

The Beauty found within the Beast

by ShilohDarke

Lucius Malfoy has lost his wife, and his son, Draco to Voldemort's wrath. He has also come away from the encounter scarred, and forever changed. Swearing to help defeat the Dark Lord, he offers the Order the use of his Library. Hermione has come to do research. She discovers that Lucius Malfoy is no longer the man they once knew. Although there is a rape and murder in the first chapter, it is not very explicit. Rated for later chapters

Reflections

Chapter 1 of 19

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Of Course, JKR is the Queen. She owns all, I am just borrowing some of the Characters to play for a bit. I am a big fan of Beauty and the Beast. It is my all time favorite story, and I thought that Lucius, and Hermione would make for an interesting take on the story.

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### Prologue

His loyalty to the Dark Lord had been brought into question before. It had not been so long ago. He remembered now how many times he had been forced to prove his loyalty. So many times he had been forced to murder and hurt innocents in the name of the Dark Lord.

He had been born into servitude to the Dark Lord. He had not always agreed with the man, but he had believed that following him would be the easiest way to keep his family at a high wizarding status.

So, he had put up with continually having to prove his loyalty to the man. Until...

"You want ... WHAT?" Lucius voice had been little more than a whisper.

"I want you to prove your loyalty, Lucius. Give me your wife's body and slay your son." The voice held an air of amusement. "I want to see your hand drip with the blood of your child. I want to watch with you as your wife is taken by your fellow Death Eaters, then tossed aside."

Lucius Malfoy had fell to his knees before Voldemort. "Not my family." he pleaded softly. "Send me after any Muggle! Have me kill Severus! But don't ask me to sacrifice my family."

His family was the only thing in his life that he truly held dear. Draco was his pride and joy. Narcissa was his soul. It was her soft voice and Draco's hopes for the future that kept him going.

He pretended to be disgusted by Draco's refusal to take the dark mark, but honestly, he was very proud of his son's determination. He hoped that Draco and Harry would be able to stand side by side to defeat the Dark Lord.

His own life was no longer important. He would gladly sacrifice it to see a new world emerge that his family could live freely.

Voldemort looked deeply into Lucius' eyes. He fought to not allow his gaze to flicker from the Dark Lord. He was being tested. He knew it.

Voldemort narrowed his gaze before nodding to another Death Eater. "Bring them," he said simply.

Lucius eyes widened as he watched his beloved wife being brought out. She was being dragged as she was unconscious.

Behind her, Draco was also being dragged out. When Lucius saw him, he started forward only to be stopped by two Death Eaters that stood on either side of him. They held the elder Malfoy in place as his wife and son were dragged into the center of the room and turned to face him.

Voldemort watched as Lucius slid to his knees. "Please," he said softly. "Not my family." His eyes met his son's. "Take me. Kill me if you will. Just leave my family out of this."

The Dark Lord moved closer to him and whispered maliciously, "But they are a part of this. As much as I own your soul, so I also own theirs."

Turning to the Death Eaters that surrounded Narcissa, he smiled evilly and nodded. Immediately both Lucius and Draco were forced to watch as ten men tore Narcissa's clothes from her body and whipped her bloody, then took turns using her half-senseless, broken body. When they were done with her, one of them stepped behind her and slit her throat.

Unable to stand the sight of his beautiful angel being raped and murdered, Lucius turned his head away. A sob escaped him before he could smother it.

The sound did not, however, escape Voldemort's attention. He turned an amused gaze back to his once right hand, and said, "But wait!" He sneered when the blonde looked back up and into his eyes. "I saved the best part for last." He gestured to Draco, who turned his eyes from the corpse of his mother to Lucius.

Father spoke to son, "I'm sorry, Draco." He choked on the words. "I'm so very sorry, my son!"

Draco looked to his father and smiled to him gently. "I forgive you. They can take my life, but they'll never have my soul, Dad."

No sooner had he spoke than the Death Eaters withdrew their wands and began hexing Draco. "Crucio!" one of them spat.

As soon as the curse would start to fade, they'd hit him again. When Draco was finally too weary to draw breath anymore, Voldemort hit him with the death blow, "Avada Kadavra!"

Shaking his head, Lucius turned to meet the monster's gaze. His voice betrayed his hatred, "I served you faithfully!" He swore softly. "I gave you my loyalty even though I despised you."

Voldemort moved closer to the beautiful blond man and spoke softly as he looked deeply into his eyes. "You have nothing else to live for, Lucius. I have taken everything from you." He tilted his head. "There is only one other thing I can take from you."

Lucius braced himself for the Avada Kadavra. He knew that his death was coming he welcomed it now. "Go ahead. Take my life. There is nothing else you can do to me."

Voldemort shook his head and removed his glove from his almost skeletal hand. "Oh no, Lucius. There is one more thing I can take from you that I haven't yet."

Lucius whispered softly, "You've taken my family. All that I hold dear is gone. What else could you take from me?"

Voldemort's hand reached out and clasped Lucius' cheek. A burning sensation began to crawl over the entire left side of his face, "Your beauty..."

Severus had found him after the battle had started. His body was discarded along with the lifeless bodies of his wife and son. The right half of his face was still beautiful perfection. His long lustrous hair was still platinum white.

However, the entire left side of his face was ugly burns and scars. His eye was white, and unseeing.

Because it was a magical burn, there was no way to heal the scars. No glamour would work to cover his imperfection.

So he hid within the confines of Malfoy Manor. He offered Dumbledore any assistance he could for research towards the defeat of the Dark Lord. They were free to use his private library. But he never left the safety of the Manor. No company came to see him, save Albus and Severus. He preferred it that way.

When the missive came that both Albus and Severus were away and Hermione had volunteered to come do the needed research, he had battled with himself to refuse their request. But he had finally given in.

Hermione was welcome. He would stay in his private chambers while she was in his home. She was here to work. It was not like he had to entertain her.

He chuckled at that idea. Easy way to entertain her would be to let her view his face. He was sure the Mudblood would find that entertaining, no doubt.

Rising, he moved to his chambers. He had given the house elves orders to help Miss Granger with anything she may need in her visit here. She would be arriving on the morrow. He sighed as he limped, dragging his bad leg behind him to his room. The Manor was huge. He could avoid her easily while she was here...

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This is a little OOC for Lucius. But I am working with the assumption that he is no longer a PROUD Pureblood, but now, a broken, tormented man. Please review. Let me know if this idea is even worth another chapter.

Hermione Arrives

I hope everyone is enjoying my little idea towards these two memorable characters that are a part of JKR's world. I will try to add more chapters soon.

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Hermione Arrives

Hermione looked at the mansion. So this was Malfoy Manor. It was huge. Her parents' house was not small by any standards. But it was tiny compared to this. It rivaled all the castles of Europe. Sighing, she stepped up to the entrance and reached to use the doorbell, but a House elf opened the door right before she pressed it.

"Miss Hermione Granger?" The elf asked politely.

The woman nodded with a smile, "Yes."

"Master Malfoy is resting now. He bids you welcome, and asks that you make yourself at home here while you do your research."

Hermione's eyebrow rose at the command of the English language that the elf obviously had. "Thank you," she responded before asking, "What is your name?"

The elf smiled, "Master calls me Serenity. I am his friend."

Her jaw dropped as she stared at the kind little elf. She then noticed for the first time that the elf wore clothes. "You," she paused, "you're free?"

Serenity nodded, "Oh yes. Master pays me. I get a sickle a week," her face broke into a big smile, "and we play chess!"

Eyes wide, Hermione followed Serenity into the manor. She had entertained many different scenarios about coming into this home. Most of them had ended badly. Albus had assured her that Lucius was a changed man since the death of his wife, and son.

But she could not bring herself to believe that he was capable of change. Leopards cannot change their spots, after all.

Even now, looking at Serenity, she would still not believe that there could be any real change to the man. Too much had happened. And yet...

Serenity turned and floated Hermione's luggage out of her hand. "Come this way, please. I will show you to your room." She turned and led the way upstairs, floating the luggage alongside her.

When they reached the top of the landing, Serenity glanced up the staircase that led to the third level of the Manor, before turning and leading Hermione down the second level hallway.

Looking back over her shoulder, Hermione wondered what was on the third level. She had not realized she had given her thoughts voice until Serenity answered. "Those are the Masters private quarters." she said softly. There was a touch of sadness in her voice.

"After the Mistress and their son died, Master moved to the highest part of the house." she shook her head. "Sometimes he doesn't come down for weeks. He hurts bad, he does." Serenity's voice seemed to falter, as if she truly felt sorry for the man.

Hermione opened her mouth to say something scathing about The Master, but snapped it shut as she considered what she had seen so far. Serenity had the appearance of a very sweet, very happy, and very free house-elf. That in itself gave way to the possibility that Lucius had changed. At least a little.

Her mind made up to not say anything to Serenity about Master Malfoy, she followed the elf silently to her room. When she stopped in front of a simple door and turned the knob to let them in, Hermione dropped her jaw at the room she saw.

The room was blended colors of dark purples and deep burgundy. The bed stood in the center. It was a large bed with high canopies that reached the ceiling. The room opened up onto a balcony.

Serenity floated Hermione's luggage to the bed and sat it down on the edge. Turning she asked, "Would you prefer to unpack it yourself? Or shall I do it for you?" she asked with a smile.

The stunned witch smiled and answered, "You can unpack if you like Serenity. I have nothing too private for you to see." Turning, she looked around the room she stood within. It was, by far, the most beautiful room she had ever seen.

"This is amazing!" she said softly.

Serenity nodded. "Yes," she answered. "When Master learned that you were to be coming to spend the month doing the research in place of Severus, he had this room prepared for you." She smiled, "It is the nicest room in the manor."

Hermione didn't doubt the truth of her words. The room held a splendor to it that she had never before seen.

As Serenity finished unpacking the last of Hermione's clothes, she gestured towards a closed door at the far side of the room. "Through that door is the bath."

Turning, she walked through the door. The bath looked more like a sunken jacuzzi. In the opposite corner was a shower that seemed large enough for two or three people at a time. This was something much nicer than she had thought someone like Lucius Malfoy would offer her.

Serenity moved into the bath beside her, gesturing to the armoire. "There you will find an assortment of towels and also a large robe to dress in after your bath, if you like," she added softly.

"Thank you, Serenity," she said before asking, "Would you show me to the library? Professor Snape had told me that the Malfoy library is one without equal. I am rather anxious to see it."

"Yes, Miss," Serenity nodded. "Follow me. I will take you to it." She turned and left the room, leading Hermione to the part of Lucius Malfoy's house that she had heard so much about from Albus and Severus.

Since graduating from Hogwarts she had become a research assistant for the Order. She spent most of her time using the wizard libraries. But, every one she had been to had only had limited supplies of the things she needed.

Severus had told her, "Lucius has the oldest, most extensive collection of books you will ever see. There is none that can compare to his collection." She wondered at that, but then reasoned that his was one of the oldest wizarding families in existence. She had even heard rumor that there was a relation there to Merlin himself.

She followed as the house-elf led her deeper into the back of the house. Back down onto the first floor. Then back behind the winding staircases. Just when she was beginning to wonder if they would ever reach the fabled room, Serenity led her to a set of double doors. They were about twelve feet in height and made of dark mahogany. Each door was beautifully carved with images of vines and flowers within the wood.

Hermione stood in awe of the artwork. She was about to comment on the beauty of the carving when Serenity waved her hand towards the doors.

As the huge mahogany doors came open, they gave way to a sight that took Hermione's breath away. Speechless, she walked into the huge room. There were roughly thirty large shelves filled from top to bottom with more books than she had ever seen. That in itself rivaled Hogwarts' open section.

But what really captivated her were the walls that were at least eighty feet high and lined with bookcases from floor to ceiling. Ladders were placed along each wall, and there was an aisle that ran along the width of each wall about halfway up. It was a stopping point to be able to move from the lower ladders to the upper ladders.

"Bloody hell," the whispered curse slipped past her lips before she could stop herself. She suddenly had memories of her aversion to flying. It wasn't flying that scared her so much as heights.

Closing her eyes, she forced her breathing to slow. The fear was short lived. It was replaced by the excitement she felt at the idea of being able to research the contents within the books.

She smiled at the thought. Having a library this size at her disposal over the course of the next month was a dream come true. She had to bite her bottom lip to quell the urge she had to squeal in delight.

Serenity, who had been forgotten in her amazement, moved closer to her. "I gather you would like your lunch brought to you here?" the little elf asked with a smile.

Without even taking her eyes off of the books above and around her, Hermione nodded. "Yes, Serenity. Please bring my lunch here. I imagine I will be spending most of my time in this very room."

The elf nodded and turned to leave. She closed the big doors behind her, leaving the young witch alone in a room full of stories to tell.

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Lucius sat in his chair, staring vacantly at the fire within the hearth. He knew she had arrived. He had felt her presence as soon as she had entered his home. He had listened to her conversation with Serenity. It was quite apparent that she thought him a monster.

The thought prompted him to look at the mirror that stood tall beside the wall. Well, he thought to himself, now your skin bears witness to what lay trapped within.

Standing he moved to the door of his room. He would never have her gaze upon his malformation, but he was interested in seeing the woman she had become.

A smile crossed his lips as he thought of his son Draco's attraction to the young Mudblood Granger. He remembered how his son had been so frustrated to find himself enthralled with her.

Malfoys did not become serious with Mudbloods. But he had once told Draco that it was not frowned upon to take her as a lover. As long as he never impregnated her, she could live comfortably as his mistress.

"But Dad," Draco's voice filled his memories as if he was still with him, "She hates me! I've behaved too much as a prat in her presence. She would never consider..." his words trailed off as Lucius stared at the back of his chamber door.

Now that he considered everything that he had once viewed as important, he thought of how stupid those things had been. It did not matter if she had not been born from a pure-blood family. It did not matter that she was one of the Golden Trio. It did not matter what side she chose to defend.

None of those things mattered anymore. If Draco had survived, he would have given his son his blessing to follow his heart wherever it led him. If things had only been different. If only Voldemort had never existed. If only...

Steeling himself against the numbers of regrets he was plagued with, he squared his shoulders, making his way down towards the library that his guest was in.

She had been there the better part of the day. Ever since she had arrived she had been there. He wondered if she even knew that the hour was growing late. She had taken both her meals there and had left it only long enough to relieve herself in the privy earlier.

Silently he made his way to the hidden passage to the library. He would not make her look upon him. He had no desire to startle her. He only wished to see her, he reasoned. It had been two years since he had laid eyes upon the fairer sex. It was only natural for him to want to see her, he reasoned. He had once been a lustful, passionate man.

There was even a time in his life that he had been an excellent lover. He doubted that any woman would endure his company for long anymore. But he remembered once being able to turn many a lady's head. Narcissa had once been very jealous of the attention women had given him.

When he found the passage, he made his way quickly to the place where he could view her without her knowledge. He would have to step out on the landing, but the higher areas of the library were darkened now. Not only that, but the ladder would help keep him from her view.

Stepping out into the aisle, he looked down at the table she sat at. His breath caught in his throat at the sight before him.

Hermione had pulled her hair up into a ponytail, leaving her face open for his view. Even with her hair pulled up, it was long, flowing halfway down her back. Her face was oval, her chocolate eyes were almond shaped. Even at his distance from her, he could see that she had long lashes framing her eyes. Her cheekbones were high, and her lips were full and had a natural pout to them.

Although she was sitting, he could tell that her body was no longer that of a youth. She had filled out well. Her breasts were full and pushed tightly against the t-shirt. The blue jeans she wore were low cut and he could see a slight strap of silk that peaked out on either side of her hips above. With a tilt of his eyebrow, he wondered if she was wearing the Muggle underwear...What was it called? A thong?

"Draco, my boy," he said softly, "You have excellent taste." he whispered to himself. As he spoke, he cursed himself, because her gaze flew from the book she had been studying up to the area where he was.

She couldn't have heard me. He thought even as he moved back into the passage and let it swing mostly closed. It was a good choice he decided, because she stood and grabbed her wand. With a sweeping gesture towards the area he stood in, she spoke the spell, "Lumos!"

The panel door swung shut an instant before the illumination hit. He released the breath he had been holding in a hiss. "That was incredibly... stupid, Lucius." he berated himself coldly. What was he doing?

His hand went to the ruined left side of his face. He had no right to stand in shadows like some pervert, staring at her young, perfect beauty. It would bring him nothing but heartache. She was a beautiful specimen. Even so, she was not Narcissa.

He closed his eyes in pain. No one would ever be Narcissa. He could feel his heart contract at the memory of what those bastards had done to his beautiful wife. She had never deserved that. Even if he had been an evil bastard, Narcissa was not. She had never been cruel or hateful. She was his angel.

Moving away from the panel, he made his way back to the hallway that led to his private chambers. The woman he loved was gone. He would never love another. He had no right to even look at another now...

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# Unexpected Surprises

Chapter 3 of 19

Hermione finds a special present in her bathing room... What a wonderful gift...

I must thank JessicaDamien for agreeing to Beta my poor excuse for punctuation. I hope everyone is enjoying my play with these two awesome characters...They belong to JKR...

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Unexpected Surprises

Hermione had stayed up most of the night. She did not even think of sleep until the wee hours of the morning, when the first rays of sunlight had begun to shine through the high windows of the library.

Yawning, she stood and stretched the muscles that ached from lack of use while she had sat in the chair. She had not moved since... Well, the last time she had risen to her feet was when she had cast Lumos in the direction where she thought she had felt eyes upon her.

Tilting her head, she looked again at the still somewhat darkened corner. It was from the direction that would have come from Lucius' private level of the Manor. Had she imagined the shadow she had seen the night before? Why would Lucius Malfoy spy on her?

Shaking her head, she brushed aside the thought. He had other things to do besides watch her from darkened shadows.

When she entered the hall, Serenity met her. "Miss Granger, you are up early," she smiled. "Would you like breakfast now?"

Hermione smiled in return but shook her head. "Actually, Serenity, I am only now making my way to bed. Could you instead wake me for lunch?"

Serenity nodded, a look of concern on her small face. "Yes, Miss. I will wake you for lunch."

Hermione smiled. "Thank you, Serenity. I appreciate it." Turning, she made her way to her room. Closing the door, she then moved to the bathroom.

Stepping out of her clothes, she turned the water on to fill the sunk-in tub. While it was filling, she moved to the vanity and inspected her hair. It fell in soft ringlets down her back, despite the ponytail.

"Oh, why not?" she asked herself finally as she pulled it free and made the decision to go ahead and wash it now.

Taking two towels from the cabinet she then moved to stand beside the tub. Testing the water first with her foot, she gauged that it was just right before stepping into the warm depths. When she finally laid back against the rim, she closed her eyes for a moment. The water seemed to soothe her tired muscles.

There were special bottles of shampoo and body soap that had been placed beside the tub. They were glass bottles with a pearl-colored liquid inside. Taking the lid off the shampoo, she brought the bottle to her nose and smiled at the scent. It was a pleasant blend of jasmine and musk. It smelled delightful. She assumed Serenity had left it for her.

Wetting her hair, she then applied a small amount of the shampoo to her palm. Then she slowly began working it into her thick, damp locks. Almost instantly, the smell of the shampoo surrounded her, teasing her senses in a way that made her gasp in surprise. It was as if a million fingers were caressing her scalp, massaging her senses.

Alarmed, she quickly rinsed her hair and was relieved as the feelings dispersed. Looking at the bottle again, she wondered at the ingredients. It certainly wasn't a Muggle shampoo. It did things to one's scalp that Herbal Essences could never do.

At the thought, her eyes went to the body soap. Biting her bottom lip, she picked up the bottle and turned it this way and that, considering. An absolutely wicked thought came to her mind. If the body soap was anything like the shampoo, it would be opening a whole new realm on masturbation.

Glancing around, she satisfied herself that there was no one anywhere around her before opening the bottle. Tentatively, she brought it to her nose and inhaled. Sighing in pleasure, she realized the scent was much the same as the other.

Pouring a small amount into her hand, she then began to work the soap into a generous lather on her skin. Although the scent still enveloped her, there was no tingling sensations to drive her senseless. She let out her breath in a disappointed sigh.

Finishing washing herself, she was just about to begin rinsing herself off when the first tingling sensations began. Eyes widening, she gasped as she felt what had to be nothing other than the caress of a palm across the sensitive flesh of her breast.

Gasping, she leaned back against the rim of the tub and lay helpless as the invisible fingers seemed to latch onto a nipple. Moaning, she arched her back as she felt the same invisible hands begin to work magic on the even more private parts of her body.

She swore she could feel the expert fingers of an invisible lover working on the precious nub of her clit. It rubbed and squeezed, eliciting a soft cry from her as she grasped the edge of the tub to try to keep from slipping further into the depths of the water.

Closing her eyes, images of a platinum-haired lover looming over came into her mind, unbidden. Shock coursed through her at the idea of Lucius Malfoy making love to her. The very thought was enough to make her blush in shame. Or was it desire?

Even as she shook her head in denial at the thought, she moaned even louder as the tingling between her legs grew to a fever pitch, wrenching an orgasm from her before she could even attempt to stop it.

She screamed out in helpless release. Shaking from the ordeal, but still feeling the tingles, she made to wash herself free of the soap. A guttural cry escaped her when her own fingers brushed her sex to find herself sore and spent. The sensitive skin of her private parts made her moan.

What was that? Her mind raced. There was no one here with her. There was no doubt that it was the soap that had brought her the orgasm. After a few deep breaths to calm herself, Hermione stood and stepped from the tub.

Drying off with the towel, she surveyed herself in the mirror. After a moment of concern, she relaxed. No adverse effects came from the soaps. Her skin glowed with a kind of health that made her do a double-take. If anything, her skin was radiant.

Running a hand through her hair, she was taken by surprise at its softness. Uttering an drying spell, she again looked at her reflection when her hair was dry. Nothing was wrong. Actually, she looked pretty. Her hair shone like silk. Her skin was soft to the touch without her normal use of lotions to soften and protect it.

Baffled, she grabbed a t-shirt out of the dresser drawer and slipped it over her head. She had to rest for a while. Although her senses were alive, and aroused, she still felt the urge to sleep. Crawling into the bed, she thought of what she had just experienced. Not the soaps, although they had been very nice.

No. Her thoughts were drawn to Lucius Malfoy and the vision she had just had of him over her. His platinum hair streaming in long locks over the damaged side of his face. A wave of desire she had never before in her life felt made her gasp.

Oh My Gods! Hermione thought, I can't desire Malfoy! That is impossible. He's twenty years my senior! Not just that, he had been the enemy for so long, she was still unsure whether or not she trusted him.

With those thoughts fresh on her mind, she drifted off into a deep sleep. She dreamed of things she dared not think of during her waking hours. She dreamt of being touched by a man that had been her enemy. In her dreams, she caught a glimpse of the man he had become.

She had no idea, but the dreams she had were not the product of her own imagination. They were given to her by a higher being. The gods were giving her a view of what was needed to help him heal.

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Lucius smiled to himself as he moved back from the panel that he had pushed aside to watch Hermione bathe. A ripple of desire had flooded him when he had seen her naked. He had pushed the desire aside and watched as his soap and shampoo had worked their magic over her. He had been very satisfied to know that she held so much passion within her.

It didn't mean anything. He reasoned with himself that he had only desired to help her relax. What better way to relieve the stress she had put her body through the night before than by reaching a perfect, pleasurable orgasm? Narcissa had once told him that his Pleasure lotions and soaps were enough to make a person forgo relationships. Who needed them, if they could reach completion without the aid of another?

Of course, Narcissa had not used the products often. She had never needed them. After all, she had him. Sighing, he made his way to his private library. The one Hermione had not seen yet. Of course, he would allow her access. But, for now, it was still his private domain.

He wanted to research another possible thing to gift her with. While he knew she would continue to use the soaps, he thought she would need her own cologne. One that was special. One that would be only hers.

He wasn't fooling himself. He would never pursue a relationship with Hermione. Even if he had still been a perfect specimen, he was still a pureblood. She would still be only a Mudblood. But he enjoyed being able to spoil her to some extent. She was, after all, his guest.

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Face to Face

Chapter 4 of 19

The moment of meeting is drawing near.

Thanks to everyone that has taken the time to read my version of Beauty and the Beast. I borrowed JKR's characters, cause I thought if given the right situation, and series of events, they would be well suited to the parts. More chapters are coming soon, although, I believe it will be a while before there are any juicy lemony parts... This story is demanding to be savored... So I guess, good things come to those who wait.

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### Face to Face

Lucius sat in his private library, staring at the different ingredients that could be combined to make the unique fragrance that would be a captivating mixture to someone of Hermione Granger's coloring, skin tone, and personality.

The common mistake people made when choosing a fragrance for themselves was that they most often chose something simply because it was popular. More times than not, that same fragrance would often end up abandoned and unused because it did not blend well with the oils within their skin and made for a less than pleasant fragrance.

The fragrances Lucius had used in Hermione's bathing blend had most certainly agreed with her body type. With that knowledge, he had a fairly good idea as to what would be agreeable to her.

With a steady hand, Lucius blended lavender, orchid, and rosewood together with a special oil that was meant to bond with the skin of the user. If she liked the scent, and continued to use it, then over time, her body would claim the special scent as its own, and she would no longer have need of the perfume.

When the ingredients were mixed, he spoke a simple blending spell. The liquids swirled around the bottle, blending together, turning into a lilac-rose colour.

Smiling, he held the bottle up to inhale the aroma. Closing his eye, he felt momentarily overwhelmed by the tightening in his loins. If Miss Granger had ever had trouble catching the eye of someone of the opposite sex before, she definitely would not have that problem any longer.

Placing a crystal stopper over the bottle, he thought of the sight he had witnessed that morning. He had been very pleased to see she could enjoy the bath. Standing, he spoke softly, "Serenity." There was no reason to raise his voice. Her senses would pick up his summons if he but whispered her name.

Within seconds, Serenity was before him, a warm smile on her small face. "Yes, Sir?"

Lucius handed her the crystal bottle. "I have yet one more present for Miss Granger. Would you deliver it to her rooms for me, like you did the others, please?"

Serenity beamed and nodded. "Oh yes, Sir. I shall place it beside her bed."

Lucius smiled his thanks to his small friend before turning away, disgusted momentarily with the way he used to treat her kind. He tried to not dwell on the man he used to be.

He had given Serenity and the other house elves their freedom to try to make amends for the terrible way he had once treated them. The elves had taken their freedom, and left him quickly. All but two. Serenity, and her life mate, Fizbot.

Fizbot worked in the kitchens and did not ever really have much to do with anyone that was not house-elf. He had wanted to leave with the rest when Lucius freed them.

However, Serenity had felt pity for Lucius. Now alone and scarred, he would need their help. She had convinced Fizbot that Master Malfoy would need them, even if he would not ask.

Although he had never actually said the words "thank you" to Serenity or her mate, he was grateful to them for not deserting him in his hour of need.

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Serenity snuck quietly into Hermione's room. Moving to stand beside the bed, she noted the breathing of the guest with a smile. She was deeply asleep and showed no signs of waking.

With the smile still resting on her lips, she set the bottle down on the night stand beside the big bed. With a final glance in Hermione's direction, she turned and started to creep from the room but stopped, eyes widening, when she heard the person in the bed speak.

"Serenity?" the drowsy voice called from the bed. "What is this you've brought me?"

The young house-elf stopped and bit her bottom lip in worry before turning to face Hermione. "I was delivering a present from the Master," she answered softly.

Hermione looked warily at the bottle. "Is this a present to be added to the other two?"

Serenity feigned confusion. "I do not know what Miss is talking..."

Hermione cut in, sitting on the side of the bed. "The shampoo and soap, Serenity. Or do you not know about those?" A silent thrill ran through her at the idea that perhaps Lucius had brought the soap into her room himself. She quickly brushed the thought aside and looked at the elf expectantly.

Serenity tilted her head. "The Master only means to greet you and help make your visit to the Manor pleasant," she said defensively. Tears were gathering in her eyes, and she looked like she was about to cry.

Hermione was immediately penitent. "I'm sorry, Serenity," she said softly. "I was only curious. Of course, I am grateful to Mr. Malfoy for his graciousness while I am to be a guest in his home," she added in a serious voice.

Serenity's face broke into a huge smile and she bobbed her head. "I will tell him you liked the gifts, Miss," she said swiftly, before turning and leaving Hermione alone in the room.

Looking at the bottle, Hermione wondered if it was a good idea to even consider smelling it. What if it sends me into a horny uproar that just simply has to be helped? Would it be a means for him to try to take advantage of my body?

No sooner had the thought entered her mind than she dismissed it. If Lucius Malfoy wanted to take advantage of a woman's body, Hermione reasoned, it certainly wouldn't be hers. She doubted very seriously that the man would have any true interest in her.

With a sigh, she gave in to the curiosity and grabbed the bottle. Opening it, she inhaled just a tiny amount of its scent, and waited... Nothing happened.

Growing braver, she dabbed a small amount on her finger and rubbed it into her wrist. Bringing her wrist to her nose, she inhaled a fragrance that was very beautiful and fitting to her.

She did not often wear colognes because they had a habit of being too overpowering. But this was a simple, exotic scent that just seemed to add itself to her own natural body chemistry. She smiled as she added just a little more to her neck and cleavage.

Rising, she went to the wardrobe and selected a sleeveless dress to wear. It was a pale blue that was fitted over the bodice but loose from the midriff to the calf where the dress stopped. Spaghetti straps held the dress in place.

Working a simple taming charm, she tamed her hair into calm ringlets that fell in gentle waves down her back. A similar charm cleared the sleep from her eyes, and gave her face the appearance of a fresh application of simple make up. Her cheeks were just a touch rosy. Her eyelashes looked a tiny bit longer and fuller. Her lips shone as if a lip gloss had been applied.

It was a simple look. Something she did most every day, before she went to work. She saw no reason to slack from that habit just because she was in Malfoy Manor.

She went to inspect herself in the mirror. The reflection spoke softly. "Oh... Master Malfoy would be very pleased. If he ever came out of his rooms."

With a raised eyebrow, Hermione answered, "I didn't do this for him!"

She felt a little anger when her reflection inside the enchanted mirror nodded sarcastically. "You keep telling yourself that, missy, and maybe one day you'll even believe it!"

Shaking her head, Hermione turned away and went to put on her sandals. Squaring her shoulders, she whispered to herself, "As if I would be trying to impress a Malfoy..."

Yet, even as she swore to herself it was not her intent, she had a sneaking desire to see the man. She reasoned it was only because she wanted to see if his good looks were really gone, as Lavender Brown had said, after Snape had rescued him from Voldemort. It had been the talk of the whole community.

Harry and Ron had cracked jokes about him for weeks until Hermione had lashed out at them, simply because she could not stand the idea of them saying cruel things about someone who had been hurt in such a way.

"It puts you on his level, Harry," she had told him. "What makes you any better than the man he was if you mock his pain?" Her look turned to Ron, and she pinned him with a hard glare. "And what about Draco? You two were becoming pretty good friends with him, for a change. Can you just dismiss the death of your friend that way? If it was me, could you just dismiss my death as if it meant nothing?"

The memory of that conversation made her want to reach out to Lucius. As a friend. She wanted to offer him her ear, if he had need of one.

"Silly chit!" she chided herself. "He wouldn't want to confide in you," she sighed, "and that isn't what you are here for, anyway." Leaving her room, she headed to the library.

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Lucius sat in his private library. He had entered through the grand library entrance, which was a hidden door. He knew Hermione would see the portion of the wall that was open. He knew she would be too curious to stay away. He ran a hand down the left side of his hair, making sure the damaged part of his face would not cause the poor girl to faint.

He would not stay once she was here. He would retire to his chambers. He had no desire to have her stare. He only wanted her to know she was welcome to make use of his private collections. She would need them.

He expelled a sigh when he heard her in the main library. His good hand moved to check that his hair was covering the damaged half of his face. It would be only a few more moments before they would be face to face. Another few moments before he would see the disgust in the depth of her eyes.

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Hermione walked into the library and straight towards the table where she had left the books she had been looking through the night before. She started to reach for the last book she had looked through, when out of the corner of her eye, she noticed a section of the bookshelves was pulled out of place.

Actually, when she turned to stare at it, she could tell it wasn't truly a part of the wall, but a doorway.

The book forgotten, Hermione moved to look into the room beyond the entrance. A soft gasp escaped her lips at the sight before her. It looked like a study. It was still a fairly large room. But it was much more cozy, and comfortable. There were a matching leather-bound chair and couch sitting before a warm, inviting fire.

Moving deeper into the room, she turned and surveyed the walls. Once again, the bookshelves were filled from floor to ceiling. But these books looked much older than the others. There were actually several shelves that held what appeared to be scrolls.

Awe lit her face at the idea that some of these books could be older than Dumbledore's own mentors. "Wow," she whispered reverently.

A deep voice startled her out of her phantasm. "Yes, it is quite impressive, isn't it?"

She swung towards the sound of the voice so fast that she lost her balance and fell with a thud to the floor.

Instantly, the owner of the voice was beside her and lifting her into his arms. In a daze, all she could do was stare at the platinum mane that was close enough for her to touch. It was Lucius. As he carried her, she could feel his walk had a slight limp.

When he sat her down on the sofa, she sat in stunned silence, looking at him curiously. The side of his face she could see was as perfect as it had always been. His hair was the same length. But it fell towards his damaged side, effectively hiding that side of his face from her eyes.

When he straightened, the only part Hermione could see of him that was no longer as it had once been was his hand. Instead of holding his hand open, it was as if he was gripping something within it.

Forcing herself to look from his injured hand back to his face, she said softly, "Thank you. I feel like a clumsy fool." Looking down to the floor, she waited for any snide remark he might send her way. He had always had a scathing remark anytime they were anywhere close to each other, and she had come to expect it.

"Not at all," he answered in a gentle voice that stunned her even more. "I startled you," he said with a dismissive wave of his hand. "It was thoughtless of me."

Turning, he moved back to the wingback chair he had been sitting in. Eyes wide, she watched his progress, not daring to speak.

When his good eye once again found hers, she was numbed by the gentle smile he offered her. "I can tell you liked my gift, my dear. It becomes you." He gave her choice of dress an interested gaze. "As does your dress my dear. It is quite becoming."

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## Voices in the Dark

*Chapter 5 of 19*

The plot thickens. Lucius does still have a temper.

Oh! I do hope you readers will like this twist. I think it is an interesting concept.

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Voices in the Dark

Lucius watched the array of emotions play across Hermione's face. A flush rose on her cheeks. Her pink tongue darted across her lips to moisten them and she opened her mouth several times to say something, but closed it again, as if the thoughts were unwilling to find voice.

He smiled, "Does the cat have your tongue? I was under the impression that you are never at a loss for words."

Hermione couldn't help but smile. She shook her head. "I can imagine who gave you such information."

Lucius nodded, "Severus often talks of your know-it-all status. But he seems to admire that about you, despite his insistence to the contrary."

Hermione nodded with a smile. "He is not the same man he had once been when I was at school."

When she looked away from him, he noticed the blush rise again in her cheeks. He found himself wondering if there was some form of romance between the two. A slight irritation at the idea formed a lump in his throat and he marveled at why he would care.

Brushing the thought aside, he changed the subject. "This is my private library. It houses some of the oldest books in the wizarding world. I wanted you to know that you are welcome to make use of these books as well as the ones in the larger library." His eye met and held hers as if waiting for a reply.

Hermione stared at that one beautiful grey eye in awe. "Thank you." Her voice was a whisper. The attraction she was feeling towards him made her feel incredibly

vulnerable. Turning her eyes from his, she glanced again around the room.

A certain potions book caught her eye. Rising, she moved to the shelf and pulled it out to look at it. Smiling, she ran her hand over the ancient leather binding. "There are only seven of these that were ever made. Five of them were said to be lost back in the time when Camelot fell."

"Not lost," Lucius said softly, rising to move to her side. "They were hidden." Reaching out, he opened the book to show her the writing on the inside of the cover.

Hermione gasped as her eyes grew wide at what he had shown her. It was Merlin's signature. "Oh my gods!" she exclaimed softly.

He chuckled as he flipped to the back of the book and waved his hand over it. "Reveal," he spoke softly. Instantly, a map became visible.

At her incredulous look, he nodded. "Yes, it is a map leading to the locations of the other books." He smirked, "Among other things."

Hermione dropped her jaw. "If you have such precious information, why have you not gone in search of them?"

Lucius regarded her with his good eye for a moment before turning and making his way back to his seat. "I guess it was because I was not willing to give such knowledge over to Voldemort." He turned and sat, smiling at her expression. "He didn't deserve the power that those books would have given him."

Shaking her head, Hermione moved back to the couch. When she sat down, she cradled the book in her lap. "Let me see if I understand what you are saying. You were his servant. You tortured and killed countless people for his pleasure. But you didn't think he deserved that much power? Am I the only one who thinks that makes no sense?" She asked in a disbelieving voice.

Lucius looked from her to the book she held in her lap. "Do you agree with every single thing Harry does?"

Hermione shook her head. "That isn't the same thing..."

"Just humor me. I think you will understand. Do you always agree with him?"

"No."

"Did you ever think that there was another way he could do something, but you went along with him, because you thought it was for the greater good?"

"Well, yes. But..."

"It was the same with me," he continued. "Hermione, I was born into a family that worried over the survival of our culture. My father believed that Voldemort would help ensure our existence. To him, it meant the survival of the pure-blood wizard." He shook his head. "My family did not ALL believe Muggles to be terrible. My mother, actually, had a great deal of respect for them."

Hermione sighed. "Then why did you have such a desire to see them destroyed?"

Lucius looked away from her. He stared into the depths of the blazing fire for what seemed an eternity. "My family was the most important thing in my life," he said finally. "When I joined Voldemort's army, I did so under the assumption that I would be doing something towards the survival of my kind."

He turned back to her, leaning forward slightly. "It isn't hatred that made me stand by Voldemort's cause, but fear. It has long been believed that if bloodlines were diluted by blending with Muggles, the race of Wizard would soon disappear altogether."

Hermione bit her lip to keep from exploding at him in her anger. Instead she asked, "Then how would you explain me? My family has no wizard blood of any kind. Yet, here I am." She shook her head. "You can't call me a weak witch." Her gaze turned mutinous. "Or, would you call me a freak?"

Lucius shook his head and sat back in his chair. "I would call you fantastic." His answer brought a blush back into her cheeks, and she looked away from him.

Suddenly, she asked him softly, "How do you have such a knowledge of potions?"

Lucius chuckled. "Severus and I were not simply friends because of our both being in Slytherin. We both had a love of potions and spells. We constantly competed to see who was the best student in potions." His smile widened at the memory.

"There was a time when, if I had not joined Voldemort, I would have tried to become what Severus himself is. But, then I met Narcissa. It was then I found I had other things I wanted more."

Hermione felt her own heart tighten at the sound of affection in his voice. She had heard from Severus that Narcissa had been a special person. "I am sorry for your loss, Mr Malfoy. Severus said your wife was an amazing person. I never really got along with Draco, but I knew he had a great deal of respect for you."

Lucius nodded. "Yes. Severus would have married Narcissa if she would have had him. She was a gentle creature. In fact, I think the only thing that made her choose me over him was the fact that I was much more romantic than he." He sighed. "He never knew how to woo a female."

He then grew solemn. "Draco deserved a chance at life. I will never forgive myself for being such a fool as to think my family would be safe if I sided with that monster."

The idea of Lucius being romantic brought a fleeting smile back to Hermione's lips. It was hard to imagine that an ex-Death Eater had a romantic side. But the pain in Malfoy's voice made her feel his self-loathing. He completely hated himself. She could sense it as if it was her own emotion. It left her dismayed and speechless.

In her silence, Lucius stood and bowed slightly in her direction. "I bid you adieu and wish you luck in your research today."

As he turned to leave her, she searched her mind for something to say to him. Anything to bring him some measure of comfort. With some pain, she realized there was nothing she could say to ease the ache that was buried deep inside his soul. Before she could think of anything, he was gone. Disappearing out a door on the far side of the room. Leaving her alone and baffled.

For a time, she sat on her seat and thought over their conversation. Finally, with a sigh, she brushed the memory aside and set about looking through the books that were now at her disposal.

When she finally allowed herself to stop, it was well after midnight. Stopping, she laid the books aside and went to find her bed.

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"He needs you." The voice spoke gently in Hermione's ear. She ran through the halls of the manor looking desperately for Lucius. Where was he? Who was this woman that was beckoning her? "Find him." The voice whispered softly, "He needs you. Only you can help save him from his pain."

A sad, but beautiful melody was echoing through the halls. Hermione kept running. If she kept searching, surely she would find him.

The voice once again whispered in her ear, "You must go now. Show him that time can heal his wounds. Do not let him slip again into loneliness."

Suddenly, a flaxen-haired ethereal beauty was before her. Crystal blue eyes held hers. The expression on the lady's face was one of kindness, but urgency. "Love him," the translucent woman whispered desperately. "He so needs to feel deserving of love again. He needs to find forgiveness. It will help him be able to forgive himself."

Hermione came awake with a start. Sitting up in the bed, she looked anxiously around the room. She felt as if there was someone in the room with her. Grabbing her wand, she spoke softly, "Lumos."

The room was empty. There was no one else there besides herself. Taking a deep breath, she sat back against the head of the bed and took a few deep breaths. Looking about wide-eyed, she still was unsure that the owner of the voice in her dream was not there.

As Hermione pondered the dream and its meaning, she became aware of the beautiful, but haunting piano music from her dream. She could hear it even now.

Rising from the bed, she grabbed her dressing gown and threw it on, tying it at the waist as she moved out of her room and into the hall.

Following the sound of the music, she felt a chill go up her spine. She remembered the dream. She remembered the woman in the dream. Now the music was calling her. Almost as if she had no ability to refuse, her legs carried her down the stairs, closer to the haunting melody.

Once she reached the ground floor, she could feel the music vibrating through her body. She walked to the closed door of the music room and opened the door that separated her from the sound. Wetting her lips, she moved into the room and looked towards the sound.

On the opposite side of the room, with his back to her, sat Lucius Malfoy. His fingers moved expertly over the keys of the grand piano. His injured hand seemed to relax naturally on the exercise it was getting.

The music called to Hermione's soul. Tears sprang to her eyes as she could not stop herself from moving closer. It was beautiful, but sad. There was so much pain in the music that a sob threatened to escape her.

Lucius seemed to not know she was there. Instead, he continued to pour his heart out over the instrument. It was as if he was giving the piano the full depth of his hurt. His shoulders shook slightly as he threw himself into the emotion of the music.

Something stirred deep within her as she watched him. Unable to stop herself, she moved to stand beside him as he played. Engrossed as she was by the music, she did not notice when he looked up and saw her.

His hands stilled. The music that had once seemed to nearly possess her was no more. Tears falling freely down her cheeks, she turned to meet his gaze. A gasp escaped her when she was met by his scarred face.

Lucius had pulled his hair away from his face for once because the locks had a tendency to torment the sensitive skin of his scar. Because it was pulled back, Hermione was faced with the full depth of his imperfection.

Dark red and purple welts crisscrossed over the skin. It was the swelling of the scars that made the eye on that side of his face useless, because it was forced shut by the scars that ran above, below, and beside it on the outer side.

The only things unmarred on that side of his face were his perfect lips. His mouth opened, as if to plead with her not to be horrified by what she saw. Then his face took on a different expression. His good eye became cold and angry. When his mouth moved, it was to twist into an angry frown.

"Have you seen enough yet?" he asked bitterly. "Or do you need to have a close up?" In an instant, he was up, the piano bench knocked over in his haste.

Angry hands reached out and grabbed her, pulling her closer so their faces were mere inches from each other. His breath heated her face as he panted furiously. With an ferocious growl, he grasped the soft material of her dressing gown and pulled her even closer. "Is it fun? Don't you just love being able to gaze upon the hideous freak that I have become?"

Tears continued to run down Hermione's cheeks. Gently, she reached out and placed her free hand against Lucius' cheek. "You are not a freak, Mr. Malfoy. You are in pain, and I am sorry for that."

A baffled expression touched his face. With an anguished cry, he thrust Hermione away from him. She stumbled, and very nearly fell before regaining her balance.

"Go back to bed, Hermione." His voice was dangerously low. "There is nothing left to see tonight." He turned his back on her and fled the room so fast she knew not which way he had gone.

Left alone in the room with the grand piano, Hermione felt suddenly overcome with the level of torment that Lucius was enduring. He saw himself as a freak. He loathed his complexion, and thought that Hermione would hate it as well.

Racing from the room, she ran back to the safety of her own. Crumbling on the bed, she let herself cry the tears that would not seem to stop. He was in so much pain. It was almost more than she could abide.

What was worse, she reasoned, was that she had believed him impossible of change. But she could see that he was a very different man now. He was so changed from the man he had once been.

Severus had told her that his changing sides was a huge victory for the Order. He was right. But it had come at a very high price for Lucius. She wasn't sure that it had not been too high a price to pay.

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The Apology

Chapter 6 of 19

Research and Romance...

Thanks to everyone that has taken the time to read, and review. I hope you continue to enjoy...

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The Apology

Lucius stood on the balcony, staring out into the night. The breeze swept his hair away from his face, but he paid it no mind. His heart hurt. He had scared the poor girl half out of her wits. He doubted she would still be there come morning.

With a bitter growl, he threw his cane over the balcony's edge. Turning his anger towards the heavens, he screamed out his frustrations.

"Why?" he cried to the heavens for release from his pain. "Why couldn't he have killed me? Why did the fates have to take everyone from me and leave me here?" A sob tore from his throat as he fell to his knees. "Please, whatever god may be listening, let me die!"

Emotion spent, he sat where he had fallen. Numb and bereft of any feeling, he swiped at the tears that still clung to his face. He remembered his father's words, "Real men don't cry, Lucius. It serves no purpose, unless you are a woman."

A small voice came from the entrance to the balcony. "Master? Are you quite well?" Serenity moved to his side and laid a gentle hand on Lucius' shoulder.

He nodded giving his small friend a reluctant smile. "I am well, Serenity. Just a little weary, that is all."

The little house-elf backed away as he gained his feet. She smiled sadly at the pain she could see displayed on his face. "Can I get anything for you? Some tea perhaps?"

Lucius looked out towards the darkness of the night. "No, my friend. I don't want anything." He regarded the stars with an air of disinterest. "Go, take your rest." he told her gently.

Bowing her head, she answered in a soft voice, "Yes, sir. Good evening, then." With a final worried glance in his direction, she turned and departed.

Once again alone, Lucius closed his eyes and took a steadying breath. He hadn't meant to snap at Hermione the way he had. But she had caught him off guard. He hadn't been prepared for her to see his face.

"Admit it, ole boy. You'd rather not have anyone see what you have become," he told himself as he moved back into his room.

For a moment, he continued to debate going to apologize before finally deciding that he owed it to her. His behavior had been appalling, even among ex-Death Eaters.

Finally, his decision made, he walked from his room towards the second floor where his guest was residing.

Upon reaching the closed door that led to her room, Lucius stood there for a few seconds. What could he say? What apology would make up for the harsh things he had said to her? It was likely that he would have to accept a sound tongue lashing in return for his regret.

After a moment of pondering, he accepted that possibility. Lifting his hand, he rapped at the door and awaited her answer. When none came, he tried the door and found it open.

Stepping inside the room, he looked around. At first, it appeared that the room was empty. But when he turned to the bed, he found her. She lay on top of the covers in her dressing gown. Curled into a fetal position, she still had the tears fresh on her cheeks.

Cursing himself for his cruel words, he moved to stand beside her. Using a levitating charm, he lifted her sleeping form from the bed.

With his free hand, he folded back the covers, then spoke the last of the charm to lower her back onto the bed. When her head rested on the pillow, he gathered the covers and pulled them over her sleeping form.

Sitting down on the bed, he observed her as she slept. She was really very lovely. The tears were drying on her cheeks. Using his wand, he spoke a refreshing spell to wipe the tears from her face, leaving it clean.

He rose from the bed and crossed to the door. As he exited the room, he spared her one last glance. He would give her an apology. But one that was more impressive than any simple words. With that thought and a smile on his lips, he closed the door behind him leaving her to her rest.

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Hermione awoke the next morning. She had expected to have the headache and puffy eyes that came from crying yourself to sleep. Instead, she felt refreshed. Sitting up, she stretched and began to smile before she thought fully of the events of the night before.

Her smile faded as for a moment she considered the tormented face of her host. The pain he had felt had spoken to her. Sighing, she turned to rise from the bed, but stopped as she saw the reflection of the bed behind her in the full length mirror on the far wall.

Behind her, on the deep purple pillowcase was a single, large white rose. Turning, she looked at the pillow that was on the far side of the bed. Beneath it was an envelope. Reaching out, she took the rose in her hand and brought it to her nose to inhale its gentle fragrance..

Despite herself, she smiled. The rose was amazing. It was indeed white, but the edges seemed to be tipped off in a liquid silver. Picking up the envelope, she moved to open it. Immediately, the envelope became animated and began to talk to her in Lucius Malfoy's deep, but soft voice.

"My dear Hermione, I am so sorry for my unacceptable behavior last night. My fate is not your fault and you were not in any way cruel to me, despite my horrible appearance." The words were spoken in a near whisper.

"Please forgive me," the voice continued softly. "To prove my sincerity, I would request your presence this evening for dinner. Please allow me to make up my deplorable behavior up to you. The rose is one from my own special garden. I have instructed Serenity to give you the key to it, so that you might be able to enjoy all of the roses, gardenia, lavender and lilac that are there. Until this evening my dear."

The envelope closed and floated back down to the pillow. Smiling, Hermione brought the rose back to her nose, closing her eyes at the heavenly scent. He wanted her to join him for dinner. She sighed as she rose from the bed, and moved to the bathroom. Her heart fluttered at the idea of spending time with him.

Her brows furrowed and she shook her head at the emotion she was feeling. She had never gotten all excited or nervous when it came to seeing Harry or Ron. Was it because she was going to be dining with a man that was for such a long time, the enemy?

No. She knew the reason for her heart skipping a beat, if she was honest with herself. Lucius Malfoy was an alluring man. He captivated her. She felt an attraction for him that was unlike any affection she had felt for anyone of the opposite sex thus far.

"Why?" she wondered aloud. What was it about this man that held her in such fascination? Shaking her head, she banished the thoughts as she sank naked into the tub as it filled with water.

She had replaced Malfoy's soaps with her own. She would keep them, but she saw no reason to overuse such a unique gift. It would be saved for special occasions.

Washing herself, she thought of the man she had met here. He was not, by any means, anything like the man she had known before. She had always thought that he was a monster. That had been the only way she could deal with the many spiteful things he had done in the past.

He had gone to Azkaban, only to be later freed when there was insufficient proof as to his treacherous nature. It was not long after he had received his "punishment" from Lord Voldemort.

Thinking of his pain made Hermione wonder if he had ever been quite as completely evil as they had all once thought. If he had truly done what he did because he had believed that not do so would end in his family's torture and death, then she could understand why he did as he had. Shaking her head, she got out of the tub and quickly dried off. She couldn't think of it anymore. It was too sad.

Going to the closet, she selected a pair of blue jeans and a dark green tunic style blouse with long flowing sleeves. Slipping it on over her head, she then pulled on the jeans. They were a little snug, and she had to work them slowly over her hips. But once the jeans were on, they were a comfortable fit. She examined herself in the mirror for a second, then shrugged. She looked passably well. She didn't suspect that there would be anyone that would care if she wasn't dressed to the nines just to do research.

Pulling her hair into a pony tail, she then applied a small amount of make-up, just to keep herself from resembling a ghost. Her face was so pale, she often thought she could glow in the dark. With a smirk in the mirror, she turned and made her way quickly to the library. Spending time daydreaming about Lucius Malfoy was all fine and dandy, but it would not get the job done that she came here to do.

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Flipping through the book she held, she skimmed for any more information on the binding spell. It was information that could prove vital in the fight against Voldemort. Not necessarily killing him, but stripping him of any and all ability to do any more harm.

Frowning, Hermione tossed the book aside with a muttered curse. The text had given her a clue into a totally new approach to this war, but offered no hint as to the properties of such a spell or potion.

"Don't treat my books so callously, or I shan't let you use them," a voice said from the entrance to the private library.

Turning, Hermione was captivated by the very sight of him. "I... I'm s-sorry," she stammered. "I didn't mean to drop it so carelessly. I just..." Words failed her as he moved to stand beside her chair.

Lucius looked like a pirate. His long blond hair was pulled back on one side, but fell in soft waves over the scarred side of his face. His white shirt was only buttoned to mid-chest. And the black pants molded themselves to his hips and thighs. The only thing more breathtaking than the way he was dressed was the soft smile gracing his lips. "It is alright, my dear. I was only jesting."

Hermione felt her cheeks grow warm and she looked away, ashamed of her reaction to his closeness.

Her eyes flew back to his when she felt something incredibly soft brush her cheek. Leaning away from what she had felt, she focused on it. A beautiful red rose that was full in bloom was mere inches from her cheek.

Reaching out, she took the offering from him. "It's beautiful," she whispered.

"As are you, dear angel," he said softly, reaching out to run a finger from her cheek to her neck before backing away. He smiled at her wide-eyed observance. "You have worked rather late this evening. Are you refusing my offer for dinner this evening?"

Hermione shook her head. "No. I was just..." She did a double-take at her watch. "Oh good Heavens. It's after ten?" She rose to her feet. "I am so sorry. Why didn't anyone come and tell me that it was time?"

Lucius smiled and shook his head. "I looked in on you earlier and you seemed so engrossed in what you were doing, I told Serenity not to bother you." He nodded to the book she had finally abandoned. "Is it safe to assume you would like to eat now?"

Hermione shook her head, saying, "I wouldn't want to inconvenience anyone."

"You aren't an inconvenience, my dear. The food is ready, with a warming charm on it to keep it edible until you are in a position to enjoy it." Lucius said softly.

"Thank you, Mr. Malfoy. I appreciate it."

Lucius closed the distance between them slowly. Her breath caught in her throat as she watched him draw near. When he held his arm out to escort her to dinner, she felt her heart skip a beat.

It took every ounce of her self-control not to giggle like a simpering school girl with a crush. Holding the rose with her free hand, she took a deep breath. Forcing herself to remain calm, she placed her arm in his. But not before Lucius noticed the shaking of her hand.

With a raised brow, he inclined his head and turned to lead her to the special dinner that had been prepared for them.

## Dinner and Dreams

*Chapter 7 of 19*

A romantic evening. Emotions building... Rated for later chapters...

Read and review PLEASE!!! I have an awesome beta. JessicaDamien is soo wonderful. And then, the wonderful Notsosaintly catches whatever she may miss...

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Dinner and Dreams

Lucius led Hermione into a beautiful dining room. On the far side a roaring fire warmed the space. Above the mantel there was a tapestry that appeared to be some sort of family crest. It was intricate, with colors of green, silvery blue, and red woven within it.

The dining room table was huge. There were candles placed strategically along its length. One would expect the place settings to be found on either end of the table. But instead, there were two plates across from each other directly at the center.

Hermione found herself smiling. It was a welcome surprise to know that instead of having to dine virtually alone with his person being so far away, she had only to look up, and he would be seated within reach of her.

Almost as if he heard her thoughts, he said, "I actually hate this table. I never have enough company to really use it anymore." He shrugged. "I hope you do not mind that we are set so close to each other."

Smiling, Hermione shook her head. "No, I don't mind. Actually, I am relieved. This room is so vast, there is no way for a proper conversation if we sat at opposite ends of this table."

Nodding, Lucius led Hermione to her seat and pulled the chair out for her. Then he made his way around the table to his place and sat.

With a flick of his hand, the spell cast on the food to keep it warm was lifted. Immediately, the smell of meats and mulled wines invaded her senses. She smiled at the aroma. There was so much food set before her that she didn't know where to start.

Speechless, she looked up to meet his gaze. "I was not sure what you liked, so I requested that a wide variety be made." He smiled. "Eat only what appeals to you."

Wide-eyed, Hermione looked from him to the feast laid out before her. There was the classic serving of roast beef and roasted lamb. There was also a hearty option of shepherd's pie and hotpot. There were also more vegetables than she had seen even at Hogwarts. Sautéed mushrooms were in a bowl to one side.

After a moment of indecision, she helped herself to a portion of the roasted lamb, then some of the mushrooms. As she reached for a dinner roll, she caught sight of Lucius watching her closely. Stopping, her eyes met his, and they stared at each other in silence.

Trying to break the awkward moment, he smiled and turned to filling his own plate. Hermione noticed he chose almost the exact portions that she had.

Despite sitting so closely together, dinner progressed in silence. Neither seemed to find anything to say. When she finished her meal, she used the edge of her napkin to wipe her mouth before looking to him. "Thank you for the dinner, Mr Malfoy. It was very good."

When she started to rise, he questioned, "You have no room left for dessert?" He had risen across from her and his eyes seemed to almost plead for the evening to not be over yet.

For a moment, they simply stared at each other before she answered, "I regret I haven't the room for more. I don't know how I can eat another thing. The dinner was fantastic. I just..." She faltered when he offered her a gentle smile. "I don't think I have any room for dessert."

Lucius nodded before asking, "Then perhaps I could convince you to tour my garden with me. I realize it is nighttime, but several of my roses only bloom in the evenings." He moved around the table to stand beside her. "There is enough magical light out there for you to be able to enjoy such a stroll. I promise."

Even with half of his face hidden behind the veil of his hair, the man was breathtaking. Unable to find her voice, she simply nodded, and accepted the hand he offered her.

She let him lead her in silence out of the room and towards the opening into the garden. She felt the absence of his warmth when he released her to find his key to open the gate that seemed almost hidden beside all the tall hedges that hid the rose garden from her view.

When he opened the gate, he stood back to allow her entrance. When she first moved into the garden, she felt a moment of panic as the only light she could see was that of the moon. Lucius spoke softly from behind her. "Lumos."

Suddenly, the garden seemed to fill with a soft, but strong, light that laid everything within the garden to her view. Her breath caught at the sight before her. Roses of every color were in bloom around her. Dropping her jaw, she stared around her in wonder.

"I had meant to come look at it today," she said softly, "but I got busy doing research. This is amazing!"

Lucius felt himself smiling at the awe in her voice. It felt nice to have a reason to smile again. "I only created this garden a few years ago." He turned away from her. "After Narcissa and Draco..."

Hermione heard the betrayal of emotion in his voice. Moving to stand behind him, she spoke softly. "It hurts, Lucius. I understand that. No one could ever replace your family."

He chuckled mirthlessly. "Not that anyone would care to, either. I have nothing to offer anyone, save the contents of my library."

Hermione found herself gripping his shoulder and forcing him to turn and face her. "You are not a man that has ever accepted pity!" Her voice rose with the level of her own confusing emotions. "Your family has always had a certain amount of pride that had nothing to do with any loyalties given to that *prat of a Dark Lord!*"

Lucius met her furious gaze for a moment before once again looking away. *Pitiful*, aren't I?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders. "I bring no honor, nor pride to that family now." Turning, he made his way out of the garden. Over his shoulder, he called, "lock up when you leave, if you don't mind."

The young witch stood watching after him for a lingering moment. Infuriated, she watched until he was out of sight before expelling a frustrated sigh. "Oh, Lucius!" she cursed. "Where has all your *spirit* gone?"

Every time she thought she was being allowed to see a glimpse of the proud man he used to be, he would shrink back into his miserable, self-loathing shell. "Well, *Mr. Malfoy*," she whispered angrily. "Enjoy your safe little pity party while it lasts, because it is almost over!"

When she left the garden, she failed to notice the spirit in the far corner. She didn't see the approval in his translucent grey eyes or the smile on his luminous face. She didn't know that he supported her decision to try to help Lucius find himself again.

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The next morning, Hermione awoke to the sound of thunder. Raising up in the bed, she rubbed the sleep from her eyes and turned towards the sound. The long drapes flowed in ghostly flourishes from the open doors of the balcony.

She had left them open the night before because the night had been so peaceful and beautiful. Standing, she pulled on her robe and tied it loosely at the waist as she moved to the open doorway and pulled the sheer drape back to look out into the morning.

It was hard to tell exactly what time of day it was with the dark clouds that loomed above. It was, however, still early in the day. She sighed and let the drape fall before realizing that there had been an owl watching her expectantly from the railing of the balcony.

Moving out onto the balcony, Hermione looked at Hedwig. "Why didn't you come in?" she asked softly, stroking the bird's chest feathers lightly before taking the missive from Harry.

Once open, she had her answer. Shaking her head, she rolled her eyes before reading on:

Dear Hermione,

I hope this letter finds you safe and well. I refused to let Hedwig enter the house, so I hope she can find you to give you this. Ron and I are worried for what tortures you may be forced to endure, just in the name of research. I cannot, for the life of me, understand why you have let yourself be forced to do such things. As if working with the greasy, untrustworthy bat wasn't enough.

I know that you feel it is a necessary evil. But neither of us like you taking such risks. The Portkey found below is in case of emergency. It shall carry you in all due haste back to us.

Forgive me my worries, but you have always been as a sister to me. The idea of losing anyone else is just not acceptable to me.

With Love,

Harry

P.S. Ron asked me to let you know your chess game is still waiting to be finished.

Hermione looked from the letter back to Hedwig. "Well, I suppose I cannot convince you to come in while I write my response?" In silent refusal, the bird ruffled its feathers and gripped the railing that much more tightly. "Very well then, you can just wait out here in this drizzle."

Going back inside, Hermione sat at the desk at the far side of the room. Taking up her quill, she penned an answer;

Dear Harry and Ron,

Your letter found me easily enough. Although, I must reproach you for making Hedwig sit outside in the rain when my room was nice, warm and dry.

I am in the midst of a very lovely household with a very polite and considerate host. He has been nothing but a gentleman to me this entire time.

If the two of you could see him, you would understand what Snape means when he says Mr. Malfoy is a much changed man. His house-elf, Serenity and her chosen mate are free. They wear clothes and are treated as if they are family.

I thank you both for your concern, but I assure you it is not needed. I am safer here than you are there. I made the agreement to stay here throughout the month to do this research, and I plan on doing just that.

I do hope you two are also safe and well. Tell Ron to just consider his next move on that game very carefully. I'm drawing very close to a checkmate on it.

Affectionately,

Hermione

After she signed the letter, she grabbed a few morsels of dried meat out of her satchel for just this purpose and returned to the balcony.

Once she had given the owl the treat, she secured the missive to the bird's leg and stroked her once across the back before it took to the air.

Hermione watched until Hedwig was out of sight before turning and going back inside. For a moment, she contemplated going back to bed before deciding against it. Turning, she made her way to the bathroom.

She undressed as the water was filling the tub. Leaning back against the wall, she thought for a moment. A wicked smile spread across her lips as she moved to the cabinet where she had placed the soap and shampoo that had been gifted to her when she had first arrived.

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Lucius' eyes were drawn to the wall he had charmed to act as a viewing screen whenever Hermione chose to take a bath. A moment of conscience came over him before he noticed that she was washing herself with the soap he had given her.

Lying back in his bed, he watched, mesmerized as she rubbed the soap over herself. He heard her moan as the soap went to work over her body. The silk of his sheets made his sensitive nipples tighten even harder as he viewed her rubbing the juncture between her thighs, working up a lather.

When her hands moved to her breasts, Lucius found his own hand moving to his hardened cock. Slowly, he stroked its length as he watched her. As her moans became cries and orgasm was upon her, he stroked himself faster and let a strangled moan fall past his own lips before he heard her cry out his name.

"Oh! Lucius! Damn, but I want you!" Her cries softened as she lay back in the tub. "Forgive me *but I do.*"

His hand had stilled and he turned wide eyes back to her image on his wall. She wanted him? *But why?* His erection still pulsed in his hand, but he simply stared at her face. Tears glistened on her cheeks. She panted as her body began to relax.

Kicking the sheet away, he gripped himself tighter and stroked faster, letting the flames build within himself until his own release found him. Once his orgasm had subsided, he continued to watch her. She lay in the tub, a look of pain across her features.

As he watched, her eyes closed; her features softened and her breathing became normal. Too normal. Sitting up in his bed, he gaped at her image as it slid deeper into the water. "*Good Merlin, she's asleep!*" He leapt from the bed and started from the room.

As his hand gripped the door, he realized his nudity. Turning, he spat, "Accio pants!" Instantly, his pajama pants, which were a satin material that was deep blue, clad his lower features. Not caring about the rest of himself, he ran from the room to the passage that would take him to her the fastest.

In what was merely a matter of moments, he was beside her, lifting her from the tub. She had just nearly sunk under before he reached her.

She came awake with a start and looked up at him, dazed. His hair was loose, but pulled back from his face, giving her full view of his scar. Her arms went around his neck as she realized he had just saved her. She could feel the strong muscles, naked beneath her own skin. His chest was smooth and hard. His scent of musk and spice assailed her senses.

As he sat her on the bed, her eyes searched his. He reached around her and wrapped the cover of the bed around her, before stepping back. "Forgive my intrusion, but it is not safe to fall asleep in such a large tub." His eyes lowered so he was no longer looking at her, but the floor in front of them.

Hermione stood, with the coverlet still wrapped around her, and moved closer to him. "How did you know?" As she advanced, he stepped further back and away from her touch before it could come.

"The manor is charmed to alert me when one of my guests is in danger." He turned to meet her gaze. "Voldemort can still find ways into my home, even if I no longer serve him."

Turning, he fairly fled the room. He did not look back. He only knew he had to put some distance between himself and the first woman he had wanted since the loss of his wife. He was terrified. He could barely contain his shaking. He wasn't scared because of the desire he felt for her. What scared him was that he now knew she wanted him, too.

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A/N: I can tell that you guys are reading. Won't you take a moment to tell me how you like it? Please???

Confrontations and Confessions

Chapter 8 of 19

Lucius and Hermione face the feelings that are mounting between them. Rating for later chapters

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### Confrontations and Confessions

Lucius raced from her room as if the Hounds of Hell were upon him. Pain surged down his leg, but he ignored it as he hurried to the seclusion of his own rooms.

Slamming the door, he leaned heavily against it. His breathing was labored and his foot throbbed. As he slid to the floor, he became aware of being watched. Looking up, his eyes met those of his father.

The man within the portrait glared at him and crossed his arms in an angry gesture. "You are a shame to this family!"

Lucius glared back at the man he had once tried so hard to earn the approval of. "Don't you ever tire of throwing the same hateful slurs in my direction? Can you not find any other insults in that thick skull of yours?"

His father's ice blue eyes regarded him for a moment before he spoke in a softer, but equally cruel, tone. "Lucius, you have brought a Mudblood into this house. Never, in all the years of our forefathers has anyone dared to allow such filth within these walls!"

Lucius found his feet and moved to stand before the painting. "That woman is fighting on the right side of this war! She has known all along what has taken me the better part of my life to discover!"

"And what is that?" the painting queried back angrily.

"That your precious *Voldemort* couldn't care less about purebloods, Mudbloods, or Muggles! He only thirsts for power! He takes pleasure in the pain and torment of others!" As Lucius spoke, his voice went from normal, even tones to an outraged, angry yell.

His father shook his head. "Calm yourself, Lucius!" Disapproval was dark in the eyes of the older wizard. "You are acting like a miserable child!"

The younger man turned away from the painting and moved to his closet. "I am no child, Father! But I am miserable. Of that you can be certain!"

The wizard within the portrait was silent as Lucius dressed. When he turned back towards the man in the painting, his eyes were angry and defiant. "You dare to criticize my judgement, old man? I beg you to look at the cost of your own! Look what your folly has cost not just me, but our entire line!"

The older wizard sputtered indignantly. "Me? What have I done?"

Lucius shook his head. "If it had not been for my burning desire to make you proud, I would never have pledged my loyalty to that *crazed lunatic!*" His hands trembled with barely suppressed rage. "I would still have my family! My son! My wife! The very things you always claimed were important, *FATHER!*"

If it was possible, the already pale skin of the man within the portrait became even paler. For once, the painting fell silent.

Lucius raised an eyebrow at the other man's loss of words. "I am not the only one that brought shame to this family, Father. I only followed through with your wishes. Isn't that quaint?" With that last, biting remark, Lucius turned and strode angrily from the room.

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Hermione sat in Lucius' private library, reading through a book on dark spells used to counter other such spells. Unthinkingly, her eyes kept moving to the Book of Merlin that Lucius had shown her a few nights ago.

Conclusively, she gave up on trying to concentrate on the book she had in her hands and set it aside. Moving to the shelf, she reached out and picked up the ancient text carefully. Running her hands over the binding of the book reverently, she smiled at the idea of reading through its contents.

When she sat back down and began skimming over the intro, Serenity suddenly Apparated to her side. "Forgive my intrusion, Miss. But I thought you might like some spice tea, and some cakes while you read?"

Hermione smiled. "That sounds wonderful, Serenity. Thank you."

Serenity returned her smile and sat the tray down on the coffee table before Disapparating away. Hermione poured herself a cup of the wonderfully scented tea and added just a touch of sugar. When she took a sip, she closed her eyes, savoring the aroma.

"Is everything to your liking, then?"

Startled from her actions, she nearly spilt the tea in her lap, before placing the cup on the table before her and turning to meet Lucius' eyes.

"Uhhh... Y-yes. Everything is wonderful." She smiled when her eyes met his. "And you? Are you alright?"

That morning there had been an awkward moment shared between them. Hermione wondered if she had done anything to offend him when he had left so suddenly. She blushed as she considered her nudity in front of him that morning.

She wasn't some virginal child. She had lost her virginity in her seventh year to Ron. It had been a silly, drunken moment between them and they had later talked about the fact that although they loved each other, they would never be *in love*.

But after that, she had not been with anyone else. There had been plenty of young men that had been interested in dating her, but she'd always pushed them aside, saying she was too busy working for the Order to take time out for personal relationships.

The truth was, she had never wanted a relationship with anyone. Not like *that*. But now, she was twenty-two years old. She was feeling her first real desire for a man. It made her heart flutter in her chest to think of such things.

Lucius studied her for a moment before looking away and nodding. "Yes, I am well, thank you." His voice was soft and traveled like black velvet over her skin.

She fought the shiver that threatened to overtake her, but not before he had seen. Moving closer to her, he said, "You're cold."

Hermione shook her head. "No, I'm not. Not really... I just..." Her words died as he moved to sit beside her and reached out with his hands to rub some warmth into her shoulders. She bit her bottom lip as his hands rubbed warmth into her bare arms.

"His brow furrowed as he took in the spaghetti straps of her blouse. "I fail to see why you would wear such scant clothing in a home that is as drafty as most castles."

She couldn't help but smile. "I wasn't thinking when I dressed. It didn't occur to me at the time." She shrugged, feeling somewhat let down by what seemed to be a total lack of desire on his part.

Frustration built within her. How could he force such a flood of desire from her and not feel any of his own? Could she have imagined that he felt something akin to what she felt? Was she just making a fool of herself in front of him?

Pushing his hands away gently, she stood and moved to put the book back where she had found it. "I'm not cold, really." She fought to keep her voice calm.

Lucius watched her back. Had he insulted her? "I did not mean to offend," he said softly. "It is a lovely blouse. I just... There are parts of this home that can be rather drafty and cold. Even when you have a fire roaring in the hearth, the manor can feel like a cold-hearted bitch some days."

As he spoke, he had moved to stand directly behind her. Hermione could feel his breath on her neck. She found herself leaning into the bookshelves to put some distance between them. "Uh... Mr. Malfoy... You... I... I mean, uhm..." He was too close. She couldn't think with him so close.

"I what, Miss Granger?" Lucius knew that he was affecting her. He knew he should stop, knew he should move away to a respectable distance. It was just so hard to step away from her. Her scent. Her hair pulled up off of her neck. He wanted to bury his face in its softness. Run his fingers through its softness.

It had been so long since he had felt desire. He had never cheated on Narcissa. Even after she was gone, he had denied himself to desire anyone. He had always thought no one could desire him now that he was no longer beautiful. Yet, he could feel her desire. It flowed from her like a spring that coursed from her to him and back again.

Propriety demanded that he step back and give her space. Yet the combination of their desires made him step closer to her so that they were touching. Leaning his head down, he laid his head against the soft skin of her neck as his uninjured hand went around her waist.

He felt her swift intake of breath as he turned and touched his lips to her pulse. His breathing matched her own and he closed his eyes as he waited for her to break away from him and run from the room.

Instead, he felt her lean her head back against his shoulder. Her hand covered his. Slowly, she turned and her eyes met his. For a moment, they just stared at each other. He felt as if he could drown in the depths of her eyes. He searched for some sign of disgust but found none. He only saw the echo of his own desire reflected there in her.

Reaching up, he ran the pad of his thumb across her bottom lip, smiling when her eyes closed. Leaning down, he replaced his thumb with his mouth, touching her lips gently with his own. It was the softest touch she had ever felt. When his lips parted, he ran his tongue over the seam of her mouth.

Opening her mouth to him, her tongue met his tentatively. Suddenly, it was as if a dam had burst within him. Pulling her so close her body felt as if it had become a part of his, Lucius gave a strangled moan.

Hermione answered his moan with one of her own. Her free hand reached up between them to find the hard planes of his chest. His shirt was buttoned conservatively to the neck. Impatiently, she found the row of buttons and began undoing each one slowly so she could touch the skin beneath.

When Lucius broke the kiss and began to pull away from her, Hermione stayed him. "No. Don't leave me. I couldn't bear it if you turned away from me now." Her voice was a whisper that sent chills through his core.

"Hermione, I..." He started to pull away again. But Hermione followed him, holding on to him.

He pulled away again and this time, she released him. He missed the look of pain that crossed her features when he turned away.

Lucius crossed the room, running his hand through his hair in frustration. *I have no right to touch her.* "Hermione," he started softly. "I want you desperately, but I cannot let this happen. You deserve better."

Tears welled in her eyes as she moved closer to him. "What if you are what I want?" She asked, her voice breaking. "I never knew what it was to really want someone, until now."

She shook her head. "You want me, too. Why do you deny yourself, when the feelings are shared? I just don't understand. Make me understand, Lucius."

Turning back to face her, his heart melted when he saw the tears glistening in her eyes. "You are young. You have your entire life ahead of you. I am older than your own father. I cannot give you what you deserve."

Hermione dropped her jaw for a moment, then her eyes narrowed in anger. "My entire life could be over tomorrow, if we don't find a way to defeat *you-know-who!* I am not some silly little virgin that has never been touched! But I have never known a desire such as this with any other man." She heaved a sigh. "I may never feel it again. So what if you are nineteen years my senior. My father is twenty-one years senior to my mother, if you must know." She smirked when his eyes turned back to her. "So, your claim to be too old for me is a very lame one!"

Lucius stood and watched her for a moment. He felt suddenly very stupid, and angry with himself. What was wrong with him? She wanted him. He was no longer married. There was nothing standing in his way of having her but his own foolish idiocy.

When he started to speak, Hermione stopped him by holding up her hand. "No. Don't say anything. I realize that you may not be ready to be with someone. I know you and Narcissa were together from even before you got out of school." Her eyes met his. "I am not trying to replace her, Lucius. I could never do that. But, if you ever think that you could give what is left of yourself to another, I would gladly share that time with you."

She reached out, and pulled his hair away from the damaged side of his face. He winced at the exposure, but did not push her away when she leaned closer, placing a kiss on the damaged flesh. His eyes closed, and he held his breath when she whispered, "You are beautiful to me."

When she moved away from him, he turned and watched her leave the room. He wanted desperately to follow her and pull her back into his arms but he couldn't make himself do it. She needed space.

He needed to find a way to move past everything that had happened. As much as he wanted her-- as much as he wanted to pursue these emotions that were flooding him-- he owed it to her to be able to move past these memories that haunted him. Until he did, there could be no future for them.

He gasped at the thought. *Future? Where did that come from?*

Ghostly Visions

Chapter 9 of 19

Hermione is asked for help. Danger also lurks around the corner... Rated for later chapters...

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### Ghostly Visions

Hermione moved swiftly from the library. All she wanted at that moment was to distance herself from the man that quickly turned from someone that she had considered an enemy to someone that she was beginning to care very deeply about.

These emotions scared her. She had learned a long time ago that it was never wise to let one's emotions control them. It was probably better that they had stopped when they did. Part of her still felt like it was wrong for her to feel this way for him. She had not known him long enough to become so attached. She assured herself that it was just lust. But even as she told that to herself, she knew it to be a lie.

"Damnable man!" she swore angrily. "What have you done to me?"

No sooner had the words left her lips, than a feminine voice answered from behind her. "He always made me feel the exact same way."

Eyes wide, Hermione turned to face the owner of the voice. Her mouth dropped open at the sight before her. Pale blond hair fell in soft curls past the woman's shoulders, almost to her waist. Pale blue eyes held Hermione's and a sad smile played across her features. "I was putty in his hands. He could always convince me that everything would work out alright."

Hermione knew immediately who the woman before her was. Even so, it did little to calm the quiver in her voice when she asked softly, "You're Narcissa?"

From the left side of the spirit came another voice. "Ten points to Gryffindor." She knew the owner of the voice before she even turned. But it was devoid of any of its mockery. Draco had a welcoming, almost kind smile on his face as he moved to stand beside Narcissa. "Hermione, don't be afraid." He spoke softly.

He looked the same as he had in their seventh year. Hermione felt tears in her eyes at seeing him. She had heard that they had hexed his body so badly, he wasn't even recognizable. If she didn't know that these were spirits before her, she would have thought he was back from the grave. Healed and whole.

She shook her head. "I'm not afraid. Only perhaps a little stunned. Why are you talking to me? Wouldn't you rather be with Lu... Mr. Malfoy?"

Narcissa looked down. "We are his past. We watch him, but he must never know that we are here."

The younger witch's brow furrowed. "But why? Don't you think he needs to see you? To know that you aren't suffering?"

Draco stepped closer to her. "But we are." His eyes captured hers. "For every moment that he cannot forgive himself we are forced to relive the last moments of our lives."

"We almost had given up on finding any peace," Narcissa added, "until you came. He felt his first relief from the pain of his memory with you by his side."

Hermione looked at the other woman. "He isn't releasing that pain. It is still there."

Draco smiled. "Not yet, but he will." He reached over and took his mother's hand. "We don't want to cause him more grief. We want to see him," he shook his head, "but we can't until he can let his guilt go."

Narcissa looked from Draco to Hermione. "Help him, Hermione. Help him realize that he is forgiven. Help him see that it is ok to go on living."

Hermione felt the tears begin to slip onto her cheeks. She drew a shaky breath. "But I don't know how." She whimpered. "'How can I help him? What can I possibly do to make him see he is worthy of forgiveness?'"

Narcissa moved to the younger woman's side. "Just stay consistent with him. Be who you are. He needs the attention you can give him."

Draco nodded. "It is already helping him, Hermione. Soon, he will be ready to see us. He will be able to accept our forgiveness and let us go." He smiled sadly. "Our souls are stuck here until then."

Narcissa looked at Draco, then back to Hermione. "He isn't ready to tell us good-bye yet. He won't be until he can forgive himself. You must try, Hermione. You alone can help him move past this." Her eyes were pleading. "Please promise me you will help him. For all of our sakes. He needs you."

Hermione was taken back by the desperation in Narcissa's voice. It was a pain that she could understand. It echoed the grief that she had seen in Lucius' eyes as well. She nodded her head. "I will try, Narcissa. I promise I will try my hardest."

Narcissa smiled, and stood back, looking Hermione over. "You were right, Draco. She is a lovely girl."

As Narcissa's final words were spoken the two spirits disappeared from Hermione's view. They simply vanished. Draco's voice lingered with her after they were gone. "Thank you, Hermione."

Hermione moved to unlock the gate to the garden. Going inside, she sank down on the closest bench and let the tears flow freely. She wanted to help Lucius. She had felt drawn to him from the first moment she had seen him. But now, she discovered that he wasn't the only one in need.

She couldn't imagine the kind of existence Draco and Narcissa were enduring. Suddenly, she found herself very afraid. Her fear stemmed from wondering how Lucius would react to seeing Narcissa. What if she did everything she could to help him overcome his grief and the moment he saw his first love and Draco, it all came flooding back?

What if all the affection and caring he was showing her was only because of the emptiness he felt at losing his wife? What if none of this was real? How could she know for certain that what he felt for her was enough to help him come back? After everything he had been through with his wife and son, what did she have to offer him?

Pain swelled within her, making it hard to breathe. "Gods! I must be crazy!" she swore out loud. Standing, she turned, and with one last swipe at her cheeks, left the garden, locking the door behind her.

She failed to notice the Death Eater that stood in the far clearing, observing her silently with an evil gleam in his eye. He watched as she made her way back to the house. A knowing smile graced his lips. So Lucius had a very special guest? The Dark Lord would be pleased.

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Lucius was on his way outside to search for her, when Hermione rounded the corner and ran into him. His arms came around her in an effort to steady her. "Hermione, are you alright?" His face showed concern. "Dear Merlin, you look as if you've seen a ghost. Whatever can the matter be?"

He silently prayed that she wasn't so upset over what had transpired between them. He couldn't bear it if he had caused her so much pain. She was the one beam of light in his miserable existence. He wasn't even sure what he would do when the month was over, and she left. How could he go back to being alone when she had shown him how it felt to have companionship again?

Hermione broke away from him and shook her head, refusing to look him in the eyes. "It's nothing." She said softly. "I just twisted my ankle on my walk. I need to go to my rooms to retrieve my wand, so I can mend it."

Lucius recognized the lie and his brow raised in confusion. She had never before lied to him. Why would she start now? He opened his mouth to call her jest, then thought better of it. Perhaps she only wanted some time away from him. After all, he had just fairly snubbed her affections.

Nodding, he asked softly. "Will you still join me for dinner tonight?"

Hermione drew a deep breath. "Actually, I really need to dedicate a few hours this evening to research," she answered wearily. "Perhaps tomorrow evening. If that is acceptable to you?"

Not waiting for his response, she brushed past him. She had to put some space between them. She needed time to gather her thoughts. She needed a chance to get a rein on her emotions. If she could just have some time to think about everything. Perhaps she could find a way to let him know just how much he meant to her.

It was so soon for her to be feeling this way. She had always prided herself on being someone who did not step into anything blindly. She never had. She always went into things with both eyes open and alert. But this. This very emotion had swept her up in a whirlwind that she had no control over. Suddenly, she felt like a child that was unprepared for the world around her.

In the safety of her room, she closed the door, moved to sit on the bed. Her eyes hurt from the tears she had cried. Her head ached and she felt weary from the sudden responsibility she was faced with.

An owl hooted from her balcony. Sighing, she got up and walked out onto the balcony thinking it was Hedwig. A strong hand clamped down on her from behind. Her screams were muffled as the steel arm around her reached for the Portkey. "Oh no, *Precious*. We mustn't fight. That isn't very ladylike!"

One moment, the two were struggling on the balcony. The next, there was nothing there but a stirring of the air.

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## Revelations

### Chapter 10 of 19

Rescue, and finally a shared romantic moment. I give the beginning of lemons in this chapter...

This chapter has actually ended up being just a bit LONGER than the others. It has an evil cliffy, but, it will be worth it. I promise!

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### Revelation

Hermione struggled against the strong hands that held her captive. But it was no use. He was too strong. A black hood had been thrown over her head, keeping her from seeing his face. The voice was familiar. If she didn't know any better.... but that was just crazy. He would never join the ranks of Death Eater. He hated them as much as the rest of the Order did.

She gave up struggling against her bonds when it became apparent that she was not going to be freed. After she had been still for a moment, she again heard her captor's deep voice. "Oh, there's a good girl." She heard him move to her side and breathed a sigh of relief as she felt the hood being pulled from her head.

Closing her eyes, she took a steady breath, before opening them. A gasp escaped her at the face she saw before her. It couldn't be. There was no way that he... "Kingsley? But, why?"

His stern dark face stared back at her for a moment. Finally, when he smiled, it was an expression that made her blood run cold. "The Dark Lord will repay me handsomely for such a prize as you."

At a loss for words, she simply stared back at him. Kingsley Shacklebolt was a Death Eater? When? Why? How could he be?

He tilted his head, as if listening to her thoughts. Alarm coursed through her at the idea that he might know Legilimency. "I want the power the Dark Lord can give me." He shook his head. "Dumbledore, Snape and Harry are all fools!"

Hermione shook her head, shocked. "You think Voldemort would give you power?"

Before she could react, Kingsley had sprung forward, striking her roughly across the cheek. "Don't ever dare to speak his name!" the wizard spat at her cruelly.

It felt as if her cheek had exploded. Hermione sat with her head lowered. She did not dare to glance back in his direction.

For a moment, he simply stared hard at her, waiting for her to brave another remark. When none came, he turned and stalked from the room, slamming the door behind him.

When Hermione heard the click of the lock, she knew that Kingsley would not be back for a while. Swallowing hard, she turned her attention to the ropes that bound her hands. She had not practiced wandless magic in some time, but she knew the basics. Surely she could get the ropes to loosen.

Staring hard at the knot of the ropes, she spoke forcefully, yet softly. "Release!" Nothing happened. She whimpered for a moment before biting her bottom lip and trying again. "Manumit!" This time, she saw the rope begin to move. She breathed a sigh of relief.

Suddenly, the bonds did just the opposite of what she had hoped. Instead of releasing, they tightened. Hermione cried out in pain as the rope cut into her wrists, drawing blood. The rope had been warded to counter attempts to free its captive by focusing immense pain to them.

Her cheek burning, her wrists bleeding, Hermione sagged against the pole she was tied to and cried. Lucius would never know she was gone until it was too late. She'd never see him again. Draco and Narcissa would never know peace. Harry and Ron would find out what happened to her only if the Dark Lord felt like gloating. It was hopeless.

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Lucius sat inside the large library, pretending to look through the ancient texts his guest had been going over the previous day. Hermione was sadly mistaken if she thought their discussion was over just because she had research to do. He would make a pretense of wanting to help her with her research. He would write down the bloody gospel of Dark Magic if it meant he could stay by her side.

After what seemed an eternity, he began to feel worried when she still did not put in an appearance. Waving his hand across the floor he commanded, "Show me Hermione!" The floor stayed as it was. Unchanged and unmoving. Tilting his head, he considered this. The only way his manor would not reveal his guests' whereabouts to him, was if they were no longer within the walls.

With a second sweep of his hand, he enjoined, "Show me Hermione's last movements within these walls!"

The floor began to swirl, and suddenly, he saw her moving out to the balcony. Next, he saw a struggle of shadows against the drapes. Eyes widening, he lurched from his chair and Apparated to Hermione's room.

Standing in the entryway to the balcony, he looked around. She was gone. A deep-seated fear took root in his heart and began to grow. Images of Hermione being raped as Narcissa had been made it difficult for him to breathe.

With a determined glare, he moved onto the balcony and swished his wand in the direction where he had seen the shadows struggling. "Reveal!"

Instantly, he saw Kingsley Shacklebolt holding Hermione's struggling form close as he Apparated away from the manor. With a smirk of disgust, Lucius stood outside Kingsley's home. With an anger he had never known an equal to, he blasted the other wizard's home with lightning force, disabling every ward that had been carefully constructed.

Using his wand, he waved it towards each door, breaking them off of their hinges. When he came to the door that was between him and Hermione, he knew instinctively that he would not be able to blast through this door. It was warded with a magic tied to its castor. The only way to rid it of the bond was to kill its host.

"So be it!" he whispered in acknowledgment. "Kingsley?" He called out mockingly, knowing that the other wizard was close by and knew he had arrived. "It isn't nice to steal other Death Eater's playthings... Didn't you know that?"

A flash of light came from behind him, followed by an angry voice. "You were a sad excuse for a Death Eater, Malfoy!" His voice was tinged with malice. "Don't insult my intelligence! I know as well as any other that you are now a sworn enemy of the Dark Lord."

Lucius' gaze darkened, and a strange smile curled on his lips. "Do you know why I was the Dark Lord's right hand man for so long, Shacklebolt?" he asked softly.

Kingsley shrugged nonchalantly. "Because of momentary insanity?"

Lucius' smile grew, and electricity seemed to arc between his fingers as he held them out for the wizard's inspection. "Because I am a descendant of one of the greatest wizards to ever live. I have power you will never know."

Shacklebolt's eyes widened momentarily before he recovered himself, scowling. "You don't scare me, Malfoy!"

"Oh, but you should be afraid!" Like lightning striking, Lucius let the electricity stream from his hands, flying through the air and striking Kingsley dead in an instant. His body wiggled for several minutes as Lucius watched, an expression of detachment on his face. When the younger wizard's body finally quit jerking, Lucius whispered, "be very afraid."

As if by invisible hands, the door that was bound to the life of the spy came open. Lucius moved to the door and scanned the room until his eyes fell on Hermione. The breath he had not realized he was holding escaped him in a rush.

Her eyes held his. The rope that bound her had fallen away to reveal huge gashes that bled freely. Lucius' brow creased with concern. When he stepped closer and knelt down beside her he saw the quickly darkening bruise that decorated her cheek. A murderous look crossed his features. But when he reached out to touch it, his hand was gentle, his palm cool against her inflamed skin.

Gathering her into his arms, he quickly Apparated back home. Hermione held onto him as if her very life depended on her contact with him. When he laid her down on her bed and began to pull away, she cried out. "No! Don't leave me! Please, I..."

Sitting down beside her, he gathered her back into his arms. "I have no intention of leaving your side tonight, Hermione." He rocked her gently as she relaxed against him. "Nothing will ever harm you again," he whispered. "I forbid it."

Hermione broke away from him and moved over in the bed so that he might lay down beside her.

For a moment, he simply looked at her lying on the bed before he moved to lay down beside her. He remained fully clothed. He would not take advantage of her while she was so shaken. Wrapping his arm around her, he watched her until she fell asleep.

Once her breathing was even, he raised his hand and caressed her cheek with a feather-gentle touch, erasing the bruise from her face. Rage flooded him anew at the

thought of how close he had come to losing her this day.

For a moment, he told himself he should leave her now. She was resting comfortably and would probably wake in the morning shocked to be in the same bed with him. But, as he lay there watching her sleep, he couldn't bring himself to leave her. It had been so long since there had been a willing body so close to him. His decision made, he quickly placed strong wards on her room, letting himself relax, allowing sleep to come.

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Hermione awoke to the pleasant feeling of someone spooned up behind her. An arm was wrapped around her protectively. Fingers twined between hers. He had stayed. He promised her that he wouldn't leave her and he hadn't.

Carefully, she turned to observe his sleeping form. He lay beside her with his eyes closed, breathing peacefully. A strand of blond hair had fallen across his face. Gently, she reached out and pushed the hair away from his face.

She realized that Lucius had risked everything the night before to come to her. She remembered overhearing Snape talking to McGonagall one day about his friend *"He never leaves his home anymore. The man is a virtual prisoner of the scars Voldemort has left him with. He will never be the same again."*

The voice played over and over in Hermione's head. Severus was right. Lucius would never be the same man he once was. His scars could never be healed by any magical or medical means. But he was a far more amazing man to her now. The man that had sworn never to leave the safety of his home had come to her aid, alone. He had come for her, a Muggle-born.

Tears filled her eyes as she considered how difficult that must have been for him. Reaching out, she traced the outline of his perfect jaw *"I love you, Lucius,"* she whispered before placing her lips to his in a soft kiss.

Lucius awoke with her arms wrapped around him. Her lips touched his softly. With his good eye, he observed her face when she pulled away. Her eyes met his. "Thank you," she said simply.

He found himself locking his arms around her to prevent her from pulling any further away. "I did what any honorable wizard would do, Hermione."

She smiled and a light showed in her eyes when she whispered, "You did more than anyone else would have done." She shook her head. "Harry would not have even gone there alone."

Lucius looked away, feeling flushed with embarrassment. It had been incredibly stupid to go there by himself. What if it had been an ambush? He could have gotten them both killed.

Clearing his throat, he released her, and rolled to get up from the bed. "... uhm... I should go now."

Before he could take a step, she was beside him, grabbing his hand. "Don't," she said in a whisper. "Don't run away from what I know we are both feeling."

Stepping back from him and releasing a shaky breath, she took hold of the hem of her shirt and pulled it over her head. He looked down at her pale, perfectly formed breasts. His throat tightened and a moan escaped him before he could quell it.

Reaching out, she took his hand in hers and brought it up to her chest. She watched his face as she pushed her breast into his hand. "I belong to you," she said softly. "Take me, please?"

Lucius took deep breaths to try to calm his pounding heart. He should turn away. He should summon Severus and make him take Hermione away from here before she could get truly hurt. He would hurt her. He knew he would. He hurt anyone that was really important to him. He never meant to, but he always did.

"Hermione, don't do this. I'm not worth..." The words died on his lips when she stepped closer and claimed them with her own. All argument went from his thoughts as she pressed herself up against him.

Her hands went to his shirt, and before he could think to argue, it was pushed down his arms, falling away from him. Passion made his blood boil as she pressed herself against him. Her nipples grazed his chest, making it hard for him to think.

He did want her. He wanted her so badly it took his very breath away for her to stand so close. Tears welled in his eyes when she ran her hands over the scars on his chest. Leaning down, her lips followed where her hands had just touched. She placed gentle kisses across his skin, driving any and all argument from him.

"Hermione." He spoke her name as if in prayer. His hands moved up her arms until he gripped her shoulders. Then he leaned towards her, capturing her lips with his own with such a sweep of passion that it stole her breath.

Returning his kiss, she stroked the lines of his torso with her thumbs. He moaned against her mouth when she found his own hardened nipples.

Breaking the kiss, he looked deeply into her eyes. His hands found the fastening of her jeans and pulled it open. Sliding his fingers inside her waistband, he slid the pants down her thighs. Hermione trembled as he went down on one knee to inspect the part of her he was laying bare.

Using his shoulder to support herself, she stepped out of the pants that had pooled around her ankles. She watched Lucius, who was taking note of the flimsy g-string she wore as underwear. His fingers curled around the material, and in a moment, it also fell to the ground.

Turning his attention to the spot that had been hidden from his view just a second before, he leaned forward and pressed his cheek against the soft, curly thatch of hair that was there. He breathed in her scent as he held her.

Hermione giggled as he rubbed his nose across her nether regions. Her hand flew to her mouth to stifle it, but it was too late. His laughter joined her own. "Your scent is that of forbidden fruit, Hermione. And I crave it."

Suddenly, he was there before her, lifting her into his arms. He turned and placed her gently on the bed. Using his hands, he urged her to part her thighs for him, so he could pay closer attention to that sweet part of her he was beginning to crave.

She couldn't stop the tremble that ran through her when he reached down and ran a finger across the folds of her flesh. In response, he climbed onto the bed between her legs, and leaned down to press a kiss against the exposed flesh.

A moan escaped her as he let his tongue trace the nub that lay between her folds. His fingers held her clit open as he let his other hand move to explore the sensitive flesh. She raised her hips when he slid a finger inside her depths.

Smiling at her reaction, he leaned down to lick the tiny nub he knew was the core of her pleasure. His finger moved slowly within her as his mouth closed over the pith and began to suckle it gently.

Hermione cried out and her hands cradled his head to her. "Lucius! Oh my...*Please,*" she gasped as a second finger invaded her depths. She pulled at him frantically, wanting him closer to her.

He answered her pulls by sliding up the length of her body. She raised her lips to his, kissing him. His hand still worked over her. Now his thumb rubbed the heart of her core as the two fingers played inside of her.

This was like nothing she had ever felt. No man had ever touched her in such a way. Her own hands ran over his chest and down to his waist where his pants were still on. Tucking her hands into the elastic of the waistband, she tugged until his pants were down past his hips.

"I want you," she whispered against his lips. "May I taste you, too?" Her eyes searched his for a moment before he lay back on the bed, and raised his hips for her when she moved to pull the pants from him.

Hermione moved over him. Her hands ran over his chest. She leaned down to place a kiss to his lips one more time before she let her lips trail down his body. She hovered over a nipple, swirling her tongue in circles around it before continuing her journey to his groin. Her hand curled around his erection. It was thick, long, and had a beautiful pinkish tint to it.

Leaning down, Hermione ran her tongue along its length. A moan escaped him when he felt her lips curl around his tip.

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A/N: Tee Hee Hee... I'm evil! I do not normally leave such cliffies in the middle of a love scene... But Hey! If it gets you guys to leave a review, why not? There will be an update soon... I promise!

Affections

Chapter 11 of 19

There is no more denying the passion. However, there are other things to come to terms with and memories to let go!

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Affections

Lucius hissed as Hermione's lips closed around him. He shuddered when she took him deeper into her mouth. Reaching out, he grasped her silky locks gently and raised his hips to meet her as she sucked on his length.

Her tongue traced the length of his shaft before she began moving over him faster. Sucking him deep, she then pulled back and traced the tip of his manhood with her tongue. After a few moments, Lucius grabbed her and pulled her slowly up the length of his body until she was laying over him.

Reaching down between them, he urged her to straddle his hips. His fingers found and began to stroke her clit as his other hand found her opening and he began to press his cock into its tightness.

Hermione cried out when he thrust forward suddenly, impaling her on his thickness. For a moment, she stilled over him at the feel of his cock stretching her. His one hand was still rubbing her essence while the other had come to rest on her hip and was urging her gently to begin their ride.

Slowly, she began to move over him, feeling him tilting his hips to meet her movements. Each time she raised up, his hips would pull back slightly. Each time she moved down, he would thrust deeper into her moist heat.

The position was something she had never done. The sensations it caused for him to enter her this way almost drove her over the edge. Slowly, she felt the heat inside her beginning to build. She shuddered at the feel of him inside of her.

"Yes!" he whispered softly. "Feel me inside you, my love. Feel how much I want you!"

Hermione began to moan and gasp. Her body trembled, and she stilled over him as she felt the walls of her core closing tightly around him.

Lucius had to bite his own lip to keep from coming when he, too, felt her body's reaction. Instead, he cradled her to him and rolled until she was beneath him. Then, he began thrusting into her. Filling her with himself over and over until she was crying out his name.

When he felt her completion ebbing, he let himself go. Thrusting faster and deeper, he carried her through another orgasm as he reached his own cessation. His seed spilled deep within her as he fell atop her. His arms wrapped around her, and he gave himself over to the emotion that he felt.

Hermione felt his tears dampen her shoulder. Feeling his body shake against her, she held him close. "Lucius," she said softly, "d-did I do something wrong? Was it too soon? Were you not ready?" A single tear slid down her own cheek at the thought that he may not have been ready to do what they had just done with someone save the woman he had pledged his love to years before.

Rolling onto his side, his eyes searched hers. "I was ready, Hermione. I was so, very ready, my dear." He sighed as he pulled her closer and stroked her cheek. "I wanted to believe that I could never have feelings for another woman after Narcissa died. I wanted to think that I could never need anyone again." He smoothed an unruly hair away from her cheek. "Then you came. Now it terrifies me how much I seem to need you." Worry creased his brow as he observed her reactions to his words. "What if you decide you need to move on to some younger, more attractive wizard? I will be left here alone, with nothing but my scars to keep me company." He tried to smile, but failed.

Hermione moved to kiss him deeply before wrapping her arms around his waist. "I could never desire another now," she answered softly. "You are in my thoughts whether I am awake or asleep. I find I cannot even concentrate on the research I am to be doing, for thoughts of you." She smiled playfully before whispering, "You've bewitched me."

Lucius returned her smile before growing solemn. "When your research is over, what then? Am I to be someone you visit upon occasion?" He raised a brow in inquiry. "Or would you possibly stay here? With me?"

A moment of silence passed between them before Hermione slid out of his arms and sat up in the bed. Absently, she straightened the covers around them as she thought about his words. To live with him was something that she yearned for. But the practical side of herself knew that it would take time before her friends would be ready to accept the new person in her life. She wasn't sure they would ever really accept that.

Taking her silence to mean refusal, Lucius slid to the other side of the bed and began dressing in silence. Hermione watched him with tears shining in her eyes. Could he

grant her time to make this adjustment easier for everyone? Would he let her open a Floo between her rooms at Grimmauld and the Manor?

"Lucius, I'm not saying no..." she started, trying to choose her words carefully.

He shook his head as he moved from the bed. "Then what am I to be? Am I your dirty little secret?" Hermione opened her mouth to argue, but Lucius had already fled the room, leaving her alone.

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Unable to sleep, Lucius stood on his balcony, looking wistfully out into the night. He was deeply troubled. After he had lost Narcissa and Draco, he had sworn to himself that he would never again let himself become attached to another.

So much for keeping that vow. Hermione had worked her way deeply into his heart. He had no idea how he was going to survive without her once she left. She, herself, might miss him at first. But over time, she would get back into her research and forget all about him.

Damning himself over his stupidity, he allowed a moan to escape his lips. He had never been a solitary creature. He had never thought that the day would come when he would no longer attend the normal array of wizarding functions. But now, he lived in the darkness. He hid from any but his closest friends. He had never even intended to allow Hermione to see him. *What possessed you to do that, anyway?* He thought angrily to himself, swearing in exasperation.

"You did it because you were desperate for some companionship," a soft voice answered him from behind.

Whirling around, Lucius found himself face to face with the spirit of Narcissa. She smiled at him in her patient way and reached out to him. When he made to take her hand, his fingers slipped right through her.

For several moments, they simply stared at each other. Lucius' face betrayed his pain as he backed away from her. "Why have you not appeared to me sooner?" he asked softly. "Why now? Why not sooner? Why not before I had come to the conclusion to let myself move on?" *Why not before I fell in love with Hermione?* He added silently.

Narcissa smiled sadly. "I couldn't come to you when you were still so tied to your grief. You couldn't see me until you were ready to let go."

Lucius shook his head. "What makes you think I'm ready to let go? How can you be so sure I am moving on?"

The smile his wife wore suddenly turned radiant. "Because you have found love, Lucius. Real love that is endless and true." She shook her head. "You couldn't see me if you weren't ready." She paused for a moment before adding in a softer tone, "You couldn't have made love to her if you were not ready."

Lucius could feel the pain and anger melting away from him. In an attempt to hold onto it, he hissed furiously, "Sure I could have. I'm still a man, aren't I? We can breed with anything if we are bleeding horny enough!"

Narcissa tutted softly. "You can lie to yourself all you want Lucius Malfoy. But don't you dare try to pretend that I don't know who you *really* are. You could never have made love to her, if you had not been able to come to terms with losing me."

The man lowered his gaze from Narcissa. "I have never stopped loving you," he said softly.

"And you never will." she answered. "But there is still room in your heart for another woman to love. Not to mention the baby girl she will give you."

Choking, Lucius' eyes flew to Narcissa's face. "What did you say?" he asked, incredulous.

"She said," Draco said from behind him as he moved closer to the father he had been unable to have contact with over the last two agonizing years, "that you are going to be a father again." The younger Malfoy smiled at the elder. "I am glad to finally see you. You are looking much better."

Lucius' eyes widened as he took in Draco's appearance. He looked happy and healthy, as if none of the curses that had destroyed his body had ever happened. "Son! I You..." He struggled for words. "I'm so sorry. I failed you both."

Draco moved to stand eye to eye with Lucius, and said earnestly, "I am proud of you. I am honored to be your son. You made mistakes. But you have more than made up for them by deciding to help in the war against Voldemort."

Narcissa moved to also stand beside the man who had once been her husband. "You had become so bent on Voldemort's way being the right way, that we lost you for a time. I lost the man I had fallen in love with. Draco lost his father and mentor."

"But you are back." Draco said after a moment of silence passing among the three of them. "I feel like perhaps the meaning in our lives ending was to help you find your way back to where you were meant to be all along." He smiled proudly. "Grandfather Merlin will be very proud once you fulfill your destiny."

A bright light seemed to streak across the sky to the far side of the balcony. Both Draco and Narcissa turned to look at the ethereal white light that seemed to wait patiently for them. The witch held her hand out to her son, who grasped it lightly before turning back to Lucius. "Be happy, Father. We'll be watching over the three of you," he said softly before turning to his mother.

Narcissa smiled again at Lucius. "I will always love you, Lucius. I want you to be happy. And try to not hate Hermione's friend Harry so much. He will be important to your daughter someday."

That said, the two spirits turned and began to make their way towards the light.

Suddenly, Draco stopped and turned back to his father. "When she's born, do you think you could you name her Hope?" Tears of joy glistened in Draco's eyes. "It would be a good name for her."

Lucius watched as they again turned and disappeared into the light. Then, just as suddenly as it came, the light was gone again. Once more, Lucius was alone on the balcony. But this time, he was overwhelmed with a sense of joy and well being.

Shock and absorption of what they had just told him sent a thrill through him. Turning, he made his way quickly back to Hermione's room.

He limped to the side of the huge bed that she had fallen asleep in. Her cheeks were puffy, and it was apparent she had cried herself to sleep. Sitting down beside her, he gathered her into his arms, startling her awake.

"Lucius?" she asked groggily. "Are you OK?" Her arms came around him, as she returned his embrace.

He leaned her back against the pillows, kissing her deeply before drawing back and speaking softly. "Can you forgive me?" he said softly. "Forgive a stubborn fool for being too stupid to simply have faith in the things unseen in the future."

Hermione smiled. "I told you, I love you," she said softly. "I am not planning on going very far from you anytime soon."

Smiling, Lucius rid himself of his clothes and reached out to her. She came to him, pressing her breasts to his torso and kissing him softly.

His hand found a nipple, and stroked it gently as he lowered her to the bed. Leaning down, he took the hardened flesh in his mouth and teased it gently with his tongue.

Hermione moaned when he feathered kisses lightly down her body, pausing to press a lingering kiss on her belly. His fingers found and began to stroke her as he turned his face to lay his cheek on her belly. He watched her reactions as he rubbed her clit until orgasm took her, making her arch off the bed.

Moving to position himself over her, he thrust forward into her hot, wet center. Hermione shook from the heated friction of his cock meeting her core. He began plunging slowly and deeply within her. She raised her hips with each thrust to meet him as the fire between them began to burn.

Finally, succumbing to the need to satisfy both of their fervency, he picked up the pace. Soon, she was writhing and crying out his name. As his pace pushed her into orgasm, he let himself be carried away into an abyss created by their passion.

Moving to lay beside her, he pulled her into his arms. "Hermione," he said softly once he caught his breath, "I can wait forever for you, if that is how long it takes for you to be ready to stay with me. You take the time you need to prepare your friends for our relationship."

She looked up to meet his eyes, and kissed him gently. "It won't take long, I assure you. They will have to accept that you are where I belong."

An unspoken vow of love passed between them at that moment. Lucius almost gave in to the desire to share his visit with Narcissa and Draco with her, along with the discovery of the new addition they would be expecting soon, if they weren't already.

No, he thought finally. There would be time for sharing that knowledge later. For now, he was satisfied just to be with her. Everything else in the world could wait until later.

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A/N: Now, before anyone even asks, the answer is NO, this is NOT the last chapter. There are so many other things that still need to happen. Harry and Ron have to discover just how deep Hermione is involved with Malfoy. Severus has to throw his fit over the relationship. And of course the Dark Lord won't be happy knowing that he failed in making Lucius completely miserable... There is much more.... So very much more!!!!

Reporting of Traitors

Chapter 12 of 19

Severus, Harry, Ron and Albus come to find out about the traitor, and discover a few other things as well.

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### Reporting of Traitors

Hermione watched as the owl flew away from the Manor. She did not know who would come, but she knew that soon Lucius would have company besides just herself. Her chest tightened and she had to take a deep breath to chase away the disturbing thought.

In the back of her mind were a million questions. What would their reaction be to finding out who had threatened her life? Would Albus demand she return to the Order and abandon her research? Would Harry and Ron both come when they discovered what had taken place? And the question that troubled her most: *How would they react when they discovered her feelings for Lucius?*

Thoughts of how they would react troubled her. That morning, she had been so sick to her stomach she had bowed out of breakfast. She didn't think she could keep it down. She was afraid of what her friends would say. They wouldn't understand. But she wasn't going to give Lucius up.

Lucius moved to stand behind her. For a moment, he just stood there before moving to wrap his arms around her. He could sense her dismay.

Hermione leaned back against him, closing her eyes. "I love you, Lucius," she said softly. She smiled when she felt his arms tighten around her.

"Everything will work itself out, Hermione. I assure you." His voice was soft and sent a flutter of sensation through her.

Turning, she pulled him closer and kissed him. "I know you are right." Her eyes held his for a moment before he pulled her closer to deepen the kiss they had just shared.

Her skin tingled beneath his touch. His fingers traced a path from the middle of her back to her shoulder, then moved to frame her face.

Their kiss turned into a passion that engulfed them both. When they finally broke apart, Lucius took her hand in his and led her back into the bedroom they had shared since the first night their mutual desire had finally been admitted.

Leading her to the bed, he turned, and upon releasing her hand, slowly disrobed and sat on the bed before her. Hermione felt a moment of power as she realized Lucius was giving her the upper hand in how far their lovemaking went.

His hands moved slowly over her arms then to the opening of her robe. Gingerly, he opened the material and let it slip from her shoulders to the floor. Hermione moaned when he leaned forward and captured one of her nipples within his mouth. His hands moved to her hips and urged her to move closer, to stand between his parted legs.

Her hand reached out and found the tip of his aroused flesh. Stroking it gently, she allowed her head to fall back as his hands urged her closer still. One hand rested against her hip as the other moved to stroke the breast that his tongue worked over.

Hermione wrapped one arm loosely around his neck cradling his head to her breast as her other hand closed around him, stroking him until he, too, was moaning and urging her closer.

Lying back on the bed, he guided her above him. Every inch of their bodies were touching as she moved to straddle him. The fingers of his hand found and caressed the nub of skin hidden within the folds of her sensitive flesh.

Gasping, she slid herself down onto his engorged heat. He moaned louder as his hands moved to her hips to urge her on. Slowly she moved over him, moaning, and crying out his name when he thrust upwards and deeper into her.

"Hermione," he whispered softly as she began to move in time with him.

"Oh..." she moaned as his pace picked up and she felt herself being carried away by the power of each thrust that passed between them. "Lucius, I..." her voice faded as

she began to feel the waves of orgasm building from deep within her.

Reaching out to her, Lucius sat up and gripped Hermione in his arms as he leaned in to kiss her neck. Running his tongue across her sensitive skin, he smiled when she shuddered under his masterful touches.

Together, they rode out the waves of ecstasy until they lay upon the bed, spent and satisfied. Hermione held tightly to Lucius as he used his fingers to comb lovingly through her hair. Both knew that they should prepare for the company that would be arriving shortly. But both were reluctant to interrupt the bond that was quickly forming between them.

Finally, Lucius sighed. "They'll be here shortly. We should ready ourselves." He chuckled, in good humor, "Not to mention, dress ourselves!"

Hermione smiled and moved to stretch before raising up. "You are right, I know. It just feels so good to lie beside you."

Lucius sat up and reached out, taking her chin in his grasp to face him. "You will lie beside me every night from now on." His voice betrayed the emotion he felt. "I'll have it no other way!"

Hermione nodded. It was what she wanted too. If it had not been, she would have been angered by his matter-of-fact attitude. Instead, she found herself relieved by his desire to keep her beside him. Leaning close to him, she placed a gentle kiss on his lips. "I suppose we should get ready."

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Harry and Ron both stood haughtily beside the fireplace through which they had just *Floo'd*. Severus sat on the sofa watching them warily. Both of them seemed almost furious to be here. *Then why*, he wondered, *had they come?*

Albus had come as well. He stood at the bookcase, studying the names on Lucius' private selection of books. It was truly an impressive collection.

Until now, Severus and Albus had been the only ones to know about the private Floo entrance to Lucius' estate. If Hermione's missive had not suggested that whoever came should use that entrance, it would have remained a secret.

When the door to the private library opened, Lucius and Hermione both stepped inside. Lucius held the door for her to enter and closed it behind them before he turned to see who had decided to come in answer to their letter.

Immediately, his eye met Harry's furious ones. "Did you plan it?" the younger wizard asked hotly. "Was Kingsley under the Imperius curse? Did you force him to it?"

As Harry began to advance on Lucius, Hermione stepped into his path. "Harry! How dare you! Lucius is not on some kind of trial here! He came after me after I had been taken!"

Harry sneered towards the older wizard. "Yes, I can just imagine how *noble* he was in saving you from something he probably masterminded." He leaned around Hermione for a final cut. "I bet killing him was just an added bonus, *huh, Malfoy?*"

Severus came to his feet. "I'm afraid I must agree with Hermione, Harry. Lucius has done nothing wrong. It is wrong to come here and be so blatantly abusive when we have no proof of his disloyalty." He had moved to the enraged man's side, and pulled him away, gently, but firmly.

Hermione stayed her ground in front of her lover protectively. Ron watched as Snape pulled Harry away from the two of them. He also didn't miss it when Lucius stepped forward and touched Hermione in a gentle, attentive way. His eyes widened and he moved away from the fireplace to sit on the sofa, digesting the information he had just picked up on.

Harry hadn't noticed yet. He was too busy being angry. But Ron knew that the look that had passed between the two had been one of affection. A shared affection. He could tell that Hermione was not the only one feeling it.

Once Severus had Harry calmed and away from them, Ron looked at them again. "How long?" he asked softly.

Both of them turned to look at the redhead. "What?" Hermione asked cautiously.

Ron's eyes searched hers and she felt a moment of pain at the knowledge that she had hurt him. "When did the two of you become lovers?" he queried in a soft voice.

Lucius raised an eyebrow as he looked from Hermione to Ron. Severus, Harry and Albus had turned from each other to look at the two lovers. Understanding dawned in each of their eyes.

While they had agreed that they were better off as friends, Ron had never hidden the fact that his feelings for her ran deeply still. He accepted that she didn't feel the same way. But that did not change the fact that it hurt very deeply for him to admit she had finally found someone that she did feel that way for.

Hermione moved to sit beside Ron. "You know I will always love you, Ron. I'm just not..."

Her words drifted into silence when Ron placed a finger over her lips. "It's OK, Hermione. I've always known this day would come." He looked from her to Lucius. "I just never thought it would be with... *him*."

Lucius stood in the middle of the room, waiting for the onslaught of furious questions. None came. Instead, the room was thrown into silence as each of them simply looked between him and Hermione.

Severus was the first to find his voice. "That is rather disgusting. If you want to know what I think."

Lucius smiled at his old friend. "No," he answered softly, "I don't imagine I would want to know what you, of all people, think."

Harry recovered himself. Looking at Hermione, he made a terrible face. "Why?" he asked in a voice barely above a whisper. "Have you gone daft?"

Hermione sighed and turned to face Harry. A look of mild impatience crossed her features. "Although I don't care if you know I am now in a relationship with Lucius, I didn't call you all here to discuss who I happen to have decided to shag!" Her eyes looked over each of them as if she was daring them to try to continue the subject.

When no one spoke, she took a deep breath and began to tell them of her encounter with Kingsley. All were silent as she related to them what had transpired. When she finished, Harry was the first to speak. "I never would have thought that he had a thirst for power."

Lucius moved to sit down beside Ron and gave the younger man a passing glance. "Neither had I. But then again, I have learned many lessons over the last couple of years that show that people don't always do as you expect."

Ron shifted uncomfortably before looking from Lucius to Harry. "I can imagine that enough power would corrupt anyone." He paused and sighed, "Just like certain events would make a person change sides."

Harry looked from Ron, to Hermione, then back to Lucius. Lowering his voice, he made eye contact with the older wizard. "I'm not sure I would ever be able to trust you."

The blond man shrugged. "Yes, well I don't imagine I will be very thrilled with the prospect of trusting you with my daughter when the time comes, either." All eyes

displayed confusion, except for those of Albus Dumbledore. His twinkled merrily.

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Once Harry and Ron were sent with Serenity to see the rooms they would be staying in, Albus had excused himself to travel back to Hogwarts and alert the Order of the news of the spy that had been expertly placed among them.

Severus moved to sit across from Lucius. His eyes studied his friend suspiciously. For what seemed an eternity they sat in silence.

Finally finding his voice, he criticized Lucius' judgment. "She will never be Narcissa." He admonished.

Lucius smiled, but stared for long moments into the fire. "You are right, Severus. She will never be Narcissa." He turned to face his friend. "No one will. But Hermione is special by her own rights." His face seemed to soften at the mention of her name. "She has helped me to be able to move on where I thought I never could."

Severus sighed. "How do you know you are not just using her? You have been with no one since Narcissa's death. What if you are only on the... what is the word? Rebound?"

Lucius reached out to grasp his cane. "I have never felt like this before, *old friend*. If it is a rebound I am feeling, then it is more powerful than any love I have ever felt before it."

The two regarded each other in silence. Light mingled with dark in the battle of their eyes before Lucius stood and made his way gracefully from the room.

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Shocking Arguments

Chapter 13 of 19

Hermione discovers Harry's temper... She also discovers something she hadn't realized.

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### Shocking Arguments

The next morning, Hermione found Harry sitting in the library. He was searching through the text of a certain dark arts book. His demeanor seemed almost urgent as he searched through it.

Sitting down across from him, she watched as he continued on, oblivious to her presence. Finally, she leaned forward and spoke softly. "Good morning, Harry."

Slowly, Harry raised his eyes to meet hers. Then, closing the book, he cleared his throat. "I just want to know one thing." His voice was dangerously low.

Hermione took a deep breath and sat back in the chair. "Okay?"

Harry's eyes never left hers. "Have you fucked him?"

Taken back by his abrupt and rude question, Hermione dropped her jaw. "What? Oh dear Merlin! What does my sexual life have anything to do with why you're here?"

Harry stood suddenly, his chair crashing to the floor. "It has *everything* to do with why I am here!"

His eyes searched hers and there was a fury there that she had never seen before. Standing herself, she glanced at the open doorway before turning back to glare at him. "I love him, Harry." She shook her head and crossed her arms in front of her chest defensively. "I don't expect you to understand, or even like the fact. But if you are my friend... you'll accept it."

For more moments than either could count they just stood in silence. When Harry finally took the book in his hands and sent it sailing across the room, Hermione flinched. "I'm not sure I can be your friend anymore, Hermione," he spoke in a furious whisper. "I look at you right now... I don't even know you! The girl I knew would never want anything to do with that blond bastard!"

Hurt by the vehemence of his words, she swiped the tears that were now coursing down her cheeks with the palm of her hand.

"Harry—" she started, but he raised his hand, silencing her words.

Moving to stand closer to her, he continued. "You are a different person than you used to be." He looked her up and down, adding, "You disgust me!" Turning, he swept out of the library, leaving her staring after him, mortified.

Shocked, she sank back into the chair she had been sitting in. There had been times in their past when they had disagreed about something. But she had never witnessed an anger in him such as this one. Burying her head in her hands, she gave in to the tears that now consumed her.

When she felt a gentle hand on her back, she looked up, half expecting to find Ron there. Instead, Severus was looking at her through an intense gaze. "He reminds me of someone I once knew very well," he said softly.

Once again wiping the tears away, Hermione asked, "Who?"

Snape sighed and moved to sit in the chair across from her. "Me," he said simply.

Baffled, Hermione sat back and studied his face. She had never seen anything to make her think Harry and Severus had any common ground between them. But at his words, she wondered. "I fail to make a connection," she said innocently.

Severus smirked. "Miss Granger, do you know why I hated Harry's father so much?"

Hermione shrugged. "I'd always assumed it was because of the way Sirius, Remus, and he treated you when you attended Hogwarts."

He nodded. "Yes, that is true, there was that. But there was also Lily."

For the first time in all of the years that she had known him, Snape's face lit up. The mere mention of Harry's mother's name seemed to take years off of his appearance.

"Lily Potter?" Her voice trembled in awe. "You were in love with her?" she asked in a whisper.

Severus nodded. "Oh, yes." He actually smiled at Hermione's expression. "I fell head over heels in love with her. My second year in Hogwarts, she was the only person, aside from Lucius, that treated me as if I was worth anything." He spared her a glance at that and sneered a little. "Oh, please! Do pick your chin up off the floor, won't you?"

Hermione had been staring at him wide-eyed and open-mouthed at that point. When he caught her, she covered her mouth with her hand, and shook her head. "I didn't... I mean I... You never... But then, why would you?"

Realizing how incredibly stupid she was sounding, Hermione shut her mouth and looked down at her hands that were fisted in her lap. *Well, that was incredibly stupid behavior!* she chastised herself silently.

"Yes, it was." Severus agreed to her unspoken thought, confirming her theory that he knew Legilimancy. "But it is not my point." He continued, explaining, "Harry loves you, Miss Granger. Not as a sister, or even a friend. He loves you as a man loves a woman. He gave you up willingly when he thought that you and Ron were destined, because you were both his best friends and he wanted your happiness.

"But now, you are not *only* going to be with Ron, you are choosing to be with someone that Harry has hated ever since he has known of the man." Severus straightened in the chair, gave her a pointed look, and asked, "Really, how would you expect him to react?"

Hermione considered this. She had never even considered that Harry would think of her *irthat way*. It was almost more than her mind could fathom.

Suddenly, her stomach did a nauseous flip, and she covered her mouth in alarm. "I'm sorry, Professor. I'm suddenly not feeling very well." Rising, she fled the room so quickly, she missed seeing Ron staring after her in the hallway. A nonplussed expression on his face.

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When she reached her bathroom, she emptied the contents of her stomach into the toilet. Thankfully, the toilet was charmed to flush immediately upon receiving contents from an outside source.

Once the nausea had passed, she moved to the sink and used a damp cloth to wipe her face. The cool dampness of the cloth felt good against her skin. Leaning against the sink, she closed her eyes and sighed.

"I've heard that saltine crackers help," the charmed mirror spoke softly.

Hermione looked up to see the reflection staring back at her. A look of motherly understanding on its features. "Help with what?"

The mirror smirked at her. "Why, the morning sickness, of course!"

Hermione's eyes widened. "Morning sickness? I don't have morning sickness." She shook her head in denial. "That would mean that I'm...."

Hermione's reflection nodded. "Yes, you're pregnant. Dear child, didn't you know?"

Stunned, Hermione dropped the cloth in the sink and left the bathroom to go stand next to her bed, where Lucius still slept. Reaching out in a fury, she tugged angrily at the covers that were over him. "*I'm pregnant?*"

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A/N: I know... Short chapter. But I thought it was better to stop at that point. Lucius has some serious explaining to do... As to how he already knew, I think...

## Awakenings

Chapter 14 of 19

Voldemort wants what???

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Awakenings

Lucius awoke to the covers being jerked off of his nude backside. Leisurely, he began to stretch, but froze when the words Hermione spoke began to sink in! "*I'm pregnant?*" He closed his eyes for a moment before rolling over to face the angry witch that hovered over him.

An attempt at an innocent smile played across his features. "My darling!" he exclaimed. "What wonderful news!"

Hermione took a step away from the bed to keep him from touching her. "Don't *you dare* 'darling' me! You knew! Didn't you?" she asked angrily.

Part of her was wondering, *Why was she was angry with him? He could not have planned on getting her pregnant, could he?* Doubts surfaced, causing her to feel a moments fear. "Did you plan this, Lucius? Did you decide to get me with child before I even arrived?"

In an instant, Lucius was off the bed, in all his naked glory, stalking her. "Of course!" His voice was cold and unemotional. "Me being such a piece of work. I must have had every intention of seducing you! My Slytherin cunning demanded that I sweep you off your feet and impregnate you before you could even think to realize my plan!" He laughed mockingly. "Silly Gryffindor child!" he sneered. "You never knew what hit you."

The fury in his eye was lessened only by the pain she saw shining beneath. "I'm sorr..." Before she could complete her apology, he had gripped her arms and pulled her body flush against his.

"Perhaps, I should rephrase my answer, Hermione." He pressed himself so close to her that she could feel the swelling of his arousal against her thigh.

As if in answer to his obvious desire, her own pulse quickened. "Lucius," she moaned as his arms wrapped around her and he buried his face in her neck.

His voice, when it came, was filled with an emotion that made her fears dissipate. "I had no hope for ever falling in love again. The gods know I don't deserve it. But when you came, it was as if the heavens were smiling down upon me. They not only allowed you to give me your heart, but they have blessed our love with a child."

He pulled away from her just enough to look her in the eyes. "Please believe that I would never try to control your decisions. I love you and I want to share my life with you."

Letting her go, he stepped away from her. "I want this child with you, Hermione. But I want you to want her as well," he sighed deeply, shaking his head. "Otherwise, her existence wouldn't be a very happy one."

Going down on his knees before her, he pulled her into his arms at her waist, lying his head on her belly. "And I want her childhood to be happy."

The gesture brought tears to Hermione's eyes. His actions were so gentle, they stole her breath away. In a trembling voice she asked, "It's a girl?"

Lucius nodded, pulling away so he could look into her eyes. "Narcissa and Draco told me she would be coming to us when they told me good-bye."

Hermione took a deep breath at the mention of Draco and Narcissa. "You've seen them?"

Lucius nodded and leaned back to look into her eyes. "The night when we first made love." He smiled awkwardly. "Draco asked a boon."

Hermione raised an eyebrow at his words. "Did he? What was it?"

His gaze never wavered from her face. "He wants us to name her Hope. He says it would be a fitting name."

At that, Hermione smiled and nodded. "That sounds like a good name for her. I rather like that name."

His arms circled around her once more, and for a moment, it seemed the entire world was standing still for them. When he spoke, his voice was hushed. "Thank you, Hermione."

She toyed with his hair, asking, "For what?"

"For giving me a reason to live again."

For once, words failed her. Going down on her knees beside him, she wrapped her arms around him and kissed him deeply.

As he returned her kiss, he whispered a spell and she was suddenly as naked as he. Urging her to lie on the Persian carpet that was on the floor, his lips trailed down the expanse of her neck and shoulder.

When his tongue traced circles around her nipple, Hermione moaned and arched her back. He smiled at the sight of her offering herself up to his touch *Who would have believed that of the two of them when they were once on separate sides of this war?* he wondered to himself as his fingers drifted down past her navel. Past the thatch of dark curls, to her heated core that was already moist and throbbing for him.

Her moans began to grow when his fingers rubbed over her clit. Raising up to watch her, he slid a finger into her and smiled when he was rewarded by her impassioned, *Yesss-ss-ss,*

Hermione reached out for him and he felt a shockwave go through him when her hand closed around him. Closing his eyes, he breathed deeply as she began to stroke him.

Feeling wicked, Hermione pulled away from him, long enough to urge him to lay back on the carpet, giving her total access to his person.

Going to her knees, she smiled at Lucius' perplexed look. Then, leaning down, she slowly circled her tongue around the tip of his sex and was rewarded by his sharp intake of breath. Feeling that was approval enough for her to continue, she began to take his length into her mouth.

Eyes wide, Lucius watched as she took his cock into her mouth. He gasped as she used one hand to hold him, as her tongue circled him once more, before she began to suck him again deep into her mouth.. His eyes closed and his hands cradled her head as she drove him into a panting frenzy.

When he began to feel his orgasm threatening to come, he gripped her shoulders and urged her to mount him. Gripping her hips, he thrust upward, impaling her on his hardened length.

Gasping, Hermione began to rock on him as he lifted his hips repeatedly, causing her breathing to become moans. The friction between their bodies began building. Both crested at the same time. Her cries were echoed by his own bellow of completion.

As the last tremor passed through her, Hermione let herself succumb to the urge to lay atop him. His arms wrapped around her in a gesture of both possessiveness and protection.

Lucius felt as if for the first time in a very long time, he was whole. It was thanks to this glorious witch who rested her head in the crook of his neck. There was no way he would ever be able to tell her how much she meant to him. Her acceptance and the love she had given him had done more than just bring him companionship. It had given him back his soul.

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The room was devoid of any light, save the one candle that rested on the mantle. The furnishings within the space were limited and in poor condition. The shelves on either side of it were empty. It gave an impression of being deserted.

The only life within the room was that of two wizards, one standing on his feet in a cowardly manner. His hands trembled and constantly fretted with the frayed edge at the collar of his robes.

The other was reclining menacingly on the only piece of furniture within the room; a ragged, grey wingback chair that should have been buried along with its previous owner. With a snort of distaste, the sitting man glared at the other. "This had better be good, *Pettigrew!* I am growing less and less interested in your unexpected visits."

Peter trembled visibly at the sound of his lord's voice. "I I'm sorry, my lord. But I thought you would want to know that Kingsley has failed. Hermione is back with Lucius."

A bony hand reached up and seemed to make an outline of Peter's neck. The younger wizard began to cough and sputter. Choking, the fearful wizard fell to his knees. "Master-- forgive-- me!" he begged. "I-- bring-- more news-- than just that!"

Still vexed at having to share company with such a loathsome being as Peter Pettigrew, but curious, he relinquished the magical choke-hold he held. *This had better be*

good," he hissed through a face that no longer bore any resemblance to anything living. Flesh hung limply on his skull and his teeth were jagged and pointed.

Peter nodded excitedly. "Yes!" he exclaimed. "It could bear good news to your rebirth. That is... I mean to say... If you wouldn't mind being a female?" he added nervously.

Voldemort leaned back in his chair, considering Peter's words. "I am not a sexual creature, Pettigrew, so the sex of my next host would not matter. But," his voice grew malicious, "the witch would have to have a powerful bloodline."

Peter almost skipped excitedly. "What if I could promise you the unborn child of Hermione Granger and Lucius Malfoy?" he said hurriedly. "She is the smartest witch of her generation, and he, being the descendant of Merlin..."

Peter's voice drifted into silence at the look on his master's face. He stood, shivering as if he was buried in ice as he waited for Voldemort to speak.

"Hermione Granger is pregnant with Lucius Malfoy's child? That's nonsense!" Voldemort shook his head. "He may no longer be a Death Eater, but he would never soil his person by fucking a *Mudblood!*"

The spineless wizard took a step back in fear. "B-but they did! I-I witnessed their conversation this morning," he swore, nodding vigorously. A dirty smile spread across his features when he added, "I also witnessed just how well they fuck..."

Voldemort considered his vile servant for a moment before saying, "Really?" His tongue moved through his mouth to lick his lips that were beginning to show signs of gangrene. "You didn't happen to bring a pensieve, did you?"

Peter smiled and held out a dirty, shaky hand. Moving to bow before Voldemort, he quickly emptied his memories of the morning and offered them to the Wizard before him.

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Hermione awoke from her nap to the sound of raised voices. Gaining her feet, she threw on her dressing robe and ran out towards the entryway to find out what was going on.

"You can't have her! You filthy, disgusting pig! You don't deserve her!" Harry was standing, with his wand drawn, cornering an unarmed Lucius. Severus and Ron stood on either side. Ron was speaking softly, trying to calm Harry, but failing. Severus seemed to be trying to find a way to anchor himself between Harry and Lucius, his target.

"Harry," Ron began, "this is what Hermione wants. She loves him. They are happy. She's right. He's not the same man we once knew."

Lucius remained silent. He watched the younger wizard desperately trying to talk some sense into his friend.

Harry shook his head. "He's used some kind of spell. He had to. She would never find that bastard," he gestured at Lucius, "attractive!" He snarled up his nose in disgust. "I mean, look at him! He's not even a man anymore! He's a *freak!*"

With lightning fast speed, Hermione gripped her wand. "*Expelliarmus!*" In response, Harry's wand went flying from his grasp. Four sets of startled eyes turned to gaze upon her.

With a look akin to fury, Hermione descended the stairs. "That is uncalled for, Harry. He is *NOT* a freak! You, of all people should be able to understand how an experience such as losing one's family can change someone."

Lucius stepped closer to her. "It's all right, Hermione. I understand how he feels." He shook his head. "I am not exactly comforting to look at."

Harry whirled back, advancing on Lucius. "Shut up, you wanker! You've mystified her into believing you are worthy of redemption. But I know better!"

Before he could even think to avoid her, Hermione slapped Harry. The sound echoed through the hall, leaving both of them stunned.

Harry regarded Hermione with a look of shock. She returned his stare with tear-filled eyes. After a moment, she shook her head and whispered, "I think you need to go now."

Turning, she made her way back up the stairs. Ron made to speak but she just waved him silent. "Just go. I cannot face you when you are like this, Harry." She stopped on the staircase, and without turning back, added, "You told me this morning that you didn't think you knew me anymore? Well, at this moment, I am quite certain that I *never* really knew you."

With those words, she ascended the stairs and left all four men behind. The shock was stagnate in the air. Ron cleared his throat. "Surely, she didn't mean it." His voice was hopeful, but unconvincing.

Harry's shoulders sagged as he heaved a sigh. "Yes, she did. What's more is that she was right. I see less and less of the person I once was during this war. I expect that by the time this battle is finally won, I shall be nothing more than an empty shell of myself.

Turning to look at Lucius, he pinned him with a venomous glare. "You say you love her? Then I expect you to take care of her." Once the words left his mouth, he turned and fled the room.

In that instant, Ron found himself wondering if there would ever be another point when the trio would ever be in the same room together again. Looking to Lucius, he said softly, "For what it's worth, I do see you as a changed man. Take care of her, will you?" He smiled sadly before moving to join his friend on the trip back to Grimmauld.

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A/N: WOW!!! Where did that come from? Don't ask me! I have no clue what will happen until I sit down and start typing!... Hope each of you enjoy it! More to come soon. I promise!

## Arguments and Justifications

Chapter 15 of 19

Severus and Lucius argue. A surprise guest makes an appearance.

JessicaDamien is the fantastic Beta that helps make my work readable. Anything else after that, the fantastic Notsosaintly points out. If there are mistakes after that, they are surely, all mine!

JKR Invented the world, and the characters. I just came up with the plot!

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Arguments and Justifications

Lucius sat silently, watching Severus pace back and forth before the fire. His comrade had been ranting for the last hour about the fight between the two men earlier.

"Really, Lucius! Hermione? Of course you should have known that Harry would react this way. I mean, you're old enough to be her father, for Merlin's sake! Did you just think he would say, *'Well, Hermione wants you, so I can accept you?'*" Severus tutted angrily and shook his head.

Lucius rolled his eyes and stared at a point on the far wall. "I never planned on this happening, Severus. It wasn't like I ~~was~~ooking to find someone to steal my very heart from me!" he said, sounding somewhat like a chastised child.

Severus turned and observed his blond friend for what seemed an eternity before he finally spoke again. "It was very irresponsible of you!"

At that, Lucius glared angrily at Severus. "And did you *plan* to fall in love with Lily?" he asked irritably. "You *knew* that she belonged to James. Yet you fell so deeply that you begged her, the night before her wedding, to run away with you! Was that responsible? How are you any better than I?"

Severus stopped his pacing for a moment and turned to regard his friend with eyes dark with pain. "I never deserved her. I knew that. Hell!"

The two wizards stared at each other for a long moment before Lucius sighed. "One of these days, a witch is going to come along," he shook his head, "and you will not care anything of age or anything else. All that will matter is the person you become in her presence."

Severus leaned back against the bookshelf and crossed his arms. "I doubt that! Not only have I never found another that moved me the way Lily did, but there's not a single one out there that doesn't tremble in my company."

The blond smirked. "Well, perhaps if you smiled once in a while..." Just as he was making his observation, Serenity entered the room, a worried look on her face.

"Begging your pardon, sirs, but the young Miss Weasley is here."

Lucius' brows furrowed in confusion. "I'm sure she only wants to see Hermione. That is quite all right."

Serenity shook her head. "No, sir. She wants to speak with you."

The two wizards exchanged glances before Lucius nodded in the house-elf's direction. "By all means, show her in."

Serenity nodded and left the room. Lucius glanced at Severus. "Didn't she become one of your best pupils year before last?"

Severus nodded. "Her grades were comparable to Hermione's in her last year. She took an apprenticeship with the Potion master in America, at the Salem University, this year. I haven't seen her since her graduation."

No sooner had he spoken than the young witch entered the room. She was dressed in Muggle slacks and a green silk blouse that was fitted. The ensemble gave a very flattering view of her figure. Her long auburn hair was pulled back into a French braid that went halfway to her bum.

Walking directly to Lucius, she never even spared Severus a glance. She tried to quell her startled gasp before it escaped her when she saw Lucius' face. Despite her shock at his appearance, her manner was all business. "I only have one thing to say," she said in a no-nonsense voice. Her green eyes sparkled with a furious fire.

Lucius nodded. "Very well, my dear."

Ginny squared her shoulders, her expression deadly serious as she spoke. "If you hurt her, I shall hunt you to the ends of the earth, and no power, save that which is in Heaven, will save you from my wrath."

Lucius smiled. "Hermione has a good friend in you, Miss Weasley. If I ever hurt her, I shall deliver myself to you, posthaste."

At his words, Ginny relaxed, then glanced around the room. Her eyes fell on Severus, who was standing, staring in stunned wonder, as if a naked goddess had just danced into the room. "Oh! H-hello, Professor. How are you today?"

Recovering himself, he covered his once slack-jawed expression with a smirk and looked away, as if bored. "I am as well as can be, given the circumstances."

Ginny raised an eyebrow at his response, but only nodded, then turned back to Lucius. "Do you mind if I see her before I leave?"

The wizard inclined his head. "As a matter of fact, I insist you stay for a few days. Hermione could use a friendly face, and I'm sure Severus would love to hear about how your apprenticeship is faring."

Ginny bit her bottom lip before saying haltingly, "I wouldn't want to impose..."

"You wouldn't be imposing," Severus cut in. "As a matter of fact, I demand you stay so I may be able to partake in some intelligent conversation for the remainder of my time here." He gestured towards Lucius in a sign of disgust. "If I have to sit through one more of their affectionate exchanges, I do believe I shall vomit," he sneered.

Ginny smiled broadly before recovering, and nodded. "Very well. I can spare a few days. If you are sure it is not an inconvenience."

Lucius looked from Severus to Ginny and smiled. "No, my dear. It is no inconvenience at all."

Returning his smile, Ginny then turned and exited the room. Lucius nodded in Snape's direction. "Now, she's even younger than Hermione, yet you looked at her with the eyes of a starving man."

Severus turned away from the door, through which he had watched the young witch exit through, and glared into laughing grey eyes. "She is simply intelligent conversation compared to the two of *you*."

Lucius chuckled. "Of course." He let the discussion drop to save his friend any further agitation. But, the truth was, he knew that expression Severus wore well. He, himself, had begun to wear it more and more when he had first fallen in love with his little know-it-all.

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Hermione sat on the bench in the middle of the rose garden. Books were scattered all around her as she jotted notes down on parchment.

Ginny watched her for a moment, smiling at seeing that her friend was ever as she had once been. Moving to stand beside her, she spoke softly. "I daresay, when you die, you'll probably be buried with your books, for fear of running out of reading material!"

Hermione gasped, dropping her quill as she turned to face her. Recognition made her jump up with a laugh and wrap Ginny in a warm hug. "Ginny, what a wonderful surprise! I'm so happy to see you!" She pulled back and glanced around. "Did your mum come?"

Ginny half snorted, shaking her head. "No, and I daresay, I'd not be here either if she'd known I had intended to come. But, that's enough on the subject." She looked Hermione over, thoughtful. "Are you doing well? Tell me truly, is it your wish to be here?"

Hermione smiled, then nodded. "I don't think I have ever been so happy, Ginny."

The redhead looked deeply into the brunette's eyes. "No spells to coerce you? A potion, perhaps? I mean, Hermione, he isn't exactly easy to look at."

Hermione immediately grew rigid and stepped away from her friend. "He is everything I could ever want, Ginny. It is not his face which I love, but his soul." She shook her head angrily.

The younger witch raised her hands in an offer of peace. "I only wanted to be sure, 'Mione. You know I don't care much about outward appearances either."

At that, Hermione smiled. "He's here, you know."

Ginny nodded. "Yes, I've already seen him." She smiled in an almost bashful way.

Hermione clicked her tongue before saying, "You are no longer his student. He might be open to your advances now."

The other witch laughed. "Even if he noticed that this time I actually have breasts, he is not the sort of wizard that would react well to my approaching him. He has to be the one to make the first move."

Hermione started laughing. "Snape? Make the first move? Oh no, you are going to have to at least give him some signs that you are open to the possibility of his affection. Trust me."

Ginny gave Hermione a curious look before asking, "How are you sure?"

Hermione moved to sit down, and gestured for her friend to join her. After the younger witch sat, Hermione told her of the first woman Severus had ever loved. Ginny sat in stunned silence as the story of Severus loving Lily unfolded.

Finally, when she found her voice, "He loved Lily? Harry's mother?" She shook her head. "No wonder he hated James so. Then, when Harry came to Hogwarts, he must have served as a reminder that the woman he had loved had not loved him."

Hermione nodded. "Yes. And, now, you are wanting him to make advances to you? He has this internal fear of rejection." She patted Ginny's hand. "You'll have abide long, if you are really going to wait for his advances."

Before Ginny could respond, storm clouds that had begun to gather let the first drops of rain fall.

Laughing, both witches stood and collected the books and parchment before making a mad dash out of the garden and into the house.

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Standing out on the balcony, Severus and Lucius had been watching the witches conversing. They had no idea what the two of them were talking about, but Severus wanted to know.

"They seem to be quite serious in their conversation," he observed in a soft tone.

Lucius shook his head. "No, my friend. I shan't let you eavesdrop on their conversation. If you want to know, you must ask them and even then, I doubt that they would tell you."

The dark wizard shrugged. "No matter. It is probably none of my affair anyway. Suffice to say, it is probably you they are speaking of, anyway." Turning to face his friend, he asked, "Are you truly going to marry her?"

"I certainly hope she'll marry me," he answered. "Otherwise, I'll have to follow her to the ends of the earth making her life miserable until she agrees."

Severus smiled at the last comment. "I hope, then, that she accepts your proposal, for your sake."

When the rain came, they had already made their way inside. They were waiting in the entryway when the two very soaked witches finally came inside the manor.

Lucius immediately wrapped Hermione in a large towel and swept her off to get her out of her wet things.

Ginny and Severus were left standing in the entryway, staring at each other. Taking in her wet, but voluptuous appearance, Severus cleared his throat and put on his best scowl. "Well, are you just going to stand there, dripping on Malfoy's Persian rug? Silly chit! You're going to catch your death standing there like that!"

Sullen and hurt by his cruel words, Ginny sighed and left him without so much as a word.

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A/N: Poor Severus... He just has no clue how to be nice.

## Hidden Truths

*Chapter 16 of 19*

The truth behind the change in Ginny's eye color comes out. And... a Journey begins for an unexpected couple...

My wonderful Beta, JessicaDamien makes my stuff more readable. Notsosaintly usually catches anything she misses. Any mistakes after that are all my own.

Of course, this all belongs to JKR... The only thing I can lay claim to, is the plot!

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#### Hidden Truths

Severus stood at the foot of the stairs and watched as Serenity led Ginny away. *Probably showing her to a room that's entirely too close to mine*, he thought dismally. Taking a deep breath, he turned and walked to the doorway and stared absently at the rain. He had been alone for so long, it was beginning to do things to him.

What measure of desperate must he be to look at Miss Weasley and actually feel lust? He admitted to himself freely enough that Hermione had grown into a beautiful young woman. He had even entertained ideas of pursuing a relationship with her once the war was over. If Lucius had not gotten to her first.

Even as the thoughts played in his head, he banished them. *No, that would just be too strange*, he told himself impatiently. Hermione was just too annoying for him to entertain any ideas of romance. It was better for Lucius to have her. *But Ginny...*

Turning abruptly, he eyed the now-vacant staircase. She was no longer a child. That much was obvious. But what manner of woman had she become? If she was anything like her mother, then she needed to be pursued by the likes of Potter. Someone who wanted and needed a large family.

But 'family' was not an idea that Severus catered to. He was hardly fond enough of children to deal with their antics during the school year. To consider having one of his own running around made him feel somewhat nauseous.

However, there was something new about Miss Weasley. A certain light in her eyes, confidence in her step and an aura that hinted to true power. She had grown from a rather uninteresting child that existed in the shadow of Harry and the other two to someone that followed her own path now. Where that path had led her was something that Severus was very curious to discover.

Resigning himself to the idea of watching her carefully while she was here, he made his way back to the library. The lone Chronicle of Merlin was the closest thing they had found so far to make headway in the war against He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. Too bad the location of the other books was such a mystery.

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Hermione lay naked on the coverlet, smiling up at Lucius as he rid himself of his clothes. His eyes devoured her as he sat on the side of the bed. His hand trembled as he reached out to caress her cheek. Smiling gently, he whispered, "So beautiful. Everything about you... inside and out... is so amazingly beautiful to me."

Raising up, Hermione kissed Lucius deeply. One hand closed around the back of his neck, drawing him ever closer, while the other closed around his already rigid manhood. She smiled against his mouth when he moaned at her touch. She murmured softly, "Make love to me."

Needing no further encouragement, Lucius covered her body with his and used his fingers to touch her already moist core. The tight wetness assured him she was ready for his hardness. Positioning himself over her, he thrust forward, eliciting a deep moan from her as he filled her depths.

Hermione held onto him, wrapping her legs around him as he rode her slowly. Pulling back, he watched as he almost unsheathed himself from her, only to thrust forward when she whimpered her discontent at his leaving.

Thrusting forward once more, he smiled when her eyes widened, and she lifted her hips to meet him when he began to move faster over her. Leaning down, he used the tip of his tongue to run circles around the pink bud of her nipple.

Moaning his name loudly, Hermione arched herself into his kiss. She had been teetering ever close to the edge. When his tongue caressed her already puckered nipple, it drove her beyond the barriers of reason.

Feeling her release, he quickened his pace to help sustain her completion. When she began to come down, he slowed just enough to keep himself from coming. *Not yet*, he thought as he began to ride her again. Slow, but powerful thrusts made her insides quiver as he drove her slowly into another orgasm. She cried out loudly as he quickened his pace once more, this time riding the tidal wave between them with her.

As his seed poured hot and fast into her, he cried out and pulled her closer into his embrace. When he let himself lay atop her, they both worked to catch their breath. Just as he leaned down to kiss her deeply, they both heard beating on the chamber door, followed by an angry voice from outside that made them both break out in peels of laughter.

"Why, in the *bleeding hell* can you two not remember a **SILENCING CHARM?**"

Snape had apparently been on his way to his chambers and was passing by just as they had reached their completion. Lucius recovered from his laughter long enough to yell back. "I'm sorry, ole boy. I'm just so very happy, I can't seem to remember such trivial things!"

They heard a muttered oath, then footsteps leading away. Lucius rolled off of her and pulled her into his arms.

Laying her hands on his chest, she rested her chin on them, her eyes never leaving his. After a moment, he asked, "What?"

Biting her bottom lip, her hand moved to caress the light spray of hair across his chest. He waited for her to ask whatever question she had in her head. He didn't have to wait long.

"Are you really?"

"Am I really what?" He feigned ignorance.

She smiled again and took a deep breath. "Are you really that happy?"

Lucius lost his smile as his face turned so serious she knew a moment of panic. His words, however, set her mind at ease. "I never dared to dream that I could once again know such happiness."

Reaching out, Hermione ran her hand over the scars on his face. Lucius trembled slightly at the touch, but held still for her inspection. Closing his eyes, he waited for it to end. His breath left him when she replaced her hand with her lips. Gently, slowly she began to kiss every inch of the injured half of his face.

It was more healing to feel her acceptance of his scars than anything any mediwitch had ever tried to do to ease his pain. Whenever she touched him, he forgot his appearance. He felt he was... just a man. And to her, he was beautiful.

When she drew away from him, they just looked at each other, and he offered her a warm, happy smile. Taking in the color of her eyes, he was reminded of her friend. It made him remember that Ginny's eyes were unfamiliar.

"Hermione," he questioned, "what color are Ginny's eyes?"

Hermione smiled. "Why?"

He shook his head and shrugged. "It's just... well, I thought her eyes were brown. But today, in the library, they were emerald green. Do you think she used a glamour? She doesn't strike me as the type to use such frivolous things."

Hermione went stock still in his arms. "Green?" she paused. "Are you sure?"

Suddenly worried that he had alarmed her, he nodded. "Yes. I'm quite certain." The words were barely out of his mouth when Hermione was up and dressing. He sat up and made to dress as well. If she sensed danger in her friend, or whoever was claiming to be her friend, she would not face it alone.

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Ginny sat in the private library, the ancient text balanced on her lap as she held her hands out over it. Her eyes glowed an unearthly shade of green as each page within the book turned. Her face held a dangerously serious expression on it, as she seemed to be examining each word, memorizing each phrase.

Hermione charged swiftly into the room and stopped short, horrified at the sight that met her. Lucius was not far behind, and he collided into Hermione when he entered the room. Both stood in silent shock at the scene before them.

Severus moved with more caution into the room behind them. Catching Malfoy's eye, he gestured for him to follow him back out of the room. With a worried glance in Hermione's direction, he eased back to the doorway, but would go no further.

Lucius spoke softly. "What has happened to her?" He pointed in Ginny's direction, before glaring at his friend. "Is that not Ginny?"

Severus nodded. "Yes, that is Ginny. But she is no longer the simple witch she once was."

Hermione turned at his words. "What do you mean? Is she possessed? What is she doing, anyway? Is there nothing we can do to help her?"

Severus opened his mouth to speak, but instead of his voice, it was Ginny that spoke from behind them. "He means I am no longer just a witch. No, I *amot* possessed." She took a deep breath, and released it in a sigh, setting the book aside. "Please, sit and let me explain."

Hermione and Lucius both moved to sit on the sofa opposite her. Severus crossed his arms and smirking, leaned against the bookshelf, waiting.

Choosing to ignore Snape and his rather ill-planned attempt at intimidation, Ginny gestured to the book she had just set down. "Lucius, you know what that book is, correct?"

Lucius nodded. "Yes. It is one of the seven books of Merlin."

Ginny smiled. "It is the only one that has not been taken to Avalon." Her smile faded. "It is the biggest reason I am here."

Lucius quirked an eyebrow in Ginny's direction. "I fail to understand--"

"And I am explaining it to you, if you will but give me a moment." She answered in a soft, but firm voice. When Lucius relaxed and took Hermione's hand, Ginny continued her explanation.

"When King Arthur died, his body was taken to Avalon. Merlin sealed him in a tomb that was impossible to be intruded upon by any mortal man. It is in that same spot where the round table, Excalibur, and all of the Chronicles, save this one, are buried as well.

"When Merlin chose to have this book left within the grasp of his descendents, the Malfoys, he also chose that once every thousand years, a new guardian would be added to the ranks of the Ladies of Avalon."

Severus, who had been standing silent up until that point, spoke in a shocked voice. "You are the next chosen Guardian of Avalon?" His eyes were wide and he looked at Ginny with a new level of respect. All of his childhood, he had heard stories of Avalon from his mother. She had told him that only a female could be chosen as a guardian and that his great-grandmother had been among their ranks.

Ginny nodded, although her eyes were only on Hermione at that moment. Moving to kneel before her long time friend, she said gently, "I did want to see you, Hermione. I did want to make sure you were safe and happy." She shook her head. "But I also had to come to ensure that this book was not in danger of falling into the wrong hands." Her now emerald eyes searched Hermione's. "Can you forgive me of my deceit?"

Hermione watched Ginny for a moment, then smiled. "Are you happy, Ginny?"

The redheaded witch chuckled. "I am no longer following in Harry's and Ron's shadows. My own path has been set. Although, I must ask that all of you within this room keep my secret." Her smile was sad. "It isn't time for anyone else to know."

Hermione smiled at her friend's words. "Then I could never be angry at you."

Lucius had been watching her silently as she spoke to Hermione. He was suddenly confused. "But, why did you come just to check and see if the book was safe after all this time? Surely, you know it is safe, after all the time it has been here."

Ginny inclined her head at his words. "Yes, but I couldn't offer to take someone with me to recover the other books for your use if there was any danger in bringing them back." Her eyes searched his face. "Do you understand?"

Hermione fairly squealed in response to Ginny's words. "You mean, the Guardians will let us use the Chonicles? All of them?"

Ginny remained solemn, but nodded. "Yes. In becoming a Guardian, I bonded with all the other guardians. I am one with Queen Mab; Morgaine; Lady Vivienne, who is the Lady of the Lake, and

the Lady Igraine, Arthur's own mother, as well. Their knowledge and ways are my own."

Hermione's smile was radiant as she embraced her friend. "This is wonderful news! Absolutely fabulous!" She turned to look at Lucius. "Finally, we may be able to finally find a way to truly help Harry defeat him!"

Lucius smiled, and was about to nod his agreement when, out of the corner of his eye, he caught sight of something small scampering across the room. His expression became deadly, and he hissed the name, "*Pettigrew*," as he stood and retrieved his wand.

Ginny was faster, and within seconds, with only the flick of her hand, she had Pettigrew suspended in air. He squealed and writhed, but could not break free of the magical bonds that held him.

Reaching into her pocket, she withdrew four crystals and placed them on the floor surrounding the rat, before uttering a chant that was even older than anything Severus had heard. The rat began to grow, changing shape, becoming human, instead of rodent.

In mere moments, Pettigrew lay on the floor before them, stinking of rat feces and ugly as ever. Hermione and Ginny both fought the urge to hold their noses. Severus and



Lucius glared at the pitiful excuse for a wizard.

He tried to scamper away from the center of the room, but when he came in line with the crystals, he suffered a near execution. Lightening danced around his head, and he shrunk back, crying out in fear. "The master will come for me. He won't tolerate"

"Shut your disgusting, foul mouth!" Lucius cut him off. He looked at Ginny. "Will that hold?"

Ginny motioned to the gems. "As long as none of you move the stones."

Lucius grabbed Hermione and put her behind him as he backed a safe distance away from the man sulking on the floor.

Ginny was still watching Pettigrew as she spoke. "Voldemort already has plans that have to do with the two of you. And your unborn child."

Hermione gasped and Lucius swung around to look accusingly at Pettigrew. The dirty man simply scowled and made to wipe his non-existent whiskers. "He may make use of you and anyone close to you, anytime he chooses, Lucius. You should know that by now, surely."

Severus moved to stand beside Ginny. "Are we still allowed access to those books?" he asked. His eyes never left Pettigrew as he spoke.

Ginny sighed. "But someone must come with me. It takes a second, outside power to balance mine when I open the tombs."

Severus nodded his understanding. "Then I will go with you." Turning to Lucius, "Get the Aurors here to escort that...*thing* to Azkaban."

When Lucius agreed, he turned back to Ginny and asked, "What do we need?"

Ginny bridged the gap between them. With no semblance of a smile, she took his hands. "You need nothing to go where we are going, save my touch."

Before Hermione and Lucius could even blink, they were gone.

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A/N: I do hope that each of you enjoy the newest twist in my plot...

Darkness in Tombs

Chapter 17 of 19

Ginny takes Severus to King Arthur's resting place to retrieve the books. Pettigrew taunts Hermione.

A/N: Just a little note, so everyone knows. Yes, I have read *The Mists of Avalon*. No, I am not going to be using much of the information from that book in this story. Although I am a fan of her work, I do not have any intention of copying her ideas. I already borrow enough from JKR. I don't want to take anymore from someone else.

As far as a Disclaimer: JKR is the owner of anything you recognize. Anything you don't came out of my imagination. And as far as any tie to Camelot, or Merlin... That story has so many different versions at this point, I doubt anyone will mind me playing with it... On the off chance that they do... Uhm... I mean no offense. I'm just enjoying the ideas of WHAT IF?

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Darkness in Tombs

Severus had closed his eyes when Ginny Weasley had taken his hands. He felt for a few moments as if the ground beneath him were tilting, only to find when he opened his eyes that they were in a cavern of sorts. Torches were lit along the walls, lighting the crude hallway where they now stood. He took in their surroundings as Ginny stepped away from him.

Turning, he found himself staring at the paintings on the walls that depicted a story. In many ways, they were much like hieroglyphics, except that as he stood staring at them, the pictures began to move.

For several moments he watched, mesmerized. He was drawn so deeply into the story that was depicted through the pictures that Ginny startled him when she spoke to him from behind. "Come with me. The books are stored in this chamber."

Turning, he looked in the direction in which she pointed. He felt a strange sense of loss at not being able to stay and observe the rest of the tale the walls told.

As if sensing his distress, Ginny turned back to him. "I can bring you back another time if you like, and you can sit glued to the report it tells as if you were watching Muggle television."

With a nod, Severus followed her, but not without noticing all of the different scenes represented along the walls. When she led him into a darkened room that held only one candle, he dropped his jaw in awe.

There, within a glass case, was King Arthur. His face seemed vibrant and alive. It was as if he had died only yesterday and had yet to begin decomposing. Amazed, Severus moved closer to inspect the man within the case.

Ginny stood for a moment and let him take in what he was seeing. When he turned a questioning expression to her, she smiled and explained, "Merlin charmed his cadaver to remain forever young. Ageless and beautiful for all eternity."

Severus raised an eyebrow at that. "Why? I know he was Arthur, but he was still merely a Muggle."

Ginny met his gaze and pursed her lips impatiently. "A Muggle with a great vision. If the world had followed Arthur's lead, then there would be no animosity of Muggles. Wizards and Muggles would now live side by side, in peace."

Severus snorted and shook his head. "There was no chance of that from the beginning. Too many a man thirsts for power. They seek to enslave that which does not belong to them. That is true of all mortal men."

Ginny inclined her head. "As I said, *if* the world had followed his example. But of course, that would have only happened in a perfect world." Her gaze locked with his. "And we know this world is far from perfect, don't we, Professor Snape?"

Turning back to the man within the clear crystal casket, she spoke softly. "As to your question of why Merlin did this for a mere Muggle," she smiled. "He loved Arthur as he would a son. He had practically raised him after a certain point in his life. What wouldn't you do," she asked softly, "for someone you loved?"

Severus contemplated her words and opened his mouth to make a flippant remark, but she had already turned and was moving to the other side of the room. "The books are here."

Not liking that she had dismissed the subject before he could even respond, Severus followed her with a huff. "I'll have you know that I have indeed loved." He scowled menacingly. "It brought me nothing but pain."

Ginny turned back to look at him. "Oh, I see. So you believe that if you give your love, it must be rewarded? Love isn't something you can use to barter for things. Love is a gift that you give freely. Not something that is to be used to gain a prize."

Severus stepped closer to her. "What would you know of it? You're too young to have even felt an ounce of the pain I have in my lifetime due to loving someone." His dark eyes bore into hers, his breathing becoming unsteady in his fury.

Sighing, Ginny squared her shoulders and closed the gap between them. Standing so close that their bodies could almost touch, she spoke softly. "I know you have felt pain, Severus. But you should not think that you are the only one to have loved, but not had that love returned."

Her discourse was so soft, that he had to bend down slightly to even hear the next words she spoke. "I have loved someone for a very long time without even the hope of that love being returned." Her eyes were sad when next she spoke. "He sees me as nothing but a bother, and probably a waste of his time."

Severus felt an unusual emotion coursing through him. The desire to take her in his arms was almost unbearable. He found himself leaning ever closer to her. Just when his lips could almost touch hers, she turned away from him. Suddenly the spell was broken, leaving him feeling strangely light-headed and confused.

Baffled, Severus turned in a full circle, wondering what enchantment was worked within these walls that would make him want to kiss her. The desire still tugged at him, but it had lessened. Shaking his head, he moved to follow her to the table upon which the books sat.

She took two in her small hands, and turned to place them in his. He was watching her closely, and when she smiled at him, but avoided his gaze, he gave voice to his question. "What was that? It was some kind of magic...that much, I know. But it was unlike anything else I have ever felt. A love spell, perhaps?"

Ginny nodded, but still refused to meet his eyes. "Almost, but not entirely." She gestured at the cavern surrounding them. "This place was built with the protective magic of love. There is a belief that if someone is here with the person they have feelings for, and confess those emotions, the recipient of those sentiments will get a heavy dose of the desires of the other." She shrugged. "Don't worry, Professor. The feeling will pass as soon as we get back to the manor."

Severus nearly lost his hold on the books he was holding. *She's just confessed to me that I am the one she loves!* The idea took his breath away. He would have sputtered like a fool if he had tried to say anything at that moment. So, instead, he chose silence.

When she had placed one more volume in his open arms, she took the remaining three, and then turned back to face him. "Well, now that we have what we came for, perhaps we should go back?"

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Hermione sat on the sofa staring coldly at Pettigrew as he lay on the floor, facing away from her. Lucius had gone to alert the Order and summon Aurors. She had chosen to stay behind and keep an eye on the sniveling idiot. Her wand was poised and ready for the slightest unwanted move on his part.

The wizard turned his head and made to sniff the air, before speaking softly to Hermione. "You poor dear. You are already feeling the effects of pregnancy, aren't you?"

Her eyes widening, she felt an icy grip of fear take hold of her. "I don't know what you are talking about. Shut up, Pettigrew!"

He rolled over, so he was facing her. "I meant no harm, my dear. My mother was a Healer. She knew many a remedy for morning sickness. Would you like for me to share one with you?"

Hermione shook her head. "I want nothing you can offer me. How dare you try to barter with me."

Peter laughed. "Barter? Me? Why would I want to barter? No, I just want your pregnancy to be as easy as possible. As it behooves the Dark Lord, it serves me to offer my advice, should you want it."

Instantly, Hermione was up, and aiming her wand at Pettigrew's throat. "My child is of no consequence *tdhim!* Why would you say he was?"

Pettigrew's expression was one of calm patience. "He has use of her. Her body is to be the next housing for his soul"

"Shut up! You disgusting wanker! How can you even think to tell me such garbage?" Her voice shook as it rose volumes. "Besides, he made himself a body from Harry's blood. Why would he need to replace it?"

The wizard cut his eyes slyly to the side, before he met her eyes. "You haven't seen him lately, have you?" He smirked. "No, of course you haven't. His body is decaying at a rapid rate. It was a Dark Arts spell that he used to build that body, and as such, there are consequences."

His smile grew malevolent as his eyes slid to her mid-section. "But, with the Dark Lord's power, he has no need to use any such spell to inhabit your baby before her birth." His cold eyes met and held hers. "He only has to make her little tiny soul leave. She is, after all, no match for his powers yet."

He should have known to stop. But being the idiot he was, he continued, "And now the Chronicles of Merlin. Imagine how delighted he'll be? He was very pleased with the news of your child, but now? Oh, I shall be rewarded well! Maybe after he's reborn as your daughter, she'll even allow me to have her mother for a night? Oh, I can hardly wait!"

Shaking so violently she had to sit back down, Hermione felt a deep rage taking over inside of her. Her wand forgotten, she stood back up and glared angrily at the wizard before her.

His eyes met hers, and he knew a moment of fear as the air around her seemed to crackle. She never raised her hand. She never even raised her voice. Indeed, it was the softest whisper he had ever heard. But it held within it enough power to make him regret his choice to hint to her what the Dark Lord's plans were.

"You would have to get the information to him, Peter." The quiet use of his first name made him gulp. "And you may be able to do it from Azkaban. But you can't give him any news... *if you are dead!*"

Peter fumbled with his robes and clumsily groped for his wand. It did him no good, because before he could even make to point it at her, the killing curse had slid from her lips, flowing like hot lava over his body.

He fell dead, the wand still gripped tightly in his hand. Hermione stood stock still. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she just stared at the dead Death Eater before her. Finally succumbing to the shock and fear that she felt, she lowered herself back to the couch. She had just cast the killing curse. In her life, she had done a great many things. But, killing someone in such a way was not one of those things. Burying her face in her hands, she sobbed freely.

Almost as if on cue, Lucius entered with Tonks following close behind him. "So you see, we have him here" Lucius stopped in mid-sentence and stared at the dead wizard and the wand clasped in his hand. Turning, he looked at first Hermione, then at her wand that lay a good several feet from her on the divan.

Tonks moved to Hermione's side. "Whotcher, Hermione. What did the bloke do?"

Hermione looked up through eyes filled with tears. "I It was..."

Lucius interrupted. "Isn't it obvious?" He gestured to Pettigrew. "The damn fool was too chicken to find himself going to Azkaban. So, he cast the killing curse on himself."

Tonks stood and moved back to stand beside the body. She circled it several times, looking at it from different angles before finally nodding. "Yes, it is definitely obvious." Removing the stones, she cast the levitation spell on the corpse. Moving to stand next to it, she looked back to Hermione and Lucius. "As the cause of death is apparent, I'll just take him straight to the burning pyre. There is no one left to mourn him, so it should take no time at all to put his body to rest."

With a fleeting smile in Hermione's direction, Tonks Apparated herself and the remains away.

Lucius moved to sit beside Hermione and gathered her in his arms. She held to him for several moments before pulling back to look at him. "That wasn't what happened," she whispered, shaking her head.

Lucius took her face in his hands and began kissing her tear-streaked cheeks. "It doesn't matter what happened. As far as I am concerned, that is all they ever need know."

A moment passed before Hermione sighed and stood up. She moved to stand before the fire. Staring into its depths for several moments, she said in a dangerously soft voice, "Voldemort knows about Hope. He has plans to use her body as the next place to house his evil soul."

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## Moments of Regret

Chapter 18 of 19

Hermione tells Harry what has happened. He sees firsthand how Lucius is not the same man.

*A/N: This chapter has a different approach to the death of Albus in HBP. It is not a big thing, just a small part in passing. It is still AU, but makes the story somewhat compliant to the sixth book. Ignore it, if you like.*

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Moments of Regret

Tom stood, concentrating on the embers burning in the fireplace. His head was hurting beyond all belief. That little Mudblood whore had cast the killing curse on Peter. Fury made his hands tremble. Did she really think that ridding the world of Pettigrew would save that fetus buried safely in her womb?

He had ways. There were things he could do to inhabit the body of that babe within the fortnight. All he needed was the Nocturnal Astral Projection potion and a sleeping mother who would be none the wiser to the mental attack he would wreak on the soul of the innocent babe. He would dazzle her with some special effects. Make her feel safe enough with him to welcome him in, then he would push her spirit from the safety of her newly forming body and he would be free to move in. Like taking candy from a baby.

A sardonic smile graced his lips as he thought over how easy it would be. Then he would be alive in the body of a ripe young girl. He'd be able to watch her grow. Watch her little tits take form and her thatch begin to grow hair. The idea caused a morbid heating pleasure deep in his loins. Oh yes, he would make sure his little feminine body knew the meaning of foreplay early on.

Not that he was by nature a sexual man, but the idea of shocking and tormenting the Mudblood who would be his mother in every way imaginable was very pleasurable. Until the girl's body was old enough to kill the bitch... yes, that would be exquisite!

He would make sure that he drank a memory potion so he retained all his memories when the time came. He'd be sure that the youthful body he planned to inhabit would be divested of its virginity as soon as there was a willing male to accomplish the job. No sense in allowing that body to stay innocent for long.

He moved to sit in the same shitty chair he had been in when Pettigrew had first told him of Hermione's and Lucius' growing affections for each other. Staring malevolently at the fire, he began to formulate his plan. He had to do everything just so. Better go at it alone. It wouldn't do for anyone to be the wiser to his plan. Although, it had been nice to have Pettigrew's rat animagus. That thought elicited a sigh from him. So, Peter was dead. Oh well, he'd never really liked the damn rat anyway!

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"Harry," her voice spoke softly to him. "Harry, I need your help. Please don't let this tear up our friendship. I thought our bonds were stronger than this! I need your help."

Harry awoke suddenly, drenched in sweat and breathing hard. Something was terribly wrong. He could feel it. And the pain! Reaching up, he rubbed his scar. What was going on? The scar hadn't hurt like that since...

Jumping from the bed, he donned his clothes and grabbed his wand. In a moment, he used a handful of Floo powder. Standing within the fireplace, he spoke firmly, "Malfoy

*Manor."*

When he stepped out of the fireplace and into the parlor, Hermione was sitting on the couch alone. Her eyes were red from crying. For a moment they just stared at each other before she spoke. "I cast an Unforgivable."

All of their past cruel words forgotten, Harry moved to sit beside her. "Tell me what happened."

More than half an hour later, Hermione had explained to him all about her arrival at the manor, her first meeting with the ghosts that had beseeched her to help Lucius, and finally, how she had come to fall in love with him. When she spoke of their unborn baby, Harry watched her face light up.

Then, she told him of Ginny and Severus, the books, and Pettigrew. She told him about the plans Voldemort had for Hope and Harry felt himself beginning to shake. Reaching out, he wiped a tear from her cheek.

"I'm sorry, Mione. I've been terrible." He shook his head. "I know you could never love him if he was the same man we once knew. I just had to get used to the idea, that's all." He grinned sheepishly. "Forgive me?"

Hermione beamed back at him through her tears and nodded. "You and Ron are my best friends. I can forgive you almost anything."

Harry tucked a stray hair behind her ear before saying, "And now, you need to forgive yourself. The man was a disgusting creature. Had I been here, I would have done it for you!" he sighed. "Or if Lucius had been in the room, I'm sure he would have beat you to the curse."

Hermione nodded. "I just never thought I could feel such anger. He made me see red." She shuddered. "The suggestions he made about Hope," her hand covered her stomach protectively. "I just couldn't control my rage." Her voice lowered to a whisper. "*I didn't even use my wand!*"

"Hermione?" Lucius' sleepy voice spoke from the doorway. "Are you well, my dear?" Gray eyes moved from Hermione's face to Harry's. Harry braced himself to be thrown out of the elder wizard's home. What Lucius said instead made the young man stare. "Welcome back, Potter. I believe your room has already been prepared."

Harry exchanged a look with Hermione, who was smiling. "He was the one who showed me how to call you through your dreams. It didn't scare you, did it?"

Chuckling, Lucius spoke. "Serenity has prepared hot chocolate. We'll hurt her feelings if we don't at least have some."

Standing, Harry followed Hermione and Lucius to the kitchen. There, Serenity had not only hot chocolate, but hot cinnamon cakes waiting for them as well. Upon seeing Harry, she smiled broadly. "Mr. Potter! It is an honor to see you again. I am so glad you came!"

Harry stared at the little house-elf. She not only spoke correct English, but she was dressed in the prettiest little dress. It looked like it had been made especially for her. He remembered seeing her before, but he had been being such a git, he had not thought on what exactly he had seen.

"Y-You're wearing clothes?" Harry stuttered. "And your English... it's perfect!"

Serenity nodded. "After the Mistress and young master died, Master freed us. He not only presented us with clothes, he gave us specially made wardrobes. Most of the others left, but my mate and I... we stayed." She looked from Harry to Lucius, and a look of such affection crossed her features that Harry was speechless. "He pays us now."

"It was Master that taught me how to speak properly." Her smile grew. "And he taught me chess! I can play quite well."

Harry returned her smile and nodded. "We'll have to play a game or two while I am here then."

Serenity giggled and did a happy dance. "I look forward to it, sir! I can't wait to tell Fizbot! Harry Potter has spoken to me! He wants to play a game of chess... with ME!!!"

Lucius and Hermione exchanged a gentle smile at Serenity's excitement before Lucius stepped forward. "Why don't you go ahead and find your bed, Serenity. I can clean up when we are done. You must be tired after all the excitement today."

Serenity looked up at Lucius and nodded. "Thank you, sir," Her eyes turned back to Harry. "Until tomorrow, Mr. Potter." she said softly. Then, with a snap of her fingers, she was gone.

Taking his drink, Harry took a sip and sat for a moment in silence before giving in and asking the question that was occupying his thoughts. "You freed all of your house-elves?"

Lucius nodded solemnly. "Yes. I was given quite a revelation when Tom killed my family. I realized that everything that I had once believed in was built in lies and deceit. I wanted to make amends for all the terrible things I had done." He shrugged. "The house-elves were a good place to start."

Harry looked from Lucius to Hermione and back again. "Hermione was right, Lucius. You have changed. I am sorry I didn't see it before." After a moment of hesitation, he stood and offered Lucius his hand by way of apology.

The elder wizard smiled kindly and grasped Harry's hand. "Think nothing of it, Harry. Hermione and the baby are my family now. You and Ron are like family to her. In my eyes, that means we are all related."

"Is this a private party, or can anyone join?" Severus drawled from the doorway.

Lucius turned and looked at his old friend. "Well, there is plenty of hot chocolate to go around, so I don't see why not. Where is Miss Weasley? I'm sure she would like a cup as well."

"I'm coming," she said from right outside the room. "I only wanted to make sure the fireworks were over." She came in and smiled at Harry. "I heard all about your temper tantrum. Is it really over now?"

Harry nodded and smirked at the youngest Weasley. "Yes, I am much better now. I just had to come to terms with the fact that Hermione could love someone old enough to be her father." He smiled broadly at Lucius' mock scowl.

Ginny laughed at that and poured herself a glass of hot chocolate. Turning, she offered Severus a cup. A silent look was shared between them before she turned back to Harry. "So, how are you? Are you enjoying the life of an Auror?"

Harry nodded and was about to comment when Severus interrupted. "He has not made his decision yet, but Albus has asked him to join the staff at Hogwarts."

His announcement elicited a gasp from Ginny and a look with raised eyebrows from Lucius. Hermione smiled broadly. "Harry has been offered the Defense against the Dark Arts class," she said proudly.

Lucius moved closer to Severus and asked softly, "Are you all right with this? I know it was a position you once wanted above all else."

Severus shrugged and turned to look at his friend. "If I am to lose the position to anyone, I would rather it was Harry than someone like Mad-Eye Moody... again." He smiled for a split second before moving to sit beside the younger wizard. "Incidentally, why have you not told Albus yet? I can tell you would love to teach. What's holding you back?"

Harry sighed deeply. "I do want the position, Severus. But I don't feel right committing myself to teaching when Voldemort is still out there. Too much has been sacrificed," he shrugged. "Draco lost his life when he refused to truly commit to the Dark Mark. You lost your spy status when it came out that Albus was still alive and everything had been staged to fool the Dark Lord. I just feel like this whole thing has to be over before I can take the position."

Lucius moved to Hermione and took the empty cup from her. Everyone handed him their dishes in turn. Moving to the sink, he then set about washing the cups and plates. For the second time that night, Harry found himself staring. But this time, it was at Lucius. The man was washing dishes.

When Lucius turned, he smiled at Harry's expression. "I was once a boy, Harry. My mother always saw fit to punish me for anything I did wrong by making me wash dishes. What she never knew was that I actually enjoyed it, somewhat."

Moving to Hermione's side, Lucius urged her to her feet. "It is past midnight, and I *insist* you get some rest."

Hermione nodded before turning to kiss Harry's cheek. "Thank you for coming back, Harry. I couldn't have borne it if you had refused me."

Harry smiled. "You know me, Hermione. I am hot tempered, but I calm down... when given the chance."

With a parting smile, Hermione let Lucius lead her away from the rest of them.

Ginny smiled and stood, "Come with me, Harry. I'll show you to your room. It's across the hall from mine."

Severus was instantly on his feet. "We might as well all go, since we are all in the same wing." He kept his demeanor calm, but he would be damned if he would let Harry invite Ginny into his room to reminisce about old times.

They had once dated. He knew that. Her sixth year, his seventh. Sudden jealousy swept over him. He understood that she had once been completely enamored with Harry. But that was when she was a child.

She was a grown woman now. It would be a step backwards for her to think of entertaining thoughts of Harry now, much less acting on them.

Ginny gave Severus a curious look, but said nothing as the three of them started up the staircase. Harry asked her how her apprenticeship in America was going. She answered that it was good and that she was enjoying America very much.

Severus followed behind silently. At first, he was almost surprised that she had not spoken of her true calling to Harry, but then he remembered her request to Hermione, Lucius and himself that no one else know just yet.

When they arrived before Harry's door, Ginny leaned up and kissed his cheek before wishing him a good-night.

He watched as she crossed the hall to her own room. When she stepped inside, she turned to close the door, but was startled to see Severus still standing there. For several seconds they simply stared at each other.

Ginny's heart began to pound in her ears. She could feel his desire as his eyes held hers. His fists were clenched and he seemed torn for several seconds. She wanted to reach out to him. She wanted to draw him inside her room to make wild passionate love.

For a moment, she almost did just that. But then she knew that if she truly wanted him for keeps, and not just in passing, she had to be harder than that to attain. Her eyes grew cold and she found herself asking him in a sarcastic voice, "What? Do you need me to tuck you in?" She had to fight her smile at the astonished look on his face. "Good night, Severus."

With that, she closed her door and leaned heavily against it. She wanted nothing more than to open the door and drag him into the room demanding that he make her his. But her heart told her that if he was to truly be hers, he had to come to her. It wasn't time yet. Not yet.

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When Hermione and Lucius made their way back to her room, he slowly began to undress her. Each brush of his fingers against her skin made her even more sensitive to his touch.

When she stood naked before him, he stepped back and slowly began to undress as well. His eyes never left hers. He let her see the longing he felt for her, and it turned her on to know he wanted her so badly.

Closing the distance between them, his lips crushed hers in a kiss that was hot and demanding. She felt his arousal against her thigh as she answered his passion with a demand of her own.

Suddenly, he was urging her towards the bed. When he gently pushed her down upon it, he moved to kneel between her legs. She smiled and laid her head back as he began to nudge and lick at her nether lips.

Moaning, she followed his silent demand to open herself for him. When she felt his tongue against her nub, she moaned loudly. His answer to that was to thrust two fingers inside her moist core. Still sucking and nipping at her, he used his fingers to bring her to a quick climax, before sliding slowly up her body, kissing and nipping along the way.

When he reached her breasts, he used one hand to play with one nipple, while he lavished attention on the other with his mouth. She cradled his head to her as he used his tongue to make her nipple tighten.

When he rose above her, he smiled. "One day soon, our baby will suckle at your breast." He thrust himself inside her the moment after he spoke, making her moan deeply. "Do you know how excited it makes me to know your body is nurturing our child?"

She smiled up at him, as he moved slowly within her. "I love you, Lucius."

Leaning down, his lips claimed hers as he moved within her gently. Wrapping her legs around his waist, she let him lead her in a slow, gentle ritual of love. When they finally succumbed to the desire to sleep, the sky was already beginning to lighten.

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A/N: I hope you don't think I went too far in my little idea of Severus killing Dumbledore was staged. For some reason, I just feel like if Severus killed DD, it was because the Headmaster wanted him to. Perhaps I am wrong. But I guess we won't know for sure until the seventh book comes out. Until then, I will just play with my little ideas, and

hope you all enjoy them as well.

## Dangerous Dreams

Chapter 19 of 19

Voldemort attacks Hermione. Lucius and everyone is ready to defend her. No matter what it may cost.

This is the final chapter of this story. I promise that there is a sequel filled with the story of Severus and Ginny, and the growth of Hope... But, that is another story...Although this chapter gets quite intense, please believe me when I say it has a happy ending. ~~~~~

### Dangerous Dreams

Hermione slept fitfully. Her heart raced as she tried to break free from the chains of sleep that seemed to pull her ever tighter into the realm of dreams. She felt an odd pressure on her abdomen, and she tossed her head from side to side.

*"No, please! Don't!" Her cries were frantic and hopeless. "Shhh... it won't do for you to make such a scene," the figure at the far side of the room said softly. "No one can hear you now anyway!" he added as he moved closer to the bed where Hermione was held prisoner through invisible bonds.*

*Her sobs grew as she worked fiercely, trying to free herself. She was wandless and naked. Spread out as if it was Voldemort's pleasure to look upon her. He stood at the foot of the bed, watching her indifferently. She was left shaken as she stared up at him. His eyes were black fathomless pools that seemed to house no soul. It was as if his soul had already left his body, and nothing was left in this grotesque shell but an impression of how evil the man was.*

*As if in answer to her thoughts, Tom smiled and began to crawl onto the bed, between her spread legs to the apex where her sex was on display. "Yes, my dear, this body that you see is just a picture, really. You see, I have given up my hold on that decaying body and am using Astral Projection to be able to visit you in your dream tonight.*

*"Tonight is the night that the baby you carry becomes my new home." Hermione screamed a vehement refusal at his words, but he only smiled. "Yes, my dear. And you shall be my mummy. How does it feel to be know that you shall be mother to the most powerful wizard of all time?"*

*Hermione shook her head, struggling again against the invisible bonds. "You're sick! You deserve death!"*

*A cold look settled over his features. "Careful, mum. I took a potion to ensure I retain all of my memories! You don't want to piss me off; otherwise I shall start my life by making yours a complete hell!"*

*His smile turned even more wicked. "Of course, you won't remember a thing. When you awaken, you won't remember anything of it, save it was a bad dream."*

*Hermione shot him a look of pure fury as she tried to channel the power she had used to kill Pettigrew. Perhaps she could use that power to send him to Hell as well!*

*Sitting comfortably between Hermione's legs, Voldemort held out his hand and slowly opened it, revealing a light within his palm. It was black with a hint of green, casting a strange glow around it. "This, Hermione, is my soul." He looked at her with a curious expression. "Wonder how I plan to implant it within your womb?"*

*A look of horror overcame her as he doubled up his fist and shoved his entire arm up into her vaginal canal. A scream echoed through her at the unwelcome invasion.*

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"LUCIUS!!! DAMN YOUR ARSE! WAKE THE FRAGGING HELL UP!"The harsh words, followed by a fist pounding on the door, aroused Lucius from his peaceful slumber. Out of the bed in an instant, he grabbed his robes and was pulling them on when Harry cast a spell that caused the door to explode.

"What in the hell--?" Lucius started, but stopped when he noticed the younger man's appearance. Half of his face was covered in blood as the scar he had always borne had begun to bleed.

Severus and Ginny filed into the room behind Harry. Ginny carried a book in her arms while Severus held his wand tightly. Lucius cast a worried look in their direction before looking at Harry.

Harry moved past him and sat beside Hermione, who was lost to dreams. She lay motionless with no signs of waking. Reaching out, he took hold of her shoulders and began to shake her. "Hermione! Hermione, love, wake up!"

Lucius watched with growing fear from the end of the bed. Now that he was awake, he could feel the ominous presence of the Dark Lord in the room with them. Hermione's complexion had grown sallow, and her breathing was coming in fast gasps for air.

He stood frozen with shock and fear. This was his fault. If he had just kept his damnable hands off of her, this wouldn't be happening. "What have I done?" His voice shook with the weight of emotion he felt. Suddenly he felt a tug at the sleeve of his robe. Ginny stood beside him, the book of Merlin cradled in her arms. She held it out to him. "I am simply one of the Guardians. You are his descendant. The book will show you what spell you must use to cast him out."

His eyes widened as he took the book. "Cast him out?"

She nodded towards the bed, tossing a worried look in Hermione's direction. "He's found his way inside. Hope's poor little soul may already be fighting for survival." Her eyes again met his. "She needs her father's help."

Looking from Ginny, to Hermione, to the book in his hands, Lucius took a deep breath and opened it. Immediately, he recognized it as the book of Soul Summoning. It was used to call forth lost souls and send them into the light, or eternal darkness, depending on what kind of lives they had led.

Flipping through the pages, he stopped when he came to a section on ending possession. Would this work? A scream from the bed shot him into unquestioning action.

"Soul without form or shape. Give yourself over to the mold you take. Neither flesh, nor blood, nor solid of mass! As you are weightless, so shall you be thin as air. I order your spirit to disperse from here!"

For a moment, nothing seemed to have happened. Then a sickly green light seemed to permeate from Hermione's abdomen, then float above her. It moved almost as a poisonous gas. Growing and changing into a thicker cloud, then taking form in the center of the room.

Because Voldemort's soul was sickly and cruel, his spirit looked much the same as the last body he'd had. Anger was evident in his features as he took in Lucius' appearance. "You're a disappointment to me, dear Lucius!" he spoke menacingly. "Severus, your betrayal wasn't enough. You had to poison Lucius against me, as well?"

Severus, who had been standing in the background, stared coldly at the spirit of the Dark Lord. "I did nothing of the sort!" He sneered as he fingered his wand, "You managed that feat all on your own. Brilliantly so, I might add."

Voldemort clicked his disembodied tongue and shook his head. "He was weak and not worthy of the society I plan to build!"

Harry, who had been sitting by the now awake and very shaken Hermione, stood and moved from the bed, aiming his wand at Tom. "How can you build any kind of society now? Surely, you realize your plan failed?" Aiming his wand, he shouted the curse. *"Avada Kedavra!"*

Both Lucius and Severus hit the ground as the curse flew straight through the apparition and hit the wall behind them.

"Harry!" Severus thundered angrily. "That curse won't work when he's already in spirit form!"

Lucius stood, and moved around the specter to get closer to the bed. Speaking softly, he began the curse he had found in the book that would lock Voldemort into the form of a **Shade**. It was a simple spell that could be used on spirits to keep them from ever being able to connect again to the mortal realm.

He doubted that it would work forever, but he had hopes that it would at least give Hope a chance to be born first: **"Once you were man, whole and alive. Now, you are phantom, dead, and unbound. I bind you to this fate, which keeps you near! I bind you to this doom to see and hear! From this day forward, may you never again be! From now to forever, may you only a Shade be! No interference to life may you commit! May no one hear a sound that you omit!"**

Voldemort narrowed his gaze upon Lucius as he spoke the sentencing that would seal his fate. He started to laugh, but stopped as he seemed to feel something. Looking down at himself, he could see his form growing fainter and fainter. It was almost as if he was vanishing, although he did not feel himself going anywhere.

He turned angry, crazed eyes on Harry. "Well, if I must become a *Shade*, then perhaps I can at least take *you* with me!"

With lightening speed, Voldemort hurled the Killing Curse towards Harry. Lucius dropped the book on the bed and moved to knock Harry out of the way. The curse hit him squarely in the chest, knocking him to the floor.

Harry turned disbelieving eyes to the man who had saved his life, then looked to Voldemort, who was barely there anymore. The evil wizard screamed angrily: **"NO! Damn you, Lucius! I will have my revenge for this... I swear it! I swear it!"** As he had spoken the last, his voice had begun to fade, as he, too, disappeared.

Hermione scrambled from the bed, mindless of her nightgown that left little to anyone's imagination. She knelt beside Lucius, holding him in her arms. "Lucius!" she cried. "Hold on, my love! You'll be alright."

There was a gaping hole in his chest where the curse had hit him. Blood seeped from the wound slowly, as if there wasn't much blood left to spill. Lucius looked up into Hermione's eyes and gasped for breath for a moment. Then, his voice was almost a whisper, "No, my love. I believe, this is where my part in this magnificent fairytale is over." He smiled. "It isn't my story anymore. But yours and Hope's." He sputtered for a moment and coughed.

Severus and Ginny both raced to his side. He moved to kneel beside his friend as Ginny sank to the floor beside Hermione. Harry crawled the distance between them, shaking his head. "You shouldn't have done that, Lucius. I didn't mean for this to happen."

Lucius offered him a weak smile before turning his attention back to Hermione. Reaching up, he ran a trembling hand down her cheek. "You have saved me from an existence that was far worse than death." He attempted a smile before continuing. "I never thought I would ever know love again. The Heavens know I didn't deserve it! But you not only gave me love. You also gave me back myself."

Hermione stroked his cheek, ignoring the tears on her own. "Shh... D-don't waste your strength."

Looking up to Harry, she begged. "Go to Dumbledore! He'll know what to do!"

Harry started to go but stayed as Ginny's eyes caught his, and she shook her head. When he mouthed the word, "Why?" she just looked back at the couple that was clinging to each other.

Lucius' hand was soft as he covered her mouth. When her eyes moved to meet his, he shook his head. "There's no time, my love." He wiped the tears from her cheek, then stared at his wet fingers. "I never thought I was worth the tears of another..."

As he spoke the last, his eyes took on an empty vacant expression. His hand fell limply to his chest. Hermione's eyes widened as she grasped him closer to her. "No! Lucius, no! Don't leave me! I can't do this without you! I-I have n-no idea how to be a mother! What if? What if I d-do it all w-wrong?" She sobbed, clutching his lifeless form to her, and rocking him gently as she cried. "I love you! Please..." Her voice broke, and she gave in to the tears. "Oh, please, don't leave me!"

Severus leaned back on his haunches and stared with unseeing eyes at his friend. He was gone. The knowledge shook him. It was too hard to believe. His eyes moved to Ginny who was sitting silently beside Hermione, hand pressed to her lips. Tears streamed down her own cheeks.

When her eyes met his, she saw the pain he was going through and reached out a hand to him. Severus immediately clasped it in his own. His eyes brimmed with tears that refused to fall, but the pain in his eyes spoke volumes.

Harry stood there helpless and bowed his head in shame. Lucius had saved his life. He felt as if he had caused Hermione's tears. Shaking his head, he whispered softly, "He shouldn't have sacrificed himself for me. Why did he do that?"

When the hand rested on his shoulder, Harry jumped as if he had been shot. Turning, he stared into a pair of crystal blue eyes that belonged to the most kindly pair of eyes he had seen since Dumbledore.

He held in his hands a wizard's staff that housed a crystal shard within the tip. His robes were a dark mahogany color that was trimmed in gold. His hair was ivory white and long, falling in waves down his back. His face, however, was beardless and smooth.

The wizard was elderly, but held a quality of youth about him that took Harry's breath away. He looked from the stranger to the others, who had yet to notice the newcomer.

When the wizard spoke, Harry felt all his fears just melt away. "Never question such a gift as the sacrifice someone makes for you. Just take the gift humbly and appreciate it for what it is."

The elder wizard then turned his attention to the young woman crying softly over her lost love. As he moved closer to them, he shoed Severus and Ginny out of the way. Going down on one knee, he took Hermione's hand in his own.

Startled, her eyes met his, and he smiled kindly. For a moment, he simply held her gaze before looking down at Lucius. Her gaze followed his. For several seconds, the two of them stared down upon Lucius. Slowly, the wound on his chest began to close, and Hermione gasped when it was completely healed.

When the first breath came, Hermione sobbed anew. His eyes fluttered open, and he gave the elderly wizard a startled look before turning to Hermione. He calmed upon seeing her and reached up again to wipe a tear from her cheek. "Don't cry," he whispered softly.

Severus was staring so hard at his resurrected friend that he gasped when Ginny threw herself into his arms and hugged him tightly. Coming back to himself, he returned her hold. For a moment, the two of them stood motionless in their embrace.

When Ginny made to pull away, Severus tightened his hold, and in an uncharacteristic gesture, kissed her forehead. Ginny stilled immediately in his arms and turned shocked eyes up to stare at him. His eyes held hers, and he smiled fleetingly as they stared at each other in silence.

Hermione looked from Lucius to the kind wizard. "But, how?" she asked simply.

The elder wizard smiled and chuckled. "My dear, I am Merlin. Did you really believe I would let my descendant come so far, only to let him die when he is finally, truly happy?" He scoffed. "Never!"

Hermione smiled gratefully and gazed down at the man she loved. "I'm so very glad to see you..." she said softly.

Lucius returned her smile. "And I, you!" he answered softly.

Merlin straightened. "So, now, there seems to be only one thing left to do."

Lucius looked back at Merlin, confused. "What is that?"

Merlin smiled. "Well, get rid of these scars, of course! They are such a nuisance, and I just don't think you need them any longer. You've learned your lesson, I think."

Lucius sat up and quirked an eyebrow in the older wizard's direction. "What lesson is that, pray tell?"

Merlin smiled as he moved to help Lucius find his feet. "That love is not something you win by looks or merit, but something that comes to you when you least expect it."

With a wave of his hand, Merlin seemed to just wipe the scars away from Lucius' face. His hand, that had been malformed since the incident, relaxed. His leg felt a slight pressure that, when released, straightened, leaving him once again whole and as beautiful outside as he had become inside.

Harry and Hermione shared a look, and he smiled at her when she turned to look at her healed lover. "I am happy for you," he said softly.

Hermione reached out to clasp Harry's hand, knowing he was feeling a little alone at the moment. "Thank you so much for being my friend, Harry."

Harry smiled and shrugged. "Well, I know one thing for certain." He laughed.

Severus released Ginny as he turned a questioning look in Harry's direction. "What's that?"

Harry laughed, "Ron's going to be buggered that he missed *this*!"

Merlin turned from Lucius to Ginny. "Now, I think we need to take the Chronicles back to where they came from," he sighed. "It isn't safe for them here because even though Voldemort has been turned to a *Shade*, he could still gain the knowledge to put himself back to form, if he found way to read over someone's shoulder as they read the Chronicles."

Severus looked between Merlin and Ginny. "You can't take them now. We need them to study!"

Merlin smiled. "Actually, Severus, I was going to suggest that you accompany Ginny back to Avalon to study the books there. No *Shade* can enter Avalon." He chuckled. "Not without destroying himself."

Severus tried to wear his best smirk and failed. "Well, yes, I suppose I must go back to Avalon with her, then."

Merlin nodded. "Very good decision."

Turning back to Hermione, he reached out a hand to place on her belly. Leaning down, he said softly. "Hello, Hope. I look forward to the day when you and I can play."

At Hermione's widened eyes, he returned. "What? You think I'm going to stay away now that you all know that I still live?" He rolled his eyes before turning and snapping his fingers. Suddenly, he was gone, and the room was left with no trace of him.

Hermione and Lucius just stared perplexed at each other for a moment before their expressions became open, and everyone knew they needed privacy.

Ginny cleared her throat and turned to Severus. "Yes, well, I should think we should stop by Hogwarts and let Dumbledore know what has happened. Then, we must be off."

Severus nodded and turned to lead the way from the room. "Yes, I do believe you are correct."

Harry stood there, looking at the two lovers who were lost to all but each other. "I fear I must go as well." He looked to the man who had saved him and felt pleasure in knowing Hermione was to be so well loved and protected. "Thank you, Lucius, for my life."

Lucius looked to Harry and smiled. "I should be thanking you, Harry. I may have saved you, but you alerted me to the danger to Hermione. Go rest, and we shall have breakfast served as soon as the sun breaks through the dawn."

When Harry exited the room, Lucius and Hermione were left alone. His eyes searched hers for a moment before he reached out to her. Immediately, she crossed over into his arms and returned his kiss with a desperate feeling. It left them breathless when they finally parted.

"I thought I had lost you," she whispered. "I don't know what I would have done... if..."

"Shhh..." Lucius interrupted. "It's over now, and I am going nowhere! You'll be sick of me by the time you're old and gray."

Hermione laughed, stroking his perfect cheek where the scar had once been prominent. "You're beautiful again."

He shook his head and grew solemn. "I am nothing without you. *You* make me whole, not my looks. They mean nothing if I don't have you beside me."

Hermione wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him deeply. Returning her kiss, he lifted her up and carried her to the bed. Never again would either of them be alone. It was a vow they made that night and would stand behind for the rest of their lives.

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Fin....

A/N: This last chapter was so incredibly hard for me to write. I cried almost the entire way through it. My muse never lets me know where she is taking me when I sit down to write so I was actually believing he was going to die until she revealed to me that ... AHEM... He's the descendant of Merlin... And the couple was to have their happy ending. I hope that each and every one of you have enjoyed this little story as much as I have enjoyed writing it. Thank you to everyone who has stayed with me through all of it. I am so grateful for all of you!