

Twins

by hp4freak

While shopping in Muggle London, Severus makes a multitude of discoveries.

Discovery in London

Chapter 1 of 3

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Author's Notes: A big, incredibly huge thanks to my beta, **VelvetMouse**, who has been wonderful.

He knew that woman; but from where? And what was it about her that screamed "You know me!"?

It wasn't the hair; aside from himself, his mother, and a handful of others whom he would recognise directly, he didn't know anyone with jet-black, straight, lank hair.

It wasn't her mouth, either. That was currently set in a thin line, as if she were disappointed with something.

He thought it might be her nose. With black hair, black eyes, and thin lips, not to mention the seemingly snarky attitude, the woman could be his twin. The nose was the only difference.

He had been in downtown London when he first saw her. She was sitting in a café, alone, when he passed. She was reading a book, drinking tea, doing absolutely nothing special. So why had he stopped, then?

He wanted to keep walking, keep shopping, but something was inexplicably calling him to her. Like a lighthouse to a ship, she was a beacon of hope, but warned of danger. He knew that he shouldn't stop, but he just couldn't help himself. He wanted to know what was so special about her.

He ventured inside the café for a closer look.

As soon as he entered, he knew that this was no coincidence. The magic emanating from her was palpable. It felt like he had just run into a brick wall, crashing through to the other side. She possessed very powerful magic, but apparently was keeping it mostly suppressed.

He knew now that he had to be careful. What was the old Muggle saying? Something about the cat being killed because it was curious?

He stalked up to the counter to order himself something to drink. There was an empty table a little ways down from her that he could claim.

He had been waiting for thirty minutes when it happened. She turned, looking over her shoulder at a noise to his left, and he knew. He saw recognition in her black eyes. Maybe fear.

He didn't move; didn't even breathe. No matter who she was, he didn't want a confrontation in the middle of Muggle London, here in this café.

He casually looked back down to his paper, willing her to look back to her book. They could settle this elsewhere, outside, away. He wanted her to leave so he could follow; they could figure out who was who there.

In his peripheral vision, he saw her slowly turn back. She bowed her head as if reading again, but he would bet all the Galleons in his satchel that she was just staring down. She would be thinking of a way to get out of here without him noticing. If she really did know him, then she would know that was impossible.

She didn't seem to be leaving anytime soon, so Severus folded his paper back, intent on waiting outside. She wouldn't Apparate from in here; he didn't think she'd Apparated in years, that would take a bit of magic.

He chose a bus stop outside, where he could lean against the pole, facing the café, 'reading' his paper. She waited five minutes before she too ventured out. By the slump in her shoulders, he figured she'd given up on escaping him.

She found confidence, and apparently anger, as she crossed the sidewalk. Shoulders back, head up, there was now a familiar spark in her eyes. It was just beyond the black, that he now realised was the result of a Glamour Charm. He focused on that spark, but the person he thought of could not be standing there.

"Hermione?"

The flash of fear in her eyes was brief, but too real to ignore. It was Hermione Granger, here in Muggle London, dressed as if she were his own twin sister. She even wore black!

"What?" she hissed at him, as if he was the one out of place here.

"Are you kidding me? What the hell are you doing here? You're dead," he said, sneering in his old familiar habit. She recoiled from that sneer as if burnt.

"Are you going to let me explain myself?" she asked, fire blazing in her eyes. He didn't know what to say.

This was the woman of his dreams and his nightmares. To him and everyone else in the Wizarding world, she had died in the Final Battle. He had seen her body himself, twisted and burnt.

He hadn't shed a single tear at the funeral, but he did cry himself into a stupor almost every night for a month after that. He'd cried into his whisky, into his brandy, and even into his pumpkin juice. It was pathetic in every way.

Then, he had picked himself up, shaken off, and moved on as best he could. He lived, but only barely.

It had been ten years now. Ten long, lonely years without her. They had never actually dated, or done anything else for that matter, but he loved her all the same. They had worked closely together at headquarters during those last months, helping the 'Boy Who Didn't Live.' He hadn't wanted to start anything until the war was over. But once it was, there was nothing left to start.

She was gone, and he lived on, more bitter and hateful than ever before. He hated himself for not telling her how he really felt, and then it was too late.

She was walking away now, apparently having given up on him answering her. He looked around quickly, and finding no one staring at him, followed her.

She was quick, but her legs were still shorter than his, and his long strides caught up with her quickly. They were walking side by side now, but both were being careful not to touch the other.

He still didn't know where she was going, and didn't particularly want to ask her with so many people around. He was just too glad that she was alive right now to even be mad or worried.

They walked for ten minutes before she took a sharp left into an alleyway. It was dark and dank, and he couldn't imagine for the life of him why they were there.

"Apparate us to your home," she said, not even looking at him.

"Excuse me? You expect me to just take you to my home without any kind of explanation?" He couldn't believe her nerve.

She looked at him now, pleading with him with her eyes to trust her one last time. He might have been able to resist her, but for the lone tear cascading down her cheek.

They landed in his back garden. He didn't have any neighbours to speak of, so they were taking no risk appearing there out of thin air.

Without looking back, he pulled out of her grasp roughly and strode quickly to the back door.

She followed, not even bothering to look around or ask any questions. Severus was impressed; clearly she was not the same girl he had known so long ago.

They sat at his kitchen table across from each other. It was a face-off; he wanted answers, and there was no way she was leaving without first providing them.

"Take the silly Glamour off, Hermione," Severus said, glad that at least his voice was still strong.

She looked at him oddly before shaking her head. "Why are you calling me Hermione? I've never in my life heard you call me by that name before now."

He just looked at her a moment. He hadn't realised that he'd never used her given name. For ten years now, whenever he thought of her, he'd thought of her as 'Hermione.' She still hadn't lifted the damn Glamour, though.

He started tapping his finger on the table in a classic show of annoyance.

"I can't take the Glamour off, if that's what you're waiting for," she said, eyes fixed on his tapping finger.

"Because...?" He was annoyed by her appearance. He was tired of staring at a female version of himself, and still wanting to kiss her into oblivion.

"I don't have my wand. I don't carry it with me. I just refresh the charm when I go to bed at night and when I get up in the morning. If you want it off, you'll have to do it yourself." She spoke in a tired, dejected manner, like she had been deflated.

He pulled his wand from his shirt sleeve then and pointed it directly between her eyes. She winced slightly, but didn't move. With a simple flick of his wrist he revealed an older version of an image that had been haunting him day and night for a decade.

"Where would you like me to start?" she asked. At least now she was looking at him with her own brown eyes. The spark fit better there somehow.

He could think of a million places to start, but he asked the first thing that popped into his mind. "How are you alive?"

Answers to the Tough Questions

Chapter 2 of 3

Severus and Hermione sit down for a nice, long, insightful talk.

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Hermione slowly closed her eyes, allowing a single tear to escape. She didn't honestly want to recount what had happened, but now she cried out of shame for the way she had handled her life. She had run from the Wizarding world like a coward.

"I... Glamoured Tonks to look like me..." There it was. The truth. She couldn't say she believed the truth would set her free this time.

She shed more tears, allowing them to fall faster, as she relived those hours. She was lost in her own thoughts for several minutes, before she noticed Severus' confused look.

"No," was all he said; all he could say. He had seen the body himself. There was no Glamour that had been cast. No Transfiguration, and definitely no Polyjuice Potion. It was a dead, mangled body; burnt (scorched, really), and battered.

He shook his head slowly, trying to clear some old cobwebs. This whole bizarre day wasn't making any sense to him.

Then a single thought struck a chord deep within him. Nymphadora Tonks was a Metamorphmagus. It was actually plausible that a simple Glamour would have a permanent effect on her. He remembered, too, that Tonks was still missing.

She saw the spark in his eyes that told her he now believed; he now understood.

"But, that doesn't explain why. Or how. How you could hurt so many people that believed, that still believe, you are dead? Not to mention the fact that Lupin still holds out hope that Tonks is out there somewhere, alive," he said. He was teetering between confused, incredulous, and extremely angry, all at once. He was no longer relieved to see her alive. Things were simpler before he knew. He now saw a monster before him, not the Hermione he had known and loved.

She flinched harder now than she had when a wand was pointed between her eyes, and she let the tears flow freely. She had kept herself from thinking about any of the Order members for so long. To hear that Remus still held out hope, after all this time, was devastating.

Hermione had detached herself from everyone that night and never let herself think of them as people again, not until now. Now the floodgates came crashing down, and she knew them again. She saw Tonks' sheepish smile as she tripped, Remus' tired eyes, and Harry and Ron's goofy grins.

Severus just watched her sit there. He sensed her inner turmoil, but let her simmer on her own. When he could take it no more, his eyes barely visible slits, he asked, "What made you do this?"

She thought hard this time, about things she hadn't thought about, hadn't let herself think about, in years. She revived those memories now. She wanted to tell him everything, but knew he must already see her as the fraud, the coward, that she was. She sucked in a deep, shuddering breath before finally saying, "I saw it... I was there when Harry fell."

A sharp intake of breath was his only response for several minutes. He had been there as well. In those last few minutes of life, the Boy-Wonder had been magnificent. His months of searching for Horcruxes had finally paid off. His years of torment and life-threatening attacks had all culminated in that one moment. It was blazoned in Severus' mind as clear as day, probably clearer than breakfast that morning was.

He now understood, to an extent. Her life-long friend had been absolutely blown to bits saving the entire world, both Muggle and wizard alike. She had seen it all.

"After Ron died in that Death Eater raid the month before, Harry and I really stuck with each other." She had somehow found her know-it-all tone so that she could get through this. "I mean, we weren't romantic or anything, but we were inseparable. We were all we had left." She waited a few seconds, just breathing, before continuing. "I don't know if you'll understand, but I just sort of lost it. I looked around me for the first time since the fighting had begun, and I saw the dead. They were everywhere. They were my friends and enemies alike."

He remembered. He had looked around in that moment, too. There had been a brilliant flash of light that had consumed anyone and everyone around it. In the very center had stood the Dark Lord and Harry Potter. Then the light imploded on them, and it took them both with it in its sheer radiance. That was when he had looked around. There had been only ten or fifteen people left standing. It was terrifying, even now, to know how many people had either been completely destroyed, or nearly lost their lives that day. It had been a devastating sight.

She was continuing now. "I panicked. Everyone was gone. The ones that were dead were lost forever, and the ones left standing were lost with me. We had been through too much to come out whole again. Everything was a blur. I couldn't tell Death Eater from Order member anymore. So I ran." Her cheeks were stained now, with streaks visible even after the tears had descended. "I... stumbled upon Tonks, and I knew. She was clumsy, but brilliant, and if she had to die, then so should I. That's when I Glamoured her, and left the world I loved."

It was the truth, and he knew it. He had seen it, felt it, and was still feeling it. He hadn't come out whole and was doubting that, after this, he would ever be whole again. She had been the light that shined into his darkness. Her memory alone had kept suicide at bay. But now that memory was tainted. It left a foul taste in his mouth.

He pulled out his wand and quickly conjured a tea set. He offered her some, even as he poured some for himself. He had a feeling there was plenty more to discuss.

She looked at him oddly, like he would actually poison her. After staring her down, he took a sip to show her it was fine. She drank slowly, cradling the cup carefully.

"But why, Hermione; why did you run? There were people that needed you. That needed to know at least one of their saviours had survived. Your friends left standing wanted to see you standing, too." He was using gentle tones. He could tell she hadn't thought about this in quite a while and wanted to keep her talking. He wasn't so much angry now as he was hurt.

She was shaking. "What friends, Snape? They were all dead. Whether it was physically or mentally, they were dead. Just like me."

His tone got rougher now. "You could have helped them. And maybe, just maybe, you would have been helped in the process. Those of us who have recovered haven't done so alone. We leaned on others for support, and were leaned on in turn. We've slowly recovered. Perhaps we're not whole, you're right there. But we're damn sure more whole than a girl Glamoured to hide from the world." He was yelling by the end of his speech.

She looked taken aback now. He didn't want to see it. He didn't want to watch those big, brown eyes gloss over. The lip would tremble, with a possible sob escaping. He

knew now that his light was not only dimming, but was about to flicker out. He couldn't watch it.

He threw both teacup and saucer against the wall, narrowly missing Hermione's head. She didn't even flinch; she was looking down now.

He stood up rapidly, knocking over his chair in the process. He stormed out of his kitchen, through the living room, and straight out the front door.

He walked; he ran. He didn't know where the hell he was going; he just had to go. He had so many things to say to her and no way to say them. Damn, he still wanted to tell her how much he loved her. He still wanted to grab her and kiss her until the only thought in her head was his name. Damn, the only thought in his head was her name.

Had he really never called her 'Hermione' before? Had it really been ten years since he had truly seen her face? Was she really a monster?

He had walked a full five miles before he remembered that he was a wizard and therefore could Apparate. But then he had to think of where he wanted to go. There was only one place that still, despite all the reasons why it shouldn't, felt like home. So he went to Hogwarts.

Hogwarts had closed one year after the war had ended. It was just too much to stay open, for no one wanted to send their children to a graveyard to learn. And despite the fact that no one was actually buried there, that's truly what it was.

Visiting Memories

Chapter 3 of 3

Severus seeks advice and remembers.

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The anti-Apparition wards had failed long ago, but Severus still landed outside the gates. Perhaps it was to show respect for the once-great castle, or perhaps it was out of habit. He didn't know. His trek up the path brought back too many memories. Overwhelmed for a long moment, he paused, turning to his right to view the Black Lake; thankfully it, at least, was still there.

He remembered both faces and events, Quidditch matches that were lost and won, house points and cups, and students who lived and died. And then there was Hermione, who was somewhere in between.

He continued on now, deftly following the path so many feet had trampled. He knew this was still unplotable and that few ever ventured here to look upon the souls of both the damned and the saved. No one ever ventured inside.

The oak front doors were closed, and had been since Minerva herself had closed them that final time. It hadn't stopped him before, though, and it wouldn't stop him now. He stood just below the bottom step, facing the doors head-on, with his wand drawn. Within a second, they were blown open, banging against the entrance hall's walls.

Severus closed the doors again, lest any Hogsmeade resident had heard the blast, however unlikely. Nine years worth of dust had rendered the halls and classrooms dark as night, and he was forced to light his wand's tip. He knew exactly where he was going anyway.

Two flights up, and one long corridor later, and he was standing in front of a very disgruntled stone gargoyle. Like Hermione's magic, Hogwarts' own magic was suppressed. He could feel it seeping through the walls, staring back through the eyes of the portraits that remained. The gargoyle was responsive, looking for a password.

Severus knew the last password, of course, and hoped the gargoyle hadn't changed it.

"Golden Snitch." Good, it seemed to have worked.

The staircase seemed to grind against the wall more than he remembered, but years of no use would do that. It was a little slower than he remembered, too, but perhaps he was just in a hurry today. He stepped on and waited for the ascent to be completed.

He faced the door now, suddenly unsure of himself. Nine years had passed. He had already faced one ten year old demon today, could he really make it two?

He scowled. Severus Snape was no *coward*. He opened the door then, striding into the room as if it were his own office. He purposefully strode to the window, letting his back face the room itself. His eyes were firmly fixed on the Forbidden Forest when he heard the soft clearing of a throat. Not just any throat, though.

He hung his head. This was what he had come here for, but still, it was almost too much. He knew when he turned around that those piercing blue eyes would bore into him. He knew he couldn't hide from them.

After the castle was evacuated, the discussion of what to do with the portraits and suits of armor had ensued. So they asked the paintings themselves. Collectively, they wanted to stay. They offered the armor new homes, but those stayed as well. Everything had chosen to stay in its home.

Every headmaster and headmistress was now staring at Severus' back, watching his lank hair sway slightly. None pretended to sleep. For too many years now, all they had had was each other. And as interesting as each of them were, they were all out of stories to tell, even Dumbledore.

"It's daylight, Severus. There are no shadows to hide in, I'm afraid." Yes, there it was. He still possessed that same grandfatherly tone that issued both kindness and power.

It was time. Severus walked to the desk now, nearly throwing himself into the chair. Before he could stop himself, he turned, seeking the portrait he knew had already spoken to him. Half-moon spectacles and a gentle smile greeted him. Severus couldn't help but grimace at the sight of it.

"Albus." The man behind the paint looked neither surprised nor bored. He simply waited for the man before him to continue.

Severus launched into the whole tale, barely stopping for breath himself, ignoring the many gasps that went around the room from other occupants. He told Albus about seeing Hermione, finally recognising her, talking with her at his home, and all the despicable things she had done to escape. He even told Albus how he loved her still. He asked for advice, for understanding, for anything.

"You ask me for understanding, yet you refuse to give it yourself. I don't agree with the measures that Miss Granger took, but I can understand them all the same. I think you can, too."

He understood the measures she had taken. After all, hadn't he used extreme measures to protect himself as a spy? He was only following orders, but did he honestly think that made a difference in the end? Hadn't he killed to ensure his place? She hadn't actually killed Nymphadora Tonks, after all. He knew he would never forget what she had done; he never forgot what *he* had done. But could he forgive her?

He walked now to the gates of Hogwarts, taking care to seal the doors again. He would Apparate to Godric's Hollow to visit some old friends.

Before the final battle, the Order members all urged Harry to choose a final resting place. None could say for certain he would survive the war or not; but they all believed, unanimously, that he would not.

His first choice, of course, had been to be buried at Hogwarts. After considerable thought, however, he chose to be with his parents. The Order still owned the land his parents' home had stood on, and agreed to convert it into a memorial and graveyard for those lost in both the first and second wars. Hermione had chosen to lay there as well.

Witches and wizards were free to Apparate into the forest behind the site. Severus landed smoothly, having done so at least a couple dozen times over the years. Like at Hogwarts, he didn't need to look where he was going. It was dusk, and there were no others around the area.

Over the years, the Order had steadily built up the site, adding names and memorials. There were memorials for Harry's parents, of course, as well as the Longbottoms, who had finally perished three years ago. Harry's, Ron's, Hermione's, and Albus' statues all stood in the center, overlooking all others.

Despite having recently spoken with the portrait, Severus dutifully picked his way to Albus' memorial first. It was large, but simple and depicted a phoenix in flight. The inscription read:

'Both powerful and wise,

Albus is remembered most

For his

kindness and forgiveness.'

Simple and pure, the way he was. Severus had written it, wanting to somehow thank the man he owed his life to. The final battle left no secrets as to Severus' loyalty, and he had been forgiven of all charges. Many people thought they should list all of Albus' accomplishments, but Minerva agreed with him on simplicity.

He thanked the kind old man again, before moving on to his next memorial in sequence.

'James and Lily Potter

Without your love, compassion,

And sacrifice, we would not be free.

Thank you for the love of your son.'

He thought about James' arrogance as a schoolboy. He thought about the man James had grown into, as well. No, they would never have been friends, but he respected that man all the same.

Lily. She had been his first light, the one that had woken him from the the world of Death Eaters and Mudbloods. They could have been friends.

He asked for their forgiveness and thanked them, too. He moved to Ron.

'Ron, as a son, you were often too much,

But we would never have traded you

For anything in the world.

Know that you were loved by us.

As a brother, you could be overbearing.

You could make us laugh and cry.

You healed our wounds and hugged us

When we were down.

Know that you are missed by us.

As a fighter for the light,

You were strategy and energy.

You helped us see where we needed to be.

Know that you were needed by us.'

These were the tougher memorials. These were the three that he would joyfully give his life to not see here, any one of them.

As always, he thanked Ron. He had hated the boy when he was just that, a boy; but as a man, Ron had been the driving force in the Order. He created the strategy, even the strategy of sacrificing himself. He knew that his death was just what Harry needed for motivation. Severus had stood there and, like Ron, let it happen, so the war would end. He was glad Hermione didn't know about his sacrifice.