

Destiny

by Pearle

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: The characters, settings, etc. of the Harry Potter series are not mine; they belong to J.K. Rowling and Co. I promise to return them when I am through. Well, most of them anyway.

[illegible]

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Hermione glanced at the clock as she closed her bag; she'd be leaving in less than fifteen minutes. She was glad to get away, to have something to occupy her mind other than thoughts of Hugo going off to start his first year at Hogwarts. The silence echoed around her as she took in the empty flat. It was so quiet now that Rose and Hugo had left for school, and she and Ron had finally... no, time to think, or not think, about their divorce later. The annual celebration making Voldemort's defeat, this year's hoopla commemorating twenty years, had been hard enough when Ron showed up at the fete with someone else; she didn't need to dwell on all that had come between them now. There would time for that later.

Running through the mental checklist in her head, she nodded absentmindedly, satisfied she had remembered to pack her new dress robes with her notes and reference books. After shrinking and pocketing both trunks, she sat down on the sofa to wait for her Portkey to activate.

The French symposium, "The Drawing Together of the Three," was set to start tomorrow morning at nine sharp. She was pleased to be speaking at such a prestigious event, even if she were a last minute substitute for her department head. Scheduling conflicts within the department had not allowed for Hermione's attendance at the

"Black hair?" But the description of his nice laugh didn't fit.

"Salt and pepper, but more pepper than salt," she said with a laugh. "There he is." Danielle pointed to a tall man talking to group of people farther down the corridor.

Hermione's mind immediately catalogued the man's appearance: he was Snape's general height (from what she could remember), but his body was fuller, not the thin frame she had come to associate with the Potions master. Not fully salt and pepper as Danielle had suggested, the man's black hair had shots of silver liberally streaked through it. He was laughing at something one of his companions had said, his face relaxed in the flickering light from the hallway candles.

"Master Boaisus," Danielle called.

It was when Master Steven Boaisus turned to answer the witch that Hermione came face to face with a ghost from her past.

"Mme De Barbarac, right on time. We can adjourn to the café in the lobby if that is agreeable?" Boaisus stared past Hermione as if she wasn't there, his smile only faltering for a second as his eyes passed over her.

"Master Boaisus, may I present Hermione Granger. Ms Granger and I have been working on this theory together for the last year. She surprised me by showing up today, so I hope you don't mind, but I invited her to join us." Danielle prattled along, vaguely aware of the man's discomfort but putting it down to his general reclusive nature.

Master Boaisus bowed over Hermione's hand. "Miss Granger."

Hermione stared open mouthed, unable to process that the man standing before her, the man calling himself Master Steven Boaisus, was really Severus Snape.

"Steven, I've got an appointment to keep. We'll get together this weekend. I'll owl you." The wizard Boaisus had been talking to left in the opposite direction.

"Fine, Andre, take care."

No, this man couldn't be Severus Snape. Severus Snape, as far as she knew, never smiled, never had a kind word for anyone, never... No, it must be something akin to Muggle jetlag from Portkeying so far. While his physical bearing was that of Snape's, his smile and open manner were completely different. Master Boaisus could not be Severus Snape. And yet...

"Are you all right, Miss Granger?"

"Steven Boaisus. Where did the "T" and "B" come from? Do you have a middle name, Master Boaisus?" Had he anagrammed himself a new identity the way Tom Marvolo Riddle had?

Boaisus smiled, amused at Hermione's obvious distress. "Yes, it's *Après*."

"After."

"Ermione? Master Boaisus, I apologize. "

"T. B. O. N. No, not N. Two A's." Hermione stood counting on her fingers, mumbling to herself. "Tobias. Your middle name was Tobias." Hermione stood silently, staring into the black eyes of the smiling wizard.

"He just said his middle name *is* *Après*."

One brow arched. "The brightest witch of your generation, but I believe names are a topic for another time. Shall we?"

Hermione refused to move. "When?"

Boaisus sighed. "Later, *Miss* Granger. We can discuss all the names you like later."

"Am I missing something here?" Danielle looked from witch to wizard and back again.

A middle-aged wizard in striking blue robes stopped on his way past the Potions master. "Steven, thank you for your help. Maybe we can get together next week and go over my research again. The change in potions made all the difference. Anyway, Callie wants you to come to dinner, too. I think she has another witch she wants you to meet."

"I can meet with you on Wednesday, Tom, but tell Callie I'll take a pass on the matchmaking." He nodded to the man as they walked off in opposite direction.

Hermione looked questioningly at the man. "Who are you really?"

"We will discuss that...later." Boaisus led the way, his long stride paced to match his shorter companions.

They took a corner booth, Danielle still at a loss as to understand what was going on between her companions. It only took a moment, but once the conversation turned to potions and charms, the trio lost themselves in academics.

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"Look at the time! I should be getting home. Master Boaisus, thank you for all your help. I will send our revised notes to you next week. Perhaps you will see something new in them." Danielle gestured for Hermione to join her as she rose from the table.

"You go on, Danielle. I have a few questions for Master Boaisus. I'll meet you here at eight tomorrow morning for breakfast."

Danielle nodded, looking questioningly at her friend, before taking her leave.

"Master Steven *Après* Boaisus. Why didn't you let anyone know you're still alive, Professor?"

"Is there any chance you would be willing to let this go, Hermione?" They had long dispensed with titles and moved onto first names as the three argued theory and practice over coffee previously.

"It's been twenty years, Steven. Or Severus... erm, Professor. I don't know what to call you."

"Call me Steven. That seems to have worked up to now." For a brief moment the scowling Professor Hermione remembered reappeared, but that countenance was quickly replaced by the relaxed visage of Steven Boaisus.

"Care to recap the last twenty years for me?" Hermione gratefully accepted a refill from their waitress before turning her full attention to the wizard before her.

"I know you've seen the memories, know the circumstances leading up to my 'death.' I find it hard to believe Potter championed my efforts, but I saw the reports of his testimony and the Wizengamot's decision. I can't believe he was able to sway their opinion of me. I would tell you to thank the boy, but I'd rather no one knew I was here." Boaisus sighed. "I suppose it was only a matter of time until I ran into someone I knew. Still, twenty years is something."

"Harry's no longer a boy; he's thirty seven now. How can you stay here? You were exonerated. They awarded you an Order of Merlin, First Class. You're a hero."

"No, Severus Snape is a hero, not Steven Boaisus. Do you really believe they would have cleared my name so quickly if they did not believe me dead?" Snape/Boaisus shook his head. "It's better this way. I have a nice life here. It is relaxed, easy. I have my research, a few friends."

"You were going to tell me what happened," she prodded gently.

"Albus and I had arranged this alias years ago in the event I might have to disappear at some point. He was quite adept at untraceable, illegal Portkeys. He spelled one of the buttons on my jacket to take me to a small cottage outside of Paris when activated. It was to be an escape routine of last measure. Nagini attacked me on...Voldemort's orders. I 'fell dead.' After you three exited, I Portkeyed to the cottage, managed to take an Antivenin potion and a blood replenisher. Potter defeated the Dark Lord; England and the rest of the wizarding world rejoiced. I opened a small apothecary and went on to publish various articles about my research until last week when your friend approached me about reviewing some research she'd been working on." Snape/Boaisus sipped his coffee. "So, what have you been doing for the last twenty years, *Miss Granger*?"

Hermione gritted her teeth; again the man had maddeningly emphasized the title *Miss*. "That's it?"

"You want a day by day account of what I've been doing? I had a cheese omelet for breakfast. Do I need to recite the recipe for you, too?" he snarled. Severus/Steven stopped to take a deep breath. "I have no need of recognition. Severus Snape is gone. I'm not the same man I was back then. I answer only to myself now."

Hermione looked up as a couple approached their table. The woman had long, flowing, blond hair, her skin flawless. The wizard was as impeccably groomed. They could have been an ad come to life.

"Steven? That is you! I thought you were planning to avoid the symposium." She smiled as she recognized Hermione from the recent photographs plastered across the *Daily Prophet* after the twentieth anniversary ball. "Lonesome for a bit of England, I see? Since he seems to have forgotten his manners, let me introduce myself." The woman held out her hand. "Miss Granger, isn't it? I'm Michelle Ashford, and this is my husband, Robert. We are friends of Steven's."

Her husband appeared to cringe a bit, but Severus/Steven threw back his head and laughed.

"You never disappoint me, Michelle. Hermione, I'd like you to meet Michelle and Robert Ashford, colleagues and some time friends of mine. Michelle and Robert Granger, Order of Merlin, First Class; friend of Harry Potter; and a past acquaintance of mine."

Hermione smiled at the man's attempt at explaining their past association. It would've been much easier to say he was the infamous Severus Snape and her former Potions master.

"We owe you, Mr Weasley, and most assuredly Mr Potter a grave debt, Miss Granger. Thank you is hardly enough." Robert quietly shook hands with her, his eyes solemn in their sincerity.

"It's not necessary, Mr Ashford. We did what we had to. I can't claim all the credit. There were many others that have been forgotten with time."

Michelle glanced between the two, smiling. "Steven, we'll see you for Sunday brunch. Please, Miss Granger, we would love you to join us, too."

"Thank you. If I'm still here, I would be happy to." She nodded to the pair as they left.

Hermione studied the dark man before her; he certainly wasn't the same man she knew in school.

"So, care to explain the change in title and surname?" Severus/Steven sipped his coffee, his manner easy as he watched Hermione process all she'd seen.

"There isn't much to tell. Harry told us what had happened when he saw your memories. And we saw for ourselves what Voldemort had done. We even went back for your body, but it wasn't there. Harry and Ron were convinced Voldemort had returned and disposed of it, but I didn't think he'd take the time. It seems I was right. I don't know, I suppose it was survivor's guilt. Ron and I had been a couple, and the losses began to hit home. Harry and Ginny got married, so..." Hermione shrugged, "...we did, too. It was obvious after a while we didn't belong together, but...I didn't want to hurt him. Then Rose came along, and Hugo, and before I knew it, nineteen years had passed."

"But you divorced him."

"We'd left each other years ago. The divorce was just a formality. He left the Auror department and started traveling with the Chudley Cannons. Ron used to stop and see the kids when he was in town. This summer they spent a month at the Burrow with Molly and Harry and Ginny's kids. Hugo started Hogwarts this year. Life moves on."

"Life moves on."

The two sat quietly, reflecting on the past. It was Steven/Severus who broke the silence. "What will it take for you to forget you saw me here?"

"How about dinner tonight?"

Steven/Severus laughed at the outrageous request. "And why would I want to have dinner with you?"

"Because you're not the same man I remember."

"No, I'm not. A lot of time has passed. Severus Snape is dead."

"So what is Steven Boaisus like?"

"I suppose you'll have to have dinner with me and find out." He held his arm out for the witch. "Shall we?"

And life moved on.

~Fini~

A/N: Fluffy, but a rather tenacious plot bunny that bit and refused to be silenced after reading DH. A way to continue SS/HG even after *that* epilogue. "

I took liberties with Severus' middle name. Teddy Remus Lupin, Harry James Potter, William Arthur Weasley, I assumed Severus' full name, following JKR's established pattern, would be Severus Tobias Snape, which anagrams to Steven Après Boaisus (Steven after boa is us you may groan whenever you like).

I ask that you kindly forgive my awkward attempts at French. As an American, I speak English as my primary language (though those that are English will say I speak American and not English, and not to fluently either).

You may recognize the name of Hermione's French friend, Danielle De Barbarac, as that of the title character in the movie *Ever After*. Just a small nod to one of my favorite feel-good, chick flicks, even if the French prince does have an English accent (as do his parents) and most of the people in the film (supposedly taking place in France) have American accents... lol... still an entertaining film overall.

Back to the grindstone and attempting to update/finish my various works-in-progress in between reoccurring health issues.

As always, my grateful thanks to my wonderful beta, Southern_Witch_69 (and well wishes for a fast recovery to her husband), for her help, comments, and never ending supply of commas. The mistakes, however, are all mine folks.

Later!

Pearle

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