

Ghosts of the Former World

by Gilded Lion

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Seeking the last horcrux, they journey to Voldemort, who has started his own affair with Ginny.

Featuring unicorn rides, vampires with a passion for French Country motifs, and the Giant Squid as a seer.

Draco/Hermione, Tom/Ginny, Harry/Hermione, Ron/Everyone, Snape/Giant Squid, Trevor/everyone, Narcissa/Everyone

A Secret Past

Chapter 1 of 1

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With furtive glances, give life to your love,

And give it callow wings to lend in flight.

Make it a visceral and an inspired dove

That's set to soar in a sweet burst of light

She was told not to go out into the rain. Something in the fluidity of its embrace persuaded her to do otherwise. Her voice rang out with a desperate laughter as the dynamic sound of rain against leaves and animals surrounded her.

Her Pre-Raphaelite hair was damp and clung silkily to her neck and upper back. She was enchanted with this rain, some release from the journey she had only begun. Foresight itself warned her portentously of doom. Certainty did not possess the caverns of her mind; it had been replaced shortly after leaving with the realization that there would be some death. The journey had affected them in ways she would not have thought possible. Ron's jocund face was now ashen, the line of his mouth perpetually straight with foreboding. Harry's hair no longer had life in it. It was tamed by his need to survive. All his energy went to keeping up with Hermione.

Hermione held strength in the hope that her intellect and the power of her adept hand at magic would guide them. Harry would be the final battle, but she would be the force that saved him before he would finally meet his final use. She knew he would have died by now had it not been for her. She had changed though. She began to think, and without shame, that Ron was feckless. She thought of him and his inability to defend himself as a hindrance to their cause. He had made mistakes, even with her explicit instructions. Because of him, the Death Eaters had known where they were even as much as a week before. Had it not been for her quick thinking, they'd be dead.

Perhaps Ron would kill them? Her conversations with Ron were not the energized usual of annoyance and disapproval, they were marked with grave importance. She never admired his face, but now she thought it stupid. Every moment was spent in the mode of survival.

On occasion, when Ron and Harry slept, gaining what strength they could, Hermione wandered out in the night and admired the world at her reach. She would see beauty in what she could, before it would completely fade. These moments were fugacious, but her mind was alive. She would be changed internally by beauty; just as she would be changed internally by the profundity of the words of books she would sometimes read in the night. She did not feel the need to sleep for long. Meager hours would suffice. Time where she could see what was beyond her gave her what rest never would, the impetus to keep going.

She could see the outline of a figure in a hood approaching.

"Tortus," she yelled. The figure froze in the invisible ropes that bound his feet and hands to the floor.

The figure was lean, and the fabric of his cloak was expensive. She lifted the hood of his cloak and looked at his face. She knew who he was, but she was stricken first by the despondence in his eyes. Fragility haunted him. He did not ask for an invitation to speak, and his voice did not plead. The voice he spoke with was hollow.

"I knew where you were. A Death Eater put a tracking device on Weasley. I was in charge of it. I escaped him; there are no others with me." She did not speak. "You have doubtless thought me cruel; I cannot say that killing me would not be condign. However cruel I was, I was not heartless. I used to read things. I loved literature and poetry; I was molded as a person by everything I read. I was aware of the nuances of the world, the power of subtlety in everything around. I figured you might understand that."

"Malfoy," she whispered, her voice barely audible in the rain. "You once said you were in it for your parents, to protect them. You were asked once to join our cause. Go back to your parents."

"I cannot say I loved them. I can say it was my duty to. I can say I was told to love them, and in the capacity of my soul to do what was right, I thought it moral to kill the world for them. You have to understand that the world I have seen, I was raised with violence; I have known it for these many years of life, but I had not known rape. I saw it. I've never... um... been with a girl..." His eyes met hers for a moment and shied away. "More and more I understood that the world of poetry and chivalry was dying, and I had known before that it was not only there that it was dying, but everywhere I looked. So I tried to be honorable in the only way I knew how to be. I thought the world was lost anyway... I should die. If you've ever known suicide, you will know that it is not just the world that haunts your thoughts; it is your own decisions that plague you. I began to think of who I would become, in a world where poetry did not even exist in books, where it would have been wiped from my recollection by the horrors I would have committed. I thought that there was nothing I could do except die. Perhaps Potter and Weasley are better than they, but they fight superficially I'm sure. I do not think they feel profoundly. I could not join them. Instead I would die. And I think I cried, because everything I had known was stolen, I had been unable to realize that my back so full of scars should have been smooth. I didn't want to live. I thought of every tragedy I have seen, every tragedy I had yet to face, and every perfidy of mankind around the world regardless of dark of light... the perfidy of being superficial... and then I thought of you."

She did not want to think. She did not want to do anything. He was enigmatic, this impossible source of honesty and virtue. She was ambivalent. The conflict and contradiction of emotions and expectations and logic did not let her speak.

"I did something." His hands began to shake. It was very slight, but there was a progression of physical manifestations of emotion across his face stemming from his fragility. His voice quivered with the knowledge of something he had done. "I killed my father. I thought I would show you his head, but it was impractical. I found a book on how to remove the Dark Mark with the dark spell involving a potion with my father's finger. It's erased."

She stepped behind him and tore off his shirt. There were whip marks on his back and the letters LM. On his arm, there was flesh burnt and red at once. She dug her nails unintentionally into this place and he yelped.

"Revelare," she whispered. Images of Lucius Malfoy with a knife and whip began to show. "We had this figured out. Nobody besides us would come. And even then, bringing Ron along was a mistake. How could you do this? You could have left us alone. You could have just run away."

"I have information."

"You think I don't know that?" She undid the binding spell. "We're going to wake Harry and Ron up."

"What about my shirt?"

"They're going to see it, Malfoy." He reached out his hand and turned her around to face him.

"You're smart. You can convince them." She could see his fine features in the light made wet by the rain. She decided then that he had the most beautiful face of any man she had ever seen. It was not rugged; it was almost feminine, but classically proportioned.

"It'll take every bit of intellect to save you from them killing you."

"Granger," said Draco, "I wanted to thank you for doing this. I don't think I would have in your circumstance."

"I'm ambivalent about you." As she walked to the boys' tent, she imagined Draco killing his father. She imagined what went through his head. She was intimidated by this person now. He scared her in a way he would never have been able to when they were at Hogwarts.

When all was explained, Ron took a deep breath and slapped Hermione angrily across the face. "You are stupid." His slap stung like salt on a wound, a wound festered by awareness of his incompetence.

Harry interceded. "He can be her responsibility. If he is going to stay here, let her take care of him. He can sleep in her tent, walk where she walks, and we'll take him along."

"He can't sleep with me," Hermione stated. "I'm a girl, and besides, he's proven himself. All my life, I've been serving you. For all these years it was all about you, all about me sacrificing for you."

"You know we still hate you?" Harry asked Draco as he laid out his bed in the wandlight.

"Surely it is not so greatly as I hate you." Had Harry looked at Draco's eyes as he said this, he might have known the trouble bringing him along would create. "You'll find out soon enough that I'm valuable. I know how to protect against the vampires and such that lay around these parts."

Draco set his bed in a corner of the tent, away from the other two boys.

He did not sleep in it. He wandered outside, to where he knew she would be. "Why did you accept me?"

Her voice was low and soft. "All your life you are going to be haunted by murdering your father. I knew at once that this is going to play over and over in your head. If we win this war, we will all be haunted. You will suffer for the rest of your life, because I found out tonight that you are a good person. You're more noble than the world is prepared to offer. I feel like I want to know your every facet, your every passion, every flaw you have." She proceeded to step away. "I'm too shocked to unravel your enigma now."

"You realize I don't care about your cause?"

"It doesn't matter. You're helping it, and part of you does. Part of you sees some glimpse of the possibilities for feeling in the world you'll be fighting for. If you even look at the flower here, the faintest most delicate scent. Is that beautiful?"

"It's not profound. It's pulchritudinous, but not profound. Perhaps there are those who feel as I in this world."

"I do."

"If you weren't here, I would not be helping this cause. I would be dead, and my father alive. For that I thank you also."

The night lasted a while, and all of them slept with the knowledge that they would confront something transcending their own reasons for fighting. On them, the world depended. Even so, the four were merely ghosts of a former world.

On the forest floor, Hermione found something, a sort of page of Draco's neat script.

I knew with my ability to love so deeply that I would suffer if I ever would come to consuming life of slaving away for love. I ran it again over and over in my mind. I would die for love, suffer for love, kill for love. I should die for love before having known it, only the phantom that tells you how love is and does not have a face. I knew I could never love a person like my father, but where was the guarantee I would not? And even if I could find someone with a soul sculpted from the same shape of clay as mine, would I not suffer in our shared tendencies towards the extremes of ecstasy and despondence?

Perhaps it was part of a letter, perhaps a note, a story, a novel? There was something enigmatic about him, something so haunted, so arresting in his eyes.