

In Your Defense

by phoenix

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Hermione took a deep breath. This was one thing she did not like about her job. The other prisoners she didn't mind. They were for the most part broken, resigned to their fate, thankful only that they would not have to endure the dementors during their impending imprisonments. This one was different.

She sighed and reached for the doorknob. Putting it off would not make it any better. As she stepped into the room, she proceeded straight to her seat, not wanting to meet his eyes before necessary, though she knew that he was watching her. He had kept her in his gaze last time.

As soon as she looked at him, she was met with his smug grin.

"Miss Granger, always a pleasure to see you."

It was at times like this that she regretted her decision to go into wizarding law. She had seen it as her best avenue to bring about change. Due to her academic and war reputations, she had been hired by one of the most influential law firms in wizarding Britain. Sadly, she had not thought to check their client list before accepting the job. "As always, the pleasure is all yours, Mr. Malfoy," she replied coldly.

As the firm's wealthiest client, Mr. Malfoy was afforded the best legal defense team the firm could assemble. While Hermione was one of the most junior employees, she was also one who had a near perfect memory and had thus been assigned to his case, despite her protests. This was her third interview with this most despicable man. And it disgusted her that she was charged with finding a way to ensure he was not imprisoned for the rest of his life, which she believed he deserved.

His smile never wavered. "Surely you enjoy the challenge that securing my freedom entails."

"That someone like you should be released is-is... I don't have the words to describe it."

He looked hurt. "Do you really hate me that much?"

"Of course I do!" she shouted. "If you had your way, my kind would be eradicated. That I have to defend you..." She couldn't control the shudder of revulsion that ran through her body.

"My dear, I do not hate your kind. You must understand that a wizard in my position must follow the prevailing sentiment. Until just recently, there has never been widespread acceptance of the Muggle-born."

She snorted in disbelief. This had been a discussion that she had avoided having with him. So far she had avoided any sort of personal conversation with him. "Mr. Malfoy, your personal beliefs do not concern me. What concerns me is finding a legal precedent we can use to secure your release. As we discussed last time, no one will believe that you were under the Imperius Curse again."

"And if you had paid attention the last time I explained myself, you would know that my family was in danger. I would think that what happened to Draco would prove that. When one enters the service of the Dark Lord, which I did as a naïve young man at the behest of my father, one remains in the service of the Dark Lord. Or did you not learn that when Karkaroff was brutally murdered?"

When she didn't respond, he continued. "And did you not wonder why my release was not secured when the dementors left Ministry control?"

She did her best to control her curiosity, even though she always had wondered why he had been left in Azkaban.

"Because they felt that I had allowed myself to be captured."

"And had you?" she asked skeptically. While she had been at the Ministry that night, she had not witnessed everything that had happened.

"That would have been the intelligent thing to do, don't you think? I remove myself from the conflict in a way that does not implicate me as a traitor."

"Yet they didn't release you."

He scowled. "My lovely sister-in-law was responsible for that, as I later learned. She and I never really got along well."

She was now engrossed in the story and leaned forward, asking, "And why was that?"

He leaned closer to her, speaking quietly, as though not wanting to be overheard. "Quite simply, she saw me as a rival for being the Dark Lord's most favored disciple. You see, I had one thing that neither she nor Rodolphus had: money. While she was more than willing to go out and conduct mayhem and murder, I preferred a lower profile while I served the Dark Lord. For that reason, she felt she should have been first."

"But they did release you at the end."

Leaning back against his chair, he said, "I believe it was only because they were desperate. They wanted everyone they could get on their side. I am sure that you have examined my wand and found that I did not use any of the Unforgivables. Most of my spells were defensive."

"That is what a review of your wand shows, but we have no proof that you did not use someone else's wand."

"But you have no proof that I did. That's all that is important. I did what I had to in order to protect my family, though ultimately it was not enough," he said soberly. "I believe that is something that everyone can relate to. In Karkaroff's case, he was alone. If I had outwardly betrayed the Dark Lord, Narcissa and Draco would have been killed as well. I was trying to preserve their lives."

"If you expect to gain any sympathy from the Wizengamot, you are going to have to refer to him as Voldemort or You-Know-Who. You sound too guilty if you use 'Dark Lord.'"

"Of course. It is a very old habit, one that is not lost easily. But I will do my best to keep that in mind."

"Let me see what I can do with your family defense. I'll have to talk to the others about this."

"When can I expect to meet with one of the senior lawyers?"

"After I've gathered the preliminary data."

"So this might be our last meeting?"

"I certainly hope so." It only took her another half hour to finish gathering the information she needed. She would organize it into a report that she felt presented the most viable defense case.

As she walked away from the holding area, she was glad that Harry wasn't here. He would never understand why she was doing this. A part of her still didn't understand why she was doing it.

For two days, she combed through the interviews, compiling a report with the basics of a defense laid out for Mr. Brown, one of the senior partners. During that time, she kept dwelling on how he had admitted that he had served Voldemort to protect his family. If she closed her eyes, she could see the pain that had shone through his grey eyes. He had looked almost vulnerable. The arrogant man she had dealt with as a student was gone.

He was not broken, but he was lost. She realized that he had been forced down the path he had taken and had tried to make the best of the situation, tried to save his family, and failed, losing both his wife and son. Would she have done anything differently if faced with the single task of saving everyone she held dear?

Did she pity him? She wasn't sure, but she was starting to understand him. And understanding him would make defending him easier. She was beginning to believe that while he was not innocent, he had succumbed to circumstances beyond his control. Did someone like that truly belong in prison? She didn't think so. After all, Snape had been exonerated during both wars for that very reason. Why should Malfoy be any different?

By the time she presented her report to Mr. Brown, she had begun to believe what he had told her. His behavior during their meetings had been that of a sincere and repentant man. She did not once get the impression that he was being deceptive or hateful towards her. Quite the opposite, he was being friendly with her, and she had treated him quite rudely, unwilling to see him as anything other than the Death Eater he was accused of being.

In fact, she now thought that he might have even been flirting with her. She had ignored him at the time because she had been so concerned about getting out of his presence as quickly as possible, but he had flashed her a small smile on occasion. Well, it didn't matter. Now that the report was done, she would never see him again. At least not in such close quarters.

"Excellent report, Hermione. You seem to really have a grasp of this case. I would like you to be a part of my team."

It took her a second to register what he had just said. "Join your team, Mr. Brown?"

"Yes. You are very familiar with this case, and it would provide an excellent opportunity for you to prove yourself. You do want to prove yourself, don't you?"

"Of course I do." She did, but she didn't really want it to be on the Malfoy case, not with the confused feelings she was experiencing.

"Good. The team will meet first thing tomorrow and you can brief this report."

"Me?" she asked nervously.

"Excellent opportunity for you. You'll do fine."

As the trial preparations progressed, she found herself spending more and more time with Malfoy. And she more and more began to see him as a fellow human being. He showed no signs of the hatred and bigotry she had come to expect from him. Instead, she saw sorrow and misery with a touch of hope mixed in. Hope that he would escape a life sentence at Azkaban.

He was warm and kind to her, always greeting her pleasantly and expressing how wonderful it was to see her again. At first, she had thought these greetings were merely patronizing comments that he would make to anyone defending him, but now that she was meeting his eyes whenever she entered the interview cell, she could tell that his words were sincere, and more than just simple flattery.

There were times while they were talking that he would place his hand on hers, only for a moment, or his leg would brush hers underneath the small table. The smile that accompanied these gestures suggested they were not accidental. And while they spoke, he always found time to bring up subjects that interested her, sidetracking her from her purpose. But she found she didn't mind. None of her friends had shared her interests, and she would find herself speaking at length with him before she realized she had become distracted from the matter at hand.

Hermione found that they actually did have a great deal in common. He was interested in arcane magic, and not just the malicious variety. He was also a wealth of information on wizarding history, including many things that they did not even cover at Hogwarts, things that she would consider a vital part of a witch's or wizard's education.

Sometimes she would stop when she saw the way he was looking at her. He would smile in a way that softened his features, a sincere smile that reached his eyes, made them seem warm, not the cold impenetrable orbs everyone expected to see. It was almost a look of longing, and it made her slightly uncomfortable. But the more often they met, the longer she found herself tolerating his gaze.

Most tantalizingly, he had made numerous references to his library. From the few titles he had slipped into conversation, she felt an overwhelming urge to spend hours immersed in the books. Unfortunately, she had not been able to come up with a reason why she should be granted access to his house. Perhaps once the trial was over, she could convince Malfoy to let her borrow some books. After all, they seemed to be getting along quite well. Now when his hand would brush hers, she would find her pulse suddenly racing and hoping that he would let his hand linger a little longer. If she had been bolder, she would have grabbed his hand to keep it from leaving, but she wasn't sure that she was not imagining the reasons behind his behavior.

On days when she did not interview him, she found herself missing him. If one of the others had to interview him, she felt a twinge of jealousy, as though someone were taking their time together away. It was very odd, since in the beginning she couldn't wait to leave his presence. But that was before she had come to know him. Lucius was not the man she had expected him to be.

But she was so much younger than he was. Surely she was just imagining that there was something between them because he was a good looking man who shared her interests, was her intellectual equal and was mature and stable. A wizard like him would never choose a witch like her; she was homely and bookish, not remotely his type. After all, she was nothing like Narcissa or any of her ilk. Those were the type of women he was attracted to, weren't they? She wasn't so sure anymore, and it frightened her a little that her burgeoning instincts just might be right.

At night, as she was drifting off to sleep, she found thoughts of him occupying her mind. She was starting to imagine how his lips would feel, how he would taste, how he would fill her. To her, his touch was soft and caressing. He would know exactly where to touch her, how to please her. Her hands mimicked what she wanted him to do. His name was on her lips as she stimulated herself to climax; it was his face that she saw before her. The rational part of her mind tried to push these thoughts aside, but they would not be ignored. Subconsciously, she knew that she belonged with him, and night after night, her subconscious and rational minds warred, with the rational side slowly losing ground.

Dreams of being with him filled her nights. Sometimes the dreams took place after the verdict was read in the luxury of his Manor. Other times, they were very naughty and took each other in the interview cell, the room where they had spent so much time together. The idea of having sex right under the Ministry's nose was very arousing, though she was almost positive she could never bring herself to do it, at least not outside of her dreams.

Finally, the day arrived when the Wizengamot would be rendering their verdict. It had taken them several weeks to put their case together, and there had been three days of testimony, including close to a dozen witnesses. While she may have doubted his innocence in the beginning, she found herself compelling the others to believe that he had had no choice, that he had done the only thing he could to protect his family, even though he had ultimately failed to do so.

When the verdict was pronounced 'not guilty', she impulsively wrapped her arms around him. After a few seconds, she realized what she had done and pulled away, smoothing her robes and staring at her feet. "I'm... so sorry. I don't know what overcame me. This was my first case and..."

He cut her off. "Quite understandable. I have not forgotten the exuberance of youth." He then turned his attention to Brown. "Mr. Brown, impeccable work, as always."

"My pleasure, Mr. Malfoy. I had no doubt about the verdict. I'll see that your assets are unfrozen, but you will be able to return to your manor immediately. Naturally, I would maintain a low profile the next couple of days, but after that, I think it best if you be seen out in public, prove that you have nothing to hide. If you give me a few moments, I'll clear the media and you can depart."

Hermione was left to collect all the documentation as the junior member of the team. When she finished, she found that she and Malfoy were the only two left in the courtroom. For once, she found that she was completely speechless.

"Thank you for your assistance, Hermione. I have no doubt that you were instrumental in earning my release."

"It isn't right that an innocent man should be imprisoned. I see now that you had no choice in returning to Voldemort. I'm very sorry for what happened to Draco and Narcissa."

A glimmer of sadness flashed through his eyes as he smiled weakly. "I only wish I had succeeded. Especially for Draco's sake. He did not deserve his fate. I should have been the one to die."

"No one deserved to die. At least one innocent life has been spared." She wished she had more to say to him. In a few moments, he would be leaving, and she doubted she would see him again. She would miss all their conversations, when they would sit up late into the night debating various points of history or arcane law. He had even agreed that there were some things that the Muggles did better than the wizarding world.

"I wonder if I might beg the pleasure of your company for dinner? It seems a shame that I should celebrate my good fortune alone. And after all, you were instrumental in proving my innocence. You, more than the others, deserve to be rewarded for your work."

Her mouth suddenly went dry. Had he just invited her to dinner? She saw a flash of disappointment cross his face.

"Well, then. Thank you for your assistance." He turned and began walking out of the courtroom.

She suddenly found her voice. "Idlovetojoinyoufordinner," she blurted out.

He turned to face her. "I beg your pardon?"

She took a deep breath. "I would love to join you for dinner tonight."

The corners of his lips turned up with a small smile. "Then I shall expect you at seven. I assume you know where I live?"

"Yes. I'll be there." She watched him give her one last smile before departing. Her heart was racing. She was going to have dinner with Lucius Malfoy, and she was looking forward to it.

After she was sure that he was gone, she rushed out of the courtroom, eager to get home and see if she had anything suitable to wear to dinner. She went through her wardrobe twice and tried on a half dozen outfits before she found something appropriate. It wasn't ideal, but it would have to do. While she was looking herself over in the mirror, she couldn't ignore her frizzy mane of hair.

Digging under the sink, she found the bottle of Sleekeazy's Hair Potion and began working it through her hair, trying to bring it under control. Normally, she wouldn't have gone through the effort, but as impeccably groomed and dressed as Malfoy was, she didn't want to feel inferior.

It was nearly seven before she was ready. After one last look in the mirror, she Apparated to Wiltshire. Standing at the front gates, she was overwhelmed by the imposing edifice that was Malfoy Manor. So overwhelmed that she did not hear Malfoy arrive.

"Good evening, Hermione. I'm so glad that you could join me."

Turning away from the manor, she looked into his grey eyes, ones that she had always thought were cold and malicious, but now looked warm and inviting. "It's my pleasure. Really." A part of her realized how lame that sounded. At this rate, she would never win him over with her verbal skills. "The Manor... It's..."

He chuckled softly. "It does take some getting used to, doesn't it?" He offered her his arm. "Dinner isn't quite ready, so I thought we would enter the house through the garden. It's not as well kept as it should be, but the flowers are in bloom, and it is quite lovely."

"That would be wonderful," she replied and looped her arm in his. As they walked to the gardens, he gave her a brief history of the Manor, trying to put her at ease. She was amazed at how he made the old, imposing building seem so normal, but to him, this was just a house.

When they rounded the house and passed through the hedge that was the garden wall, she found herself speechless.

"It is rather stunning, isn't it? The garden has always been one of my favorite places to sit and think."

"I can see why. I could spend hours here."

"Well, we don't have hours right now, but we do have about fifteen minutes. I hope that will be enough."

A part of her was sad when they left the garden for dinner, but she found that they were eating in a conservatory, which was nearly as beautiful as the garden outside. While they ate, they had a discussion very similar to the ones they had had in the past. She was at ease while having an academic discussion.

All too soon, the plates were cleared and she was sure that their evening was over.

He rose to his feet and extended a hand toward her. "I know you expressed interest in my library. Since it is now too dark to enjoy the garden, I thought you might like a tour of the library."

"That's most gracious of you. I appreciate the offer." A part of her couldn't believe how warm he was being. The other part of her felt guilty about how prejudiced she had been toward him when she had first been assigned to his case.

When she entered the library and saw the thousands of books, she knew that she could easily spend years immersed in the ancient tomes. He casually explained to her how the books were organized, but she was only half-paying attention as she examined the titles of nearby books.

"If you desire, you may use my library for research."

"Really, Mis... Lucius, that's too much. I couldn't take advantage of you like that." She noticed that he was very close to her.

"These books have never been appreciated as they should." He reached out and brushed a stray lock of hair from her face. "I know that you are one who would appreciate them," he added softly before leaning forward to kiss her.

His kiss was warm, gentle and didn't last nearly long enough. She was left panting when he broke the kiss. Before he could say anything, she reached up and laced her fingers through his long, luxurious hair, pulling him toward her to renew the kiss.

As the kiss deepened, she could feel his arms wrap around her and caress her back. There was something about the way he tasted that just made her want more. She found herself gently guided backwards and was forced to sit when she felt the edge of a sofa against her legs. As she dropped to the sofa, she was forced to break the kiss, but soon his lips were engulfing hers, and she could feel his body pressing against hers again, urging her to lie down on the sofa. When he finally broke the kiss, he pulled away from her, and she was disappointed.

"Forgive me. I was overcome by the moment," he said apologetically.

He started to rise from the sofa, and she moved to stop him, straddling him and giving him a deep, penetrating kiss, exploring every corner of his mouth, reveling in his taste. Finally, she broke free of the kiss, and they were both breathless. Beneath her, she could feel his throbbing erection. She had spent the last several weeks dreaming something like this would happen.

"Hermione..."

"Lucius, I want this. I want you." She placed a series of small kisses on his neck, unbuttoning his top buttons.

"Are you sure? Being associated with me... Well, I have a reputation."

"I forgive you for your past. And being Muggle-born, I don't care. I thought you would have learned that I don't really care what wizarding society thinks. I belong with you." Leaning forward, she kissed him again, grinding against his erection, eliciting moans of pleasure.

She was quite pleased when she felt his hand slip under her skirt and caress her thigh. To make sure he knew her intentions, she slipped her hand into his robes to rub his swollen manhood. She was already aroused, but the thought of feeling him inside her made her wet with anticipation. With her other hand, she was trying to unfasten his robes, eager to feel his skin.

As his finger slipped inside her and began rubbing her nub, she gasped and froze. His touch was electrifying and she lifted up, allowing him better access. Soon she was panting and holding onto him for balance. She felt light-headed. "Please," she pleaded, not really wanting the torment to end, but still wanting to feel him fill her when she climaxed. "I need you."

"I need you, too," he whispered as he pulled his hand free. After summoning his wand, he banished her knickers and helped her open his robes so she could settle onto him.

She moaned as she felt him enter her. It was a tight fit, but it was quite pleasant. Slowly, she rocked over him, enjoying the friction. From the look on his face, he was finding this equally as pleasurable.

It wasn't long before he placed his hands on her hips, urging her to move more quickly. She hoped he was close because she knew that she would not last long. Squeezing him tightly, she felt the wave of pleasure course through her body and cried out. Very soon after that, she felt the slickness of his climax.

Once they were both spent, she collapsed against him, too tired to move.

He kissed the top of her head and brushed her hair with his hand. "That was...most unexpected."

Panic coursed through her. She knew she wasn't very experienced and had hoped to not disappoint him, but it appeared as though she had failed. "You...didn't like it?" she asked nervously.

"My dear, that was one of the best experiences of my life, one I had not expected to experience so soon, but not one that I regret." He lifted her chin so that he could look into her eyes. "You are a truly gifted woman, in more ways than you might imagine." Leaning forward, he gave her a very reassuring and deep kiss. "Perhaps you would care to join me upstairs where we could take our time getting to know each other."

"That would be a perfect way to spend the rest of the evening." *And the rest of my life*, she added silently. In him, she found what had been missing from her life. Now that she was here, she didn't intend to leave. Let the gossipers say what they would about her; she wouldn't care, as long as the two of them were happy.