

The Interruption

by rosewood

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Thin, pale green light shone through the window beneath the Black Lake into the private study located in the dungeon. Although he was a man accustomed to solitude, Severus Snape found the quiet atmosphere somewhat unsettling. It was the final week of the school term, and he sat at his desk looking out of his window, reflecting upon the events of the past several months which had left him in a position he dared not hope to ever achieve. The chance at a future free of petty institutional squabbles, dunderheads, and most importantly, manipulative, mind-fucking, rat-bastard masters both of the Dark and Light variety. If he played his hand right, there was a strong possibility he would also have Amanda Appleton, the curvaceous Ancient Runes professor, firmly by his side.

A most enjoyable thought, indeed, but not quite enough to shake the air of unease that had slowly crept into the room. His senses heightened; he was unsurprised when his wards alerted him to someone lingering outside the entrance to his office. A scowl marred his face as a quick spell revealed the person to be the Granger girl. The Brat Trio had the uncanny ability to pester him at the most inopportune times, and this was no exception. For a brief moment, he considered ignoring her presence, but he knew it would only be a futile exercise as the girl was a mind numbing example of unfettered persistence.

He blamed Minerva.

He huffed in annoyance as he left his study to enter his office from his quarters. The girl had been pestering him more than usual as of late, and he could hardly wait to finally be rid of her come the week's end. His mindset anchored, he abruptly opened the office door, startling her as she had yet to actually knock.

There was something definitely off about her demeanor. He eyed her warily. It was apparent that she'd attempted to tame the gnarled mess atop of her head, as it was twisted into some semblance of a French braid. Her skirt seemed a tad shorter than dress regulation dictated and... Was that rouge on her lips?

"What do you want this time, Miss Granger?"

Hermione wiped her hands nervously upon her skirt, her smile faltering under his glaring scrutiny. Things were not going quite as smoothly as she had hoped; however, she trudged onward. She cleared her throat, poised to speak, until he cut her to the quick.

"I haven't the time nor the inclination for your nonsense, silly girl," he spat. "Get on with it."

"Well, sir. I was wondering if..."

He couldn't recall anything after she uttered those first few words because her voice chimed. It actually tinkled and chimed and brought forth a vision of the chit in angelic splendor riding astride a unicorn through a twilight lit meadow.

"Bloody fucking hell!"

She gasped at his uncharacteristic outburst. Circe's tits, even her gasp had a musical lilt.

No, things were certainly not turning out as she had anticipated. Embarrassed beyond belief, she stammered out a melodious apology, only to be abruptly cut off once again.

"Not. Another. Word."

He growled as the last notes of her charmed voice faded away, stepped aside to allow her into the office and pointed to the rickety chair in front of his desk, reserved specifically for wayward students. Dejected, she sat down. Tears streaked mascara down her cheeks.

The door shut with such force, it rattled the jars placed along his shelves. He sat down at his desk, closed his eyes for a moment then drew in a deep breath while he considered his options.

He could do away with her without leaving a trace, but that would require too much effort. Besides, her disappearance would cause a ridiculous amount of drama that was sure to induce a migraine he would rather do without. Instead, he decided to get this sordid situation over and done with so that he could get on with the business of contemplating his life, as well as the more delightful attributes of Professor Appleton. Severus snapped his fingers to summon his personal house-elf. He jotted a short message and ordered the creature to immediately deliver it to the Headmistress. He then turned his undivided attention to girl sitting in front of him whose sobs were punctuated with the irritating sound of softly ringing bells. Her tears left him unmoved and only served to fuel his rancor.

"Miss Granger, would I be correct to assume that this unfortunate circumstance is the result of a potion, as opposed to a charm?" His deep voice held an edge of quiet, controlled fury.

She nodded. Her attempt to wipe the tears with the back of her fingers only served to further smear the dark streaks running down her face.

"And would this potion by any chance contain Ashwinder eggs, as well as some form of veela essence?"

Unable to look him in the eye, she stared at her lap. Exasperated by her hesitation to answer his question, he slammed his hand upon the desk causing her to jump in her seat. Startled, she looked up to meet his furious eyes. He entered her mind without thought or care, only to be bombarded by an onslaught of emotions. There was her humiliation regarding her current predicament, followed by guilt and an underlying current of angst-riddled desire. He grasped onto her feeling of guilt and quickly found the information he sought.

She had discovered the Veela Vox potion in a musty tome that she purloined from the Black family library at Grimmauld Place and had taken great pains to brew it in the privacy of the Head Girl's room. While Ashwinder eggs were somewhat costly to come by, Snape was taken aback to witness her actually stun Fleur Weasley to obtain several strands of the young woman's hair and a few precious drops of her blood, then Obliviate her afterwards.

All of this was done in a desperate attempt to achieve one goal: to catch the eye and heart of the Potions master.

Shocked by the intrusion upon her mind, Hermione frantically fought to sever the mental connection as each damning memory swam into view. She was sobbing uncontrollably by the time he withdrew from her mind several minutes later.

Unable to withstand the disjointed potion-induced ringing caused by her cries, Snape silenced her voice with a harshly whispered spell. He stared at her for a long, hard moment. He could scarcely believe the girl in front of him was capable of such deviousness, or that she would go to such lengths as to attack a fellow Order member in an effort to brew a potion bordering on the Dark Arts. She would be expelled and the Aurors, as well as her parents, would be called to the school. He didn't even want to think about the ensuing scandal that was sure to leak out in a twisted way that would firmly place the blame on him. At the very least, Minerva was going to have kittens.

This was not how he intended to spend his afternoon.

Hermione could feel his revulsion wash over her in almost tangible waves. She never anticipated that her well-laid plans would disintegrate like ash in the wind. Oh, how he must hate her after discovering all she had done. She took a deep breath in an effort to calm herself and glanced at him bleary-eyed. He had crossed his arms, staring at her with disdain. She felt her heart twist with the first twinge of heartache and remorse.

Snape arose from his seat, placed both hands upon his desk and leaned forward. She wilted beneath his glare. "Of all the utterly foolish things you have done during your years at this school, this goes beyond the pale." His whisper was tinged with ill-concealed loathing. "Get up, you pathetic girl. It's time to visit the Headmistress."

Her eyes went wide as she tried to protest, only to find her voice had been silenced. During the midst of her plotting, failure had never entered her mind, much less the prospect of being hauled in front of her former Head of House and personal mentor, Professor McGonagall, in utter disgrace. Her parents would be called. They would all know the despicable things she had done. She would be expelled. She would be humiliated. Days away from a graduation that would be forever torn from her grasp. Her dreams of a fast-track career as a barrister in the Ministry crumbled. This couldn't happen. Mustn't happen.

Her mind whorled as she desperately sought a solution. She could fix this. She just needed a moment to sneak away before reaching the Headmistress' office. One small moment. She would have her future at any and all costs. She shook her head, and tried to seek refuge behind the chair she clumsily vacated.

"Enough!" he hissed. "Since you deemed yourself old enough to meddle in adult pursuits, you will face the consequences in such fashion. Now pull together whatever meager dignity you may possess, or Merlin help me, I will truss you up like a holiday goose and parade you through the halls in front of all and sundry."

His thinly veiled threat had the desired effect. She stood stock-still.

"Is that understood?"

She slumped her shoulders, nodded in submission and followed him into the hallway. As he erected the wards to his office, she quietly pulled her DA galleon from her pocket and sent a plea for help to her best friends, Harry Potter and Ronald Weasley. Hopefully, they would be able to reach her and create a much needed distraction before she and Professor Snape reached the Headmistress' office. If not, her chances of extracting herself from this obvious lapse into sheer stupidity would be slim to none.

There is a reason potion brewers are cautious when handling volatile ingredients: no one ever wants to be caught in the maelstrom of a potentially dangerous situation, like the one about to occur at the intersecting paths of one highly irate Potions master; one nervous, slightly disheveled Head Girl who appeared much worse for wear; one well-meaning, albeit, somewhat inept, scar-headed young man; and his quick to anger, jealousy prone red-headed sidekick.

The aftermath had been devastating.

Once his wards around his office were erected, Snape sharply turned on his heel and headed through the maze of the dungeons towards the ground floor. Hermione was grateful that he didn't drag her by her arm as she had half expected. Instead, she had to trot after him in an effort to keep up with his longer strides. She was nearly out of breath by the time they had finished ascending the stairway to the main floor where it meet at a junction near the Great Hall. The few students they encountered along their path offered them wide berth, as it was apparent the Potions master was not in any mood to be trifled.

As they strode down the main hallway, Professor Amanda Appleton appeared from around a nearby corridor. The Ancient Runes professor was a comely woman in her early thirties with black hair that fell in full waves upon her shoulders. She was intelligent, good-natured and in the prime of her life. A slight smile graced her lips as she saw Professor Snape, despite his sour demeanor. They had shared in a quiet, meaningful affair this past year that held much future promise.

Severus slowed his pace slightly when she came into view. She was the only reason he had yet to leave Hogwarts, and now that the term was coming to a close, he dreamt of a future with this woman whom he had come to consider his soul mate. But first, he had to get the situation with the Granger girl under control and heft her off on the Headmistress. As far as he was concerned, he would no longer be dealing with the Brat Trio if he could possibly avoid it.

From the far side of the corridor, footsteps could be heard running in their general direction. Moments later, Potter and Weasley slid into view with the Marauder's map in hand, as they rushed to intercept their friend who apparently was in some kind of trouble.

The two young men gaped as they tried to make sense of Hermione's appearance. She was a disheveled mess from top to bottom. Her face was ruddy from crying, her eye makeup streaked down her cheeks and her reddish lipstick had become smudged. Add to that, her shortened skirt, snug blouse and her hair struggling to spring free from its plait, she resembled nothing more than a roughed-up trollop. In short, her disastrous appearance came as a complete shock to her friends.

Hermione heaved a sigh of relief upon seeing the two and hoped they could provide enough of a temporary distraction so that she could sneak away. It was unfortunate that she missed Weasley's facial expression as his brain cobbled together an unlikely scenario that would place a whorish-looking Hermione within the company of their slimy Potions professor.

"You filthy bastard!"

Ron slashed his wand through the air in a downward motion, shouting a spell meant for the battlefield. Upon hearing the commotion, Snape's wand dropped from his sleeve into his palm as he deftly deflected the hex. A split second later, Ron cast another curse, only this time Harry grabbed at his arm in an effort to stop his friend from spiraling further out of control. His wand swept in a wide arc that hurled the spell wildly through the air toward a pair of third-year students who had stopped to watch the disturbance. Instead, it struck Professor Appleton who didn't hesitate to jump in its path.

Severus was terrified as he watched his lover throw herself in front of the erratic blasting curse. The force of the spell slammed both her and the two girls she sought to protect, off their feet and into the far wall where they slumped onto the floor. Rivulets of blood seeped heavily through the torn shreds of her robes.

Enraged, he Stunned then bound both Potter and Weasley before racing to her side. He knelt down and parted her robes, revealing a gaping wound along her midsection. Without further hesitation, he pointed his wand to the side where a silver mist formed into a swan that gracefully hovered for a few seconds before quickly flying toward the infirmary.

Hermione watched aghast as the scene unfolded. At this point, several students started gathering around, many openly crying. Neville Longbottom stepped over the bound bodies of his two male friends toward the injured girls. The young man watched the Potions master, whose hands were coated in blood, as he valiantly fought to save Professor Appleton, before turning his own attention toward the unconscious girls. Severus continued to sing an incantation over her abdomen in a vain attempt to close the wound. Despite his efforts, she continued to bleed out. Madam Pomfrey was soon by his side running a quick succession of diagnostic and healing spells. After a few minutes, the school matron knelt back upon her legs and bowed her head as she watched the Potions Master continue his futile ministrations. Soon his shaken voice was punctuated by sobs. He pulled his lover's body into his arms and wept.

Hermione slowly backed away from the devastation. She turned to run as far from the corridor as she could, only to stumble into a hidden alcove and retch.

Hermione strode into her private room, thankful for the perks afforded to the Head Girl. She could hardly contain her excitement as she went straight to the side table in front of her window to check the potion she had left cooling in a silver cauldron she had slyly borrowed from Grimmauld Place. Her future happiness rode upon the outcome of this afternoon. She deserved this. She had earned it. And soon she would bestow upon him all the love he so richly deserved. So it hit her like a Bludger to the gut when she discovered that the cauldron lay empty. A folded parchment addressed to her in her own handwriting sat propped against it.

"Leave it be. There is only tragedy and heartache to be found down that road. Move on with your life."

As the note dropped from her fingers onto the floor, she slumped down upon the edge of the bed, her heart heavy. She tentatively touched the small object that dangled from a chain around her neck and cried.

Severus leaned back in his chair behind the desk in his private study. He grimaced and wiped his hand down his face in concern. A heavy tension hung in the air that he couldn't quite place. He knew it boded ill for him; his years as a spy had taught him as much. The term was coming to end, and he could only imagine what catastrophe lay ahead. After all, the future was inevitable. Then without warning, the feeling of impending doom simply vanished. He scowled at the sudden change in atmosphere, as it could only mean one thing.

Someone had been mucking with the timeline. Again.

Sweet baby Merlin, he was going to strangle Minerva for gifting that Granger swot with a Time Turner.

Paranoid that the Fates were simply yanking his chain, he sat in silence waiting for a new calamity to occur. A few minutes passed without incident, and a small smile crept across his face. Severus pulled open a small black velvet box from an interior pocket of his robe. The platinum ring adorned with a sapphire was a Prince family heirloom. He knew it would look perfect gracing his lover's hand.

He had relished the relative freedom of the past few months. He had a new lease of life, complete with deep and abiding love. He pulled a fresh sheet of parchment from his desk drawer and penned his letter of resignation, effective immediately, following the end of term.

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