

Idiot's Repose

by PlaidPooka

He'd Avada Kadavra himself if he could move. An Epilogue, what epilogue, in which Severus Snape is not killed by Nagini.

One

Chapter 1 of 9

He'd Avada Kadavra himself if he could move. An Epilogue, what epilogue, in which Severus Snape is not killed by Nagini.

Cold.

Merlin it's cold.

Something's hard. Why is it so hard?

Am I sleeping on the floor? What's happened? I can't remember. Where am I? I need to wake up. Come on now, Severus old chap, wake up.

Perhaps I am awake. I seem to be thinking more clearly, at any rate. I'm barely breathing. My heart rate is so low I'd rather not think about it.

Damn. I can't even open my eyes. It smells disgusting here...wherever here is. It smells like blood and dust. Blood, dust, and urine.

It's me. I think I smell myself. I'm bleeding somewhere, and I've pissed myself. An awesome end to an awesome day, I'm sure. But what day? What's happened?

I try for an indeterminate time. Try to take a deep breath. Try to open my eyes. Try to waggle a fucking finger.

Bollocks it's cold.

The snake! It was that fucking snake and that fucking monster that kept her. I was ready for that, you egomaniacal fool. Did you know? Did your dark lordiness know that I crafted an antivenin for that fucking snake? I took it...I know I did. I've been taking that potion every day for the past fortnight.

Why didn't it work? Oh, I suppose it worked somewhat. I am alive...comotose, but alive nonetheless.

Something's wrong. That potion. It should have worked. Certainly it is a dangerous potion, but I know my business. It should have negated the poison, not left me a zombie. Was there too much blood loss? Am I bleeding out? It was a calculated risk, though I thought it worth taking. Blood loss would convince the noseless one I was dying so he wouldn't feel obligated to ensure the matter. That was why I didn't add a blood congealant in the first place. The blood loss from a brace of puncture wounds would be dangerous, but shouldn't kill me. That was the plan.

Perhaps my brand of ill luck held true to form. The damn snake may have hit the jugular. No. If that was the case I'd be dead, not immobile.

Blood loss.

Sweet Merlin fucking hell. I did this. All my careful calculations and I left one important factor out in my hurry. Blood loss. I didn't take blood loss into account when I set the dosage. That antivenin potion was nearly dark in nature. Like foxglove, it is dangerous if used in too strong a dosage. I didn't consider how drastically my own blood loss would change the strength of the potion.

The potion itself is harmless in its inert state. One could drink buckets of the brew with no harmful results at all, so long as you don't actually need it. Once the venom is introduced into the system, say from the bite of a jolly huge snake, the potion becomes dangerously volatile. It is capable of causing great healing or great catastrophe.

How much trouble was I in? I seemed safe for the moment. My breathing and heart rate were almost nonexistent, but they both held steady in their diminished state. My mental state was improving rapidly and I now felt clear-headed. It was as if I'd downed a large dose of the Draught of the Living Death.

I remember the students were here. Granger holding my hand. Potter getting the memories. Weasley standing like a lump, looking like he might piss himself.

I suppose the joke is on me, then.

Did it work? Did all the carefully laid plans work? I can only hope that the day was won and the madman is dead.

Perhaps the day was lost. I have no way of knowing exactly how long I've been lying here, but it seems a long time. If we'd won, someone would have come to collect me by now, even if they did suppose I was dead. The Dark Lord, however, would gleefully leave my body here to rot.

Even if we've won, even if they come for me, I don't know any cure for what's happened to me. Too many variables affected the outcome. It would take me months, perhaps years of study to perfect a cure. An endeavor that I am patently unsuited for in my current state.

I might be better off dying here on the floor.

I might die here on the floor. I don't hear anything but the painstakingly slow thump of my diminished heartbeat and the occasional creak and groan of an old house. If there is fighting, it's too far away for me to hear it. The Death Eaters have evidently left the building. I seem to be on my own for the foreseeable future, and I can't move a muscle. I try again to open my eyes but give up almost immediately. I could move my eyeballs slightly side to side, but my eyelids behaved as if they were glued shut. Nothing to hear. Nothing to see. Left to fade away in a pool of blood and piss.

I shouldn't have taken the antivenin. I should have let the bastard put me out of my misery.

I'm not sure why I wanted to live. My life was rather miserable. Got the woman I love killed. Killed my best friend. Oh, he was dying anyway but I finished him off. A brace of decades trying to ram some knowledge into the most dunderheaded children in the universe. I think the only reason I wanted to live was to see it come to an end at last. To see the bastard die, and remain so.

Doesn't seem like a good enough reason now.

I'm almost dozing when I hear a new sound. I'm clearheaded at once. A door creaking, I think. Yes, and now the sound of footsteps and a rhythmic vibration in the floor tells me someone approaches.

I decide I don't care who it is. If it's a Death Eater, they'll likely put me out of my misery. If it's an Order member or someone from the school, they might do the same quite frankly. Maybe they'll tell who won the day before they kill me. The footsteps draw closer, and I try to mentally prepare myself for whatever fate befalls me.

"He's here, Sir!"

It takes me a moment to place the voice. A student. Macmillan, I think. Ernie Macmillan. He steps closer but does not touch me.

"Ah, there he is, poor chap. Thank you, Mr. Macmillan. It doesn't look hopeful, does it? Best to check, though."

I hear a spark of magic, and then my left eye is pried open and I see the disheveled face of Filius Flitwick briefly before my eyelid is released and I fall into blackness again.

"I'm afraid he's gone."

I am not gone, damn you! You are hardly a medical professional, Flitwick. I'll thank you to keep your faulty diagnoses to yourself. Go get Poppy, you daft dwarf.

"Good. I mean, him being a traitor and all."

Lovely. Nice to see you too, Mr. Macmillan.

"Not at all, young man, not at all. Young Potter's been babbling to anyone who'll listen that Professor Snape was on our side until the end. Besides, He Who Must Not Be Named killed him. That's proof enough for me."

"I suppose so. What should we do with him then?"

"We'll take him back to the castle, the poor man. The dead are being set outside the main doors until we can get them properly buried. There's no room inside. The infirmary was destroyed and the Great Hall is full of the wounded."

Damn it, Filius. I'm not dead! Get Poppy.

A strange tingling spreads over my skin and the hard floor of the Shrieking Shack falls away. He's levitated me, I expect. Flitwick and the boy say little as they transport me to the castle. Not one word from either of them about whether Voldemort perished or not. Potter lived to blather on about me...I suppose that's something. I'll never like the brat, but he is Lily's son and I have tried to protect him.

At least the air outside is fresh. I still smell of blood and piss but the dusty decay of the Shrieking Shack is gone. It's chilly out and I can feel dampness on my face. I think it's spitting rain. Brilliant. I suppose I might die from exposure before I suffer the suffocation of being buried alive. That's looking on the bright side for you.

All too soon my body is lowered onto cold and uneven ground. Bodies. I think I'm lying on bodies. How bad was the battle that they have stacked bodies like cordwood? Did we win? Someone, please tell me we won.

"We can't leave him uncovered like that."

Don't leave me at all, Macmillan.

"He's beyond caring, lad. I didn't want to leave him in the Shrieking Shack, but nothing will disturb him on school grounds. We have to help those who still need us and focus on the living."

I'm alive, you ridiculous old coot. Someone please get Poppy. Please.

"Let's get back inside, lad. We've done all we can for him."

Bastards! I'm alive, damn you all. Don't leave me freezing here on a pile of corpses.

I hear their retreating footsteps and the small flicker of my hope gutters and dies. I might not even mind so much if somebody would bother to tell me if that snake-faced bastard is dead once and for all.

Merlin, don't leave me here. I thought the shack was cold, at least it wasn't raining. Between the bodies beneath me and the cold water seeping into my clothes, I begin to feel numb. My paralysis is such that I can't even manage to shiver. A rotten end to a rotten life.

Please, someone. Please.

A/N I think what I missed most about writing fanfic was getting to play with Severus. He's fanfic's everyman. You can find him in every kind of character archetype, from ridiculously horrible sadist to the most romantic of Gary Stu and everything in between. The thing about Severus is he can work in all of those things.

Idiot's Repose is my chance to take Severus out to play. I've missed him. This story hasn't been an original idea since Sleeping Beauty, but it's the first time I've tried my hand at it, and I think we'll have fun together. It's Epilogue, What Epilogue? and there will be romance eventually, but no lemons. I think I've lost the knack for lemons.

My novel, Wyrd House, was not selected for publication by Kindle Press, but I've self-published it and anyone who is interested can find it on Amazon and Kindle.

My next attempt at a Kindle Scout campaign is live right now and runs until the 15th of April. The book is Teatime of the Living Dead, and I think it might be the best thing I've written so far. If you want to check it out, you can find it at Amazon[dot]KindleScout[dot]com. Just check under "Mystery, Thriller, and Suspense." I'd love it if any of you have a chance to check it out.

Thanks for reading. I have really enjoyed my return to the Potterverse. I'm working without a beta, so any mistakes you find are my own.

Two

Chapter 2 of 9

He'd Avada Kadavra himself if he could move. An Epilogue, what epilogue, in which Severus Snape is not killed by Nagini.

Chapter Two

Something.

Something.

Voices?

Someone is coming. I hear voices approaching. In my confusion, I try to leap to my feet, but my body remains motionless and out of my control. I was dozing, I think. Or unconscious. Can one fall into a state of unconsciousness when one is comatose? I don't know. I feel frozen and weak. The rhythm of my slowed heartbeat has gone skitterish and unsteady.

I hear voices approaching. Who?

"I can't believe they dumped him out here, he's a hero."

Potter. With that demanding and slightly whinging tone, it could be no one else.

"Everyone we lost are heroes, Harry. They gave everything they had to give to fight for the Light. There's no room inside...too much of the castle has been damaged."

Granger. A thoughtful sentiment, but for once I could use a little special treatment. If they are indeed talking about their nasty old potions professor.

"She's right, Harry. They're beyond caring what happens to them now. The git's in good company. Fred's out here too."

Damn. Of all the blasted Weasleys, I liked the twins the best. Clever and devious, the both of them. How many have we lost? Was Voldemort among the fallen? Did we win?

"Here he is, Harry."

Miss Granger's voice is directly above me. This will be my last chance. I have to move something. If I could even open my eyes the girl will notice.

"They didn't even cover him up. They just dumped him here."

Come on, old man, open your eyes.

"We'll find something to cover him, Harry." Weasley's voice was closer now. "In the castle. A tapestry or something."

That would be warmer, at least, but it wouldn't stop the inevitable. I must make them realize that I'm alive.

"Harry, Ron, give me some more light!"

The girl's voice is brusque and demanding. Immediately I can hear the swoosh of magic and see a bright light behind my closed eyelids. This is my last chance. I struggle with every ounce of my fading strength to open my eyes.

It's no use. My eyelids remain glued shut.

"What is it, Hermione?"

I'm too despondent to even care which of the boys are speaking.

"Look at his eyes. There's movement...like he's dreaming."

"Is it a reflex thing?" Trust Potter to use such specific grammar. "I mean, I've heard that dead bodies can belch and pass wind, and all sorts of things."

"I don't think so."

Warm fingers press against the cold flesh of my neck.

"I don't feel a pulse." Potter again. It's his horrid muggle upbringing getting in the way of his logic. With magical issues such as the Drought of the Living Death, checking for a pulse has never been very useful amongst wizards. I don't blame Potter, he cannot help his unfortunate upbringing, but I do hope that Weasley sets him straight.

"That isn't good enough, Harry. Not with the sort of magical mishaps a wizard can get into." It's Miss Granger that corrects him. As annoying as I've always found her in class, even I admit she's a clever baggage.

"Should we get Madame Pomfrey?"

Yes, Weasley. You absolutely should get Pomfrey. Now.

"I'd hate to disturb her over nothing." Damn it, Miss Granger. Go disturb her! "Give me a moment."

More spellwork, but the trio standing above me continue to be uncertain. If Filius couldn't tell I was alive, I'm not sure what I expect from these students. It's doubtful they would know any of the more precise medical spells which search out signs of life. My best hope is that Miss Granger will be clever enough to fetch Poppy. If Flitwick had done that in the first place, I wouldn't be lying here.

"Sonorus Vitae."

A tingle of magic flows over my body. Damn, but Granger is a clever witch. This isn't a normal medical spell. I'd bet my life that the girl made it up on the spot.

Not that my life is worth much at the moment.

It seems to take forever, but after around thirty seconds pass an audible lub dub of my failing heartbeat is amplified for all to hear.

"G-go," Miss Granger snaps with an uncharacteristic stammer. "Go get madam Pomfrey. Hurry."

"Is he..."

Now is not the time to falter, Mr. Potter. Go get the nurse!

"He's alive, but I don't know for how long. Go on!"

Heavy footsteps rush away from us and I feel a blessed heat as Miss Granger casts a warming charm over me. She follows with a shielding charm, and then a whoosh of warm air to dry my rain soaked form. I begin to feel more myself. I can't move, but I feel less like I'm hovering on the edge of death.

I feel as if I am warm again for the first time in several decades. My hand is lifted, and small fingers wrap around my own. The girl is holding my hand. She did that back in the shrieking shack, when she thought I was dying. At that point, she must have thought me still a traitor, but she held my hand. I knew she was clever, but I hadn't known she was kind.

It is hardly surprising. At any given time there are around three hundred students at Hogwarts. Students and professors rarely socialize aside from the odd ball. As a head of house, I knew many of my Slytherins fairly well, but the students in other houses I only knew from class. Miss Granger had few friends and spent much of her free time on schoolwork. She'd seemed more like an encyclopedia than a person.

Not that I can complain about that at the moment. Miss Granger's intelligence seems to be all that kept me from dying of exposure in a pile of corpses.

The hand holding mine squeezes briefly.

"Don't worry, Professor. We'll get you sorted soon. So many dead, I don't think I could bear losing one more person. It's over now. Voldemort's dead. We won, thanks to you."

Thank you, Miss Granger. At least I know the bastard is dead. For good this time, surely. Now, no matter what happens to me, I can at last be at peace.

I drift off, to sleep or unconsciousness, I'm not certain which.

I awaken to a veritable din of noise. There's no way of telling how much time has passed. Near me, someone is retching over and over. A sound that, had I the ability to move, would tempt me to join in. Farther away a man keeps shouting.

"It's here! The monster is here at last!"

I can hear weeping, banging, and a buzz of conversation. The sounds echo, as if I am in a large area filled with people.

The Great Hall. Hadn't someone mentioned that the wounded were in the Great Hall because the infirmary had been destroyed? By the sound of things, there were a large number of wounded. How much time has passed? I would have thought the wounded would have been moved to St. Mungo's by now. Certainly the school and the Order had been on their own during the battle, but the Ministry was always more than willing to jump in and help once the danger was passed in an effort to grab some of the glory.

Perhaps with the fall of Voldemort, the Ministry was too busy sorting themselves out and rousting the Death Eaters from their ranks. Even so, the healers should have come by their own accord.

"Miss Granger, how is he doing? Any change?"

"No, Madam Pomfrey. His vitals have grown stronger, but he remains unresponsive."

"The next wave from St. Mungo's should arrive shortly. There's nothing more I can do for the poor man, I think he'd better go with the next group."

That explains it. There were enough wounded that they hadn't been able to transport them all at once. The people in most immediate need would have been taken first.

If I could move, I would drag myself out of here. Potter's word on my loyalties would be enough to sway most in the Order, but the Wizengamot won't be so forgiving. Once I'm in St Mungo's it will be a matter of time before they find me. I'll be tried and judged while I cannot speak one word in my defense.

Not that I have much to say in my defense.

"Are you sure I have to?"

It's Potter's voice, but I've lost track of the conversation around me.

"You're the only one who can. It will happen soon, I'm certain of it."

Miss Granger, but I remain clueless about the conversation.

"All right. Yeah, all right."

"You remember what I told you?"

"We went over it twenty times, Hermione. I may be thick, but I'm not that thick."

"You aren't thick, Harry. You might have a terrible tendency to rush into things, but you aren't stupid."

"I don't know. I feel like I'm always wrong about everything."

"Nonsense. All you have to remember is which tact to use based on who they send. You can do this."

"I'm not certain I can."

"Harry, you're tired is all. Get some rest. I'll wake you when it's time."

My former students fall silent. While I've known for some time that Potter is not quite the arrogant prat his father was, I'm surprised the boy seems to have so little sense of self worth. Potter was so stubborn and self assured in my classes, I assumed he was that way at all times. We truly do not know our students well.

Merlin, but I do not want to be taken to St. Mungo's. There's nothing I can do about it. I haven't managed to so much as open my eyes. I'm too exhausted to worry and my throat is so dry it seems a far more serious problem than the judgment of the thrice damned Wizengamot.

Despite the noise and chaos surrounding me in the Great Hall, I slip back into unconsciousness.

A/N

Thanks to everyone for reading, and for the kind comments. I'm having a lot of fun writing this. I'm not sure how long it will end up, maybe 6-8 chapters.

I have a new Kindle Scout Campaign for a paranormal mystery named Wyrd House. If you go to Amazon[dot]KindleScout[dot]com and nominate it, you get a free advance copy if it's selected for publication. If it's not selected, I'll self publish, so you'll get a chance to read it either way. I think my fanfic readers will enjoy it. It's contemporary, and has magic and romance as well as a mystery to solve. All the things I enjoy writing best! Thanks to those who have already supported. It means a lot to me.

And you can visit me at my blog where I share writing news and ramble on about writing by googling Julianne Q Johnson.

Three

Chapter 3 of 9

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Chapter Three

I don't know where I am. It's too quiet to be the Great Hall. The smells are all wrong as well. Wherever I am, it smells like lavender and old sweat. Not exactly pleasant, but not as bad as piss and blood, I suppose.

I can hear muffled noise in the background, and at least one person besides myself breathing nearby. The soft whistle of air is slow and steady. Someone asleep perhaps.

I must have been moved to St. Mungo's, damn the luck. While I might be stuck in my present state indefinitely, at least I would have been safe at Hogwarts. With the Potter boy singing my praises the Order and the professors would have protected me. The wizard government will have no qualms blaming me for their incompetence during the war and letting me rot...or putting me to death. I'm simply too convenient as a scapegoat, not well liked by other wizards and unable to defend myself. Whoever has taken up the mantle of leadership would be foolish to take any other action.

As if my anxious thoughts have drawn the devil, there is a sudden rush of wind and a loud bang of sound. A door has been thrown open. I don't need eyes to know that. The inflow of air at first freshens the room, but soon enough the smell of bodies who have not washed recently permeates the room.

"Severus Snape, I am arresting you on behalf of the Wizengamot on charges of treason and also the murder of Albus Dumbledore."

Is that Thicknesse? The Dark Lord's puppet Minister? Old Tom is no longer around to pull the puppet's strings, so this must be Thicknesse himself making his play to retain the Ministry. He had been a toady of Scrimgeour's when he was the Head of Magical Law Enforcement, more interested in politics than the safety of the wizarding world. All power grubbing fool and little substance. Now, after fighting both angels and demons my fate is left in the hands of this nobody. Pathetic.

"That's enough!"

Potter?

"Don't interfere with me, boy. Lower your wand immediately before I have these Aurors disarm you. Who do you think you are?"

"I'm Harry bloody Potter, that's who I am. As a citizen of the wizarding world and member of the Order of the Phoenix I hereby challenge your authority. You have been under the Imperious for ages. I demand that you be examined to ascertain if you are fit for office."

"You, girl, what are you doing? Call that Patronus back immediately."

"No. As a citizen of the wizarding world, I too call into question your fitness for office. I do not recognize your authority, and I will not do as you say."

Ahh, Miss Granger is here as well. This must be what my young Gryffindors were discussing back at the castle. I should have known that two such brash and reckless young people would not leave me unprotected. Miss Granger came up with this plan, surely. She is right, the boy isn't stupid, but she is deviously clever.

"I'll have you both thrown in prison for this, you stupid children. You have no right..."

"We are of age and have every right to call your authority into question."

"How dare you! This man...Snape...is a criminal and I will see justice served."

"Severus Snape is a war hero and neither Harry or myself will stand by and see him treated so shabbily."

"Lower your wand, girl!"

"I will not."

"I will see this man in prison and there's nothing you children can possibly do to stop me."

"Oh, I don't know about that. I killed Voldemort after all. I think I manage to stop you too."

"Did you hear him threaten me? Arrest him immediately!"

"Arrest Harry Potter, Sir? You want us to arrest the Boy Who Lived Twice?"

"I think young Potter's on to something here. I think we'd best get the Minister examined for fitness for office."

"Aurors! I gave you an order!"

"We heard you, Sir, but we decline to comply."

"What is the meaning of this? Why, Minister Thicknesse, have you drawn your wand against the savior of the wizarding world. Have you gone quite mad?"

Shacklebolt has arrived. So that's where Miss Granger's Patronus went. Clever girl indeed. Kingsley has been active in the Ministry for decades. If he gets Thicknesse thrown out for being unfit for duty, he'll have a fine chance at the Minister position himself.

"How dare you question my sanity, Shacklebolt. I'm here to have this Death Eater arrested and that's what I'm going to do if I have to put the whole lot of you in prison for obstruction of justice."

"I have it on the highest authority that Severus Snape is a war hero. He will be treated with the utmost respect."

"And who exactly is this highest authority?"

"Me. I killed Voldemort, and without the help of Snape I couldn't have done it."

Good boy, Potter.

"I am not going to listen to a child."

Merlin, but Thicknesse was thick. Once it gets around how this imbecile spoke to Potter, war hero, Shacklebolt will be a shoe in for Minister.

"I'm afraid that you are going to listen to me, Thicknesse. I will not stand here and have our heroes treated disrespectfully. Aurors, please detain Mr. Thicknesse. We will have him examined by the healers to see if he is a danger to himself or others."

"I will not--"

"Stupify!"

I hear at least three voices shout the spell, but I think Miss Granger was first out of the gate. Thicknesse must have drawn his wand. Thick indeed.

"Aurors, please take him to the healers and warn them he is dangerous please. I'll be with you in a moment."

"Yes, Sir. Don't worry, Sir. We won't let him cause any more trouble."

"It's not right, him threatening Harry Potter, and poor Snape here, who can't even defend himself. Not proper at all."

There is further murmuring and a shuffling of bodies in the room. Soon, peace returns and I am left with my young protectors and Kingsley.

"Are you certain Snape was on our side, Harry. I don't mean to question you, but I have to be sure."

"Absolutely certain, Sir. I know we haven't had time to talk, but there isn't a doubt in my mind. Now that the war is over, and Snape is no longer having to play spy, I imagine Albus' portrait will back me up as well."

"That would help. I have no problem taking your word for it, Harry, but I have to convince the entire Wizengamot as well. Having Dumbledore, even portrait Dumbledore, to back you up will ease things. I'd better go deal with that idiot. Clever plan, Miss Granger. It went off exactly as you expected."

"It wasn't difficult to figure out. The Aurors would never go against Harry, not right after he defeated Voldemort. But thank you...Minister."

I hear Kingsley's hearty laugh as he walks out of the room. The girl is right. After backing Harry in front of a group of Aurors, Kingsley is a shoe in for Minister.

My protectors talk quietly for a few moments, and then apparently go right back to sleep. They must be exhausted to sleep so soon after all the hubbub. Hell, I'm exhausted and all I did was lie here. It seems I'm safe enough for now. I still cannot even open my eyes, but at least I don't have to fear being accosted and thrown in prison while I can't protect myself.

Sleep reaches up and drags me down into unconsciousness.

A/N: Thanks to everyone for reading, and for the kind comments. I'm having fun with this story. It's nice to play in Severus' head again. He's one of my favorite characters of all time. I'm not sure how long this fic will be. I've got chapter 4 finished and started chapter 5. Maybe 10 in all. I am flying without a beta, so any mistakes are my own.

Big thanks for everyone who has nominated my paranormal mystery, Wyrd House, on Kindle Scout. My campaign took a turn for the better as soon as you guys showed up. If you want to check it out, you can find it at Amazon[dot]Kindle Scout[dot]com. Look under mysteries and you'll find me. It's a fun book that has magic and romance, so I

think my readers will like it. If you nominate it, and it gets selected, you get a free advance copy of the ebook.

More fic coming in a few days!

Four

Chapter 4 of 9

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Chapter Four

It's been a week, I think, since I was carted to St. Mungo's, and I'm going insane. I'm in a quiet room with no roommate. Healers check on me periodically, and mediwitches pour potions down my throat, spelled to make me swallow. Nutritive potions mostly, as well as potions to keep me hydrated and healing potions for the wound on my neck.

None of them ever say a word. I know I can't respond, but the lack of any sort of stimulus for my mind is taking its toll. I swear, if I could move I'd Avada Kadavra myself.

"Hello, Professor. I hope you are feeling well today."

I am so grateful to hear another human voice that I find in myself a strange lack of disappointment that it is Hermione Granger. At this point, company is company. As long as Neville Longbottom doesn't come strolling in.

Who am I kidding? I have fallen so low that even Longbottom would be welcome.

"I'm sorry I haven't visited sooner, it's been a hard week. So many funerals."

Of course. I've been wondering why none of my former coworkers have been in to check on me, as well as no one from the Order. True, they thought me a traitor. Perhaps even with Potter singing my praises, they will not be able to forgive me Albus' death. I haven't forgiven myself, so I hardly expect others to. However, I had thought that at least Hagrid or Poppy might have ventured to my bedside. They both have forgiving natures. A week's worth of funerals would explain even their absence.

For the next hour, Miss Granger informs me of the events of the final battle as well as a long list of the dead. So many of my little snakelings dead and there was so little I could do to prevent it. The Dark Lord would have had my head if there was even a rumor about my steering them clear of the Death Eaters. Now, the great bastard is finally dead, and perhaps my house can return to what it was before a madman used it to fill his army.

I find myself sorry to hear about Lupin. Oh, he had no business teaching children with his...infirmity, but he wasn't a bad sort. He was by far the best of the Marauders. Nymphadora gone too. The woman was a menace with her clumsiness, but she always had a kind word for me, even when I didn't deserve one.

That one of the Weasley twins died is perhaps the greatest loss. Such clever young men...they really should have been sorted into Slytherin, though I suppose it's a blessing in these times that they were not. I can't imagine what Arthur and Molly are going through. We've never been close-- my life as a spy prevented close attachments--but we always got on well. I wish I could tell them how sorry I am for their loss.

I wish I could talk at all.

For the next half an hour, Miss granger reads me articles out of Potionmaker Monthly. It's excruciating. The articles in that periodical are rather sophomoric in nature and the tone of the writing itself is bone dry. It's better than nothing, I suppose, but dear Merlin it is almost as mind numbingly dull as being trapped in my own head.

I am granted a reprieve by a mediwitch entering the room.

"Hello. Should I leave the room for a moment?"

"Oh...that's not necessary Miss. I've just come to give him a potion. I'll only be a moment."

It's a mediwizard this time. I can't usually tell unless they wear some perfume that clues me into their gender. The potion takes seconds and then I hear the sound of his footsteps as he heads for the door.

"One moment, Healer--"

"Drumund, Miss."

"Healer Drumund, is this how my friend is usually treated when people come into his room for his care?"

"Well, yes. There isn't much we can do, you see, except nutritive potions and cleaning spells and the like. His condition--"

"I'm not speaking about his medical condition."

Huh. I've heard Miss Granger use that tone of voice on her fellow students when they were not doing something she thought they should. This should be far more entertaining than that dreadful potions journal.

"What seems to be the problem, Miss--"

"Granger. Hermione Granger. The problem, Mr. Drumund, is that you waltzed in here without even greeting Mr. Snape, poured a potion down his throat without checking his condition, and were ready to sail out of the room without one word to my friend. Is this how a patient of St. Mungo's is usually treated? Like a piece of furniture instead of a human being?"

"Listen, Miss Granger, it's kind of you to visit your friend here, but he's dead to the world he is. There's no point us talking to him if he doesn't even know we are here, is there?"

Oh, my. Miss Granger is not going to like that patronizing tone. If the man had any sense, which he obviously does not, he'd flee now or reach for his wand.

"You must be joking. There plentiful studies in medical journals, both wizarding and muggle, that document patients such as Mr. Snape remembering what they heard when they have awakened. Do you mean to tell me that this poor man has been lying here in silence for a week without even the words of common courtesy being spoken to him?"

"Now, Miss, I'm sure that you are worried about your friend, but I don't see as how a young witch such as yourself would know anything about the--"

"You will listen to me, and you will listen well. I am Hermione Granger. Perhaps you've heard of me? No? Then perhaps you noticed the article in yesterday's paper where it mentioned that I received an Order of Merlin, first class, for my war efforts. I stood on a dais between my friends, Ron Weasley and Harry Potter, and I accepted one of the highest honors that our society has because I am a war hero. I can tell you right now that I did not risk my life to defeat Voldemort so that some boneheaded knob can stand there and tell me to be a good little girl. I am not a good little girl."

"Ma'am, please put your wand away!"

"I will not. What I will do is hex your bollocks off if you do not get your supervisor in here immediately. Have I made myself very clear?"

"Yes, Ma'am. Right away, Ma'am."

A flurry of footsteps speeds from the room.

"I'm so sorry, Professor. I had no idea that you were being treated so shabbily. If I'd know, I would have found a way to come sooner. Last week was very hard."

Don't fret, Miss Granger. The recent melodrama in my room has perked me up sufficiently. You are a right spitfire when you are angry. I had no idea. It strikes me that Voldemort was lucky he lasted as long as he did with you on his heels.

"I have your medal here, Sir. I was going to tell you about it. I will keep it safe for you until you wake up, but for now I think you'd best wear it. I have more shouting to do I'm certain, and having the stage properly set, so to speak, will work in our favor."

She is a clever baggage. Was she always like this, or did the war bring it out of her?

I feel her slip the ribbon around my neck, and the weight of the medal on my chest. There's a screech of wood on the floor, and then my hand is lifted and held tightly. She's moved her chair closer to the bed...that's what the scraping sound was. It's oddly pleasant to have her hold my hand, even if I cannot return the embrace. Except for silent people lifting my head to force feed me potions, no one has touched me in some time.

"It's first class...just like mine. Kingsley wanted to make your second class, but we wouldn't hear of it."

I don't know how I feel about this. Once upon a time, such accolades meant a great deal to me, but that seems such a long time ago. Those dreams of recognition belonged to an angry man who hadn't yet been forced to kill his friend and colleague. Now, I rather think the entire wizarding world can kiss my ass.

"I've heard there's been some commotion in this room. What seems to be the trouble?"

It's an older woman's voice speaking in a polite but no nonsense tone of voice.

"Healer Santos, it's good to see you again, though I'm sorry it is because of such circumstances."

"Why, Miss Granger! I haven't seen you since that terrible night. So many wounded. My young mediwitch said some crazy woman pulled a wand on him, but surely--"

"I'm afraid it's true. That man was so disrespectful to my friend, Mr. Snape, and myself that I quite lost my temper."

"Miss Granger--"

"Please, call me Hermione."

Clever baggage. Now that she has someone in a position of authority, she's all that is calm and polite. It strikes me that I do not know this smart young woman at all. She's always been intelligent, but not always this sly.

"Hermione then, and you must call me Margret. Now then, you don't strike me as the sort to easily lose your temper. Why don't you tell me what is going on."

For the next several minutes, Hermione described in vivid detail what she thought of St. Mungo's staff and the shabby treatment and disrespect I had been treated with. She made much of my war hero status, and gently brought attention to the medal around my neck as she explained the reason for her visit today. She spoke concisely yet eloquently, making much of my actions during the war as well as the disrespect I had received since my arrival. I am not much used to being so emphatically defended. I find myself enjoying it far more than I would have expected. Perhaps that hunger for accolades has not deserted me so much as changed form.

"Hermione, I am so sorry that your friend has not received the treatment and respect that he so obviously deserves. Rest assured that his staff will be changed immediately, and he will not be treated so ill again while he resides with us here at St. Mungo's. You are quite correct. The fact that Mr. Snape is in a coma does not mean that he is not aware of his surroundings. We are overcrowded, I'm afraid. We have not the means of keeping him company as much as he needs, but he will neve go entire days without being spoken to again."

"Thank you, Margret. That is very kind. I will inform his friends that visitors are encouraged, and we should also be able to help."

The Healer left soon after that, and Miss Granger went back to that dismal potions journal. She only read a few minutes before she interrupted herself.

"I'm sorry, Professor, but this thing is rubbish, isn't it? If you don't mind, I think I'll try something a bit different."

I hear a rustling sound as she rummages for different reading material, then she begins.

"Lord Charlton arrived at Claymoor Manor after midnight, and no one was awake to see to his sweaty horse except the young cook, Sylvia. Leave off, I'll see to the horse myself, he said as he waved her help away. Nonsense, Sir. You get yourself inside and I'll see to your great beastie. Sylvia was a cheeky servant, but intelligent and loyal. She wasn't bad to look at either, and during Charlton's last visit, he came to suspect that the fetching lass might fancy him."

A romance novel, Miss Granger? And one that has all the signs of being at least somewhat naughty at that. Now, that's more like it.

A/N: Many thanks for reading, and for the kind comments. I'm sorry I have not been responding, but I am reading them, and they are cheering me up immensely. I've got a health issue I'm dealing with (no fun, but not dangerous at all) and it's been getting me down. But fear not, I will persevere!

Big thanks for everyone who has nominated my paranormal mystery, Wyrd House, on Kindle Scout. If you want to check it out, you can find it at Amazon[dot]Kindlescout[dot]com. Look under mysteries and you'll find me. It's a fun book that has magic and romance, so I think my readers will like it. If you nominate it, and it gets selected, you get a free advance copy of the ebook.

I'm working without a beta, so any mistakes are my own.

Five

Chapter 5 of 9

He'd Avada Kadavra himself if he could move. An Epilogue, what epilogue, in which Severus Snape is not killed by Nagini.

Chapter Five

"So I bound its roots like it suggested in Proudfoot's journal, and now it's twice as big and still growing."

I lied. When I thought that even Longbottom's company would be better than endless silence--I lied. It isn't better. It's mind numbingly dull. I now know more about the Glorioso family of creeping Bantu vine than I could have ever imagined. It is a plant that old women grow because it's pretty and it has no known magical use whatsoever. I could not be less interested.

Three weeks have passed since Miss Granger found out that I'd been lying in bed with no company and no mental stimulation. Three weeks of having at least two visitors a day. Potter has shown up twice and used his time to give me a detailed account of the final battle. I was glad of it, and especially enjoyed the description of Voldemort's last moments, may he rest in hell.

Then Potter ruined it all by getting over emotional and repeatedly asking my forgiveness for him not understanding what side I was truly on. I don't mind his repentance, per se, but I wish he wouldn't go on and on about it. He was meant to think I was dark, they all were. Merlin, that was Albus' chief reason for me taking him out. Certainly, there was some small amount of concern for Draco, but mostly that plan was bred from the mind of a general thinking about pawns lost and battles won.

The fact that he was correct and his plan worked perfectly is not truly any consolation at all.

Hagrid's come to see me several times, but mostly he cries and talks about who we've lost. If my condition continues, and I have no reason to doubt that it will indefinitely, Hagrid will become better company when his emotions have had time to even out. I'm fond of Hagrid. That might surprise some people, but it makes perfect sense to me. When one has spent most of one's adult life as a spy, it's refreshing to be around someone with whom you always know where you stand. Hagrid is an open book. He literally cannot keep a secret. Honestly, now that Albus is gone, Hagrid might end up being my best friend. I find his presence calming, despite his emotionality.

Minerva also comes to see me. She shows up nearly every other day, but never stays for long. She's busy, I know, so I try not to blame her for the shortness of her visits. Overseeing the repairs to Hogwarts is a big job. She tells me all the details of the damage and how the repair work is going. She always reminds me there's a place for me there when I get better.

If I get better, more like. I enjoy hearing about the reconstruction, I only wish I was able to get out of this bed and help.

As far as the future job goes, I'd consider it. Hogwarts is more a home to me than my shabby house ever was. What I never want to do again is teach potions. While I love brewing potions, I hate teaching it. Too many variables. In a potions classroom, one is always hyper vigilant in an effort to keep students from poisoning themselves or blowing up the classroom. Defense classes are far more easily controlled, and while accidents happen, they are rarely fatal and often easily dismissed. The stress of teaching potions and my work as a spy was almost more than I could handle. It was far easier when I was playing at Headmaster, even if I did have to keep the thrice-damned Carrows from slaughtering the children.

Longbottom's lecture on useless flora winds down and he excuses himself to go visit his parents. The silence is a blessing for a while, but the endless hours of lying in this bed unable to do anything are wearing me down. To go from almost frantic activity to this nothingness is beyond imagining.

I shouldn't be so hard on Longbottom. He did kill the damned snake that put me in this position. I may never truly enjoy the boy's company, but he has nothing to fear from me any longer.

I've been sleeping too much. Some days, I sleep nearly all the time except when I have a visitor. I've got to stop doing that. I feel as if my brain is atrophying. I must find ways to keep it active. It won't matter if I get out of this bed someday only to find that I've become a blithering idiot.

I begin by mentally choosing a letter and then listing all the potions ingredients I can think of that start with that letter, as well as their uses. It's a ridiculous exercise but it does pass the time.

I have reached Nettle when I hear approaching footsteps and a small breeze wafts in an odd combination of citrus peel and wormwood. It's an interesting scent, a mixture of sharpness and a rich, earthy tone. I decided a few days ago that it's the shampoo Miss Granger uses. Wormwood is a good choice for detangling. When brewed with citrus peel it gets a slick but dry texture, rather like silicone. I imagine that Miss Granger has taken to making her own hair care products in an effort to tame that griffin's nest that resides on her head.

I find that I'd like to see the effect. Purely from a scholarly interest, I assure you.

"Hello, Professor!"

She always greets me with the same dogged cheerfulness and always calls me 'professor' despite the fact that I'm no longer anyone's teacher. I appreciate the effort, but she needn't bother. She is good company and I neither expect nor need her to be pleasant all the time.

"Sorry I haven't visited in a few days. I've been that busy. I've got a project I've been working on, and it's taking quite a bit of my time. I should be out looking for a job, I suppose, but I want to finish my project first."

That's right. Minerva told me that all the seventh years had been granted passing grades for their graduation. It made more sense than expecting any of them to repeat a year, especially with the state the castle was in. Miss Granger should have little difficulty finding a placement. The girl was always well ahead of her studies. Her intelligence coupled with her status as a war hero--and being a personal friend of Potter--and no employer would be concerned about her missed class work.

"Once I finish my project, I'll figure out what I want to do. I've had loads of job offers. The Headmistress suggested I write to each of them and express interest while mentioning I plan to take some time off because of the war and it worked like a charm. Every single one of them contacted me to tell me I should take all the time I need and get back to them when I'm ready."

Hmmm. Minerva is a sly old cat. I wouldn't put it past the old woman to have a place in mind for Miss Granger at Hogwarts. Encouraging Miss Granger to put off her job search would play right into Minerva's hands.

"I'm staying with Harry for the moment, and we both have some money saved up, so there's no need to be in a rush about anything."

Is she staying with Potter? I would have thought the lass would be with her parents or the Weasleys. I know the Grangers have had their memories restored, she mentioned that last week. So, why is she staying with Potter? Wasn't she Ronald Weasley's girlfriend? Seems to me that Hagrid mentioned that. I thought Miss Granger had better taste, but I wasn't truly surprised. Those two have been dancing around each other for years. But if she's with Weasley, what's she doing living with Potter?

Why do I care who the bint shacks up with? It's certainly none of my business. I don't know, I suppose it's because she's kind and intelligent, and I think she deserves better than some young idiot.

"Now then, I've brought us a new book today. This one's a muggle one, but it's got the most hilarious and unbelievable magic in it, so I think you'll be entertained. It's called *The Warlock's Bride*."

Miss Granger begins to read, and the book is hilarious and scandalous by turns. Having a former student of such a young age reading to me books that are sexual enough to be banned by Hogwarts is both odd and rather amazing. Her voice gets quite low and husky when she reads the erotic passages. It makes me think things about Miss Granger that I probably shouldn't. The girl's young enough to be my daughter.

The hell with it. She's of age, she's no longer my student, and I am unlikely to ever rise from this bed under my own power. Besides, I'm simply not all that altruistic. I can think of the young woman however I like. For the rest of Miss Granger's reading, I stop fighting the inevitable and imagine the two of us in all the naughty situations that the warlock and his bride get into. It certainly makes the book more interesting.

Right in the middle of a particularly steamy scene, there is a sound like an approaching elephant, and Potter bursts into the room.

"Hermione, I found it! Oh, sorry. Hello, Severus. Good to see you."

Severus? Since when has Potter started calling me by my given name? I'm not certain I like this turn of events, but I can hardly complain.

"You found it? Are you certain it's the right one?"

I wonder if this "it" has something to do with Miss Granger's mysterious project? She certainly sounds excited about it."

"Yes, I'm sure. It was warded six ways to Sunday. Ron's brother Bill had to help me with a couple of them. We're talking some seriously dark wards."

"Excellent. Glad Bill could help. Charlie had to head back to the Dragon preserve, but Bill plans to stick close to home for a while and keep an eye on George."

Damn. It's hard to lose anyone you care for, but I can't imagine losing a twin sibling. I wonder if they fear George will do harm to himself. Such a bright mind that boy has. If I wasn't stuck in this bed, I'd seek the boy out myself and get him interested in some potions projects for that shop of his. Might be fun at that, thinking up some nasty potion tricks that aren't too dangerous. I'll give it some thought since I have little else to do.

"I didn't want to risk bringing it here. It's back at the house."

"Did you look at any of it?"

"No. I'll tell you about it later."

Whatever it is that they are talking about, it's clear that Potter does not want to discuss it in front of me. Curiouser and curiouser. Are they working on something illegal? But why would they be concerned if I hear their plans? I'm in no condition to cause them any trouble.

Sadly, Miss Granger takes her leave shortly after Potter's arrival. She bids me goodbye, and the two of them walk out, whispering to each other. I wonder what young Weasley thinks of all this; his girl living in Potter's pocket. I personally think Potter is a slightly better choice for the girl than Weasley, but I don't much fancy either of them as a match for the intelligent young woman.

She'd be better off with someone of my intellect.

Yes, I'll get right on that as soon as I leap up from my sickbed.

Depressed again, I forget all about my campaign to stay awake more and drift into a fitful sleep.

A/N: At last, things are starting to get interesting! Curiouser and curiouser indeed! Thanks to all who are reading, and for the kind comments. I think we are perhaps halfway through this tale. Maybe 4 or 5 more chapters to go.

Big thanks for everyone who has nominated my paranormal mystery, Wyrd House, on Kindle Scout. If you want to check it out, you can find it at Amazon[dot]Kindlescout[dot]com. Look under mysteries and you'll find me. It's a fun book that has magic and romance, so I think my readers will like it. If you nominate it, and it gets selected, you get a free advance copy of the eBook.

I'm working without a beta, so any mistakes are my own.

Six

Chapter 6 of 9

He'd Avada Kavra himself if he could move. An Epilogue, what epilogue, in which Severus Snape is not killed by Nagini.

Chapter Six

For the next month, I saw Miss Granger less than usual. She continues to visit nearly every other day, but the visits were much shorter. Each time, she would apologize for leaving so soon and blame her mysterious project for taking up so much of her time.

As for the project itself, she speaks not a word--except to mention in an offhand manner that it wasn't going well. I have no idea whatsoever exactly what she was working on. It puzzles me greatly. Why was the chit so tight-lipped when speaking to a man who could tell no one of her plans? Miss Granger could tell me every minute detail and her secret would be safe with me.

There has been no change in my condition. The St. Mungo's staff is pleasant to me, thanks to Miss Granger, but I remain completely paralyzed. I cannot even open my eyes. I had hoped that time would lessen the unfortunate antidote's effect, but that does not seem to be the case. Once a week, a healer comes to talk to me about my condition. It's a depressing and one-sided conversation. They have no idea what has happened to me and even less what to do about it. Their entire plan of action is to take care of my body while they wait for the paralysis to wear off naturally.

They refrain from mentioning how unlikely a possibility this is.

They mean to be kind...I know that. They will kindly take care of my body for the next several decades, if that's what it takes. By that time I will, of course, be stark raving mad.

It's inevitable. No matter how hard I try to keep my mind active, the lack of stimulus from being trapped in my own head is going to have consequences. It has already had a negative effect. I do not quite feel myself. Oh, it will be some time before I become daft as a brush, but I cannot shake the feeling that I am not the same man that I was before Nagini bit me.

I do my best to keep my mental facilities from deteriorating. I have tried to figure out on my own what exactly happened with my antidote and how it can be reversed, but it's a herculean task. To have any chance at all, I would need my notes and my preserved samples of both the antivenin and the poison itself. A fat lot of good either would do me in my present state.

Perhaps it's for the best. To know the answer to my problem and to not be able to tell anyone might drive me mad sooner than anticipated.

I have mentally concocted no less than a dozen potions for one George Weasley. Each has its own ridiculous and sometimes gruesome effect, yet each is inherently harmless. Young George would be quite pleased with them, I am certain. If I ever do get out of this bed I'll write them down for him.

Of all the people who have survived that final battle, I believe George Weasley may be the only one who is as badly off as I am.

It's quiet in the hospital. Even without the use of my eyes, I know it's the middle of the night. A hush falls over the entire building and I rarely hear the sound of footsteps in the hallway outside my room. All the rooms in St. Mungo's have magical wards to alert the staff if there is a change in a patient's condition. There's no reason for anyone to enter my room at night. Through my closed eyelids, I can tell that even the lights are dimmed.

I hate being awake at night. There's no chance of any outside force to stimulate my mind, and I am alone with my own head. I try to go back to sleep, but I am completely rested. I must have fallen asleep far too early the past evening, but with no clock, it's a difficult thing to judge.

In the middle of the hushed and mind-numbingly boring night, I mentally concoct the thirteenth potion for young Weasley's ridiculous shop. It will turn the drinker into a hawk for one hour, with the reflexes of the beast but while retaining the mental facilities of the drinker. It will have to be combined with a potion that slows a fall, of course. Can't have young witches and wizards plummeting to the earth when the potion wears off. Should be quite a moneymaker despite the danger. The spells that allow a wizard to fly unassisted are extremely difficult to learn, as I well know.

My musings are interrupted by hurried footsteps and the sound of someone flopping into the chair near my bed. Miss Granger by the smell, but what is she doing here at this hour?

Sniffing? No, she's crying, but the sound is muffled as if she does not want to disturb me with her unusual display of emotion.

Why is she crying?

I am not particularly surprised that I am upset at hearing the young woman cry. Miss Granger has been uncommonly kind to me. She has been both my defender and my advocate, and she reads me the most ridiculously erotic literature simply to keep me entertained. In my confinement, I have grown enormously fond of her, and I am genuinely fond of very few people in this world.

Never, since the moment I was bitten by that cursed snake, have I been more furious at my infirmary. I want nothing more than to comfort the woman crying by my bedside. I have some limited experience in dealing with weeping young women from my position as head of Slytherin House, but this situation is different. I find that I no longer think of Miss Granger as one of my students. How could I? The type of literature she reads me, her intelligent and fierce defense on my behalf, and the patience and loyalty she proves by her frequent visits have forced me to see her as an adult. A young adult, certainly, but this is no schoolgirl.

And I am no saint. I'm a Slytherin, through and through. No Slytherin worth his salt would balk at an age difference between himself and someone he cares for. Especially not one so much in his favor. Why should I? I am free of Voldemort and the Death Eaters, forgiven of my crimes, and a medal winning war hero. The only thing stopping me from pursuing Miss Granger and dragging her away from that snot-nosed Weasley is this thrice-damned sickbed.

Slytherins are quite adept at getting what they want. It was not something I was good at while I was at school, but I am no schoolboy now.

A final sniff, and Hermione speaks for the first time. "I'm so sorry to disturb you, Professor. I shouldn't have come so early in the morning. I didn't know where else to go. I didn't want to go to my parent's house. They've had their memories restored, and their back at home, but they are still a bit out of sorts."

That's right. The girl obliviated them to save them from the dangers of the war. A brutally clever plan.

"Harry will ask a million questions, and the Weasley house is obviously out."

What's this? Is there trouble in paradise? How perfect.

"I can't believe Ron is being so stubborn. How dare he try to tell me what to do with my life."

Wonderful. Oh, I have nothing against the sod except that he had something I want. If the boy has, through his own stupidity, removed himself from my way, then I feel my opinion of him shall improve greatly.

That is, if I ever get out of this bed. I will not give up. I have more to live for now than I have had in my entire life. I swear this bed will not be the end of me.

"First, he's been complaining about the time I'm spending on my project. Then, he had the audacity to suggest it wasn't proper for me to spend so much time alone with you. Can you imagine? Even if you were not in your present condition, how dare he try to dictate to me who I can be friends with."

So, she thinks of her scary old Potions Professor as her friend, does she? Excellent.

She pauses for a moment in her diatribe against all things Ronald Weasley. I wait patiently, knowing she will continue. All Slytherins know the value of listening over speaking. I have found through my forced silence that people who are in my company cannot seem to stop talking in an effort to fill in the silence. I now know far more about my visitors than they ever intended.

Even Neville Longbottom.

"Then he had the nerve to tell me that I should drop everything I do so that he can marry me and we can have a bunch of children right away. Well, I'll tell you something, I

am nobody's brood mare. I would love to have a child or two at some point, but there is simply too much to do now that the war is over. I don't plan to have children for at least ten years, and I told him so."

This should be good. The Weasleys have long been in the habit of large families.

"He said that if I didn't want children, why were we even together? I said, honestly, I have no idea. And I broke up with him. I broke up with him and I'm glad!"

Her crying seems to belie that statement.

"I am glad," she says as if she can hear my thoughts. "I'm just so disappointed. He's not the person I thought he was."

Ah, disappointment that the relationship did not work out is far better than weeping over the boy's loss.

"I should go. I'm sorry to bother you with all of this."

It was my pleasure, Hermione.

"I've got to go. I've got to go deal with Harry and then try to get a few hours of sleep. Big day tomorrow for my project. Merlin, but Ron had horrible timing, as per usual."

Indeed.

"Harry and I will be by in the morning. I need to get a little sleep first. Goodnight, Professor."

I am left with the startling realization that I am Hermione's big project.

Merlin's bollocks.

A/N

Many thanks for all of the kind comments. Now, things are going to get interesting! I'm so excited to write the next chapter, I think I'll write it tonight. Oh, it won't all be smooth sailing, but things are going to start happening. Severus is very excited.

Big thanks for everyone who has nominated my paranormal mystery, Wyrd House, on Kindle Scout. If you want to check it out, you can find it at Amazon[dot]Kindlescout[dot]com. Look under mysteries and you'll find me. It's a fun book that has magic and romance, so I think my readers will like it. If you nominate it, and it gets selected, you get a free advance copy of the eBook. My campaign is not going great, so I can use all the help I can get!

I'm working without a beta, so any mistakes are my own.

Seven

Chapter 7 of 9

He'd Avada Kadavra himself if he could move. An Epilogue, what epilogue, in which Severus Snape is not killed by Nagini.

Chapter Seven

Hermione and Potter wake me when they arrive early in the morning. They scurry into the room like a sneaky hurricane, muttering and whispering to each other. There is a crackle of magic and I can feel the hairs on my arm raising in reaction.

"Do a silencing spell too, Harry. I don't want anyone to know what we are up to...they might try to get in and stop us."

Ah. They've warded the door to keep others out. What is it that they plan to do to me? I am well aware that Hermione is a clever witch, but whatever homemade antidote she has concocted is bound to fail if she is ignorant of what caused my accident in the first place. Worse than that, her ministrations might make my situation worse. I am able to breathe at the moment, but if my paralysis worsens, I could suffocate.

"Are you ready, Hermione?"

"Yes, I have it here in my bag, but I need a minute."

"Why? We really shouldn't dawdle. I don't know how much time we have before the staff notice they can't get in."

"I understand, Harry, but he's agitated."

"How can you tell?"

"Look at his eyes. They're the only thing he can move."

The woman is right. I hadn't noticed, but in my agitation, I was trying to look around myself.

"Try to hurry, Hermione."

"Professor, calm down and listen, please. I know about your antivenin."

What?

"I have all of your notes, and your samples, and I know about the antivenin you developed. I studied it thoroughly, and I believe you are in your current state because you could not calculate the exact amount of blood loss."

Clever girl.

"I know I don't have your level of expertise, but quite frankly I couldn't find anyone who does have your skill to help me. Slughorn was perfectly useless."

Damn straight.

"I have worked on this potion for over a month and had some successful testing with mice. I have a weak dose with me to test on you. I have every reason to believe it will have a positive effect, and I am reasonably certain it will do nothing to harm you."

I find myself relaxing as she speaks, and I am no longer unduly concerned. She's a bright woman who does her homework. To be honest, if I have any chance of getting out of this damned bed, it lies with Hermione.

"Your antivenin was quite volatile. This potion is also volatile. Don't expect a great improvement from this single dose. I have come to the conclusion that small regular doses have the greatest chance of success."

Good reasoning, especially for a muggleborn. I have nothing against muggleborns, but their folklore and fiction subconsciously teaches them that magic produces instantaneous results. This is often not the case, as Hermione has obviously learned.

"So, we are trying a ten percent solution of the potion today. It's been spelled not to choke you, and we should know within a few moments if it has a positive effect."

Soft hands grab my chin and a small thumb opens my lips far enough for the thin neck of a potion bottle. The liquid is tipped in, and my throat swallows automatically in reaction to the potion.

"Hermione, I think someone is knocking."

The hands leave my face and there is a small rustle and clank of sound. I imagine she's tossed the vial back into her bag.

"Go ahead and drop the wards, Harry. Now we're only visiting as usual."

A tingle of magic and a breath of air as the door to my room is reopened. A silence falls between the two young people as they wait to see what effect their efforts bring. One of them is pacing back and forth near the foot of my bed and I find myself mentally following the small sound back and forth.

Several minutes pass and I have begun to suspect that the potion has failed entirely when I notice something new.

I'm staring at the ceiling. It's not a very nice ceiling...a swirly beige plaster with water damage stains here and there. For someone who has not been able to open their eyes in ages, it's a perfectly adequate ceiling. The splotches of damage at least add interest.

My eyes are open, and I blink them several times simply because I can. At this point, having control of my body, in even the smallest way, makes me feel more in control.

I try to move my fingers and toes, but they remain paralyzed. Fair enough. Hermione said it would take time.

I look slightly to the left, and there she is. The girl looks like hell. Her hair is the worst rats nest it's ever been and has at least two forgotten quills stuck here and there. Dark circles seem to have made a permanent home under her eyes, and she looks thin and drawn. She's also smiling a gloriously happy smile at me.

I think she is the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

"Look, Hermione, he's smiling at you."

The voice draws my eyes to the other side of the bed, and there is Mr. Mop-top himself, grinning down at me. He looks exhausted as well and I wonder what he's been up to.

"I think he fancies you, Hermione."

"Don't be ridiculous."

"Well, he isn't smiling at me."

"The Professor is going to be up and about before too long, Harry. Do you really want to be on his bad side when he's standing with a wand in his hand?"

"Oh, go on. I think Severus will be happy enough we got him out of that bed that he'll give me a pass."

Severus? Since when has the boy taken to calling me by my given name?

"Did you see that? He rolled his eyes at me!"

"I dare say you deserved it, Harry."

I don't know why I'm wasting my time looking at that boy when Hermione is at my side. My eyes move back to her and she blushes a little as she smiles down at me.

I must be smiling, at least slightly, though I cannot truly tell. Why shouldn't I smile at a pretty young woman? I'm no longer a spy, a Death Eater, or embroiled in a war. I shall smile at whoever I like.

I try to speak and manage a soft grunt.

"Don't worry, Sir," Hermione hastens to reassure me. "It was only the first dose. The effect should be cumulative and each subsequent dose should give you more improvement. I plan to stay here today and we should be able to have another dose every few hours."

"I wish I could stay, but I have to get back to work."

I wonder what sort of work the boy wonder is up to.

"How many are left?" Hermione asks.

"An even dozen, but we have a lead on the McWeavers."

Ah. I should have guessed. Potter is helping to round up the last of the Death Eaters. No wonder he looks so tired.

"Stay safe, Harry."

"I will do my level best. Take care of Severus."

The insolent boy walks to Hermione's side and kisses her on the cheek.

"Hey! Now he's scowling at me!"

"I told you not to annoy him."

Potter leans over me and frowns. "Look, Sir. We've been through a war together and won. Hermione and I got you into this hospital and we're going to get you out of that bed. And I'm going to call you Severus, so you might as well get used to it."

His hand descends to lightly touch my cheek and I am shocked to see moisture in his eyes.

"Get used to it," he repeats. "I've lost enough people in my life, you know?"

I have no idea what my expression holds, but Potter seems satisfied with it.

For my part, I can understand his feelings. I too have lost most of the people in this world that I truly cared for, small though that number may be. Besides, being friendly with Potter the war hero will have its uses in this post-war world. I may have a medal around here somewhere, but there will be those in the wizarding world who want me dead.

Hermione raises my bed a little so that I can sit up and see what's around me. There's not much to see in the drab little room except for the woman herself, but that suits me fine. I get to watch her as she removes one of her ridiculous romance novels and begins reading to me. She catches my eye from time to time and reacts with a combination of smiles and soft blushes. Even with her rat's nest hair and exhausted eyes, she is utterly enchanting to me.

Despite the novelty of my regained sight, a night of little sleep soon catches up to me. When Hermione discovers my eyes are at half mast, she lowers my bed to the flat position and fluffs my pillow for me.

She smiles as she gently brushes a lock of hair from my eyes.

"Sleep well, Professor. I'll wake you in a couple of hours and we'll try another dose."

I fall asleep to the sound of her voice softly reading to me.

It is a newly rediscovered joy to awaken and be able to open my eyes. The ceiling is not the most beautiful of sights, but it beats being blind. I can barely see Hermione from the corner of my eye. She appears to be asleep in her chair, but as if she senses that I am awake, she begins to stir as soon as I look in her direction.

I imagine she's set up some sort of ward to alert her when I awaken. She's a clever girl.

"Hello, Professor."

As she speaks, she leans over me and peers into my face, studying it. A wand appears in her hand and she casts a nonverbal spell. Diagnostic spell, by the looks of the ticker tape that flows from her wand.

"No adverse effects whatsoever. Good. Your color is improving as well. Ready for another dose?"

Absolutely.

"I'll take that smile for a yes."

Am I smiling? With the paralysis, it is difficult for me to judge what my face is doing. It's as if it has a mind of my own. I concentrate for a moment and decide my lips are slightly upturned. Suitable enough, I suppose. At least I am not grinning at the girl like some imbecile.

Hermione leaves my bedside long enough to quietly shut the door to my room. The vial is produced and administered so quickly that even if someone had walked in, they were unlikely to notice it. I imagine the precautions of the morning were there in case I had unexpected side effects than they were to prevent exposure of the antidote itself.

Hermione sits at my side on the edge of the bed. Her hand is on my wrist to keep track of my pulse as the potion takes effect. My heart does seem to race a moment, but quickly returns to its normal pace.

I feel different. Slightly more energized. An experiment to move my limbs produced definite twitching in both my fingers and toes. That is positive progress indeed. If the potion is giving me any movement at all in my extremities, the likelihood of it completely reversing the paralysis is quite high.

"How do you feel, Professor?"

I clear my throat, purse my lips, and try a few words. My voice is harsh with disuse, but perfectly understandable.

"Please, Hermione, call me Severus."

A/N: As always, thank you so much for reading! I am having so much fun returning to the Potterverse for a visit. It's nice to write something for the pure fun of it again. We have at least a few chapters to go, but we are certainly past the halfway mark.

I'm writing without a beta, so any mistakes are my own.

Please check out my novel, Wyrđ House at Amazon[dot]Kindlescout[dot]com. Nominate it for a chance to get a free advance copy of the ebook if it's selected. My KS campaign ends on March 3rd. It's a mystery full of magic and romance, so I think you would all enjoy it. You can also keep up with all my writing news at my blog: juliannejohnson[dot]wordpress[dot]com.

Thanks for reading!

Eight

He'd Avada Kadavra himself if he could move. An Epilogue, what epilogue, in which Severus Snape is not killed by Nagini.

Chapter Eight

The next two hours pass very pleasantly. While it remains distressing to be unable to move other than a slight twitching of my fingers and a small ability to move my head, regaining my ability to speak is a great relief to me. Hermione shows me her notes on the elixir she has concocted for my cure, and we have a lively discussion about her findings and the positive results.

I can find no fault in her work. The discussion is interesting and challenges my mind in a way it hasn't been challenged since that damned snake bit me. I feel more myself and yet I feel changed as well. The anxious and driven man who fought a drawn out war seems very far away. My paralysis seems to have created some distance from those days of war. It seems like something that happened years ago.

I feel at once alien and more myself than I have felt in a brace of decades. So far, I like my post-war self. I can do whatever I want, including flirt with this kind young muggleborn woman at my side. For perhaps the first time in my life, I can do whatever the hell I want.

Hermione makes a slightly off-color joke about billywig stings, and I laugh as I haven't laughed in years. I can tell by her expression that she is shocked by my laughter, but she recovers quickly and joins right in.

When the laughter fades, I bring up a more serious subject. It is something I've been wondering for some time.

"Hermione, how are your parents? Have their memories been restored?"

"Oh, yes. I found them that first week after the last battle and reversed my memory charm."

"Have they returned?"

"No, actually, not yet. Now that they remember, they want a little time to get used to things before they move again."

The normally cheerful girl's voice holds a great deal of sadness. The meeting with her parents must not have been the happy experience she was expecting.

"Do your parents understand how much danger they were in from the war?" It seems ridiculous to me that Hermione's parents could hold any sort of grudge because of her sensible actions.

"I'm afraid not. I tried to explain, but I'm not certain how much they believed. You see, I always downplayed the danger when I spoke to them about the war at all. I didn't want them to worry, and I didn't want them to demand I leave the wizarding world."

"Would you have left if they expected it of you?"

"No. I'm a witch and I'm not giving that up for anyone. Not even my parents."

"Good. Hermione, your parents were on a list of those Voldemort wanted destroyed. Your actions saved their lives. You can find comfort in that fact even if your parents don't fully understand."

There's moisture in her eyes, and she blinks it away before smiling at me. "Thanks for that. Anyway, they'll forgive me eventually. They always do."

"Give them a little time. To suddenly remember an entirely different life can be quite a shock to the psyche. Once they have a little time to adapt, they'll return to their real life."

"I think you are right. I had a phone call from them last week and they are beginning to talk about moving back."

Our conversation is interrupted by the sudden entrance of one of my mediwitches.

"Why Mr. Snape! How wonderful to see your eyes open!"

I close my eyes for a brief moment. I smell a slightly cloying mix of cherry and pineapple. I recognize the cheap perfume.

"Mediwitch Corianne, a pleasure to meet you. I thank you for your excellent caretaking."

I find that I mean it. Despite her horrid taste in toilette water, the woman has always spoken to me with respect and she has taken very good care of me while I was unable to take care of myself.

"Oh, you sweet man." There are tears in her eyes and she seems honestly touched by my partial recovery. "That horrible paralysis must finally be wearing off. I was worried about you, and that's a fact. I'll go get a healer to check on you right away."

She exits the room as quickly as she appeared.

"Er...Severus, it might be a good idea not to mention my involvement in your cure."

"I wasn't planning to. Your elixir borders on dark magic, as did my original antivenin. I much prefer to continue with my recovery. You being held for questioning by the Ministry would hardly allow that. I believe sticking to this idea that the paralysis is wearing off on its own is our best course of action."

"I should have known you would have considered the ramifications already. You really are very clever, Sir."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Sorry. You're very clever, Severus."

"Thank you. You are no slouch yourself, Hermione."

The Healer arrives and performs a battery of diagnostic spells. As the hospital is already aware of what potions I have been given--or so they think--no spells are voiced that would bring Hermione's meddling to light. Much fuss is made about my recovery, and it is decided that I can be allowed food and drink rather than nutritive potions.

The meal they bring me is simple. A little porridge, a soft cooked egg, and a small triangle of toast. Hermione waves away the help of a pretty orderly and feeds me herself.

I think things are going well on all counts.

After the bland meal, Hermione reads to me for a bit and I fall asleep to the gentle sound of her voice.

When I wake, it's time for another dose of Hermione's elixir. We chat as we wait for the potion to take effect, and after around twenty minutes, I discover that I can move my

fingers and toes freely. My ankles and wrists are also responsive, though my arms and legs are not yet under my control.

"Hermione, I truly do not know how to express my gratitude." My voice comes out a bit gravelly with emotion and I find that I do not care. I have no reason to hide my feelings anymore. I am no longer a spy and no one is spying on me.

"There's no need. I wanted to help. We lost so many people in the war...I couldn't stand to lose anyone else. I didn't want to lose you too."

"I am very happy not to be lost. My first week in this bed was grim indeed. Then you arrived. While my state was still depressing, you made it better. You made it bearable. Now, you've given me back my sight, my voice, and my hands. Even if this cure goes no further, I cannot thank you enough."

"None of that, Severus. I have every reason to believe we'll have you walking in a few days."

"You've shown me your research and the results of your trials. I imagine you are correct."

The pretty mediwitch comes in with a tray. I must have slept longer than I thought. Once again Hermione shoos the woman away and takes charge of my meal. This time I have a rather bland piece of baked fish, some mashed potatoes, and some boiled turnip. I forgive the hospital for the boring and monotone meal because they have included a single cup of weak but acceptable tea.

Shortly after the meal, I realize I have a new issue.

"Hermione, perhaps you would be so good as to fetch the mediwitch for me."

Her brow furrows. It's clear she doesn't like that idea. Good.

"Why? Do you need something? Can I help you?"

"I need to take a piss, Hermione. While I'm certain you could handle the matter, perhaps you would be more comfortable..."

She flees the room before I've finished the sentence. She blushed too, when I mentioned her handling the problem. Perhaps she was envisioning it. Between this reaction and the way she keeps scowling at my pretty mediwitch and shoos her away, I believe I am doing quite well.

Slytherins are quite good at getting what they want. Of all the houses, we seem to understand human nature the most. There were professors at Hogwarts who thought that Hermione should have been sorted into Ravenclaw, but I disagree. Intelligent people who have a thirst for knowledge can be found in all the houses, they don't all get crammed into Ravenclaw. Hermione, with her propensity for taking in strays and her eagerness to leap into the fray and buck the system if she thinks it's wrong is pure Gryffindor.

I can't play Slytherin mind games with Hermione and get anywhere. A direct approach will be my best chance by far.

After the mediwitch leaves my room, Hermione slinks back in still looking a bit uncomfortable. She puts a brave face on things and attempts to act normally, but it's clear she remains a bit flustered and embarrassed.

I wonder if the thought of me urinating has caused this reaction, or if the young woman is having naughty thoughts about her former professor?

We speak for some time about her plans for the coming year. She has decided to put employment plans on hold, and finish her schooling when Hogwarts is back in business. While her war hero status would get her any number of jobs, returning to school is the only way she can sit her NEWTS. She's a sensible young woman. I admire her desire to finish school and not rely on her Order of Merlin alone to open doors.

While we are talking, she touches me occasionally. A gentle hand on my shoulder or arm when she is making a point. Fingers across my brow as she brushes the hair from my face.

There's no doubt about it. She had naughty thoughts about her professor.

Good. Now that I've survived the war and I'm ready to begin the rest of my life, I find that I'm in a hurry to begin the rest of my life. A direct approach is certainly the way to go. Thank goodness for Gryffindors. One never has to worry how they feel about you. They always make it perfectly clear.

As soon as I can move a little better, I'll make a move that is direct and to the point. In the meantime...

"Hermione, I will sleep soon. You should go home and get some rest in something other than my bedside chair."

"Why? I mean...you need regular doses of the potion...and I should watch for side effects...but perhaps you are tired of me hovering around..."

"Hermione, hush." The poor girl is babbling. "I think it's clear that I am experiencing no adverse side effects whatsoever. However, I am thinking about your own needs and not my own. I'm becoming quite fond of having you hovering around, as you put it."

"Well then, I'm staying, and you can't do anything about it." A sharp nod of her head punctuated the statement. I'd rather stay here with you. I sneak into the mediwitch's lounge to shower when you are asleep, and I get food in the shop on the third floor. There's no reason at all for me to leave."

I certainly wasn't going to argue with her.

Hermione lowered my bed, tucked me in, and then leaned down to give me a chaste kiss on the cheek.

"Goodnight, Severus."

"Goodnight, pet."

A/N: I'm working without a beta, so any mistakes are my own.

You know, I thought this story would be maybe four more chapters, but Severus and Hermione seem to be in a hurry, lol! I think a chapter or two will finish this story up. I've really enjoyed my return to the Potterverse, and the people who have read and commented brighten my day. It's nice to write something just for the pure fun of it again. I don't know if there will be another fic after this. I won't say I never will, mind you, but I have no plot bunny nipping at my heels and my non-fanfic writing takes much of my time. For now I'll say, we'll see.

The Kindle Scout campaign for my novel, Wyrdd House is now over. Thanks to all who took the time to nominate it. Now, I'm waiting for news, and getting ready to start a campaign for Teatime of the Living Dead, which I'm super excited about. I also have a re-write of one book to do, and two WIPs to finish, as well as a mailing list to start. Busy, busy, busy! If you want to keep up with my writing, please visit me at my blog: [Julianneqjohnson\[dot\]wordpress\[dot\]com](http://Julianneqjohnson.wordpress.com).

Thanks for reading!

Nine

Chapter 9 of 9

He'd Avada Kadavra himself if he could move. An Epilogue, what epilogue, in which Severus Snape is not killed by Nagini.

Chapter Nine

Oddly enough, my legs regain movement before my arms do. The paralysis had begun in my extremities and quickly worked its way inward, perhaps the antidote was having a similar effect, albeit more slowly.

Hermione is napping in her chair and I am wishing I had the use of my arms when Minerva McGonagall walks into my room.

"Severus, you're awake! Are you all right?"

"I will be, thanks to Hermione."

The young woman in question wakes up and exchanges greetings with her former student.

"I'll let you two have some time together. I could use something to eat at any rate." Hermione starts for the door to my room, but stops when I flap a hand at her.

In my defense, I'd been trying to lift my arm. My arm did not cooperate. Hermione is a clever witch. She immediately came up to the bed and gave my hand a squeeze before heading out the door.

When I turn back to Minerva, she has one eyebrow raised and both arms crossed on over her chest.

"And what was that. Professor Snape?"

"What was what?" I know playing stupid is not going to work, no matter how happy Minerva is that I'm more myself. That doesn't keep me from trying.

The older witch says nothing, but she gives a pointed look to my hand and then to the doorway Hermione recently used to exit my room.

"Obviously I am grateful to the young woman who has given me a second chance at life."

This earns me a prim snort.

"Which has most likely been intensified by my current situation. Nightingale syndrome, as the muggles call it."

This gets me an actual chuckle. "The day any Slytherin falls victim to Nightingale syndrome is the day I start cheering for the Chudley Cannons instead of the Magpies."

It was a losing battle from the start. "She's intelligent, kind, and attractive. I care for her."

"Understandable. She's returning to Hogwarts when it's repaired to finish her schooling. Any professor who wants to keep company with her there had better be her husband."

"How long until Hogwarts is back in business?"

"No more than three months."

"Fair enough."

Three months is an eternity to a Slytherin. Certainly I should move quickly. A woman such as Hermione is not going to agree to marriage unless she has been dating the man in question for a suitable length of time and has reason to marry sooner rather than later. If we are seeing each other for a few months, for example, and can only continue to do so if we get married.

Slytherins are as capable of leaping into the fray as any Gryffindor, as long as they have a suitable reason to do so.

"Now, how long do you suppose it will be until you are able to help me with the repairs? Any chance of you getting out of this bed soon?"

"If my progress continues at its present pace, I imagine I'll be up sometime tomorrow. It will take me some time to get up to strength. I've been lying here far too long. A week, perhaps, before I'll be any use to you."

"That soon?"

"I think so, yes. And you should get two birds with one stone. Once she is not spending all of her time on me, I think Hermione would jump at the chance to help at Hogwarts."

"An excellent idea. She is young, but quite talented with a wand."

"Faint praise from her head of house. She's a bloody war hero. I think she can manage a few repairs." I could feel the scowl on my face. It's an expression I hadn't used of late, not with Hermione fussing over me.

The mad old harridan had the gall to laugh at me, which made me scowl all the more.

"Tone it down, lad, before your face freezes like that. Now, not that my opinion matters much to you--"

"It does," I admit.

"Now you're sulking. It's quite unbecoming."

"Get to the point, woman."

"I believe that you and Miss Granger will get on quite well."

"Well, thank Merlin for that. Whatever should I have done if my choice of partner didn't meet with your approval."

"Hush, you. What can I do to help? What do you need?"

There is one void in my life that has been weighing on me greatly. "I seem to have misplaced my wand."

"Damn. That is a problem. Do you suppose it was left in the shack?"

"I imagine so. Flitwick thought I was dead. I doubt he would have looked for my wand. Does the shack still stand?"

"So much damage, so many buildings in Hogsmeade lost, and that eyesore wasn't touched. If it's there, I will find it. Any nasty little wards I should be wary of?"

Smart as a whip. I'm lucky the woman seems to have no issues with my pursuing Hermione. "Any member of The Order may handle my wand without fear. I wouldn't try anything other than picking it up, though. My wand is temperamental at best."

"Well, isn't that a shock. Severus Snape's wand is temperamental. Oh, do stop scowling. You must know how thrilled I am to have you around to tease."

She grabs one of my hands then, and I squeeze hers back just as tightly.

"Now then," Minerva says, giving my hand a last pat, "What do you want to teach, Severus? I'm afraid we have quite a few positions available."

"History of Magic."

"What? You can't possibly be serious. I can give you Potions, Defense, even Transfiguration if you want...I'm going to be quite busy. Why in the world would you want to teach history? It's not like Binns is going anywhere."

"No, he isn't, but he should. Our children learn nothing in those classes and they desperately need to. If we had an actual living professor in that class, perhaps we wouldn't be doomed to repeat the same mistakes over and over. Once with Grindelwald, twice with Voldemort, Merlin knows who will be next."

"I see your point. I hadn't thought about that before. But I was counting on you to take Potions or Defense. Binns might be a bloody awful professor, but he's at least a professor. Slughorn refuses to teach any longer, and I don't even know who else to ask."

"I can take the higher level Potions. History won't have the same time commitment and we can make the class size larger since there's no practical."

"True, but who will teach the lower level Potions?"

"Give them to Hermione."

"What? Miss Granger is returning to finish her studies, Severus. Besides, she's hardly qualified to teach a potions class."

"She's more than qualified. Why do you think I'm improving?"

"Really? I assumed the paralysis was wearing off."

"Not at all. Hermione found my notes on the antivenin, developed an antidote, as is curing me. I couldn't have done it better myself and she did it completely on her own."

"She'd do fine with the lower levels then. But what about her classes?"

"School has never particularly stretched her capabilities. Hermione can handle her class work and teaching. She can take her potions newt before classes begin...she's more than prepared."

"That's an idea. I'm certain she could pass her transfiguration beforehand as well. I'll talk to the board and see if we can set up a special testing for her."

"For a student with an Order of Merlin, First Class? They'll do it. That will cut down her classes and give her time to teach. Then next year, when her schooling is completed, you can give her all the potions classes."

"Do you think she wants to teach?"

"I think she would, for a time. Don't count on her for long, though. She'll end up in the Ministry."

"She'll end up the Minister."

"I imagine she will."

Our plots and plans in place, Minerva shortly takes her leave. She's heading straight out to see if she can locate my wand. I hope she finds it. I miss it like I'd miss an amputated limb. The idea of trying to break in a completely different wand is off putting.

That afternoon, when my latest dose of the potion at last gives me the use of my arms, I use my newfound ability to tip Hermione into the bed on top of me. Her mouth is a perfect 'o' of surprise when I kiss her for the first time.

I have not actually kissed many women during my life. I was too awful as a student to attract anyone. In my adult life, most of the women who were interested in a snog were people I actively hated. I find that it is incredibly easy to kiss Hermione.

"Severus?" The expression on her face is a charming mixture of surprise, worried, and happy.

She's an intelligent woman and a Gryffindor; I know exactly which tact to take.

"I admired you as a student, though as a spy for the Order I could not say so. I worried about you while you were on that damned Horcrux hunt. These past few days I've gotten to know you fairly well. I'm extraordinarily fond of you, pet, and once we get out of this place, I'd like the chance to get to know you even better."

"I would like that."

"Good."

Then I kissed her again. I think the two of us will get on very well. I'm looking forward to it.

A/N:

That's it for this one. I doubt that there will be another story from the Potterverse from me after this, but never say never! I have so enjoyed coming back for a bit of fun with

Hermione and Severus.

I'm working without a beta, so any mistakes are my own.

My novel, Wyrđ House, was not selected for publication by Kindle Press, but I've self-published it and anyone who is interested can find it on Amazon and Kindle.

My next attempt at a Kindle Scout campaign is live right now and runs until the 15th of April. The book is Teatime of the Living Dead, and I think it might be the best thing I've written so far. If you want to check it out, you can find it at Amazon[dot]KindleScout[dot]com. Just check under "Mystery, Thriller, and Suspense." I'd love it if any of you have a chance to check it out.

Thank you all so much for reading, and I hope you have enjoyed my story.