

Due Praise

by Merlina Thalia

Hermione is leaving Hogwarts for the last time and Professor Snape has something he needs to say. My response to prompt #2 of the Potter Place Winter 2007 Prompt Challenge

Chapter One

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N This is my first attempt at a challenge and my first time putting any of my Harry Potter fanfic online. Please let me know what you think. Does it deserve a sequel? For now it stands alone as a one shot, but I do have some ideas sketched out if I decide to write another. If I do, it will eventually be SS/HG.

This is a response for prompt #2 for Potter Place; however, I changed it slightly as this takes place after seventh year is over, not after an apprenticeship:

Prompt - Days after Hermione's Potions apprenticeship with Snape is over, and she has left, she receives a letter from Snape. What does it say?

Please read and review:) If for some reason someone wants to archive it elsewhere, that is fine but please let me know first.

I'd like to thank ladyinthecloak for being my beta and for all her help:)

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It was the last day. She knew that it would affect her, but she didn't expect a tear to roll down her face before they even left the station.

Hermione Granger had just sat down in a seat towards the back of the Hogwarts Express. She looked out the window at the castle that she would no longer live in, no longer take classes in. She knew it would not be the last time she would see the castle, but she was sad just the same. They had just left the Leaving Feast, and she knew that many of the faces she knew so well she may never see again. So many people had already been lost in this war, and it was inevitable that more would follow. She would miss them all, even her horrible Potions master, Professor Snape. She was surprised at this thought. She would have been even more surprised if she knew that the man was standing in the shadows and had closely watched her get on the train.

Hermione looked down at her book bag sitting on the seat beside her and opened it, thinking perhaps she would read for a few minutes before her best friends, Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, and his sister Ginny would be there. She knew that they would be late as Harry and Ron always saved their packing until the last minute, and Ginny offered to help Harry. Hermione refused, telling them it was their own fault. She didn't mind they weren't there; she was glad to have a few minutes to herself so that they would not see her close to tears.

She reached into the bag and saw something sticking up out of her book. It was a deep green. She pulled it out and realized it was a letter. She idly wondered who it could be from, as there was no name. She turned it over and broke the seal. She was surprised to see that it was a Slytherin seal. She slid the letter from the envelope and

unfolded it. The parchment was blank except for her name until she started reading it. The words appeared as she read the letter in her mind.

Miss Hermione Granger,

I am a man who does not show much emotion and cannot. Were it not for my place in this coming war, perhaps things would be different. It is because of the circumstances we both face that I am sending you this letter. This is not something I could or would ever tell you in person. Even if things were different I am not a man of high praise. You are a smart girl and will understand why once you read my signature, which will appear once you finish this letter. The war is upon us, and it is very likely that one, if not both of us, will not survive, which is one of the reasons why I am writing this. You deserve to at least know the truth.

The past years have required me to hide what I feel and act indifferent, if not overly harsh to you. By circumstance I would often berate you when you deserved praise. I believe, Miss Granger, that you are a very intelligent witch and the best student I have ever had the pleasure of teaching. I admire that intelligence as well as your strength in overcoming adversity, in proving to be the smartest witch of Hogwarts regardless of your bloodline. I must also commend your bravery for the crusade you are about to partake. I know more about your future search than you will ever know. While I may not survive to see the end of the war, I do know that if the light side wins, you and your friends will be instrumental in bringing it about.

Perhaps if circumstances were different I may have been able to bestow some sort of praise on you in person, but as they are not, I cannot. Do not approach me or try to contact me about this letter. It could be detrimental to both of us. If you do contact me I will deny ever sending it.

I will be disappearing very soon to partake in my own part of the war. Do not look for me.

--Professor Severus Snape.

Before she had a chance to even process the information, the parchment disintegrated in her hands.

Hermione sat stunned for a few minutes. She didn't know what to think of it. Was it really from him?

Hermione caught movement out of the corner of her eye and turned her head. She was astonished to see Professor Snape watching her. He nodded his head in acknowledgment. *So he did really send it*, she thought. She didn't know what to make of it. It obviously wasn't a love letter or anything of the sort, but it was... anti-Snape. *Maybe he would not be such a bitter man if it weren't for pretending to be on the other side* She nodded back to him and returned to her thoughts.

"Hermione? What are you looking at?" She turned to see Ron standing at the compartment door. Harry and Ginny were behind him.

"Just looking at everybody. Some of them may not survive," she said sadly. She looked back to where Snape had been, but he was gone.

Hermione scooted over on the seat so Ron could sit down. Harry and Ginny sat across from her. She was still at a loss and was thinking of telling her friends. *It's probably best if I don't. They'll just think he's up to something.* She didn't know why, but she believed the letter. She always tried to see the best in people.

She turned back to the window as she saw a flash of black billowing robes disappear into the castle. She might never know the truth for sure.