

Time Will Tell

by Mandela

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I do NOT fancy him!

Chapter 1 of 2

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Author's Note: This is my first attempt at a serious fanfic. I'm going to do my best to keep the characters as canonically correct as possible, and I'll try my darndest to keep the situations realistic.

At the moment, I do not have a beta. However, if anyone would like to help me and beta my story, I would be eternally grateful. If you're interested, you can contact me at spearbritney193@yahoo.com Thanks, and enjoy!

KA-POW! A small hand grenade exploded at Ron Weasley's face, the force of the explosion propelling the redhead backwards into a solid stone wall. From his position on the couch, Harry watched his best friend's face register both shock and horror.

"What'd you do that for?!" Ron exclaimed crossly, unceremoniously dumping the controller down on the coffee table. The words RON LOSES flashed across the television screen, showing Game Ron lying still on the ground while Game Harry danced around and flashed the victory sign.

"Sorry," Harry said, grinning good-naturedly, "I couldn't resist." Ron grumbled.

"Y'know, something's wrong when you choose to blow up your best mate rather than Malfoy." Ron frowned, put-off. Over in the corner Hermione and Ginny rolled their eyes.

This was the first time Ron had ever played a video game before, and despite the fact that he was beginning to master the use of a controller, he was nothing compared to Harry. Harry Potter, the famed Boy-Who-Lived, had spent the summer before his seventh year sneaking into his cousin's room to play video games for hours on end.

"How about we both go after Snape?" Harry suggested suddenly. Ron immediately brightened at the idea.

"Brilliant!" He crowed, snatching up his controller once again. "Blast that greasy git to—"

"RON!" Hermione interjected, sending a disproving look at the boys. Ron glanced her way and smiled sheepishly but made no move to turn the game in another direction. Sighing, she turned back to the card game she and Ginny were playing. She'd made a mistake in indulging one of Harry's and Ron's wishes, transfiguring one of Dudley's video games so that the scenery looked like Hogwarts and the other characters were various students and staff. *Just what they needed*, she thought sarcastically, *a game*

which gives them unlimited ammunition and the ability to blow what- or whomever they want sky high!

Hermione shot another glance at the game console, an idea hatching in her mind. Finding her wand in the small tote bag near her seat, she pointed it at the game and uttered a spell under her breath. Wordlessly Ginny watched, giggling as soon as she caught on to what Hermione was doing.

At that moment Game Harry and Game Ron burst into the Potion's classroom, both sporting enormous semi-automatic guns. With a triumphant shout from the real Ron and Harry, the two game characters began shooting wildly at their much-hated potion's master. Their shout, however, soon turned to cries of confusion, then indignation.

Game Snape wore a surprisingly realistic look of bored indifference as he held up his hand to stop the barrage of bullets that came his way. The bullets dropped harmlessly to the floor. Back on the couch, Harry and Ron gaped at the television screen.

"No Muggle weapons in class, Potter," Game Snape said in a voice eerily like the real Snape's. "Fifty points from Gryffindor." Harry and Ron yelped as the hourglass in the top right corner was emptied. A large GAME OVER splashed across the screen, eliciting wide eyed looks from both boys. In the corner, Ginny and Hermione giggled madly.

Ron glared accusingly at Ginny. "What did you do?!" He howled. "We were just about to get Snape!"

"I-hic-didn't do any-hic-thing!" Ginny protested amid laughter-induced hiccups. Not believing his younger sister, Ron chucked a throw pillow at her.

"Hey!" Hermione protested as the pillow barely missed smashing a priceless Ming vase and a set of glass figurines. "If Harry's aunt and uncle come back and see this house ruined, they'll be mad!"

"They'll be more than mad," Harry added under his breath to Ron. "They'll be bloody livid. They don't want any of my friends visiting." Ron nodded sympathetically. Unfortunately for the two of them, Hermione had heard every word.

"What do you mean we aren't supposed to be here?" She asked, suddenly sitting upright in her chair. "If they come home and find us here you'll get in trouble, Harry!" Harry shrugged, nibbling on a potato chip.

"Dudley won some sort of sports award at his school," he explained, not looking very concerned about the prospect of getting caught. "They're all out at an awards luncheon or whatever. They'll be gone all afternoon." Hermione glanced at the clock. It was just before 1 PM, too early for the Dursley's to be returning.

Somewhat mollified, she said, "Alright. And when we leave we'll floo back to the Burrow from Mrs. Figg's house, right?" Harry nodded. Ron squirmed in his seat.

"Something wrong, Ron?" Harry asked. Ron made a face.

"Don't like Mrs. Figg's house," he muttered. His three companions looked puzzled. "Got those bloody cats all around and one of 'em—" Ron shuddered, "One of 'em was carrying a dead spider around in its mouth. Tried to bring it over and put it on my lap."

As Ron dramatically ended a rather anti-climatic story, Harry, Ginny and Hermione burst into laughter. Ears turning red, Ron turned his attention back to the game, repeatedly pressing the only button he knew: shoot. Game Snape popped up again and repeated: "No Muggle weapons in class." Ron scowled.

Now more amused than agitated, Harry looked at Hermione and asked: "Did you put that on there 'Mione?" The girl nodded. "But...why?"

Hermione shrugged. "Well, for one thing, he isn't as bad as everyone says he is. You've made him out to be some kind of monster." Ron and Harry both gaped at her, aghast. "He's brave, extremely intelligent and—"

"A bastard," Ron finished. Hermione frowned.

"He was probably just stressed out," she said, not intending to sound nearly as defensive as she was. "After all, everything he did for the Order wasn't exactly child's play!" Ginny remained silent, studying Hermione. But Harry and Ron could not resist the temptation.

"You fancy him, don't you!" Harry exclaimed, looking both incredulous and disgusted. Ron, meanwhile, was making childish kissing noises.

"Mrs. Hermione Snape," he declared, wincing along with Harry. "Hermie and Snapey sittin' in a tree—"

"Oh, knock it off!" Hermione demanded, her face flushing. "I do NOT fancy Snape, so kindly stop implying that I do." Glowering, she scowled at her friends. "Ron, Ginny, I think it's time to go." Despite protests from the other three, they were no match for an agitated Hermione grabbing Ron's hand and literally dragging him out the door.

"See you in three days, Harry!" Ron called despondently as he was hauled outside. "The train leaves for Hogwarts at eleven, and remember to bring some b—" Ron's last statement was cut off as Hermione slammed the door behind them. With a sigh Harry began the task of resetting the living room back to its normal state, hoping that the next seventy-two hours would pass uneventfully and he'd soon be on his way back to Hogwarts.

Unacceptable Behavior

Chapter 2 of 2

An unfortunate potions mishap leaves Hermione to bear the brunt of Snape's anger. While she is left to clean up the mess, however, she comes across something that might serve as a hint as to why the potions master is the way he is...

Three days later, Hermione didn't appear to remember her outburst at the Dursley's house. Harry and Ron, prodded on by an overly cooperative Ginny, had sheepishly apologized when the foursome had met again at Platform 9 3/4. Hermione, who had been intently studying her transfiguration book, had simply shrugged. Harry and Ron were grateful that she didn't appear to be holding a grudge, and didn't press the subject.

By the time another week had passed, both Ron and Harry had forgotten entirely about the incident. It was a Friday evening, and the Gryffindor common room was packed. A pair of first year boys ran around the room, playing monkey in the middle with another little firstie's shoe. Harry and Ginny were curled up together on one of the various armchairs and Ron, in the midst of explaining the finer points of quidditch to a potential beater, kept throwing them dirty looks. His exclamations were mingled with their indignant cries at one point as he ruined one of their kisses by lobbing at pillow at Harry's face.

Students every sat in small groups chatting animatedly. Lavender and Parvati were having a deep discussion about the current year's boys. Ginny had disentangled herself

from Harry's arms and had joined them. A paper airplane sailed over the girl's heads.

And in the middle of all this chaos sat Hermione, her attempts to block out the noise proving to be woefully inadequate. With a frustrated sigh she slammed the book shut. Ginny, who'd been sitting very close, heard this and looked up.

"Ready to join the real world, Hermione?" Ginny asked, rolling her eyes as she saw the title of Hermione's book. "It is a Friday night. You have plenty of time to study that later." Hermione would have preferred to just go up to bed, but Ginny wasn't about to let her leave. The younger girl angled her seat so that Hermione was part of the circle the other three girls had formed. As she became aware of the topic of conversation, Hermione could barely stop herself from rolling her eyes.

"Terry Boot?" Lavender snorted. "He looks like a third year! I'd shag Seamus over him, any day!" Seamus looked up hopefully, hearing his name in the same sentence as 'shag.' "No Seamus, I didn't mean it that way!" Lavender added, looking thoroughly disgusted. Parvati and Ginny giggled.

"Hermione," Parvati said, as if suddenly noticing the other girl's presence. "Who would you rather shag, Draco Malfoy or" she paused, taking a moment to come up with someone vile enough to rival Malfoy. "Professor Snape?" At this question Ginny nearly spat out the pumpkin juice she'd been stealthily sipping from Lavender's cup.

Hermione frowned at the query. First of all, she didn't want to shag *anyone*. And she especially did not want to shag Malfoy or Snape. "Neither," she said finally, firmly.

Lavender rolled her eyes sending an 'I told you so' look at Parvati, but she persisted. "Come on, Hermione! That's the point of the game. You have to choose one."

Ginny carefully set down her glass of juice before adding, "Really Hermione, it isn't that bad. Just choose one or the other. You don't actually have to shag one of them."

"Surely you like one better than the other?" Lavender prompted. "One of them is better looking, perhaps. Or more up to your standards than that Viktor Krum you dated a few years ago."

"Maybe she can't choose!" Parvati squealed. "Maybe she's having a hard time deciding because she wants to shag them both."

Neither Parvati nor Lavender seemed to notice Hermione's growing frustration and impatience. Seething, she finally exclaimed: "SNAPE! I'd rather shag Snape, alright?!" Lavender and Parvati both blinked, exchanging uneasy looks with each other. The common room had gotten eerily quiet, and dozens of eyes were focused on Hermione.

"Oh, shove it, all of you!" She declared, rising. "I'm going to bed. And you'd all better keep the noise level down!" Scowling she stalked off, and Ginny was uncomfortably reminded of the way she'd left the Dursley's in a huff.

As the Head Girl disappeared up into her private room, the buzz of conversation filled the common room again. Lavender, Parvati and Ginny all glanced at the stairs Hermione had so recently disappeared up.

"I don't know why she reacted that way," Parvati confessed, lowering her voice and nervously looking over her shoulder, as if she expected to see Hermione standing over them. "It was just a game!"

"I know!" Lavender agreed, still looking vaguely disgusted at Hermione's choice of men. "And Snape, of all people! The girl must need her eyes checked. I mean honestly, I know Malfoy's a bit of a prat, but who would actually choose Snape over him!"

By Monday, Hermione had not forgotten Friday's humiliating outburst. The rest of the house hadn't either, but they knew enough to act as if they had. *Luckily*, she thought, *We have class today. Everyone will forget about it.* Unfortunately, she realized a moment later, her first class of the day was Double Potions.

Hermione could feel Lavender and Parvati watching her all during class, and she made it her business to not look at Snape once. She rearranged her quills as he entered the classroom, staring only at her notes as he lectured about that day's potion.

"You will be brewing a high useful, yet highly volatile and dangerous potion today," Snape drawled. "When making the Exploding Potion, you must follow the directions exactly. Any mishaps will surely cause your potion to backfire." A slight smirk slid onto Snape's face. "I trust that as seventh years you are competent enough to read directions." He clapped his hands once and the directions appeared on the board. A cabinet filled with the necessary ingredients sprung open.

"Your partners are those who are sitting at the same table as you are," he added. Hermione glanced at the seat next to her, barely able to stifle a groan as she saw Neville. *I suppose it's best this way*, she thought. *At least I can keep an eye on him and make sure he won't botch this up.* Neville stared horror struck at the board, turning with a pleading look to Hermione.

Snape, meanwhile, had found this odd pairing somewhat amusing. With a smirk he watched the two of them, enjoying the distressed look on Neville's face. What that boy was still doing in potions was a mystery to him. Hopefully Granger would keep him from blowing up the classroom.

Hermione looked up sharply, feeling eyes on her that she intuitively knew were not Parvati and Lavender's. Their eyes made contact for a minute before Snape looked away, snapping orders at a Slytherin boy. Behind her, Parvati and Lavender giggled and Hermione turned red.

"Remember, do not cut the asphodel root," Snape warned. As much as he despised helping his students, he was not keen on seeing his classroom wrecked.

Hermione barely acknowledged that she heard Snape's order. She stared intently at the ground ginger in her bowl, continuing to grind it into a fine powder. Beside her, a flustered Neville looked back and forth between Snape and the asphodel root before him. He'd been so intent on reading and rereading the directions that he'd only heard the second half of Snape's statement. Hermione was in her own little world, it seemed, and Neville didn't want to interrupt. Nervously he raised his knife and began cutting the root into tiny pieces. After all, he'd distinctly heard "Cut the asphodel root."

"Almost time to add the asphodel," Hermione stated suddenly, as if waking from her reverie. She poured the ground ginger root into the boiling cauldron, stirring it thirty times clockwise, as instructed. "Ok, add it in," she instructed, eyes glued to the directions. Scooping up the asphodel, Neville held the pieces over the cauldron, ready to drop them in.

At the last second, Hermione glanced up and saw the shredded root just as Neville tipped his hands to dump it in. "NO!" She cried, but it was too late. Neville, startled by her outburst, dropped the entire handful into the cauldron. The potion, supposed to be a deep, midnight blue turned a bright green and began emitting a high pitched whistle. The other students looked up, alarmed.

Without warning the potion exploded, shattering the cauldron and knocking Hermione, Neville and anyone else in the vicinity to the ground. Hermione threw her arms out to soften her fall, but she landed at an odd angle and cried out as her wrist twisted sharply. The students coughed as the smoke slowly disappeared upwards.

Robing swishing ominously behind him, Snape stomped up to where Neville lie cowering on the hard, stone floor. "Idiot boy!" he hissed, grabbing Neville by the ear and dragging him to his feet. Neville whimpered. "Out! Get out of my classroom this instant!" Looking terrified, Neville bolted for the door.

"Professor, Sir, it was my fault. I" Hermione began, scrambling to her feet. Snape cut her off mid-sentence.

"You were supposed to be assisting Mr. Longbottom," he said, his voice eerily smooth and calm considering what had just happened. Hermione nodded miserably. "Fifty points from Gryffindor. And," he added, looking at the mess, "you will be staying after class to clean up."

"What are you all gawking at?" He snapped, suddenly turning his attention back to the other students. "Bottle your samples and get out!" The other students rushed to comply; even the Slytherins hurried, not wishing to be left in the classroom with an angry Snape.

With all other sources to which Snape could vent his anger disappeared, he turned back to Hermione. "Clean this up!" He snarled. "I want my classroom exactly the way it was because you and that idiot boy did this!" Hermione nodded, having resigned herself to her fate of spending her free time cleaning the classroom. "I'll be in my office," Snape continued. "And I expect you to come fetch me when you've finished. I'll need to approve it before you are allowed to leave." That said, Snape deftly stepped over the shattered cauldron bits and vanished into his office.

Hermione spent the next half hour charming away the spilled potion and righting all the tables and chairs that had been knocked over. Luckily Snape had not forbidden her from using magic, and the majority of the mess was cleaned up quickly enough. The large black scorch mark on the floor, however, would not go away. Hermione had tried every spell she could think of, and had even attempted a Muggle method of getting down on her hands and knees and scrubbing at the spot. But the black, scorched floor remained unchanged.

It would have to do, Hermione realized with a sigh. Muttering "Reparo!" under her breath, she collected the millions of glass shards back into the vials they had originally formed. Taking three in each hand she headed towards the cabinets. But as she did so her grip on one of the slippery vials lessened and she could feel it slipping out of her fingers. It would have been simple to repair it had it fallen, but Hermione was sure that if she had to clean up one more thing she would snap.

Clumsily she attempted to shift her balance to keep the vials from dropping to the floor. In doing so, however, she crashed into the corner of Snape's desk. The hard wood corner jabbed into her ribs and reflexively she let go of the vials, her hands rushing to her injured side. She groaned as she heard the glass shatter again. Bending down to assess the damage done to the vials, the array of papers that had fallen from Snape's desk caught her eye.

Dear Mr. Severus Snape,

It is our sad duty to inform you of the death of your father. The following were found amongst his possessions at the time of his death...

Hermione gasped, skimming the first few lines. Snape's father had died! And, Hermione realized, glancing at the date, quite recently too. Her curiosity getting the better of her, she began shuffling through the other papers. There were a number of letters, and pictures as well. The pictures started off showing a small, smiling child. As time progressed, the pictures began to show a darker and more melancholy adolescent, then a scowling adult. Much to her amazement, Hermione realized that the boy in the pictures (yes, even the smiling little toddler) was Snape.

The handle of the door leading to Snape's study creaked and Hermione jumped. She'd been so intent on studying the photographs she hadn't realized that Snape could come back into the room at any time. Worriedly she looked down at the pictures in her hands and then at the desk a foot or two away from her. She'd never get them back in place in time. Making a quick decision she shoved the entire stack under her uniform blazer, hoping Snape would not notice the odd-shaped bundle.

Just as the last paper was tucked away, Snape emerged from his private study. "Is something amiss, Miss Granger?" He asked softly, the quietness of his question proving to be more disconcerting than if he had yelled. Hermione dutifully shook her head, afraid that if she spoke she'd blurt out something that might get her in trouble.

Snape looked down at the broken glass at his feet (Hermione had never gotten around to fixing the vials). "Tut tut, Miss Granger," he said, shaking his head. "Ruining classroom supplies? I'm surprised you couldn't clean this up." Hermione's face turned red and she opened her mouth to retort, realizing only seconds before that if she did, she'd have to admit to looking through Snape's personal papers. "Interesting," Snape observed, eyeing the girl. "For once she is silent." Hermione flushed an even deeper red.

Snape's eyes traveled to the burnt patch on the floor and he sighed. "I hope you do not consider your job finished, Miss Granger," he said. "I've kept you long enough now, but you will return for detention tomorrow evening, at 7 pm sharp. You are dismissed."

Hermione nodded wordlessly, scurrying out of the classroom, her arms pressed suspiciously tight against her stomach. Snape watched her go, noting her odd behavior. His gaze traveled back to the broken vials. It was quite unlike Miss Granger to be so clumsy and dull-witted. A pale object caught his eye, and a quick glance revealed it to be an envelope that had slipped underneath his desk, and he reached down to recover it. This envelope had been on his desk, he remembered that clearly. Opening it up he frowned as he mentally inventoried the contents. At least half of the picture were missing. Of course! That's what the girl had been trying to hide, Snape realized with a scowl. No wonder she was acting so strangely. But he'd have to deal with her later. Hopefully she'd have enough sense to keep the picture private until he could secure them. It wouldn't do to have those photographs floating around the school.

Idly tossing the half-empty folder back onto his desk he sank into the chair, gently massaging his temples with his fingers. He was going to have to have a talk with Miss Granger at her detention, and it certainly was not going to be about potions.