

Down and Out in Bognor Regis

by harrietvane

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: If Harry Potter belonged to me, there'd be a lot more sex and a lot less putting up with dunderheads. So, suffice to say, it does not belong to me. I also do not own Shrewsbury College at Oxford, which is solely the brainchild of Dorothy L. Sayers.

Authors Notes: This was written for odogoddess as part of the Summer 2007 SS/HG Exchange. This story might not make as much sense to the non-Brits, but some Wiki-ing should make a few things clearer if you care. Thanks to P for his obsession with the idea that I write a story that combined his Butlins obsession, drugs and Harry Potter. One day, I will take him to Butlins so he can experience it all for himself (see, that's me being selfless). Finally, thank you to those involved in running the sshg_exchange and to my beta, shiv5468. Even though they cursed me, they're still lovely people. The title is a riff on Cory Doctorow's e-book *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* (and the Orwell book that inspired that title, I suppose). Because Butlins is just like Disney World. I also listened to Cliff Richard's 'Summer Holiday' while I wrote this. I suffer for my art. There's also an Austen quote floating in there, much to my dismay, and some slightly altered George Meredith.

What Harry Sodding Hero-of-the-Sodding-Magical-World Potter wanted, he usually got, and this time was no different. It had been a rather pathetic display, really, with all of the requisite Dickensian wrenching of heartstrings. The poor orphan Potter had been taken in by the Dursleys and mistreated, and he'd longed to go on a proper family holiday, but they had--and he could certainly sympathise with their position--locked him under the stairs or sent him to pester Arabella Figg for a week or two or something. He had tuned out at that point, his desire to feign interest being quite slim, but the crux of the matter was that Harry Potter wanted a proper family holiday, and a proper family holiday he would have. Being of an unfortunate upbringing, Severus Snape could, after a certain amount of liquor, appreciate the sentiment that might arise in such circumstances to provide a wholly different experience for one's progeny. He just didn't see why Harry had to choose such a bloody awful locale.

Of all the places open to man and Wizardkind--Paris, Italy, even America (if one was into that sort of thing)--Potter had chosen Bognor Regis. It seemed that, while locked under the stairs for what was clearly an insufficient number of years, Potter had taken to excising advertisements for a Muggle seaside 'resort' called Butlins from old magazines and hiding them under his mattress. Hermione had looked slightly bewildered when she had related this factlet from the life of Little Orphan Harry to him--the Drs Granger seemed to prefer touring wineries and historical sites on the Continent, proving that not all Muggles were bad sorts really especially when they returned bearing alcoholic gifts of acceptable vintages for their son-in-law--but nonetheless Harry had insisted on Butlins for his first family holiday and so Butlins it was to be. She had proffered a brochure for his perusal, but it seemed it was a done deal regardless of his personal and strongly-held opinions on the matter. Butlins. Bognor Regis. Muggles. No magic. Potters. Weasleys. Children.

Hell.

He also didn't see why he had to go. It had been pointed out to Hermione quite correctly and rather at length that neither he nor she were in any way related to the familia Potter, unless one counted the time in sixth year he'd managed a furtive snog and a grope of Lily Evans and her famous tits. Hermione, rolling her eyes, had declared that, while a grope of Lily's tits did not count, she was like a sister to Harry, the godmother of both his children, and a good friend of Ginevra. And he was her husband. The verdict was one of fucked-by-marriage. They were going. Besides, wasn't he always whingeing about needing a break? She refused to entertain his argument that any

place with 'bog' in its name surely shouldn't count. Apparently a week at the seaside was a week at the seaside, Bognor Regis or the French Riviera. At least she had the good grace to look slightly pained when she'd said that. Anyone who would say 'non' to Côte d'Azur to say 'aye, go on then' to Bognor Regis was clearly mental; he was pretty sure that, despite the company she kept, his wife was still sane--if not beyond reasonable doubt, then at least on the balance of probabilities.

So, there he was in Bognor Regis, the twenty-eighth most crap town in the UK in 2004 and apparently home to lots of knocked up teenagers, according to Hermione, who had, as always, done her research. He could sympathise with all those knocked up girls. Sex seemed to be about the only worthwhile thing to do in the whole place. Enconced at a small table in a discotheque, he was working his way through his fifth lager and glaring at his wife. Hermione had had the good sense not to insist that he Be Involved in activities that involved anyone under the legal drinking age, and he had spent the day pottering around the hotel and the small town itself while Hermione had done unmentionable things with children, which largely involved pretending that people stuffed inside giant costumes was anything other than mind-numbingly dull. Overly cheerful women in red coats kept approaching him every time Potter went to the bar, and attempting to spark conversation. It seemed to be a cult of sorts, and he made sure to keep his glass well away from their reach, replying to the advances of each with rapidly diminishing politeness.

It was going on 10, and Hermione was still suspiciously absent. She had volunteered rather enthusiastically to help the tired and yet-again-pregnant Ginny dispatch the two young Potters, Muriel and Albus--honestly, what were people thinking, naming their children such hideous things? Surely it was best that such names died out with their previous owners--to bed and the care of Grandma Molly, as she insisted on being addressed these days. He was not an expert on the under-five set, but he suspected it did not take an hour and a half to dump them with their granny, beat a hasty retreat and get changed into something appropriate for a night hopefully free of any kind of licensed characters peddling their song and dance routines and tie-in merchandise. Something called a Venga Bus was coming, according to the music playing. He wished he were on it. It didn't sound quite as good as the Knight Bus, but a bus implied travelling to a place that was somewhere other than here. He gulped down the remainder of his drink most ungracefully as another of the red-coat cultists met his eye and started to move towards him. He'd heard about Muggle religion and the incessant need of many of its adherents to convert the goddess; it was frankly disgusting when a man was trying to eke what little enjoyment he could out of his summer holiday by drowning his sorrows in fairly average lager.

He held up his empty glass to Harry, who was ranting--somehow under the impression that Severus cared--about the cheek of the Germans taking all the prime poolside real estate, and his plan for them to secure it for Merry Olde England the next morning. Waiting until Harry returned to the bar for the next round, Severus slipped out of the door. Now, where to? The Potter-Weasley contingent had taken several apartments, but heading in that direction might mean encountering Molly and having yet another discussion on how special this holiday was and wasn't it lovely to have small children around again and other things generally offensive to his firmly-held personal beliefs. As he trudged along the path towards the hotel where Hermione had booked them--'perhaps Severus should have some distance from the children, Molly; yes, yes, a good idea'--he ruminated on the fundamental unfairness of it all. Here he was, spending a week of his summer holidays admittedly at the seaside, but not a seaside he particularly wanted to see, with people he didn't very much like, all for the sake of a wife who he had only married because the Ministry of Magic was capable of higher levels of fuckwittery than he'd ever imagined and introduced some arcane legislation. He still couldn't quite understand the reason for it or how he'd got roped in. He wasn't even a pureblood! Hermione had come to his rescue in the style of an attractive, successful and intelligent white knight, allowing him to keep his position at Hogwarts--with pay rise for new marital status--and his Potions Master status. Oh well. He was under the thumb now, and he didn't even get any shagging out of it, which was more than a slight disappointment, much to his surprise. Hermione Granger--not Snape, because she was her Own Woman with her own identity, thank you very much--was a very pleasant surprise. The now Dr Hermione Granger had taken a bit of a rest from the Wizarding World and gone and got some Muggle qualifications in psychology from Shrewsbury College, Oxford, and now had her ear chewed off by the miserable witches and wizards of the world for a very princely sum per hour, helped for free or close to it those suffering from something she called post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the war, and answered more than a few poor souls who wrote letters to the *Quibbler* asking her all about their personal luggage.

She let him bitch to her--about his marking, his colleagues, Voldemort, Albus, his students past and present--for free. That was something, at least. She was also more than slightly fit, and a good two decades younger than him. He hoped that someone, somewhere, was jealous of him.

He wondered how many of her friends knew that their arrangement wasn't quite as it appeared? Hermione had called it a Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, something to do with Yanks and poofs and the military apparently. And who was going to ask whether she was being rogered by Snape on a daily basis? He'd never asked her for the numbers, but he didn't suppose too many people had--if any. No-one had ever asked if he were getting a leg over, that was for sure. They just seemed to assume he was, like you assume your parents shag from time to time but really aren't interested in hearing confirmation or details. So no-one asked, and he didn't tell, and here he was suffering through some kind of circle of hell--probably the fifth, being the sullen bastard he was--on a holiday to please his wife and keep the peace with her quasi-relations and friends. He'd grown rather used to being bossed around in one form or the other--his father, Minerva, Albus, Voldemort, Lucius, now Hermione--that he seemed programmed to just move from one to the other. At 47, he wondered if he'd ever get around to being the boss himself.

Probably not. He was the boss of his classroom, at least, and surely the ability to terrorise the entire British contingent of magical children for two decades counted for something. If it didn't, he'd have Hermione appeal for him. She was good at arguing; the Know-It-All had a disarming habit of rolling like the Hogwarts Express over people who didn't see eye to eye with her worldview. More than a few of downtrodden pureblood housewives now owed their fortune and freedom to Hermione's fervent belief that philandering was only acceptable if the man in question got a note signed by his wife, as if it were a Hogsmeade weekend. Women he'd always previously thought of as meek and harmless suddenly were showing up in the Wizengamot's civil division asking for a divorce and something called alimony. If he were the one who made the money, he might be nervous, but half of sweet fuck all--a teacher's salary--probably wasn't worth her time even if she was the kind of woman to make a grab for her spouse's Galleons.

Extracting the swipe pass card key thing--what was wrong with a proper key, he didn't know, but that was Muggles for you--he clicked open the door of their room. It was called a Nelson Stateroom, as if Lord Nelson had any intention of lodging at a Butlins even if he were alive, and while a bit too white and airy for his tastes, it was tolerable for the week they would be staying. Muggle music was playing at a moderate volume inside--a Silencing Charm had obviously been applied to the room--and the bedside lamp and the full moon through the window provided a small amount of illumination to the room. He had been suffering an onslaught of prosthelysising and someone--presumably Hermione--had been hiding out here. A good plan, to have each party think you were with the other--he wished he'd thought of it first--but that didn't detract from the fact that he'd had to spend an evening listening to Harry Potter plot against the deck-chair-stealing German holiday makers as if they were Voldemort reincarnate. It's not like Hermione didn't know he didn't like these people overly much. To leave him out of any escape plan was unforgivable.

The door clicked shut behind him, and his nose twitched at the faint smell of smoke, almost undetectable against the salty night sea breeze. His wife was stretched out on the large bed in thin cotton summer pyjamas, her hair in a loose plait and a joint between her left finger and thumb and her eyes shut. She patted the mattress beside her without opening her eyes, and he sat down. Dispensing with his shoes, socks and uncomfortable trousers in short order--she didn't seem to mind such informality in her presence--he settled beside her on the bed, his hand meeting hers halfway as she passed him the joint.

"I didn't know you indulged." He took one, two tokes, inhaling deeply and holding for a long moment before exhaling. Who would have thought it: goody-two-shoes Hermione Granger smoking marijuana in a hotel bed with Professor Snape, terror of the Hogwarts dungeons.

"Not as a rule, at least since university," she replied with a delinquent smile. "I had to Oblivate the Warden and two scouts after a small incident in my room at Shrewsbury. A few carefully applied charms, and you could hardly see the fire damage. You?"

"Not since my ill-spent youth. It was the seventies, and London." He tried not to think of the fact that she hadn't been alive for most of that decade; she had a way of making him feel old. "As for tonight, it is impolite for a man to refuse a woman's offer of a mind-altering substance and leave her to smoke alone."

Their hands brushed as he passed the joint back to her, and she repeated the ritual.

"Is that covered in an etiquette handbook somewhere?"

"Apparently so," he snickered. "When I was chastising the young Miss Sackville-West for her nighttime wanderings and other offences against morals and decency, she assured me that Debreth's has risen to the task for both the Muggles and our lot on such delicate issues. It's hardly as if the toffs aren't indulging at least as much as us peons."

He paused a moment, stretching his arms above his head and settling himself more comfortably. They passed the joint between them, smoking the remainder in silence until there was nothing more to be had from it. Leaning over her, Severus discarded it in the ashtray on the bedside table.

Settled into a mellow and comfortable silence, reclining on the overly soft bed, he broke it with a burning question.

"Might I enquire as to what prompted tonight's foray into illicit substances? Regretting your choice of holiday venues?"

She smiled, slapping his arm gently in rebuke, and shrugged, shoulder pressing against his and falling away again, before she turned on her side to face the wall.

"Watching Ginny and Harry and the children... I suppose I just feel lost. Like I am missing something."

"I didn't know you fancied yourself the barefoot and pregnant type."

"God, no. Well, maybe just one, someday--to fulfil an academic curiosity, you understand. But take Harry. He had the weight of the world on his shoulders; now it's gone, and he's running around playing Quidditch, founding a whole tribe of children with his lovely, loving wife, and being so bloody nauseatingly happy. Not that I begrudge him that, of course..."

"Of course. You're not me."

She snorted.

"I spend 10 hours a day listening to people's problems."

"More like 12, but do continue."

"Whatever, let's split the difference and say 11. Every day it's, 'Oh, Hermione, the sky is falling! What do I do?' I mean, I know it's my job, but sometimes..."

"Sometimes you want to call them dunderheads, tell them to work it out for themselves and bloody well leave you alone? I'd advise you not to consider teaching if you're pondering a career change, though I'm sure you've picked up my feelings on the matter before now."

She laughed, and he watched her shoulders shake, and imagined her breasts moving as they always did when she laughed. The tiny print of cherries on her pyjamas crinkled as he gently stroked her back in support, his mind simultaneously shocked at his actions and approving. They'd never been particularly demonstrative--he was Severus Snape, after all--but she didn't protest. She turned and rolled, trapping his arm beneath her and rested her head on his shoulder. Clearly she was on her way to being just as intoxicated as he was.

"No-one ever comes for therapy because their life is going fantastically. It's always when the shit has hit the fan and they need someone to pick up the pieces. It's a bit like when I was at Hogwarts, except the problems are bigger, and I rarely get paid in sweets."

"Well, saving for the Voldemort problem. I'd imagine that was bigger than your average case of a straying spouse."

"Yes, excepting my role in the thwarting of evil. Hundreds of people are asking me to tell them how to make themselves happy..." She trailed off for a long moment.

"When you are still attempting to work that out for yourself," he supplied. "You are only young, Hermione. No-one expects you to have figured it all out. Save yourself, that is."

"I'm not unhappy, just... I thought it would all be easier. I would go away to university, get my degree, come back and establish myself professionally--"

"All accomplished."

"--marry a powerful and handsome Wizard--"

"Also done," he gloated.

"Stop looking so smug. My point is, I had a list, and I've got to the end of it and it isn't what I thought it would be."

"In my experience, it rarely is. I would hardly have joined Voldemort if I was entirely cognizant of the outcome. What did you think would be different?"

She sighed deeply.

"I would feel wonderfully fulfilled because I was helping people."

"Yes, you have a habit of persisting in the charade that you are a people person. You keep attempting to fight their battles for them, probably because you believe that they are too imbecilic to succeed on their own. You are perhaps the most extraordinary misanthrope--save myself, of course--that I have ever met, Hermione. You are interested in problems and facts and logic. People are none of those things as a rule, which is why your practice has been such a roaring success. If they were logical, they wouldn't need to be told to take what is the logically obvious course of action. What else did you expect to be different? Marriage?"

"Not particularly. It is largely as I had expected."

And that was unexpected. He laughed, and raised an eyebrow in surprise.

"You expected a marriage forced by the hand of the Ministry's asinine policies? I thought you dropped Divination in your third year."

"I obviously didn't expect the exact set of circumstances. I just meant that we get on quite well. It is... rather pleasant to have someone to talk to and just be around, and largely what I had hoped for."

There was a pause, a hitch of breath, and an admission: "I am quite fond of you, Severus."

"And I of you."

He lazily wrapped a loose tendril of her hair around his finger, amazed at the way her springy curls captured the digit, so different from his own hair.

"And if I were more than fond?" Hermione asked nervously.

"How much more fond?"

"Considerably."

The answer was delivered with no hesitation, her voice unwavering and assured. He shifted, twisting to face her in the darkness, his eyes serious and dark with the weight of the matter. If one started a love affair with one's wife--well, for the sake of domestic harmony, it was not something to enter into casually.

"Don't act so surprised, Severus. It is not a recent drug-induced revelation, if that's what you're worried about."

"Ah."

"Is it reciprocated, or have I made a fool of myself? Sometimes I think I catch you staring at my..."

He kissed her. It was tentative, a mismanaged meeting of mouths midway. Noses knocked and teeth tapped together in the awkward way that was usually associated with the adolescent amour of the Astronomy Tower, but it did not take more than a few seconds for the awkwardness to merge into something more befitting their respective ages and experience. With a few adjustments--he rolled *this* way and she *that*--Severus Snape was lying atop his wife, tongue in her mouth, wondering just how all of this had happened and, more importantly, whether she would object if he touched her tits. She was right; he had spent some time observing them, admiring them from what was at least a metaphorical distance for quite a while. The question--both of the tits specifically and where this was going more generally--was resolved without him needing to pose it; Hermione wriggled out from underneath him, and, without the slightest hint of theatrics or apprehension, unbuttoned her pyjama top and discarded it beside the bed.

Ah, so this is how it was to be. In his secret pondering of this moment, he'd figured it would be after several months of courting, wooing Hermione with secluded restaurants and charming her with bons mots over brandy by the fireplace while they discussed advances in potions or perhaps poetry. He sounded like a lovesick teenage girl; here was his wife, Hermione Granger--smart, passably attractive, sarcastic Gryffindor war heroine--mostly naked in bed with him, and he was stuck in one of her insipid Jane Austen novels. He was Mr Darcy, she his Elizabeth, and no better than his character could he fix on the hour, or the spot, or the look, or the words, which laid the foundation. It was too long ago. He was in the middle before he knew that he had begun. Making quick work of his t-shirt, he lifted his arse to allow Hermione to assist him with his boxers, having already divested herself of her pyjama bottoms. In none of his imaginings had Bognor Regis, Butlins or cannabis sativa featured, but here the moment was and he was not to be the one to turn it down.

Indeed, he didn't think he'd be allowed to turn it down, at least without physically restraining Hermione. Whether the marijuana or her natural sexual demeanour--he would have to reserve judgements until sufficient data was collected on that front--she was everything one had heard whispered in the Slytherin common room about the sexual forwardness and deviance of Muggle women. Sitting on her heels at the foot of the bed, she devoured his body with eyes that pinned him to the bed as sure as a whispered *Incarcerous*. It was a peculiar feeling to be laid bare, flat on his back, blushing like a maiden, and hoping that she would find him adequate. In his previous sexual encounters, though they had not been numerous by any means, he had been the conqueror and not the territory about to be claimed.

The smile gracing her lips was enough to confirm that she was well aware of the reversal. She was, he supposed, as she crawled up the bed to hover above him, likely to be a benevolent conqueror at least. His cock, standing hard and expectant at the prospect of her tender mercies, made the first contact with her body. Grasping him in warm hands, she stroked him once, twice, three times, before manoeuvring herself to straddle him. The wetness of her cunt was torment against his sensitive skin. She met his eyes, the aggressively sexual mood turning sober with a startling speed, and brushed her fingertips across his fluttering stomach muscles as she lowered herself onto him.

"He whom I love is hard to catch and conquer,

Hard, but O the glory of the winning were he won!"

Well, at least he got his poetry, even it was later in the game than he'd foreseen. She smiled shyly--as if he wasn't lodged inside her, as if she wasn't riding him, as if she hadn't clenched her inner muscles around him when she had uttered the word 'hard' in a low, throaty tone of voice he had never heard before--and resumed her steady rhythm. He traced his fingers up her thighs, sliding over the crease of thigh and sex, passing across her clitoris, revelling in her whimper as his fingers continued up, up, and across ribs and planes of soft white skin to her breasts, plucking momentarily at the pinkness of her nipples. Rough fingertips departing upwards to her collarbone, neck, tracing her lips with a thumb, trailing back down and along her arms until he reached her hands. Taking them in his own, he squeezed them affectionately, feeling himself blush as he swallowed hard.

"He is won."

It was only a little death, but they went to it willingly.

Several times.

Pulling her close against him, he pressed a soft kiss to Hermione's shoulder and pulled the sheet over them. Daylight was breaking. He swept the curtains closed with a flick of his wand before settling his head onto the pillow. Grinning in a thoroughly un-Snapelike manner to himself as Hermione began to snore softly, he closed his eyes.

Potter would have to wage war on the Germans alone.