

Moving On

by GinnyW

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: JK Rowling created this amazing world and these fabulous characters. I am only borrowing them and I'm praying she doesn't kill the ones that I love the most.

Remus looked around the staff room. This was their "Start of Term Celebration". Minerva always held a party and insisted that the teachers and staff were all in attendance. The students would be arriving on the Hogwarts Express tomorrow evening, and the Sorting Ceremony and Feast would once again take place.

The thing was that the staff rarely celebrated. They would eat and drink in the staff room, sitting in their various groups of friends and discussing current events or the latest student gossip. But it was required that they all attend.

At Minerva's behest, Remus had once again taken over the position of Defence Against the Dark Arts once Voldemort had been defeated by Harry. The rumored curse that had been on the position was no more, and Remus had now been the professor for going on thirteen years.

This year would be the most interesting, however. Remus looked across the room to see how Severus was faring thus far. The dour man was sulking in the corner, as per usual. Severus had returned to teaching Potions six years ago. The man had had a rough run of things after his acquittal from the Wizengamot. After the fall of Voldemort, he'd spent three years in Azkaban awaiting the "swiftly" spinning wheels of justice to grant him his trial. Following his surprising acquittal, thanks in part to testimony on his behalf from Harry Potter, he'd gone off to sulk.

Well, that's how Dumbledore's portrait put it. Severus had tried to support himself. No one would hire him. He'd lived off of his savings, attempted to brew potions from his home, and peddled his wares on the Hogwarts Express to various apothecaries in the wizarding world. However, very few people trusted potions made by a former Death Eater and accused murderer, acquitted or not.

It had taken four years and multiple visits to his house, but Minerva had finally convinced him to return to teaching. That was, of course, when he'd found that he had almost nothing left. Severus had only accepted the post as Hogwarts' Potions master as a last resort.

Naturally, the hiring of Albus Dumbledore's murderer, (even if he had been cleared of the charges, the label would never leave him), had caused quite a stir among the Governing Board of Hogwarts. But just as Albus would've done, Hogwarts' Headmistress stood firmly by Severus' side, refusing to back down to the pushy old wizards who were on the Board. Obviously, Minerva had won the little battle of wills.

After the fight with the Board, Severus and Minerva both merely had to deal with the angry Howlers from parents threatening to pull their children out of the school. It had seemed to take an incredible amount of patience on Severus' part to keep from deducting every House point from the hourglasses that stood in the Entrance Hall in his frustration. The headmistress, for her part, had also shown a tremendous amount of restraint, and it was finally a deal with the *Daily Prophet*, allowing a reporter to follow Severus around for the day to see how he conducted himself in the classroom and then write up the article for publishing, that calmed the public down.

Remus still wondered how Minerva had convinced Severus to tolerate that, however, Severus had changed somewhat. Any man who spent three years in Azkaban, *patiently* awaiting trial, would change. Remus had seen it in Sirius, although with his schoolmate, he'd seen more of a regression than the tempering that he saw in Severus. Mostly what he saw when he looked at Severus' face was regret. The regret was etched in the faint lines that were beginning to form on his face, and it was permanently fixed in the black abyss of his eyes.

This was going to be an especially hard year for Severus.

But Severus wasn't the only person that Remus was worried about. He scanned the staff room, looking for the brown-haired, brown-eyed young woman who was looking equally morose this evening.

And there she was, sitting at the other end of the room, exactly where he'd left her just a few minutes prior. But she'd requested that he leave her alone for a bit, insisting that he mingle and speak with others. So, he did, but his thoughts weren't on the light and meaningless conversations around him.

Remus sighed, running his hands through his graying hair. This was Hermione's first year at Hogwarts. She was taking over the teaching of Arithmancy. It had been a stroke of luck that Professor Vector had decided to retire this year. Hermione had been through a lot over the last six months and needed the change, although she too had to brace herself for what she was going to be forced to face come tomorrow evening.

Remus noted that the other professors would politely approach Hermione where she sat, awkwardly greet her, and move on to chat with someone else. Everyone knew the uncomfortable situation that she was in, but nobody knew how to deal with it. He wasn't sure what Minerva had been thinking when she'd offered Hermione the position here, but he did agree that Hermione had needed the change and she needed to be someplace safe.

Hogwarts was both of those things.

Remus breathed a sigh of relief when Minerva went over and sat down with Hermione. He was hoping that the headmistress would excuse the younger woman, but alas, she did no such thing. On one hand, he could understand. Tomorrow would be much more difficult to endure. Tonight Hermione simply had to deal with a few new colleagues giving her sympathetic and knowing looks. Tomorrow the rumors would be flying, and she'd have to face some demons.

It all began for her after the fall of Voldemort. Things settled. Hermione had been hired by Gringotts, where she'd worked as a curse-breaker, expanding on her Arithmancy skills. She and Ron appeared close; however they surprised everyone when they weren't immediately married. When asked why, she simply told people that she wished to become settled in her career first.

Then Harry and Ginny were married. And the article came out in the *Daily Prophet* stating that there must be "trouble in paradise" because Hermione and Ron had yet to announce their engagement. Remus knew that she had received pressure from Molly, and Ron must've as well.

He remembered thinking at the time that things must've become much more intense for the pair of them the moment that Harry and Ginny's first child was born not more than a year later.

Eventually, the couple gave into the pressure. They had been married five years ago. It was about that time that Nymphadora and Hermione became very close friends. Apparently once Hermione was married into the Weasley family, she no longer felt that she could trust Ginny as a true female confidant.

Ron was often gone on business trips. He was a representative for Firebolt broomsticks. So, whenever Ron was out of town, Hermione would come by Remus and Nymphadora's home. Granted, during the school year, many times Remus wasn't around either. But from reports he got from his wife, Remus knew that the marriage was rocky at best.

Within six months of Ron and Hermione's marriage, apparently, they began getting pressure to have children. The couple had been on the verge of divorce more times than Remus cared to count as a result of family meddling.

Nearly two years ago they began seeing a marriage counselor and working things through, it seemed. And about a year ago, Hermione had confided in Nymphadora and Remus that she and Ron were trying to have a baby.

They had been watching things improve for the couple over the year and for the first time, Hermione seemed truly happy with the way things were going in her marriage.

Thank God a contraceptive potion can mess up a woman's cycle for up to a year after she stops taking it! Remus thought for what seemed to be the millionth time.

Everything came out just over six months ago ... all in Ron's dirty laundry, quite literally. Ron had come home from one of his business trips, and Hermione had grabbed his suitcase for him while he'd been sleeping on the sofa. In the pocket in one of his robes, she'd found an older photo of her loving husband holding a little girl that appeared to be about six years old at the time. She'd known it was older because Ron hadn't worn his hair that long in the last few years.

When she turned the picture over, she'd found the words: *I love you, Daddy!*

Hermione had later told her friends that she'd remained calm as she learned the details of his betrayal from her husband. It was after that when she became hysterical.

Most of her attack had been verbal, but she'd obviously felt betrayed and was not in her right mind. Remus felt that her husband had been lucky that she'd been a Muggle-born because attacking with a wand was not her first instinct. Not that Remus believed that Hermione was violent by nature. She was anything but. However, she had obviously reached her limit.

When Nymphadora had been called by the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, Domestic Disturbance Division, she'd had to do quite a bit of talking to get them to keep from detaining either of the Weasleys. Nymphadora took Hermione back to the Lupin house with her, while Ron stayed at the house.

Remus had spent a few extra evenings and weekends at home with his wife and their houseguest during that time to try to be supportive. Hermione had taken some personal days off from work, and after three days of crying and refusing to say much, she told Remus and Nymphadora what she'd learned prior to her hysteria.

Obviously, Ron had a daughter. The child was six months younger than Harry and Ginny's son and was the daughter of Hannah Abbott. Hermione had informed both Remus and Nymphadora that he'd apparently begun seeing Hannah shortly after Harry and Ginny announced that they were going to have their first child. It seems that Ron had hated the embarrassment, pressure, and failure he felt from his family for not yet starting a family.

He'd run into Hannah one evening at a bar, and they'd quickly become reacquainted, as it were. But it hadn't remained a one-night stand. No, Ron, in his infinite wisdom, went back to the Hufflepuff. Ron claimed that he confided everything to Hannah, including how he felt about his baby sister's marriage and pregnancy, while he was still waiting for Hermione to "settle into her career". Hannah, in *her* infinite wisdom, decided to help him by taking a mild fertility potion without telling him.

So, the majority of Ron's business trips that he'd claimed to be on, one of the major reason for their fights, and his distance were due to the fact that he was living a dual life.

Remus sighed and began mingling among his colleagues again, chatting with those that he came across, and glancing at Hermione every so often. Pomona was now saying her polite "hello" before going back to sit with Hooch.

Hermione would've stayed at her job at Gringotts, had she been able to, however once her personal days were used up, she had no choice but to return. Nymphadora tried to talk her out of going, but had been unable to do so. Hermione had done well the first few days of trying to ease back into normalcy. It was day four when everything turned itself upside down.

No one knew what it was that triggered it, but Hermione had a breakdown while at work, going completely mental while working down in the tunnels of the main vault in London. Her emotions not only wound up risking her life, but also the lives of the other two people on her team. Needless to say, she was terminated from her position.

From there, she began going back to see the counselor that she'd been seeing with Ron the year before.

Upon hearing what all had happened, Minerva had insisted that Hermione come teach at the school.

The only problem was that Ron's daughter, Ariel, would be arriving tomorrow on the Hogwarts Express. Although Hermione would not be teaching the girl, (and Remus hoped that Hermione would never have to), Hermione would still have to see her.

"What are you staring at, Lupin?" came a snide voice. "Or should that be, whom are you staring at?"

"What?" asked Remus, looking up from his chair and catching Severus staring at him.

"I thought that you were a happily married man. Tsk, tsk. Whatever will your wife say?"

"And how are you doing this evening, Severus? Are you prepared for this year?"

"It is no different than any other year," Severus sneered.

Remus raised his eyebrows. "Is that so? I'll have to tell Harry that. I'm sure he'll be thrilled to know that you're looking forward to having little Andrew Potter in your Potions class."

Remus chuckled when he heard a noise come from Severus' throat very reminiscent of a growl. He looked up into Severus' face, and once again, saw the lines of regret that were ever present on the wizard who'd only lived a quarter of his life.

That was when the moment of idiocy hit Remus. When asked about it years later, he'd never be able to say what it was that came over him.

"Severus, you need to let it go. Harry Potter's son is not going to be the end of your life."

"At least I don't have to deal with Granger's kid," Severus muttered, while glancing over Hermione.

"No, just Ron's."

"So I've heard."

"Which leads me to what I'd like to ask you," Remus carefully stated.

"Out with it."

"Go talk with her, please. I've spoken with her tonight, when she first arrived, and Minerva has, but everyone else has only said the obligatory welcome and avoided her as if she were ill."

"I am not speaking with someone just because she's a charity case," hissed Snape.

"Need I remind you that you owe me, Severus," Remus said softly so that nobody else could hear. "And I don't mean for you to go up to her and say your cursory welcome and leave either. I mean go up to her and actually have a conversation. By God, the girl needs it."

"I don't owe you anything. I'm not going to let you hold anything over my head, Lupin."

"You do, and you know it. I'm not talking about Fenrir, here. I'm talking about the fact that I convinced Minerva to put me on the Christmas party committee in your place, stating that you had too many other duties that you were busy with this year, when we all know that it's your turn."

Remus knew he had him when he heard Severus mutter softly under his breath, "Oh, bloody hell!"

"And what do you propose that I speak with her about? Do you have a script prepared for me?" Severus drawled.

"No, I don't have a script for you. Improvise. Isn't that what you used to do when you were a spy?"

"Yes," came the short reply.

"Just be nice to her, Severus."

Snape narrowed his eyes and glared at Remus before walking over to the other side of the room where Hermione still sat. Remus held his breath at first, wondering if he'd just made a major error in judgment, and if so, what catastrophic event was about to happen.

When no lightning struck the staff room and no earthquakes shook the ancient castle walls, he allowed himself to breathe.

"What are you doing, Remus?"

"Oh, Minerva," Remus said with a smile. "Please have a seat. I am watching Hermione and Severus."

"Yes, you've been doing that all evening, I've noticed."

Remus laughed. "I never would've made a very good spy."

"No, you wouldn't have. They seem to be getting on well. I think that's the first time that I've seen Hermione genuinely smile in weeks. What do you suppose he said to her?"

"Knowing Severus? He's probably giving her tips on giving Ron's daughter detentions and deducting unfair House points."

"Severus wouldn't do that," Minerva said, defending her Potions master.

"How naïve are you? Of course he would."

"Well, Hermione certainly wouldn't do such a thing!" the headmistress insisted.

Remus smiled indulgently at her and then glanced back over at the couple. They continued to watch the pair talk, and after a while, Remus was surprised to see that Severus had extended his arm and Hermione was now looping her arm through it. The couple were still talking quietly as they made their way towards the door. Standing from his chair, Remus made his way to intercept only to be stopped by Minerva.

"Let them be, Remus."

"What?"

"I said, let them be. They both need some companionship, wouldn't you say?"

"Yes, of course. I just didn't expect... Well, I'm not quite sure what I expected," Remus said.

"I know. I'd wager that they are just going for a walk, anyway. Tomorrow will be hard for both of them. Perhaps they will find a way to work through these changes together," Minerva said, hopefully.

"Perhaps they will," Remus agreed, allowing his face to relax and the worry to ease. Minerva was right. It wasn't as if Severus was going to ravish Hermione in the hallways, at any rate.

"I predict they will both move on just fine," the headmistress said with a small smile.

"I hope you're right, Minerva. I hope you are right."

A/N: Yes, this really is a one-shot. It was written as a gift for mugglegirl0908. When my other WIPs are finished, I may come back and revisit this storyline. :)

Thanks to Cocoachristy & SnarkyRoxy for beta reading this story for me!