

Angel of Music

by Celisnebula

Something strange has happened to Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley, something that has the Healers of St. Mungo's baffled. Severus Snape is called in to help, only to be sucked into the very heart of the mystery.

Story for Maaiker on the sshg_exchange on livejournal.

Angel of Music

Chapter 1 of 1

Something strange has happened to Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley, something that has the Healers of St. Mungo's baffled. Severus Snape is called in to help, only to be sucked into the very heart of the mystery.

Story for Maaiker on the sshg_exchange on livejournal.

"Why are you here?" Harry asked in a tired voice, watching as his childhood tormenter walked into the hospital room.

Severus Snape paused just inside the doorway. "I was under the impression I was needed," he said in a deceptively mild tone. "However, if that isn't the case, I shall tell Minerva that there simply wasn't a thing I could do." He turned to leave, only to stop short as Harry desperately called out, "Wait."

"I " Harry started hesitantly. "Do you think you can help them?"

Snape's eyes traveled over the pale forms of Hermione Granger and Ronald Weasley occupying two separate hospital beds. Their eyes were wide open, pupils dilated, bodies so rigid they could've been carved from stone.

"I don't know," he said after a moment, glancing over at the younger man's haggard face.

"Please," Harry whispered softly. "If there is anything you can do, please, please do it. They are all I have left."

"Really, Potter," Snape said with a sneer. "There's no need to be melodramatic. You are hardly alone." He pulled out his wand, uttered a small invocation, causing the tip of it to light up, and held it over Hermione's prone body.

Harry bit his lip, trying hard to suppress the tight coil of anger Snape's casual dismissal brought. If Snape could help them, then he would do whatever it took to ensure that Snape did it.

"I need to know exactly what happened, Potter as much as you can tell me," Snape said, breaking Harry's train of thought.

"I'm not sure there is much I can tell you. I wasn't at Grimmauld Place when this happened." Harry shifted his weight in the chair at Ron's bedside, reaching out to smooth the bed sheet. "Ron and Hermione have been fighting a lot lately, so I've been making myself scarce; but I know Ron had nothing to do with this!"

"Have I said that he did?" Snape asked tersely, turning from Hermione's afflicted form towards Ron. Harry looked up at those words, watching the movements of the glowing wand as if mesmerized as Snape repeated his previous movements.

"Pray, continue, Potter we haven't got all day."

"Right, sorry." Harry shook his head slightly, trying to gather his thoughts. "When I got home, I found them both on the floor of the library, eyes wide open. Hermione had a book clutched tightly in her right hand. It looks as if Ron had tried to grab it away from her, only instead of a tussle, they collapsed on the floor. But that makes absolutely no sense!"

"Was there anything near them on the floor, any crushed or broken glass?" Snape asked without looking up.

"No, nothing like that."

"What about their wands, were they drawn?"

"No," Harry said with a sigh. "Hermione's wand was tucked up her sleeve, and Ron's was in his back pocket."

"Think, Potter!" Snape ground out in an exasperated tone. "Was there anything suspicious about the way you found them?"

"There was nothing there! Nothing at all!" Harry's voice caught in a broken sob. "They were just lying on the floor, not moving. Their eyes were staring straight up, not blinking; it didn't even look like they were breathing!"

"I need to see the book, Potter. But don't touch it. In fact, I need access to the clothes they were wearing, anything they might've touched. Collect the items, but do not touch them yourself." He turned back towards Ron and ran his long white fingers down the young man's face. "It's almost as if they've both ingested the Draught of Living Death I suppose it's too late to ask for any remnants of the food they might've ingested," he said, mostly to himself. "Well, no matter." He looked up, and caught Harry's eye. "Do run along, Potter. No telling how long we might have."

"I've already touched the book," Harry said. "When I found them, I grabbed it from Hermione's hand and threw it across the room. I panicked and tried to wake them with a Rennervate Spell, but that didn't work. In the end I tried to shake them awake. Nothing seemed to help."

"Of all the foolish " Snape cut himself off. "Never mind, just go get the items. Do try to keep your hands off of them, there's no telling what exactly caused this."

Harry opened his mouth, as if to protest, but then closed it, disappearing from the room with a *slighpop*.

When Harry returned, he found Snape deep in conversation with one of the Healers. Not wanting to interrupt, he set the bag of items on the floor and moved into the chair beside Hermione's bed.

"Hold on, Hermione," he whispered, pushing back a strand of hair from her face. "Snape's here, and well, I don't know what he'll be able to do, but the Healers are lost, so I suppose we'll have to trust him."

"Potter," Snape snapped, throwing a look over his shoulder. "Did you get the items?"

"In the bag on the floor."

Snape pulled out his wand, crouched down over the bag and uttered a soft spell. He carefully shifted through all the items, taking care not to actually touch them as he checked for any residual potion ingredients. Shifting his weight, he changed spells, checking for any charm traces. Snape sneered as he noticed the title of the book a copy of *The Phantom of the Opera* musical screenplay. There was a slight bit of spell residue on the book, not enough to determine what charm was used.

"You say you handled the book earlier, Potter?" he asked without looking up.

"I grabbed it out of Hermione's hand, if that's what you mean."

Snape reached for the book, his fingers hovering just above the cover. "Did your bare hand come in contact with it?" he asked.

"No," Harry answered, just as Snape lost his balance, his bare hand brushing across the cover of the book. He fell to the floor, in the same condition Harry had found Ron and Hermione in.

oOo

Snape found himself in a dimly lit cavern; the stench of sewage greeted his nose as he took in his surroundings. To the left, a dark lake stretched out before him with a small boat tied to a moor, and to the right, the concrete island stretched on, meeting a wall with a doorway. With one last glance out across the dark lake, Snape turned and started towards the door.

"Professor Snape," Hermione squeaked in surprise as he walked through the doorway. "Is it really you? This shouldn't be happening Neither you nor Ron should've been affected by the book. It was keyed only to me."

"Bloody hell," he muttered. "You mean to tell me that you deliberately did this to yourself? Do you have any idea the sort of problems you've caused? You and Weasley have been in stasis for nearly a week now, and Potter's frantic."

"What do you mean, a week?" Hermione asked. "But that's impossible! The spell is only supposed to last as long ... Oh, bugger!"

"Oh, bugger, indeed," he said in an amused tone. "Don't tell me, the *great* Hermione Granger has miscalculated."

"If all you're going to do is poke fun at me, then do shut up," she snapped.

"Such a lack of respect for your elders," Snape quipped in a mocking tone. "Where was this lovely bit of backbone when you were a student?" Hermione blew out a frustrated breath. "No matter," he continued, ignoring her. "Tell me about the spell."

"It's designed to give the reader the actual sensation of being a part of the book a participant instead of merely an observer, you get to act as one of the characters. Though it's only supposed to last a short while."

Snape raised his eyebrow at that. "Define a short while. So far, you and Weasley have been incapacitated for nearly a week."

"Obviously, something went wrong."

Snape snorted. "Serious understatement."

"Look, I've been working on this project for well over two years now," Hermione gritted out. "This is the first trial run, and the only person this was supposed to affect was

me. The charm has been specifically keyed to only affect one person, and only once before it completely wears off."

"What was the time frame you intended?"

"I have the spell set to last as long as it takes the person inside of the book to read the actual tome. Bloody hell," she groaned. "Ron's in here, so the spell probably set to his reading habits, which is why this has taken so much time. Ron's an incredibly slow reader. Still, that doesn't explain what you're doing here. How did you get in here, by the way? You never said."

"I accidentally touched the cover when I was running a diagnostic spell on the book. How far into the screenplay are we?" Snape asked wearily.

"The Phantom, or rather you, has kidnapped me during the *Don Juan Triumphant* duo."

"And we have to act out as the 'characters'?"

Hermione nodded. "If we don't, the chapter doesn't advance at all, and we're stuck in the scene until we do act correctly."

"Bugger!" Snape snarled.

"If it's any consolation, I am sorry you were pulled into this," Hermione said softly, handing him the white phantom mask. "If we finish this last sequence, the spell should release us all."

"Let's get on with this farce." He walked over to the large organ against the wall, which dominated the room. Placing his long fingers against the ivory keys, he played a lovely, lilting melody. Hermione stared at his back for moment, completely surprised at his compliance.

Music swirled around her, and she crept closer to where he played. His eyes were closed, fingers flying across the organ keys, and she reached forward. His eyes snapped open just as her fingers brushed against the mask, piercing her as she pulled it away to reveal the smooth skin of his pale flesh.

With an enraged roar, Snape grabbed her wrist, his features set in a furious expression. Hermione tried to pull her arm away, but his grip tightened.

"How dare you, Christine," he whispered, pulling her flush against him. Hermione gasped at the close contact. "You have ruined this... You have ruined me."

"I have done nothing of the sort," Hermione responded, her voice trembling. "Have you gorged yourself at last, in your lust for blood? Am I now to be prey to your lust for flesh?"

"Is that all I am to you? A monster? Has the mask I wear poisoned your love for me?" He angled his head down, his next words whispering over her lips. "I could take what you refuse, in time you would see beyond the ugliness of my face."

"This haunted face holds no horror for me now," she whispered, tracing her fingers across his face. "It's in your soul that the true distortion lies."

"Am I not your *Angel of Music*? Have I not brought you everything you desire?" he asked incredulously, pulling from her embrace.

"You are no angel. You are nothing but a man—an evil man who profits from the misery and hatred of others. I could never love someone such as you," Hermione declared.

"We shall see," Snape whispered menacingly. Suddenly, a strange chiming sound filled the room. "It appears we have guests, my dear. Perhaps I should be a proper host and greet them." His eyes narrowed as he watched Hermione's lips form the name "Raoul."

"Do you honestly believe that foolish pup has made it this far?" he asked in disbelief.

Hermione hitched up her chin. "He's not as foolish as you would believe, sir."

In the distance, Ron's voice could be heard, calling out, "Christine."

Snape's hand snaked out, grasping Hermione by the throat. "Make your choice, Christine. A life with me, as my bride, or will you send your would-be lover to his death?"

"Let her go," Ron called out, pointing a sword at the Phantom's back. "Snape?" He lowered his sword. "The Phantom is Snape?"

"Indeed, Mr. Weasley," Snape retorted, releasing Hermione and pulling forth his own sword. Hermione bit back a strangled gasp as Snape lunged towards Ron. Their swords clashed together with a metallic clank. Back and forth they charged at one another, the swords slashing at clothing, missing flesh by mere inches, until finally Ron collapsed in a fit of crazed exhaustion.

Whirling around, Snape clasped Hermione's wrist and pulled her towards Ron's panting form. "Make your choice, Christine," he whispered, placing the tip of his sword against Ron's jugular.

"Don't do it, Christine," Ron cried out from the floor.

"Raoul," she said softly, turning her face from him.

"You try my patience, make your choice! Be my bride, or he will die."

With a deliberate movement, Hermione turned her face up and kissed him gently on the mouth. He closed his eyes, drawing in a sharp breath, and stood as still as stone as her soft lips met his in a whisper of a kiss.

She pulled away with a frown. "Does that not signify my choice? Must I still prove to you what I have decided?"

Reaching around his neck, Hermione tilted her head and pressed another kiss to his lips. Still, he did not move. She pressed her body against his, disappointment flooding through her as he made no effort to respond. With a frustrated groan, she started to withdraw when suddenly, he moaned harshly, deepening the kiss.

His lips ground into hers, and instinctively she parted her lips. She felt light-headed as his tongue slid into her mouth. He dropped the sword and wrapped his arm around her waist, pulling her flush against his body. Hermione clutched at him, her knees weakening under the dazzling power of his response.

Then he tore his lips from hers and pushed her from him. Hermione stumbled over Ron, falling hard on her bottom.

"Leave me," he said harshly. "Take her and go." With those words, he turned from a stunned Hermione and bewildered Ron, and strode out of the room.

oOo

Calling for a Healer, Harry quickly stepped around the collapsed form of Severus Snape and carefully bagged the book, taking care not to touch it with his bare hand. Obviously, the book was the key to this whole ordeal.

The Healer rushed into the room, and upon observing the situation, was about to cast a *Mobilicorpus*.

"Do it," Snape intoned menacingly, rolling over, "and I'll make the time you spent in detention seem like a bloody tea party."

"Snape! You're out of it? What happened?"

"Harry," Ron groaned from the bed. "Could you keep it down? I've a blistering headache."

"Please stop all the yelling," Hermione cried out.

"Ron! Hermione! I I didn't think he could really do it, but he did."

"I didn't do a thing, Potter," Snape said, slowly getting to his feet. "Granger did it all on her own."

"Hermione? You did all this?"

"I'll tell you everything later, Harry. Right now, though, my head's too jumbled to do anything."

"Fine," Harry said in a huff. "But you will tell me everything later."

oOo

A/N:

Disclaimer: Unfortunately I can't claim any of it as mine. Gaston Leroux wrote the Phantom of the Opera in 1910, though there have been many adaptations of this story, and JK Rowling wrote Harry Potter in the 1990s. I've only borrowed the characters for a bit, to play with. I promise to wash them off and re-dress them when I'm done playing with them. I also must thank the ladies over at Yahoo's Potter Place for starting the Lost in a Good Book challenge, which helped immensely with this story.

Lines taken directly from the Phantom of the Opera musical:

"Have you gorged yourself at last, in your lust for blood? Am I now to be prey to your lust for flesh?"

"This haunted face holds no horror for me now. It's in your soul that the true distortion lies."

"You try my patience, make your choice!"

Via the Harry Potter Lexicon: http://www.hp-lexicon.org/magic/spells/spells_r.html#rennervate

Rennervate (REN-er-vayt)

"en-" Old French from "in-" L. cause to be + "nerves" Eng. c.1603 strength, from "nervus" L. nerve

http://www.hp-lexicon.org/about/books/gf/changes_gf.html

This spell has been officially renamed by JKR from its original name. Some versions list this spell as "Enervate," which changes the etymology quite a bit. In fact, if the word were really Enervate, the Latin origins would have exactly the opposite meaning from what it meant as Ennervate.