

For All The Love In The World

by JTBJAB

Dumbledore does his utmost to ruin everyone's lives and Voldemort meets his match! But most importantly - Severus learns to love...

Chapter One

Chapter 1 of 4

Dumbledore does his utmost to ruin everyone's lives and Voldemort meets his match! But most importantly - Severus learns to love...

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or any of the characters in this story; I only own the plot!

Chapter 1

For All The Love In The World

Hermione settled into her favourite chair in the Gryffindor common room. Closing her eyes, she let the heat from the fire wash over her in waves, relaxing all her limbs, forgetting about the upcoming NEWTs and that certain someone who insisted on torturing her.

Finally! She sighed. *Some peace and quiet.* She had just spent an exhausting night in the library and had only just managed to escape being caught by Snape on her way back. Or so she had thought.

"And just where do you think you've been?" an indignant, silky voice whispered in her ear, making her jump.

"Professor Snape?" Hermione gasped. "What are you doing in the Gryffindor common room?"

"Following students who think they are above the rules." He smirked. "So, can't you three fit under the Potter's cloak together anymore? Do you think being Head Girl means you will get a lesser punishment for being out after curfew? I assure you, it does not."

"No, sir, I know that, but..."

"Where are they? Are Potter and Weasley too cowardly to stand up and defend the resident know-it-all, leaving you to take the punishment for three students, alone?"

"I was alone, sir, really... I was studying for the NEWTs and lost track of time."

"An almost believable cover story... if I hadn't seen you muttering on your way back here," Snape sneered. "If not Potter or Weasley, then who was with you?"

Hermione blushed. "No one, sir, I swear; I was on my own."

"Do you think me stupid, girl?" Snape hissed at her.

"No, sir, but I wasn't with anyone. I, it's just..." Hermione stared into the fire.

"Out with it, girl. Despite the rumours, I do require sleep."

"I like to recite everything I have revised while I'm walking back after studying, to make sure that I remember everything... sir."

"That will be a detention, Miss Granger; for your utter disrespect and blatant lying to a professor." Snape walked towards the portrait.

Hermione breathed a sigh of relief at not losing any points. Being tied for the house cup with Slytherin was making everyone tense as it was; they couldn't afford to fall behind.

"Oh, and, Miss Granger..."

She looked at him, crossing her fingers and praying to any deity listening that he not take any points.

"...50 points from Gryffindor for being out after curfew," he smirked, "and getting caught."

Obviously no deity deigned her worthy to grant that one wish, and she cringed as she thought of her housemates' faces the following morning. She watched in disbelief as Snape smiled... actually smiled. It was an evil smile, yet still a smile.

Thank you so much! The boys are going to kill me in the morning!

Snape raised an eyebrow at her shocked and angry expression. "Something wrong, Miss Granger?"

"No, nothing is wrong, sir."

"I suggest you get to bed then... you will need your energy for my detention tomorrow. Be outside my office after breakfast."

"But, sir, tomorrow is a Hogsmeade visit."

"You should have thought of that before breaking school rules." With a flash of black swirling material, he was gone.

Hermione stamped her foot in frustration and then started to laugh hysterically at the childish act.

"Damn him!"

The next morning at breakfast, Hermione sat with her two best friends, with a book propped up against the fruit bowl.

Ron, as usual, was complaining.

"Argh, I hate Potions!" Ron exclaimed, looking at his timetable.

"So... did you do the homework?" Harry asked innocently.

"There was homework?" He panicked and started searching through his bag. Suddenly he stopped; Harry was laughing. "When are you going to stop doing that to me?"

"When it stops being funny. And that isn't going to be for a long time, after seeing your reaction right now."

"Will you two quit it, I'm trying to read. Besides, it's the weekend, Ron everyyou could do your homework with plenty of time to spare." Hermione sighed as she slammed her book shut.

"How about eating, instead of reading, at breakfast?" Ron muttered, sliding his timetable back into his bag.

"I'm not hungry."

"You always say that, but you never seem to eat anymore. I mean, you've lost loads of weight." Ron stood to reach for some more bacon. Selecting two large pieces, he sat back down again.

"Don't I get any privacy in my life?" Hermione snapped.

"Nope, you're the only girl in this trio, and we can't help it if we take notice of what you look like."

"Ronald Weasley!" Hermione stood up, swinging her bag over her shoulder. The Hall went silent, and the other students turned just in time to see Hermione slap him, hard.

"I, I, I didn't mean it like that," Ron stuttered, looking at her in shock.

"I don't have time for this." She gestured between the two. "Now leave me alone!" She stormed out of the Hall with all eyes following her.

As the doors swung shut with a bang, the other students' eyes turned to the very red-faced Ronald Weasley.

Snape had watched the entire exchange with a scowl on his face. The 'Golden Trio' always seemed to ruin his day somehow. He decided to get at least some pleasure from the disturbance and got up to go and 'sort out' what happened, already thinking about the number of points he could deduct from Gryffindor for the display.

"Severus," McGonagall laid a hand on his arm, "I believe I will go and deal with it. After all, Gryffindor is *my* house."

"Well, maybe you should keep control of *your* cubs, Minerva. They play dangerously close to the snake pit."

"Now, Severus, just because you woke up on the wrong side of the bed this morning, doesn't mean you have to take it out on your colleagues." Dumbledore's eyes twinkled.

"You were in Gryffindor too, old man," Snape muttered under his breath.

"Severus!" McGonagall scolded.

"I thought you were going to deal with *your* cubs."

McGonagall huffed as Dumbledore chuckled. Standing, she leapt into her Animagus form and ran to where the two boys sat, listening to what they were saying to see if she could figure out what had happened.

Harry sighed in resignation. "Ron, you know you have to be careful with what you say to her now."

"I still don't understand why."

"We'll find out soon." Harry ran a hand through his hair; it was hard work playing mediator between his two best friends.

"What? After I'm dead because she bit my head off!"

"Ron, you know she has been acting strangely; she is hardly sleeping and all she seems to do is study..."

"That, Harry, is normal," Ron stated with his mouth full of bacon.

"You really are as thick as Hermione says you are."

"I don't understand."

"It's..." Harry suddenly noticed a tabby cat listening attentively to their conversation. "Good morning, professor." He laughed at Ron's confused face.

"Harry, you have officially gone mad. If you're going to call anyone professor, it should be Herms. I mean, at least she's clever enough."

McGonagall cleared her throat, having transformed back into human form. "As observant as ever, Mr Potter." Ron jumped at her voice, and paled, though, through some miracle, he managed not to choke on his food.

"Constant vigilance!" McGonagall tried hard not to smile at Harry's attempt to impersonate Moody.

"You, on the other hand, Mr Weasley..."

"I apologise, professor, but we are worried about... Ow! What was that for?" Ron rubbed his shin where Harry had just kicked him.

"Worried about what, Mr Weasley?"

"... NEWTs..." Harry nodded enthusiastically to back his story and smiled sweetly up at her.

McGonagall smiled warmly at Harry. "You are too much like your father for that to work, Mr Potter."

"I don't know what you mean, professor." Harry grinned.

"Yes, well. Mr Weasley, what caused Miss Granger to slap you and storm out?"

"A misunderstanding, on account of my choice of words, professor."

"About what?"

"Perhaps a few points being taken might persuade them to elaborate."

McGonagall scowled as Snape sidled up beside her.

"Severus, I told you I would deal with this."

"Oh, but Minerva, I saw the *distress* on your face and came to your rescue."

"Scram or I'll hex you." Harry and Ron grinned uneasily as they watched the exchange. Snape smirked, but strode off to swoop down on a second year Hufflepuff. "Now, Mr Weasley, Mr Potter, tell me, what is going on here?"

"It was nothing, professor, just Hermione getting a bit stressed." Harry glared at Ron in an attempt to try and get him to keep his mouth shut.

"You mentioned her not sleeping."

"Or eating..." Ron bit his lip as Harry kicked him again; unfortunately McGonagall saw it this time.

"Mr Potter, please refrain from kicking. This is important."

"Sorry," Harry mumbled, but he glared at Ron.

"So, Miss Granger is not eating or sleeping?"

"We don't know that; we just know that she doesn't eat at meals with us, or, if she does, it isn't much. But she could go to the kitchens. The house-elves have lost their fear of her, but it took a while, after that whole SPEW thing. And we don't know she hasn't been sleeping, but she has been looking tired lately."

Ron looked as if he was going to say something else, but the nudge of Harry's foot reminded him to keep his mouth shut.

"Are you sure?" McGonagall asked with concern on her face.

"Yes, professor."

"Have you spoken to her about it?"

They both stayed quiet, and Ron looked away in the hopes that he wouldn't accidentally answer.

"Is that what happened earlier? Was that the reason that she slapped you, Mr Weasley?" Still silence. "Harry... Ron, please. You must tell me."

The use of their given names shocked them into looking at her. They both slowly nodded and hung their heads. "Thank you. Do you happen to know where she will have gone?"

"The library is a strong possibility. Although sometimes she disappears and we can't find her, no matter where we look, or for how long."

McGonagall paled as this and nodded her thanks, hurrying up to the Head Table to speak briefly to Dumbledore before she left the Hall, doing a pretty good impression of Snape with her robes flying out behind her.

AN: Thank you to my brilliantly helpful BETA, snarkyroxy... I could not have done this without her!

Chapter Two

Chapter 2 of 4

And so the mystery with Hermione's behaviour continues...

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Chapter Two

For All The Love In The World

McGonagall almost ran to the library in search of Hermione. She swept around the shelves and even went into the Restricted Section, which Hermione, being Head Girl, was entitled to go in. But she found nothing.

Hermione held her breath as she watched her Head of House search for her. She looked around the room she was in and smiled.

She remembered when she had found this room; she had tripped over some books left on the floor whilst running from Ron and had braced herself for impact with the wall. Instead of falling against it, however, she had fallen *through* it, into the hidden room.

It had been disgusting, totally filthy, and it had taken her hours to clean. But it had been worth it. There seemed to be several charms on the room, for which she was glad.

Now she knew of the room, it recognised her, and though it was still hidden to others, the opening to the room was clear for her to see as she entered the library. There was a Silencing charm set up, which made it a quiet safe-haven, and she was sure if she made a noise, no one would hear her either. She didn't want to test that theory, though, in case she was wrong.

McGonagall cursed under her breath. There was something wrong; she had been worried about Hermione for a while now, and what Harry and Ron had said confirmed that there was definitely something amiss. "Albus, you fool, why didn't you listen to me?"

"I never knew we felt the same way about the old man." McGonagall scowled as Snape sat gracefully in a chair with a book on potions.

"Why are you here? You have all the books you need in your office; most of these barely reach NEWT level."

"True, it is disgraceful. But I am having fun tailing you; being flustered doesn't suit you, Minerva."

"Not now, Severus," she returned, exasperated.

"Backing down from a contest? I am shocked, Minerva, the lioness finally loses a battle without a fight."

"Severus, shut up, you... you... urgh... just get out of my sight." McGonagall threw her hands in the air, frustration clearly showing in her features.

"Well, if the lioness isn't back in the fight with a sting."

"If you aren't helping, Severus, you are part of the problem."

He sighed and raised an eyebrow in his typical fashion.

"Well, well, well. A problem a Gryffindor can't solve. If you want help, you are going to have to ask for it."

"You are insufferable, Severus."

"Well, as I can see you don't need my help, I will be off. I have actual work to do."

"Severus, help me find Hermione."

"Miss Granger? You are getting this worked up over Miss Granger? Why are you worried about that little know-it-all?"

"She... it is not important. It is something that I need to discuss with her. Not you. Now are you going to help me or not?"

"She is in here."

"Severus, as you can plainly see, she is not. I have been all over the library. Unless she is invisible, I don't see how she can be in here."

"There are many hidden rooms and corridors in the castle... some even the Headmaster is unaware of, you know."

"There's a hidden room in here?"

"I believe there are four, one for each House."

"Where are they?"

"I know only of the Slytherin one; it has been of great use for many years and is quite comfortable. I don't believe the other rooms have been found by a student for well over fifty years."

"That is no help, Severus."

"She can't hear us, but she will be able to see us, so she won't accidentally come out for you to see." Severus dropped his head so that his hair fell across his face. "You shall have to be a snake to catch her."

"But..."

"Come, Minerva." He lifted his head. "Let's leave." He made a show of offering her his arm and walking out. Hermione sighed in relief.

Snape and McGonagall stood outside the library. "What are we doing out here? I was in Gryffindor, why can't I go in and get her?"

"Because you need to find the room first, and you need to be in need of it, like an emergency, to find it on your own. That is why there is one for each House."

"Well, how is standing here going to help?" She was silenced by Snape pulling her into his cloak and sinking into the shadows.

"Bloody stupid!" Hermione muttered as she passed them. "Can't leave me be. Making me late. It's enough to drive anyone crazy. Fucking stupid!"

"Twenty points from Gryffindor for such foul language." Hermione stifled a scream as she spun around.

"Professor, you scared me." A look of fear flickered in her eyes as McGonagall stepped around Snape, glaring at him.

"Was that really necessary, Severus?"

"I believe it was, Minerva. We can't allow the Head Girl to go around cursing, can we now?"

McGonagall scowled and turned to Hermione, who had backed against the far wall. "Miss Granger, come with me, I need to talk to you."

"I, I can't. I need to, I need to... I'm going to be late to my meeting with... Draco."

"Draco? Since when do you call Mr Malfoy 'Draco'?" McGonagall questioned.

"Since he, since he..." Snape narrowed his eyes as he saw her shirt begin to glow, or rather, something under her shirt begin to glow. "I'm going to be late."

The dark potions professor stepped towards Hermione. "Miss Granger, it appears your shirt is glowing."

The look of horror that crossed over her face confirmed it was something connected to Draco.

"I need to go. I'm late."

"You didn't answer my question, Miss Granger."

"You didn't ask a question, Professor."

"Bloody know-it-all. Ten points..."

"Severus! She is quite right; you didn't ask her a question. Is this how my House loses most of its points?"

"Miss Granger, why is your shirt glowing?" Snape ignored McGonagall's question, keeping his sharp eyes on Hermione.

"It's my timer." Hermione cringed in pain. He watched her hand twitch as though to remove the offending object.

"Timer? A *timer* for what, Miss Granger?"

"My timer so that I am not late for... anything." She bit her lip and clenched her fists. Tears sprung to her eyes as she waited for their dismissal of her.

"Well, I'm sure Mr Malfoy won't mind you being a bit late..." McGonagall began.

"NO!" Hermione screamed as she reached beneath her shirt and touched the glowing object. "I need to go now." She began moving down the corridor.

"Miss Granger, *where* do you think you are going?" Snape stepped towards her.

"I need to go, I need to go, now!" The tears that had previously threatened to fall now started to flow down her cheeks. "I'm sorry, Professor McGonagall, Professor Snape." She turned and fled down the corridor.

McGonagall watched in shocked silence as Hermione turned a corner, and jumped when Snape spoke.

"I believe we need to speak to Mr Malfoy."

"Why?"

"Did you not notice Miss Granger's shirt glowing?"

"No, I was too busy watching her face to see if she was lying."

"When she spoke of Mr Malfoy, whatever she was wearing under it started to glow. If it is what I fear it is, we don't have long."

"Severus, you are scaring me. What are you talking about?"

"Has Miss Granger been performing well in class?"

"Her essays are up to her usual standard," McGonagall said thoughtfully, "however, now I think of it, her spells seem less powerful as of late. They haven't been lasting long, but I put it down to her being distracted."

"And Mr Malfoy?"

"He seems stronger." McGonagall frowned. "I assumed he had been studying harder."

"I believe he is draining Miss Granger's magic."

"What? Why would he do that?"

"Because, Minerva, in case you have not noticed, we are on the eve of war. Miss Granger is obviously seen as a great threat to the Dark Lord."

"But I thought it would be-"

"Potter? The Dark Lord wants Potter to be left for himself."

"But why would-"

"She is his best friend and, as much as I hate to admit it, she is a clever witch who has power of a magnitude even she has not yet realised."

"We need to find her."

"Indeed." Snape started off in the opposite direction to which Hermione had taken.

"Where are you going? Aren't you going to help me?"

"I am going to where I believe they are."

"But she went that way." McGonagall pointed in the direction Hermione had taken.

Snape paused mid-stride to answer her. "I know a short-cut. There is only one place that they could be."

Snape began walking away again, leaving McGonagall to follow behind.

"Where?"

"It is not a place you would know of; it's a Slytherin thing."

"Bloody Slytherins!"

"If it wasn't for the dire need to find Miss Granger, I would walk away from this right now, at that comment."

"I apologise, Severus. It was not directed solely at you."

"Here." McGonagall turned to where Snape had been, but he was gone.

"Severus?"

"Come along, Minerva. Surely you can recognise a fake wall when you see one."

McGonagall slowly walked through the wall to her right and gasped. She could feel a multitude of spells working around her.

"Welcome to the Slytherin Chamber for--"

Suddenly, a loud voice echoed throughout the chamber. *"CRUCIO!"*

AN: Thank you for the reviews, they mean a lot to me.

And thank you again to my beta, snarkyroxy!

Chapter Three

Chapter 3 of 4

McGonagall has the true Slytherin experience... and not the good kind...

Disclaimer: I don't own HP or HPverse. JK does. I do, however, own the plot and the OC's.

Chapter Three

"Stupid Mudblood, can't you do anything right? Bloody late... again!*CRUCIO!*" Hermione clenched her hands into fists as she writhed on the floor. "Give in and scream, Mudblood, because this won't be over until you do."

"I... will... never... scream... for... you... *Malfoy,*" she managed to choke out.

"I told you to call me Draco, or have you forgotten?" Malfoy scowled. "Shall we revert back to master?"

"You are *not* my master," Hermione panted out, still feeling the fading curse rippling through her body.

"CRUCIO! I am and always will be."

"Please..." Her voice broke, and her lip began trembling.

"Please what, Mudblood?"

"Stop! I can't do... this... anymore."

Malfoy laughed, his cold eyes glinting as he flicked his wand. "Scream for me, Mudblood.*CRUCIO!*"

"No!" She barely bit back a scream as he intensified the curse again.

McGonagall and Snape, who had both been frozen in shock, moved towards the door, trying desperately to get through the wards set there.

"My sweet little Mudblood. You have so much to learn; when I tell you to scream, you scream." Hermione stumbled to her feet only to be knocked back by a punch in the stomach. "Now, what shall be your reward?" Malfoy smirked. "Maybe knowing what awaits you will persuade you to obey me."

"Let me go. Please, let me go," Hermione whimpered as she fell back against the wall.

"You have obviously not learnt enough yet to know what pleasures I can give.*CRUCIO!*"

Outside in the outer chamber, the two worried teachers continued to try and break through the wards, their wands moving so fast they were a blur.

"How is it he can cast an Unforgivable without alerting anyone?" McGonagall said, her voice strained, trying desperately to hide the panic she felt.

"The wards in this room were put up by Salazar himself. Only a Slytherin can access it unless another is invited, such as yourself. Furthermore, it can only be accessed when a Muggle-born is present. It is the... the torture room."

"Why can't we get in?"

"I don't know. Usually it is set so the Muggle-born cannot exit, but spectators can enter."

"*CRUCIO!*" A barely contained scream was heard.

"She is strong," Snape muttered in awe.

McGonagall glanced quickly at Snape before returning her concentration to the wards. "What do you mean?"

"Have you ever had the curse cast upon you?"

"No, but..."

"It is like every bone in your body is breaking, the muscles are being ripped from your skeleton, your blood is boiling and your skin is pulled tight to the extreme. Your eyes feel like they are burning and..."

"Stop! I don't need you to be that graphic."

"Obviously, I do, Minerva. You need to understand why it drives people mad if it is used too much. Because none of that is actually happening to the victim; it is purely psychological. It is amazing what the mind can do to the body in which it is encased."

"But..."

"I don't believe she will go mad. She is resisting it. I'm just surprised she hasn't passed out."

"Maybe... maybe this isn't the first time this has happened."

"I don't believe it is either. Even I screamed the first time it was cast on me."

If they had been in any other situation, McGonagall would have found it funny how vain he was about his control.

Malfoy was starting to get annoyed. Hermione usually gave in by now. She wasn't ordinarily this strong. *CRUCIO!*

"Stop," tears ran down her face as she choked on her words, "please."

"Scream, Mudblood; scream like the whore you will become as soon as you have learnt your lessons."

"I'm not... going to scream... and I... will. never. be. your. whore!"

"*CRUCIO!*" Malfoy smiled as Hermione almost screamed. "You will learn, my dear Mudblood. I mean that is what you like to do: learn. Well, now you shall learn to serve me. *CRUCIO!*"

"You can't make... me do... anything!"

"Really?" Lifting the curse, Malfoy laughed. "How would you like to dance?*Tarantallegra!*"

"No, don't..." Hermione stopped talking as her feet began moving on their own. She could no longer slump, saving her strength. Angered with herself for letting this weaken her, she tried to keep eye contact with her tormentor.

"For a Mudblood, you're a pretty good dancer."

"Can't you think of anything else to call me?" Hermione screeched.

Ignoring Hermione's comment, Malfoy sneered. "How about we add a twist, Mudblood? How about we have you dancing with pain?"

"What are you talking about?" Hermione snapped.

"For a know-it-all, you really are quite thick."

"I don't..."

"*Finite Incantatem.*"

"I thought..."

"Oh, don't celebrate yet, Mudblood. Here's something you can thank my father for...*TARANTALLECRU!*"

Hermione let out a blood-curdling scream, the Cruciatus Curse ripping through her body as she was forced to dance.

"Finally, you learn, but I think I will leave it on a bit longer. It might help you remember..."

Malfoy was thrown back against the wall as Snape and McGonagall broke through the wards and burst through the door.

Hermione clenched her teeth in pain, her eyes brimming with tears of frustration; if only she had lasted that little bit longer.

"*Finite Incantatem,*" McGonagall spoke clearly, fighting the emotions that were threatening to overwhelm her. Nothing happened. "Severus!"

"Malfoy, remove it immediately!" Snape growled.

"*Finite Incantatem*," Malfoy muttered, glaring darkly at Snape.

Hermione fell to the floor and curled into a tight ball. She lay there silently, trying to fight the shakes caused by the Cruciatus Curse. McGonagall rushed to her side and laid a hand on her shoulder, but Hermione flinched away, curling into an even tighter ball.

"Mr Malfoy, go to my office immediately and do not leave until I give you leave to do so."

"Shouldn't he..."

Snape sent McGonagall a meaningful look, hoping that she would understand his actions, before turning his gaze back to the young Slytherin...now leaning arrogantly against the wall. "Now!" He glared at Malfoy as the young man scrambled out of the room.

Turning his gaze back on Hermione, he spoke. "Miss Granger..." Hermione was still. "We do not have long before the shakes return. *Mobilicorpus*."

Hermione's body rose in the air and floated after Snape as he strode out of the room towards the Hospital Wing, with McGonagall following in silence.

When they reached the Hospital Wing, Snape gently lowered Hermione onto a bed.

"Poppy! Poppy, where are you?" McGonagall called out.

"What is it, Minerva, dear?" Pomfrey walked calmly out of her office, reading a sheet of parchment. Finally, she looked up. "Merlin! What happened to Miss Granger?"

Before McGonagall could reply, Snape answered sharply. "Highly irrelevant information...can you help or not?"

"I need to know what happened, Severus, so that I can help in the best way possible."

"Cruciatus Curse."

Pomfrey gasped, but quickly set to work examining the young Gryffindor. "Severus, can you go to the Headmaster? I need his help."

"Why on earth would you need..."

"Do you wish to question me? Are you a qualified..." Pomfrey cut herself off; Snape was gone.

"What's wrong with her, Poppy? Why do you need Albus?" McGonagall questioned, gripping Hermione's hand.

"I need him to cast *Rennervate*... I'm not strong enough. Not in this case..." Pomfrey sighed. "And we can't afford to take her to St. Mungo's; the press would have a field day."

Snape burst through the Headmaster's door, robes billowing behind him.

Dumbledore looked up and smiled. "Severus, how delightful to see you...care for a lemon drop?"

"No. I regretfully inform you that Miss Granger is in the Hospital Wing. She is suffering from repeated bouts of the Cruciatus Curse." Snape turned back towards the door before muttering a few words. "She was very strong."

The twinkle from Dumbledore's eyes was gone. He stood slowly. "Who performed it?"

"Malfoy, sir. But..."

"You must protect him; I understand. Let's just hope that this war is over soon so that..."

"Yes." Snape hurried out the door ahead of Dumbledore, arriving in the Hospital Wing several minutes before him, despite the fact that the aging Headmaster had used the Floo.

AN: Sorry for the delay in updating, folks. Took a bit longer than I thought to get RL sorted enough to be able to re-edit the chapter. And of course, thank you, snarkroxy, for going over it for me.

Chapter Four

Chapter 4 of 4

Dumbledore fails and Ron gets teased by Severus Snape...

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"*Rennervate!*" Nothing. Dumbledore closed his eyes and breathed deeply, trying desperately not to panic. *RENNERVATE!* Still nothing. Dumbledore shook his head sadly. "I'm sorry, Poppy. We are going to have to wait for her to wake up on her own. Somebody should inform Mister Potter and Mister Weasley."

Snape's lips curled into a sneer. "Potter and Weasley do not need to know about this, Albus."

"Severus, in the short time that we have left before the Final Battle, there should be no regrets. No secrets." Dumbledore frowned before turning to McGonagall. "Minerva, perhaps you could go and get them; I believe they are out practising Quidditch."

McGonagall nodded and left quickly as Dumbledore turned back to Snape. "Send the boy to me; tell him to tell me that you have punished him already. That will keep you

safe and stop Lucius from becoming angry."

"Yes, sir." Severus swept out of the room in a swirl of robes, heading down to his dungeons.

Meanwhile, Harry and Ron were perfecting a new move on the Quidditch pitch when Ron stopped, seeing a stationary figure watching them far below.

"Harry!" Ron yelled, causing Harry to pull up next to him.

"What?"

"McGonagall is down there, watching us."

"What do you think she wants?"

"I don't know. Let's show her that new move we came up with."

"But we haven't practised it much. We could crash."

"Come on, Harry," Ron whined.

"Fine. Ready." They leaned forward on their brooms and sped towards the ground, pulling up into a loop and corkscrew before skimming along the ground and getting off whilst still moving, running towards McGonagall.

The Head of Gryffindor tried to smile as her students sped towards her, but the ache in her chest was too much. She didn't think she could bear the look on Harry's face when he found out what happened.

"What's the matter, Professor?" Harry questioned, coming to a complete standstill and trying to catch his breath.

Turning back towards the castle, McGonagall started to walk again. "Mister Potter, Mister Weasley, follow me."

"What's happened? Has there been another Death Eater attack?"

"Harry!" Ginny, who had just noticed them about to leave the pitch, was speeding towards them. She pulled up sharply as she reached them.

"Glad to see we have another talented player joining the team, Miss Weasley."

"Thank you, Professor." Ginny turned to Harry. "What's the matter, Harry? Why are you leaving practise early? You were going to teach me that trick." Harry looked at McGonagall.

"Perhaps you should come with us as well, Miss Weasley. You are one of her friends, after all."

"What?" Ron looked at her dumbly.

"Hermione!" Harry took off running.

McGonagall followed slowly as Ginny got off her broom to walk beside her and Ron.

"Is something wrong with Hermione, Professor?"

"I'm afraid that there is. She is unconscious right now, after several bouts of... of the Cruciatus Curse." Ron stopped walking.

"Malfoy... that bloody ferret!" He got on his broom and sped towards the castle.

Ginny looked at McGonagall's face. "Is she going to be okay?"

"I don't know, Miss Weasley."

"Professor?"

"Yes?"

"How did she get attacked? Wouldn't Aurors come if an Unforgivable was cast?"

"Normally." McGonagall was reluctant to tell a student about the room and thinned her lips, trying not to think about how helpless she had felt when trying to get to her prized student. Knowing that she wasn't going to expand on that, Ginny stayed quiet the rest of the way to the Hospital Wing.

Harry and Ron watched as Madam Pomfrey fussed with Hermione before they were allowed to sit next to her.

"Now, you are not to stay long. She needs her rest. She has been through a lot. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Madam Pomfrey," they chorused.

She smiled as she left the boys alone with Hermione, but both boys noticed it didn't quite reach her eyes.

"Hey, Herms, you have to wake up."

"Yeah, we need you to help us with our homework," Ron groaned.

"Yeah, Ron still hasn't done his Potions homework."

Snape had just entered the Hospital Wing when he heard that. Puzzled, as he knew he hadn't set them anymore homework, he was about to speak, but something made him decide to watch from the shadows instead.

"P... P... Potions homework? What Potions homework? There wasn't..."

Harry was clutching his sides as he laughed. "You still... fall... for that!"

"It's not funny!" Ron huffed and punched Harry on the arm.

"But it is. Your face, it's brilliant!"

Ron folded his arms and huffed. "You know that kind of stuff gives me nightmares."

"You dream about me, Mister Weasley?" Snape stepped up behind Ron, who froze in fear.

"No... no, sir."

"I almost believe that." Snape sneered before smirking at the look of horror on both boys' faces as he circled around to the other side of Hermione's bed. "Has she been conscious at all since you have been here?"

"No, sir. We haven't been here long."

"It doesn't make sense." Snape muttered.

"Sir?"

"Was I talking to you?" he snapped.

Ron and Harry looked at each other, then at Snape as he swept out of the Hospital Wing.

"Well, that was certainly interesting." Harry turned to Hermione and gripped her hand, just as Ginny and McGonagall came in.

"Oh, Hermione... she almost looks..."

"Don't say it, Ginny," Harry pleaded.

Suddenly, Hermione stirred and groaned.

"Herms?" Harry squeezed her hand.

There was another groan which alerted Madam Pomfrey, who arrived at what could almost be described as a run. "Move aside, move aside. Minerva, dear... Minerva!"

McGonagall jumped as she came out of her thoughts.

"Can you help me by removing these students?" Upon seeing their grief stricken faces, Pomfrey continued, "You may return when she is fully awake. Could you three perhaps collect Professor Dumbledore?"

McGonagall quickly led the three concerned friends out of the Hospital Wing before hurrying back to stand beside Hermione's bed. They watched as her eyes flickered open and cringed as she cried out in pain. Pomfrey, with the help of McGonagall, administered a pain relief potion, which had Hermione laying silent but staring off into space, not focusing on anything.

"Miss Granger, would you like to tell us what happened?" McGonagall asked in a concerned voice.

"Nothing happened. We were just talking," Hermione's voice seemed mechanical, dead.

"Mister Malfoy..."

"Was doing nothing to harm me; he was just talking to me."

"Miss Granger, he..."

"I have nothing else to say." Hermione rolled over, with her back facing her Head of House.

McGonagall looked at Pomfrey, horrified. "He's, he told, he's..."

"Miss Granger is his slave." Both women turned to Snape, who had just entered the room again.

"What do you mean slave? What kind of slave?" McGonagall gasped.

"I know he has been draining her magic, and he told me that it is all part of one of Lucius' plans."

"To do what, exactly?"

"Lucius barely gives details for a raid, why would he give his son any details?"

"Severus, please."

"What has she said?" Snape carefully changed the subject. It was hard enough looking at the student before him who was usually filled with such life; he didn't want to dwell on why she was like that.

"That nothing happened, and that they were just talking and he wouldn't harm her."

"Anything else?"

"She repeated that they were just talking, and then said she had nothing more to say."

"He has her under a complicated spell. There is no way Draco can deny that his father had a hand in it. I'm shocked that he managed to brew the potion correctly... but..."

"But what, Severus?"

"Well, I can reverse it, but we need to get the necklace off her first."

"Why?"

"Because if we leave it on, it will block the potion."

"Isn't there..."

"Not everything to do with magic involves foolish wand waving, Minerva."

"Severus, there is no need to be..." Realising that now was not the time for petty arguments, McGonagall sighed. "How do we get it off her?"

"By lifting it over her head; how else do you get a necklace off?"

"Why wouldn't Miss Granger just take it off herself?"

"Because if she has been instructed not to take it off, then she couldn't, no matter how much she wanted to."

"But we can?"

"Yes." Snape started to move towards Hermione when Pomfrey stood in front of him.

"You go and make the potion, we will remove the necklace."

"I need to ensure I make the correct potion. I need the necklace to do that."

"Stand there. Minerva, go ahead."

McGonagall slowly removed Hermione's necklace and placed it into Snape's hand.

He nodded his head and was gone.

"What has this world come to?" Pomfrey sighed as she looked at Hermione, lying very still.

McGonagall sat down heavily in the chair by Hermione's bed. Gripping her hand she finally let the tears fall.

"Miss Granger... Hermione... don't let this get to you... don't let it stop you becoming the witch you are destined to be."

Hermione didn't move; in fact, her blink was barely visible.

McGonagall tried to stop the choking sobs from taking over, but seeing her favourite student in this position, she couldn't help her fears overwhelming her.