

Black Orchid

by Anijade

The war is over and the cure for the Cruciatus Curse is on it's way but those involved have been thought long dead, Why did they leave and what are they hiding M/F,M/M

Thanks to my Beta Emily you are faboo

Unrecovered

Chapter 1 of 8

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Prologue

Hermione Granger and Ginny Weasley sat in the cabin area of the 747 taking them to San Diego. Both girls had tear stained faces, making it clear that this trip was not a holiday, nor fun for either of them. Dumbledore had decided that the two women would be a distraction for Harry in the war effort, and they were being sent to America for their protection. No amount of protests and arguments could get him to change his mind, so the girls decided to take things into their own hands and had made plans of their own. How could they have known that the decisions they would make in the next twenty-four hours would forever change their lives? All it took was getting off the plane in San Diego and getting on a connection to an unknown destination for Hermione and Ginny to vanish completely.

Healer Sarah Kendall sat at her desk revising her current notes on the Black Orchid project. Even though the war in Great Britain had ended three years ago with Harry Potter emerging as an even greater hero, she knew that there were still multitudes of people who still suffered from the aftereffects of the Cruciatus Curse, and Sarah had been hard at work trying to find a cure. After years of hard work, she had finally made a major breakthrough.

It was a cool summer night in Brisbane, and she and her partner Emily Mills were working late in their apothecary. Emily was a mediwitch, and with Sarah being a Potions Mistress, they had combined their efforts and had a successful business together. In the background she could hear Emily going through the motions of closing up the shop and Sarah started finishing up her notes away for the day so that they could go home.

Downstairs Emily was locking up cabinets and sweeping up behind careless customers. Emily jumped at the sound of an unexpected knock at the door. She sighed and went over to see who it was, expecting a customer who needed 'just one last item.'

It wasn't a customer. She paled at the sight of the face that greeted her at the door. It was a familiar one, but not at all welcome. She slammed the door shut, warded it quickly and raced up the stairs to Sarah. She rushed into Sarah's office.

"Sarah, we have to go now. They've found us." She panted.

Sarah looked up from her work and paled when she heard Emily's words. Standing up, she placed a small Portkey on her desk and sent all her research to her home. In

her haste, she didn't notice as two sheets of her notes fell from the desk and drifted slowly to the floor.

"Go home and put up some wards. I'll get the ingredient and add more wards here."

Emily nodded and went to the fireplace. Sarah waited until she was sure Emily had gone before running down the hall to her lab. She warded the door behind her and recovered the vial from its secret hiding place. She could hear the downstairs door being blown apart and foot steps on the stairs heading to where she was. Quickly she looked around her lab to see if there was anything else she needed before stepping into the fireplace and swirling away in a flash of green flames.

As her lab swirled out of sight, she saw that the wards on the door had been broken, and caught a glimpse of the face of the man rushing toward the grate.

'Damn! We were doing so well! It won't be so easy to disappear this time.'

Draco Malfoy hadn't been expecting to recognize the face that answered the front door. He had been sent by Dumbeldore to find Dr Kendall to ask her to help Severus Snape in continuing her project finding a cure for the Cruciatus Curse. By the time his brain made the connection, the door had been slammed shut and he could hear the wards flying into place. After trying some basic spells to get the door opened, he knew for sure who the woman's partner in crime was.

'Only Hermione would be able to set up such difficult wards; this is going to take forever .. '

Eventually, he had had to blow up the door just to get inside, and by the time he got past the second set of wards to get into Hermione's lab, she was disappearing into the Floo.

"Well this just got more complicated."

Draco looked around the office and didn't see anything of notice other than some filing cabinets and a desk. Both looked locked. Deciding to wait to break into the cabinets, he left the lab and entered the other. The office looked slightly strange, with a large space in the center of the room and filing cabinets lining the walls. Draco figured a large piece of furniture had been removed. He assumed it was a desk, as there was a chair with no table. On the floor next to the chair were two pieces of parchment. When he picked them up he recognized Hermione's careful notes from past classes together. With a sigh, he activated the Portkey that was attached to his cloak and reappeared in Dumbledore's office.

The expectant faces of Harry, Severus and Dumbeldore met Draco when he arrived back in Dumbeldore's office. He shrugged and frowned. As he handed the pieces of parchment to Severus to read over, he started to explain. "There has been a complication."

Severus immediately started reading the notes and quickly recognized the handwriting. With a sigh he looked up at Draco and nodded. "Apparently."

Harry looked confused and snatched the parchment from Severus hands; it didn't take long for understanding to cross his face. "You mean after all these years they are still alive?"

Draco looked confused at his apparent omniscience not working for him in this situation. The parchment was handed to him. After reading it he nodded seriously and flopped into the nearest chair. "Ginny is the one who answered. It took me blowing up the door to get the wards down, but by the time I got through the second set of wards outside Hermione's lab, she was already in the Floo."

Harry sat back, stunned. His mind was swimming with the overload of information they had all just received. For eight years they had believed that Hermione Granger and Ginny Weasley had been betrayed and died at the hands of Death Eaters. It was shocking to find out that they were very much alive and had been hiding from those closest to them. Albus walked around his desk and faced the men who sat in front of him.

"So, any recommendations on how to proceed?" asked Draco. "It is obvious they didn't want to be found; however, we need the information that Hermione has obviously developed."

A sigh came from Severus. "We have no choice, we have to go after them. Whatever made them run is not more important than this cure."

Albus nodded. "Severus, you'll need to go back with Draco to Brisbane. You need the cure as much as anyone else, and you have the knowledge to help her finish faster than she could alone."

Severus nodded and rose from his chair. Draco rose from his chair as well, and followed Severus out of the office.

"And so it begins..."

Unforgotten Past

Chapter 2 of 8

Same as First Chapter

At half past three in the morning, Severus Snape and Draco Malfoy apparated into the dark street outside of the apothecary. Eyeing the broken door, Severus gave Draco a withering look. "You couldn't find another way to get in?"

Draco rolled his eyes, "Ginny set the wards. Nothing else could get through."

Severus grunted and continued into the shop. He wryly admitted it was a well-to-do place, something he pictured himself running should he ever leave Hogwarts. On the counter he found several business cards listing Sarah Kendall, Potions Mistress, and Emily Mills, Mediwitch, for the Brisbane Clinic and Apothecary. The idea was unique for the wizarding world but not for Muggles, so he assumed that Ms. Granger had been responsible for this endeavor.

'Not a bad idea, quite logical.'

Heading up the stairs, he entered the office where Draco had found the parchment. It was obvious that something had been moved, most likely a potions workbench. This was Hermione's office, very clean and orderly just like the woman he had known. There was a couch in the corner away from the workbench.

'Looks comfortable enough to rest on if she is working late, or brewing a potion.'

The far wall was covered in bookshelves, each one completely full, and several stacks of books lay about the room.

'And she hasn't lost that love for knowledge either.'

Sitting down on the couch, Severus's thoughts went back to the last time he had seen Ms. Granger.

Night of the Leaving Feast

The graduating parties had left the Great Hall and moved to their respective towers. Severus had taken his leave from the feast early on and had headed back to his dungeons for the night.

'Another year has finally ended, and I have three months of peace before the next crop of dunderheads arrive. At least this was my last year of Weasleys' she thought wryly.

Pouring himself a glass of fire whiskey, Severus stared into the fire, trying to lose himself in the warmth. Unfortunately, he was brought out of his reverie by the banging at his door. "What is it? Do you have any idea what time it is?" he growled.

Flinging open the door, he was surprised to see Miss Granger, his apprentice, standing there. "Is there something that you need here?" The sarcasm laced voice almost made Hermione change her mind and go back to her room, but she was determined to speak her piece before the morning.

"Hello, Severus, I need to speak to you." He glared down at the young woman standing in front of him.

"I am certain I misheard you. You mean Professor Snape." Hermione rolled her eyes and pushed past him into his chambers. "By all means, Miss Granger, make yourself comfortable."

"Oh I intend to, Severus." Severus had practically growled at her in irritation and grabbed at her arm.

"What do you think that you are playing at you silly girl?"

Hermione grinned up at him. "Who said I was playing?" She looked at him in all seriousness. "I need to speak to you seriously before I leave tomorrow. Will you please listen?"

Severus had sighed but acquiesced to her request, lowering himself into his overstuffed leather chair. To his surprise, Hermione came and sat at his feet. Chewing at her lip nervously she looked up at him and spoke in a low tone.

"I have wanted to tell you this all year. I have really appreciated the opportunity you gave me allowing me to stay here and be your apprentice. However, my close proximity to you has led to a new development." Her eyes fell to the ground and a blush colored her cheeks.

Finally she knew she just had to blurt it out. "I am in love with you!"

The dark man looked down at the woman at his feet and sneered at her. "You think you're in love with me? That is ridiculous. I will not be a part of your teenage hormones." He attempted to stand up but Hermione was faster and she pushed him back into his seat and firmly pressed her lips against his. Severus immediately pushed her away, although his body had already started to respond to her advances.

"What do you think you are doing, Miss Granger?"

"Loving you, Severus. We only have tonight, and after that we could both be gone from this earth. Is loving me for one night that awful?"

Severus looked into her deep brown eyes and groaned before pulling her to him in a hungry embrace. "This is only for tonight, understand?" She nodded and went back to kissing him while her hands roamed over his expansive chest.

Severus groaned in her mouth. His mind really wasn't wrapping itself around what was going on. Under Veritas serum alone would he admit that he had fantasized about this very situation; he never thought his apprentice would be so willing outside the confines of his imagination. But with the war going on, there was too much going on for him to consider pursuing anything. Chances were he wouldn't survive the war, and he didn't want to get involved when there was so much at risk for the both of them. She didn't know, but he was the main supporter of her and Ginny being sent to America. It would make it easier knowing she was safe.

Hermione was a fast worker; she quickly had his shirt off and was running her fingers through the sparse hairs on his chest. Gently he picked her up, feeling her legs wrap around his waist instinctively. Hermione ran her fingers through his hair, finding the strands silky, not greasy as most suspected. She worked her kisses along his jaw line to his neck as he carried her to his bed. *'Finally I'll have him, if only for tonight.'*

With a flick of his wand they were both naked and he laid her onto his bed. Her creamy skin stood out against his dark silk sheets. In his mind she looked like a wanton goddess that he wanted to worship. *'It's only tonight.'*

He knelt between her legs and ran his finger over her slit, surprised to find that she was already wet for him. He usually didn't arouse women. Between his looks and his attitude, they were usually turned off. Her scent was intoxicating to him, and he ran the tip of his tongue between her lips to gauge her reaction. Immediately, Hermione's body arched and she moaned loudly. "Oh gods yes, do that!" Hermione ran a hand over his head, her other hand was twisting her hardened nipple. Severus allowed a small smile hearing her pleasure at his touch and went to work sucking and nibbling on her clit at the same time he slowly pushed a finger into her, marveling at the tight wetness of it all. Hermione writhed and moaned on the bed above him and finally she couldn't take it anymore. Her body tensed as the orgasm flowed over her, and she let out a yell. As she panted on the bed, Severus climbed up on the bed next to her, feeling quite pleased with his performance.

Slowly, Hermione came down off her high and crawled over to him with a wicked smile on her face. "Now, it's your turn."

She sat at the lower end of his body and leaned over taking his cock into her mouth in one gulp. Severus nearly jumped out of his skin, as he wasn't expecting her to do anything like that. *'Well they are right it's always the quiet ones.'*

Hermione was having a fun time sucking and tonguing Severus. He was larger than she expected, but nonetheless it was a good time. Severus panted and moaned, trying to keep from losing control, he wanted to be inside her for that. Suddenly he panted out, "Stop, please, slow down."

Slowly, Hermione released him from her mouth and looked over at him.

With cat like reflexes, Severus had Hermione on her back as he laid over her. Looking at her deeply, he whispered, "Are you sure you want this?" Inside, his mind was telling him not to give her a choice, but his honorable nature won out. To his relief, Hermione only pulled him closer and nodded as she opened her legs wider to take him in. Carefully, he placed himself at her entrance and slowly entered her. It was like silky pool of molten lava, taking all of his restraint. To his relief, she wasn't a virgin but a jealous thought briefly ran through his head. *'Who had she been with?'* Then all thoughts were gone. They started a rhythm that had been in practice since the beginning of time, murmuring soft words of love and affection. He would only admit it later, but he did love her. Then they fell into a peaceful sleep together.

The next morning Hermione stiffly crawled out of bed and got dressed. She took one more look at the sleeping man that she loved, and a single tear ran down her face. Before leaving, she placed a note and a chain with a triquetra shaped pendant on the pillow next to him. She kissed his cheek and slipped quietly out the door, careful not to wake him.

Dear Severus,

No matter what you may think, I do love you and I have for a long time. I finally just got brave enough to tell you. Keep safe, and I hope to see you soon. Please keep this to remember me by, and call my name should you need me. I will do my best to be there. I love you.

Hermione

Back in the office Severus looked down at the charm in his hand, almost bemused that he still had it. At first he had told himself it was just to remind him of their night together, but later knew it was love, apparently no longer a lost love at that.

Unbelievable

Chapter 3 of 8

Same as before

Sarah Kendall, also known as Hermione Granger, sat heavily on the couch in the small cottage she shared with her best friend Emily Mills, also known as Ginny Weasley. Holding her head in her hands, she groaned in frustration Thoughts ran wildly through her head.

'Why now? Why had they come back now after we worked so long and hard to vanish?'

She still couldn't fathom how they had found them, or why they had waited eight years to do so. Ginny walked over to the couch and handed Hermione a tumbler of fire whiskey and sat down next to her friend.

"So what do you want to do?" Ginny asked, "Keep running, or just let the past catch up with us?"

Hermione grimaced as she took a large swallow of the liquor before answering. "Honestly, I am too tired to keep on running. We knew this was going to happen, so let's just face the music and pick up what's left of our lives later."

Ginny nodded and started to clean up the room. "Hermione, did it ever occur to you that they might come after us?"

Hermione gave Ginny a soft smile, "I hoped, but I thought it would happen before now. At this point, does it really matter? We have great lives where we are. Don't get me wrong- I miss them all, but will we really fit in there anymore? So much has changed."

She turned to Ginny to gauge her reaction to her wistful thinking, but all thoughts immediately left her when she saw the look on Ginny's face. Ginny was looking at the magic mirror that allowed them to see into her office at the apothecary.

"Hermione! You need to see this!"

Immediately Hermione stood up and looked through the mirror. What she saw took her breath away, and not in the good sense.

Severus Snape was sitting on the couch in Hermione's office. He was also in the throes of an episode caused by the aftereffects of the Cruciatius Curse. His arms and legs were twitching violently, and it looked like he was having the magical version of a seizure. They could tell he was trying to regain control of his war-damaged body, but it was having little or no effect. He didn't even seem able to call out before he slumped over onto the couch, apparently unconscious.

Hermione looked at Ginny frantically, knowing that they needed to do something. In her mind he had just become her patient.

"Ginny, they didn't come here looking for us. They came for the cure."

Her eyes drifted over to the cauldron that was still simmering on the other side of the room.

"I won't have time to test it, but if I add the final ingredient now, I can leave him a sample and he can be the first. He certainly needs the chance."

Ginny nodded wordlessly as she continued to watch Severus through the mirror. Seeing that he was still unconscious, she got some supplies together and proceeded through the Floo to give him a relaxation potion to hold him until the new potion would be complete. Using a straw, she got the potion down the helpless man's throat and felt his body relax in her arms. Laying him out, Ginny tried to make him as comfortable as she could.

"Severus, I am so sorry this is happening to you, but Hermione is almost done and it should make you better." She whispered to him.

After draping a blanket over him she stepped back in to the Floo so she could monitor him without being seen.

Draco heard the rushing of the Floo leaving and ran into the office. He hadn't been able to see who had left, but all thoughts of that left his mind as he saw Severus covered up on the couch. *Well whoever it was, at least they weren't coming to do more damage.* He guessed it had been either Ginny or Hermione, as they had treated the continuous side effects that Severus suffered from. Pulling the chair in the office closer to the couch, Draco sat to watch over his godfather as the other man slept, only twitching occasionally at this point.

On the other side of the mirror Ginny watched her former lover and former professor and wondered if there was any way to make things right again. *I do miss and love you terribly Draco. I wish you knew that.'*

Unraveling

Chapter 4 of 8

same as before

Chapter 4 Unraveling

Hermione looked up as Ginny came back through the fireplace to watch through the mirror. She ached for her friend, feeling the same pain of being away from the man she had loved for so long; but at the time there had been no choice. She brought her attention back to the task at hand. She had to clear her mind if she was going to get this potion right to save the man she still loved.

The cauldron on the table simmered happily, and she was ready to add the final ingredient: four petals from a black orchid, each stirred in separately, counter clockwise from the first one. With each petal, the potion changed colour from the original blue to a pale yellow, lime green to bright luminescent silver. All it needed, in her opinion, was time - something she hoped Severus would have enough of.

Hermione sighed, resigned to waiting, and went to sit with Ginny. Nudging her closest friend in the world, she gave her a small smile. "How is he doing? Or, more importantly, how are you doing?" Ginny's emotions ran on her face quickly before she assumed the professional look of a mediwitch.

"The patient presents with the symptoms of someone who has suffered under the Cruciatus Curse for more than an hour at a time. But we knew that. If the new potion works the way we think it will, he should be resolved within hours." She paused, considering Hermione's other question. "As for myself... I think my heart is breaking all over again. I didn't think that seeing Draco again would be so painful after all this time."

Leaving Feast ~ Ginny's graduation

The name rang out in the hall: Ginerva Molly Weasley, and it took Ginny all of her willpower for her not to squeal with delight in having graduated near the top of her class. In the audience she could see Harry, Ron and Hermione clapping enthusiastically as she collected her diploma with the congratulations from her professors. As things wound down and the dance started up for the night, she saw a whirl of black robes leaving the great hall and she gave a small grin. The signal had been given, and she was going to sneak out of the dance after a whisper to Hermione regarding her whereabouts. Hermione nodded and gave her friend an encouraging smile before Ginny ran out of the hall and down to Hagrid's cottage, which had been empty since Hagrid had gone to get allegiance from the Giants in Northern Scotland. As she opened the door, thick black leather gloves and a rich chuckle grabbed her from behind and pulled her in.

"What do you think you are doing, little girl?"

Ginny pulled away without fear and a light laugh as she reached around and pulled off the hood to reveal her love, Draco Malfoy. The man in front of her quickly removed his death eater robes and threw them on a nearby chair before grabbing up his love in a deep kiss.

"I wish you could have made it and watched me graduate, you know that right?"

Draco sighed. This relationship between them caused both of them to miss out on some of the lighter, nicer things in life, like watching his girlfriend graduate from Hogwarts. This was war, and it wasn't nice, so all they had were each other until it was over. Placing her forehead against his own, Draco held Ginny close, pushing all other thoughts out of his head and concentrated on the time they had together. Later, in the early hours of the morning, Ginny got up and left a note and a pendant for him on the pillow. She cried silently as she prepared to leave the love of her life.

'I hope, my love, that I will see you again.'

The melancholy in the room seemed to press heavily on Hermione as she ladled the completed potion into a vial to cool.

She crossed the room and hugged Ginny tightly. "It will be OK," she whispered into the other girl's hair.

"Maybe it's time the whole truth came out."

San Diego Airport 1999

Getting off the plane, Hermione and Ginny looked around the international terminal warily. They tried to move along inconspicuously, but in from the corner of her eye Ginny saw a familiar face, and not a welcome one. Nudging Hermione, Ginny got her friends attention. Upon seeing the man, she stiffened.

"That's Theodore Nott! Has he seen us?"

Ducking her head, Ginny looked at him as they moved away. He was definitely following them; the question was how to get away from him. Both girls rushed through the terminal, finding a ladies room to hide in. Once inside, they immediately cast a few quick glamour charms on themselves in one of the stalls. Thankfully, the bathroom was very busy, and no one noticed that a brunette and a redhead went in and two blondes came out. Hermione had changed her brown hair to an ash blond and her eyes to blue, while Ginny was now a honey blond with green eyes.

"Pick a new name Ginny, and put it on your ticket and anything else that might ID you as Ginny Weasley. We are getting on the first plane that is boarding. We'll magic ourselves onto the manifest if we have to, but the Death Eaters know we are in America, so we have to be elsewhere no matter what."

Ginny nodded and transfigured her papers. Grinning, she looked at Hermione and said, "Hi there, I'm Emily Mills. Can I be your new travel companion?"

Hermione gave a nervous smile back.

"I'm Sarah Kendall, nice to meet you. I believe we have a plane to catch."

Hurrying out of the bathroom, they passed Nott, who was still looking for what they used to look like, and quickly boarded the nearest plane, which happened to be going to Sydney, Australia.

From there they had made their way to Wizarding Brisbane and started over. It had been the plan that once they were settled, they would find a way to let those in England know that they were all right. But, as most plans go, a complication popped up, and they had remained hidden and silent.

Present

Hermione placed her finger on the side of the vial to make sure it was cool enough before standing up and giving Ginny a wry smile.

"Well, it's time. I say we gas the room to knock Draco out, and then give Severus the potion. The gas won't affect the potion and Severus is already out so that won't be a problem. Also, we should leave a copy of the notes too, so they can reproduce it. Should we let them know the pendants we left them are Portkeys that will bring them to us?"

She looked at Ginny uncertainly. Ginny slowly nodded.

"We better. For everyone involved, it's time to come clean."

Uncovered

Chapter 5 of 8

same as before

Chapter 5 Uncovered

Before they had left, they had to write a very long and detailed letter to both Draco and Severus. Ginny was going through a photo album picking out certain photos that she wanted to include in the letter while Hermione actually wrote their explanation out the best way she could.

Dear Draco and Severus,

Where to start in trying to explain why we have lived a lie for so long. It started innocently enough. We had a run-in with Theodore Nott in the San Diego airport. He didn't catch us and we immediately caught the next plane headed out so that he would think we were still in America. Once we were in Australia, getting settled was harder than we expected.

First we had to get jobs and get into school with false identification. No small feat, I'll have you know. But we did manage to do it. Many times we sat down to try to think of a way to let you know that we were alright but nothing came to mind with chance revealing where we were and that would have defeated the whole point of sending us away.

I must confess that we were still a little miffed at being sent away in the first place. You took our choice away from us and while we are aware that it was for our own good. I (Hermione) was not a child, yet I was being treated as one. That was part of not telling you where we were. Childish, I know in hindsight; merely angry at the time.

Remember the pendants we left you? Well they are protection talismans and Portkeys to us. Somehow we thought you would figure that out from the letters we left but I guess you never did. For the longest time we hoped you would find us, but after a while we just gave up and started living out lives as best we could here.

We have enclosed some pictures of our life here including the biggest reason we were afraid to come back. We lacked an explanation then as we do now. Please find it in your hearts to consider forgiving our selfish and irresponsible actions. We have missed you both so much and would very much like to have you back in our lives.

Here are the notes and a sample of the Cruciatus Curse Cure. Severus, by the time you read this we will have given you a proper dosage. Yes I know it hasn't been tested but we watched your last attack through the mirror and felt it would be best for us to try to relieve your agony as soon as possible.

Love Always,

Hermione and Ginny

P.S Our names are still the activation words for the port keys.

Once the letter was complete, both women walked to the Floo. Ginny had something similar to a smoke bomb in her hand but instead of smoke it would release a non-toxic sedative that would put Draco under for about 8 hours. All the sedative would do to Severus was put him into a deeper sleep, which would make pouring the potion down his throat a little awkward. But it was better than to chance him fighting them. Or worse, for him to wake up and demand answers they weren't ready to produce yet.

The sedative quickly took effect, and they watched through the mirror as Draco slumped over in the chair he was sitting in. Once they were convinced that he was completely out, they cast bubble charms on themselves and entered their office through the Floo. Ginny checked both men's pulses before nodding at Hermione to start. Hermione angled Severus's body semi-upright and massaged his jaws to release. She then pulled the stopper out of the potion vial and poured a third of it down his throat taking the time to rub his throat to make sure he didn't choke..

Certain that he had enough, Hermione laid him on his back, tucking the blanket around him tenderly. She made eye contact with Ginny.

"It's done. I am just going to leave the letter, notes, pictures and the vial on the side table next to Draco. They should see it when they wake up. We'll be able to monitor everything from home."

Ginny nodded and headed back to the Floo taking the time to run a finger lightly over Draco's cheek as she passed him.

"What will we do if they can't accept us?"

Hermione tightened at her question but managed to answer.

"Then we will continue as we have. Our life isn't that bad here. It would just be better with them in it. I hope that they can understand it."

With those words, both of them went home through the Floo to watch from the other side of the mirror. All they could do was hope that the cure would save Severus and that the men they had loved would forgive them.

The next morning Draco woke with a stretch and a yawn, feeling very refreshed for the first time in days. He felt a little guilty for falling asleep while watching over his

godfather. As his thoughts drifted to Severus, so did his eyes, and he was relieved to see the other man still sleeping peacefully. The lines of pain he usually wore were gone and his hands were relaxed. Draco also noticed that the blanket was tucked in differently than before, and he guessed that the girls had been back and done something

Looking around for some sign of them he saw a large envelope and a potions vial on the side table. Grabbing the envelope, he ripped it open and scanned the letter. When he got to the pictures, all the colour in his face was washed away. Roughly, he went over and shook Severus.

"Wake up. You have to see this!"

Severus roused, staring at his godson with bleary, flat black eyes. He yawned and pulled himself up to a sitting position. His eyes grew wide as he noticed the movement didn't make his body ache. Draco shoved the papers and pictures into his lap and watched his godfather intently. Severus read over the letter and slumped into the couch as he looked at the pictures.

"Oh Merlin, this changes things now doesn't it?"

Severus's face was unreadable as he read the letter again. Then he set it aside to look over the other notes.. Minutes later he collected the whole package and stood up. Grimly he spoke to Draco.

"We need to get this cure to Hogwarts to start production on the cure. Then we'll deal with this new wrinkle."

Unbecoming

Chapter 6 of 8

Same as before. Getting close to the end Thanks to my Beta Em

Chapter Six: Unbecoming

Hermione woke the next morning in her bed. She was a little confused at first, since the last thing she remembered was sitting on the sofa, watching the mirror and wondering what all would happen. The sunlight tickled her nose and would have made her smile had she not immediately remembered the happenings of the night before. The new life they had created was falling apart, and there was nothing more she could do about it. Part of her wanted to be relieved that the truth was out, but the other part cried for the happy place they had created here. The little voice in her head told her that none of this would have happened at all if she had managed to convince Ginny to go home after the war had ended.

Past ~ Summer of 2005

It was late in the afternoon when they heard the war was over, and both women were sitting at the dining room table attempting to eat their lunch while they decided what to do about their current situation.

"Ginny, the war is over. There is no reason for you to stay here. You have your whole family waiting for you. You don't need to hide anymore."

Ginny rolled her eyes and let out a frustrated sigh.

"I am not leaving you here alone! If I go, you go. It's that simple. You would be welcomed just as I would. I don't understand why you can't see that."

Hermione felt her throat tighten at Ginny's words. She didn't understand why Ginny couldn't see things the way they were. Ginny could go home, back to Draco and the rest of her family. There would be love and happiness for all involved. But her, well she didn't have any of that. Her parents were dead. Her one time love had seen the whole thing as a fling, and as much as she loved Harry and Ron, they would not understand.

"Everyone would be miserable if I went back. There is nothing left there for me."

Ginny stood up from the table and crossed over to where Hermione was now openly crying. Taking her friend into her arms, she soothed the other woman with nonsense words as she ran her hand over her head.

"If you stay, I stay. I will not leave you to handle all of this alone. We are in this together, our own happy family. Will I miss them? Yes, but we are doing all right here and they will be fine there. Most likely they already think we are dead."

Hermione gave an odd hiccup cough before nodding and sniffing. She took the serviette that Ginny handed her and blew her nose hard.

"You will continue your research and become a wonderful success and life will go on. Perhaps later we will be ready to go home on our own terms."

That had been the end of the discussion. Ginny had stayed, and life had been good and on an even keel, until last week, when their past had finally caught up with them

Present

Still lying in bed staring at the ceiling she answered the soft knock on her door with a husky voiced, "Come in." There at the door was Ginny, who looked as ragged as she felt. Making her way to the bed, she flopped down on it dramatically next to Hermione.

"So what do you think the verdict will be? I looked in on the office when I got up, and they were already gone. They took the package with them."

Her head turned at looked at Hermione, who was just lying there with her eyes closed as she spoke.

"You know this all could have been avoided if you had gone back after the war ended, right?"

Ginny snorted. "This could have all been avoided had they just called first before showing up. We made the right choice for us back then. I would have never been able to keep it a secret that you were still alive, and you know the whole story would have come out, and then they would have showed up and tried to take you by force."

Hermione huffed out a laugh. "You mean they would have tried to take me by force and in the end no one would be happy."

She then spoke softer, "Thank you for staying. I don't know what I would have done without you."

A calm reverie fell over the bedroom, but was soon interrupted by a loud crash from downstairs. Rolling her eyes, Hermione sat up in bed.

"I knew it was too quiet down there. What do you think is going on?"

Ginny giggled. "Oh, I am sure the regular mayhem. I was keeping order until I came to talk to you."

"Sure, sure blame it on me. You could have left me up here to rot, you know. I would have been quite happy."

With a sigh, Hermione pulled herself out of bed and walked into her adjoining bathroom to start her morning ablutions. She called out to Ginny.

"Go back downstairs and hold court. I will be there as soon as I can."

As she washed her face, she could hear scolding going on downstairs and Ginny shrieking, "What on earth is going on down here? What do you think I am here for, to clean up after you?"

She laughed and started to brush her teeth. No matter what happened, Ginny was right. They would be fine and they would be happy, and if those at Hogwarts couldn't deal with things, it was their problem, not hers. There were more important things to worry about now. Like opening up the Apothecary. She let out a groan. Because of all the goings on, the place had been closed for a day and she had left a notice that they would be opening up again today.

"Oh Merlin, it's going to be a long day. Thank Heavens for house elves, or my sanity would be long gone."

Not for the first time was she happy that she had given up on her goals for S.P.E.W., and she was very grateful for the time and help they provided.

By the time she made it downstairs, Ginny and the elves had righted things and the house was quiet. Noticing the clock, she looked at the names there and smiled at what she read. Ginny: Opening the shop, Sage: reading in the library, and Dante: Putting a dung bomb in the school toilet. The last notation made her chuckle as she walked to the fireplace and took the Floo to the office.

"Can't forget to warn Ginny that she is going to get an owl from the school soon."

Unmarked

Chapter 7 of 8

The war is over and the cure for the Cruciatus Curse is on it's way but those involved have been thought long dead,
Why did they leave and what are they hiding M/F,M/M

Thanks to my Betas CoacoCristy and Somigliana you are faboo

Chapter Seven: Unmarked

Draco and Severus arrived through the Floo in Dumbledore's office with a large billow of smoke. In the office, Ron, Harry, and Albus were all waiting, wondering if the trip had been productive. Almost immediately, both men were bombarded with a slew of questions regarding the women and the potion. Raising his hand, Severus called for silence and the questions died down.

"Alright, you want to know what happened, and we will do our best to tell you, but I will tell you now, a couple of things are private and a little foggy."

While he was talking, Draco had taken a seat and was apparently just sitting there in shock. Looking at him in concern, Albus suggested that perhaps it would be better for Severus to start telling them what had happened. Severus covered the pertinent details, including the fact that Ms Granger and Ms Weasley were very much alive and doing well Down Under. He got up to the point where he had had an attack, and that was where Draco picked up the story.

"Once Severus collapsed, I put him in Granger's office to rest out the worst of it..." He frowned before continuing. "But that is where things start to get fuzzy for me too. I am pretty certain that I was drugged by them..." Draco glared and shook his head. "When I woke up, Severus was healed, and I was fully rested." If anyone noticed that Draco had gone pale remembering what had happened next, nothing was said; however, Severus headed back to the Floo and indicated that Draco should follow.

"If you would excuse us, Albus, I would like to go over Dr. Kendall's notes in great detail so that I can start the mass production of the cure." Calling out, "My quarters," Severus vanished into green smoke, failing to listen to Ron and Harry's calls of wanting more information about their friend and sister. Seeing the Potion master had gone, they turned their questions to Draco, who paled even further.

"Potter, Weasley! I can't tell you anything more. I only got a glimpse at them as they were leaving. No conversation took place. I can't answer your questions yet. But don't worry; we will all get to the bottom of this." *Granted, you two are going to kill us when you find out why they have been gone so long.* "Now if you don't mind, I am going to help Severus with the notes. Circe knows you two were never that great at Potions. Without Granger's help, that is." A smirk came to his lips as Draco crossed the room and left via Floo to join Severus.

Once back in the dungeons, Draco flopped into the chair opposite the one that Severus was currently occupying, holding his head in either shock or dismay. Possibly both. "So, then, Severus, you've just been cured from the side effects of the Cruciatus Curse and found out you are the father of a seven-year old. How are you going to celebrate?" There was a tinge of sarcasm and amusement in his voice, but something else lingered there too.

Without looking up, Severus snapped back, "I wouldn't joke if I were you. If I am not mistaken, there is a seven-year old Malfoy running around too." It was a sobering thought for both of them really. Their spy status had kept the idea of having a family out of their immediate thoughts for as long as either could remember, since neither of them had really expected to outlive the Dark Lord.

Swallowing hard, Draco pulled out the packet that contained the notes, letters, and pictures. Handing a couple to Severus, he just stared at them, trying to deny what they clearly showed. "We did this, Sev. Can you believe it? They are a part of us, something untainted, unmarked from the evil that surrounded us." The awe in Draco's voice was unmistakable. Severus had to agree it was unbelievable; a miracle really. Now how were they going to handle this new situation? *With cunning of course!* A smirk came to Severus's lips as he planned their next stage of attack

Elsewhere in the castle, Ron and Harry paced inside the chambers they now shared. "What are we going to do, Harry? How do we explain that we don't love them like that

anymore, and that we are now together?"

Sighing, Harry ran his fingers through his already ruffled hair. Since he and Ron had gotten together, it had never occurred to either of them that their presumed dead girlfriends might not actually be dead, or that they would have to explain that they were gay. "Not really sure, Ron. Maybe they will be so caught up in coming home that they will have forgotten about us having been together. Maybe they found other blokes to be with; it has been a long time."

Ron shook his shaggy red hair dubiously. "You really think that they would have gotten over us, mate? They were all alone in Australia for eight years. What else could they have been doing other than school work?" He shuddered at the thought of studying but knew that it suited both Hermione and Ginny.

"You might be right, love. They might still be pining after us, hoping that there is some way to pick up things where they left off before they left. We'll just have to break it to them gently that there is no chance for them to be with us, and that we are all better off as friends."

Harry wished he sounded more secure in his decision, but he also suspected that Hermione and Ginny's tempers had probably not improved in the past eight years. Flopping onto their bed, he stared up at the ceiling. "It's weird, huh? That they might be coming back? Thing is, Ron... I don't think they want to come back. Think about it. The war has been over for a while, so it was perfectly safe for them to come back but they didn't. They might not want to be with us any more either."

Ron was silent as he thought. It had never occurred to him that Hermione might not want to come back to him. True, she had been very distant with him before she'd left, but the war was going on, so he had ruled it off as that. Honestly, he really hadn't paid much attention to her in the months before she had been sent away. Once she had been gone, Hermione had become a distant memory until the war was over.

During the war, Harry and Ron had discovered that their lifelong friendship had grown into an actual romantic love, something that had left them both very flustered. Upon hearing about the loss of Ginny and Hermione, their grief had been tinged with reluctant relief, knowing that they would not have to explain their betrayal. Now their reprieve would most likely come to an end.

"Ya think they forgot about being in love with us, Harry?" Ron wasn't sure if he should be hurt or relieved at that thought either. "It's very possible that they moved on with their lives, and I wouldn't have blamed them. Ron, I don't think we should worry about it until they come back, if they do come back...."

Both were sober in the realization that their friend and sister might not ever come back. For the first time, it dawned on them that they would not be in the center of the girls' circle of friends anymore.

Back in the dungeon, Severus had recovered from his shock first and was now in the livid stage of acceptance. "HOW DARE THEY!"

Draco winced at the force behind the yell. He could understand why Severus was so upset. He wasn't exactly thrilled himself, but yelling really wouldn't get them anywhere. "What part are you most upset about? That they got pregnant in the first place or that they didn't come home after the war?" Draco was rather surprised how well he was taking all of this really. True, he was going to make Ginny pay for making him mourn, but he could understand her reasoning, and he still loved her.

In the case of Severus and Hermione, Draco didn't know if love had been involved at all or if it had just been a bit of carelessness in the heat of the moment. Severus's glare would have been enough to cause someone to turn to stone if Draco hadn't already been used to it. His mouth opened and closed a couple of times before he turned away in a huff. "Severus, the issue isn't what to do about the past. We need to know what to do about the present."

Taking a deep breath, Severus turned around and crossed his arms, a deep frown imbedded in his forehead. "For once, you are correct, Draco. We now require a plan. There is no way that I am going to allow my daughter to remain without my influence in her life, no matter what her mother wants." There was a twinge inside his chest as Severus had to admit to himself that he was a little bit pleased that he had a child and knew that Hermione hadn't kept her away from him to be cruel. Still, the situation couldn't remain as is, the little girl was his last remaining relative and he wanted a relationship with her.

Draco coughed at Severus' mention of Hermione. "Severus, you don't think that Hermione would deny you spending time with your daughter, do you? We both know that them remaining in hiding, especially in their conditions, was the best thing that they could have done." However, even Draco couldn't deny how much it had hurt to be deprived of so many firsts in his own son's life. Still if there was a chance to get his family back together and make Ginny his wife, he was going to do it--come hell or high water.

"I think that this situation should be handled delicately," Draco started, "so that the girls aren't spooked and feel the need to vanish again. I suspect that they have gotten comfortable in their new lives and must be feeling very off center right now. Not that I am condoning what they did. Yes, they should have contacted us as soon as the war ended, and we could have been dealing with this back then, but we can't change that."

Draco stood and walked to Severus' side. "I think our best plan of attack is to go back and talk to them face to face. They have nothing left to hide now that all the cards are out on the table." He had been about to head over to pour himself a drink, when he heard the Floo rush open. Turning, he was surprised to see two young children come spilling, out, obviously terrified and crying. The dark haired little girl righted herself first and her eyes fell on Severus. "Father, you have to come right away! The men... the men are hurting mummy and Aunt Ginny!"

A/N: Thanks so much to CocaChristy for all her help with this chapter it would not exist without her.. Thanks to all the reviewers for all your support

Unbound

Chapter 8 of 8

The war is over and the cure for the Cruciatus Curse is on it's way but those involved have been thought long dead,
Why did they leave and what are they hiding M/F,M/M

A/N: Thank you so much to my beta, Cocoacrity. Thank the rest of you and you know who you are for supporting me and pushing for this chapter.

Chapter 8 Unbound

The children falling out of the Floo was unexpected, to say the least. The fact that they recognized Draco and Severus as their fathers was reassuring yet surprising. The little girl that Severus could plainly see was his daughter recomposed herself faster than Draco's son, who still sniffled a little before moving closer to his friend. Severus and Draco exchanged a look, but stayed calm. The children's words had chilled them, and they knew that there was no time to waste.

Severus moved first, kneeling down in front of his daughter. *No, her name is Sage... call her Sage.* "Okay, Sage, I know you are frightened, but I need to know exactly what is going on. What men are hurting your mothers?" At the mention of their mothers, both children let out fresh sobs, and Sage flung herself into her father's arms. Severus gave Draco a bewildered look as he wasn't sure what to do with the child, but he didn't want to upset her further.

"Umm, yes. Now, Sage, I need you to calm down so that we can help both your mothers; we don't have much time." The little girl sniffled again, but the sobs had died out. *Thank Circe she is calming down. I am never sure what to do with crying women.* Sage took a staggered breath, but grew calmer. Severus wondered if she was articulate enough to explain what had driven them to come all this way. He shuddered at the idea that Albus might have closed the international Floo and then the pair would have been good and lost.

Finally the little girl was ready to talk. "It happened maybe thirty minutes ago. Someone knocked at the door. Aunt Ginny went to open it, and the first thing she said was, 'Oh, no.' Then she said, 'Breadfruit...'" Letting out a deep breath, Sage continued. "Breadfruit is the code word for us to hide, so me and Dante ran and hid in the room that we are supposed to go to." The memory made her eyes well up, and Severus was afraid she would start sobbing again. Kneeling at her side, he looked directly into dark eyes that were so much like his own.

"Sage, I need you to stay calm, that is the only way we can help your mummy and Aunt Ginny. Okay?" She nodded and continued with her story. "Mummy used some hexes and then she screamed. Mummy never screams like that, so I knows that the mens hurt her. I grabbed Dante's hand and ran out, wanting to help Mummy. When Mummy saw us, she was lying on the floor crying, and she looked hurt. I wanted to go to her, but she shook her head and mouthed 'office.' I knew that she meant for us to go to the office, so we went through the Floo. I don't think the mens saw us; they were hurting Aunt Ginny though."

Draco stiffened at the idea of Ginny being tortured. He could only guess from Sage's description that the attackers had used *Crucio* on the two women. At this point, Dante was finally calm enough to pipe up. "That's when we decided to come here. I knew that my daddy would help my mummy." He looked over at Draco adoringly.

Severus walked to the Floo connection in his room, taking some powder and throwing it in calling for Dumbledore. "Albus? We need to come through. We have two guests and a problem." Nodding at the children, they went through the connection and into Dumbledore's office. Albus was sitting behind his desk, and his only response to seeing the young children was to raise an eyebrow at Severus and lift the lid of his candy bowl. "Lemon Drop, anyone?" Only the children seemed happy with the offer and carefully took one each before taking a seat in one of the chairs together. Albus looked at the two men expectantly, waiting for an explanation, and Severus was quick to give him one.

"Their mothers have been attacked, and they came here hoping that Draco and I would save them." Albus got an understanding look on his face before he turned to the youngsters.

"You two made the right decision coming here. Now I want to you think very carefully. Do you know the name of the people who attacked your mothers?"

Both children stilled and seemed to be in deep thought as their minds went over the past forty-two minutes. Then Dante looked over at his father. "I think Mummy called one of them Nott." Sage's eyes grew wide, and she nodded furiously. "They were wearing all black robed clothes, and I couldn't see their faces."

The name brought back bad memories for both men. They had suspected the Death Eater had survived the final battle, but they hadn't had a clue as to where he was hiding. Now it was becoming clear that he had gone looking for revenge and apparently found it.

Draco ran his hands over his face, hating the idea that Nott had found and was harming Ginny and Hermione. "How could he have possibly found them? It took us this long to find them, and that was an accident...unless...." Draco's face went ashen as he considered that they might have led Nott and his companion to the women. "They must have been watching us. Damn it, Severus, we led them right to them."

A hush came over the office as everyone digested this new information. There had never been any indication that either Severus or Draco had been monitored, and granted, until they came across the research done by Sarah Kendall, a.k.a. Hermione Granger, they almost never left the castle other than the occasional trip to Hogsmeade or Grimmauld Place. That meant one of two things: Either there was a spy in their midst, or Nott had known all along that the women had not died and thought that the Order knew as well.

"So then, Albus, we're heading back to the cottage, where hopefully these children's mothers are, and then we'll be back." The words sounded light hearted for the children's sake, but Severus wondered if it would not be better to be upfront and let them know there was a good chance that their mothers were dead.

Severus and Draco took the same path that their children had taken, first going back to the Apothecary and from there, to the cottage. When they came through, they had their wands drawn, ready for an attack. The smoke was the first thing that hit them as they came out of the Floo. Draco stumbled over an upturned chair. The cottage was on fire, and from what little Severus could see through the smoke, he could tell that the girls had put up a fight. The idea that they wouldn't go down without a fight made him feel a little bit better, but still they couldn't possibly know all of the dark spells that the Death Eater knew. Both men cast a Bubblehead Charm on themselves to make breathing easier as they searched for Ginny and Hermione.

"Do you see anything, Draco?" Severus called through the smoke. The two men had moved in opposite directions, hoping to cover more area faster. The response was slow in coming, and that made Severus wary. "Yes, yes, I think I have found a body." Draco's voice cracked when he spoke, and Severus couldn't tell if it was emotion or the smoke. Following Draco's voice, Severus made his way to Draco's side where he saw a burned hand coming out from under an overturned bookshelf.

"There is no pulse... should we?" Draco didn't even know how to form the question, but Severus understood, bending down to move the shelving. It took some effort on both their parts to lift it off the body, but when it was moved they both released a relieved breath. The body didn't belong to either Ginny or Hermione. On the downside, it wasn't Nott either. "Nott must have had an accomplice who wasn't up to par."

It was obvious that the skirmish here hadn't gone the way Nott had planned, and both Draco and Severus assumed that he had fled once he had lost his advantage. Still they didn't spend much time thinking about this as they continued looking for the girls.

"I've found one, Severus!" came Draco's almost jubilant cry from the remains of the sitting room. Severus had gone upstairs and was going through the less mangled bedrooms. It was there that he found a very injured Ginny Weasley. Her eyes fluttered weakly at him, and she tried to speak.

"Not now, Miss Weasley, we need to get you out of here. Don't worry, your son is safe." Severus cast a stasis spell on her for fear that moving her would be fatal. Then with a *Mobilius Corpus*, he led her prone form downstairs where Draco was holding an unconscious Hermione Granger.

Draco's eyes held a question that he couldn't bear to ask, but Severus answered anyway. "She's alive, but barely. We don't have time to go back to Hogwarts, but Brisbane has the Oodgeroo Noonuccal Hospital. We'd better get them there now." With mixed feelings, both men headed to the Floo with their precious cargo, hoping that it wasn't too late.