in your sixties, if you wish to."

"I realise that. But everyone with whom I could be just Hermione, not part of the Golden Trio or a war heroine, is spoken for."

"Now you are being ridiculous. There are plenty of wizards out there, in Europe or elsewhere in the world, who won't be interested in your participation in the war at all. Even in Britain, if you look earnestly."

"See, I told you I'm only whining."

"Do you yearn for children?"

"Good heavens, no! I just assumed that I would have some eventually."

"And you will. Though, they might not be red haired and Quidditch mad, which is just as well."

Feeling better already, Hermione had signalled the waiter for two glasses of Prosecco and handed one to Snape.

"Thank you. And cheers to my future children Hannah and Hugh, mad haired and book crazy."

"To Hannah and Hugh."

They had parted amicably shortly afterwards.

After that, Hermione had met Snape several times a year, at various functions such as weddings or work-related occasions. She could rely on having lively discussions and sharing the occasional laughter with him when he choose to apply his still acerbic wit.

During the last year, they'd often had lunch together with Lucius Malfoy. The influential pure-blood had shifted the majority of his business ventures to the Muggle world. Hermione had a good working relationship with him after a few rather violent clashes about how to interpret the Statute of Secrecy and while they would never be best buddies, she looked forward to their extended luncheons, even more so when Severus joined them, something he did regularly.

Therefore, when Snape used her first name this time, Hermione sat down again, took a few breaths and let his words sink in.

"Thank you, Severus. I guess your prediction about the Tories' course of action will come true. I will try not to fret in the meantime and hope for the best."

Lucius chimed in with, "Nevertheless, it pays to be prepared for the worst. But then, your department will become even more important. If you play your cards right, you will be wizarding Britain's portal to the rest of the world."

Snape sent a dark look in Malfoy's direction.

"You don't need to be so protective of Ms Granger, Severus; I am sure she will acquit herself admirably."

Hermione suppressed the urge to roll her eyes. Lucius could be quite condescending sometimes but she really did feel more optimistic now.

A soft chime sounded from Snape's pocket watch. The Potions master hesitated and then turned towards the young witch who was busily scribbling onto her ever-present notepad.

"Hermione, I have to harvest some moss near St Ives. If you come along and help me, we would have enough time for a stop in the Tate."

Still hunched over her work, she did not notice the tense set of Snape's shoulders, but Malfoy did. As she stared off into space, brow furrowed, his friend's stance seemed to grow even more rigid as if he prepared himself for rejection.

But then, Hermione turned towards Snape with a brilliant smile. "I have tried to remember whether I have appointments this afternoon, but there are none. I will gladly come along with you, Severus. Merlin knows I won't get anything done in the office, and I have enough overtime, amounting to months probably. Should I change?"

Severus looked her up and down, sizing up her nice but sensible shoes, shapely calves and sage green robe over skirt and jumper.

"No, the weather should be fine in Cornwall, and we won't do much climbing."

After settling their bills, they left a pensive Lucius Malfoy and Disapparated from the restaurant's cloakroom.

Lucius thought about his friend and the young Muggle-born. Severus seemed to like her. Granger had apparently a lot of respect for the Potions master, but whether she felt more than that, he could not discern. He decided to say nothing at the moment and to keep watching them. He had a feeling that asking Ms Granger about her intentions would not go down well.

Hermione and Severus appeared behind some shrubs south of St Ives Bay. They walked down the beach a bit further until some rocks came into view. Hermione studied the moss growing on them under Snape's watchful eye, but came up with nothing. It was hardly enough moss to occupy one person with harvesting it for longer than half an hour, but she had suspected anyway that this expedition was a ploy to divert her. "Well, are you going to tell me?"

He fell into teaching mode easily. "The chime alerted me to this place entering the right moon phase for harvesting. I will now cast a spell that alerts us when the moss has been exposed to enough sun to be at its most potent. Then it will begin to emit a blueish glow Muggles cannot see, and we'll scrape it off."

He searched the beach and cliff for onlookers and then proceeded with an intricate wand movement, saying the spell aloud for Hermione's benefit.

"Silly wand waving, my arse! Do you have an idea how jealous I was at the incredible creativity and intuition of the Half-blood Prince?"

Snape looked a trifle smug, boyish even, but the expression was gone again in a heartbeat. Hermione was forcibly reminded of a first-year Harry's reactions to even the most common kindnesses. Aware that he would read her expression in the wrong way, she busied herself with wandlessly vanishing her tights they were torn anyway; her companion had judged the suitability of her clothes for this excursion mainly right, but had failed to take her tights into account and looking at her naked toes in the sand.

"I am now. My mother was really talented at Charms; she taught me from an early age, and I grew up with her inventing new spells or tweaking existing ones. Later, I learned that she did it out of necessity, having no access to a wizarding library. By the time I got my first wand, I approached Charms in that way, always trying to gauge what words or phrases could carry a spell. That I liked to play with words helped, I suppose."

"Play with words! I imagined you sitting by your fireside as a pupil, trying to find new biting worded insults."

Snape blushed a little. "Caught. But only for colleagues and some of the more pompous friends of Lucius."

Hermione's laughter rang out over the bay before she joined him scraping off the glowing moss. They were finished in less than half an hour.

After magically sealing the containers with moss, Severus offered her his arm, and they made their way up the hill towards Tate St Ives. A few hundred yards from the museum, a waiter was preparing the tables on a terrace for dinner. On a whim, Hermione addressed her companion, "Shall I enquire if they have a table for an early dinner?"

Snape looked at her earnestly, as if searching her face for clues of something. "Yes, I would like that."

The young woman felt as if she'd missed something important, but busied herself with booking a table for them.

In the gallery, they parted ways soon, being interested in different artists. Hermione spent a lot of time in front of Alfred Wallis' paintings. The native fisherman had started painting late in life, depicting in bold strokes familiar scenes and things boats in St Ives' harbour, flowers in a vase. Deceptively simple, the pictures went right to the core of the matter, the calm yet invigorating beauty of local flowers, the promise and gaiety of boats dancing on waves. A deep voice much closer to her than expected remarked, "Some things are so simple, aren't they?"

If she turned around, she would end up in his arms. Did she dare to turn around? To buy herself a little time, Hermione leaned back a bit until she came in contact with Snape. Taking his personality into account, his actions today practically screamed 'declaration of intent'. Hermione was not sure she could match this intensity on top of being scared shitless, but after another glance at Wallis' boats, she decided to take the plunge. Turning around, putting her arms around his torso and resting her cheek against his body, she said, "Severus, your friendship is one of the most precious things in my life. I can not imagine doing without you as a friend. What if we ruin that by taking this further?"

After initially stiffening, he relaxed and brought his arms around her as well. Being flush against his body from knees to head, Hermione noticed the slight tremble and felt him drawing a shaky breath against her neck. "I can give you no guarantees. I just cannot any longer I need..."

The trembling intensified as she felt a surge of protectiveness towards this man, who was probably the most dangerous wizard alive. She tightened her hold and drew soothing circles on his back. Oh yes, she could love him easily. Never one to put much faith into house traits, Hermione knew, nevertheless, that she would guard his heart with all the ferociousness of a Gryffindor lioness.

She drew back a little bit to look into his face. When she realised that her eyes had quickly swept back from his eyes towards his mouth, she blushed. Severus didn't need any more encouragement for their first kiss.

Much later that night, Hermione observed the relaxed, sleeping man next to her. She admired his long black lashes against pale skin, felt delight about the near smile on his lips. Drawing the blanket back over both of them, she settled back against him to sleep.

Some things really were simple.

Lucius Malfoy was relieved that he had no reason to interfere on his best friend's behalf, and he quite contentedly stood as best man during a wedding ceremony that mixed wizarding and Muggle elements, trying to put that incident in the registrar's office behind him where he had jumped visibly when a printer had come to life.

Ronald Weasley's youngest puked on Harry Potter's back, which marked the reception as a success in Lucius' books.

Mr and Mrs Granger had had a long and brutally honest talk with their estranged daughter's fiancé. Afterwards, they made active efforts to become closer to her again, which made Hermione happy, even though Severus suspected that Mr Granger's initial main goal was to talk her out of marrying him, something he could understand easily.

The arrival of grandchildren mended the relationship further, and over the years Hermione realised that she and her parents were as close as other families of Muggle-borns the gap between the two worlds was there; it could be bridged but not made to disappear.

Neither Maxit nor Brexit came through, although it was a close call. Due to the political uncertainty, wizarding and Muggle Britain's economy alike suffered severely. This meant a lot less work for Hermione's department projects and exchanges were suspended until both governments decided either for or against staying in the Union which was just as well because the department's head was on maternity leave.

Hannah Eileen Snape and her little brother Simon Hugh Snape knew the Tate St Ives inside out by the time they boarded their first Hogwarts Express. In their teens they began to roll their eyes when holidays were mentioned, but always accompanied their parents good-naturedly for a two-week stay on the Cornish coast.

The End