

Hidden Meeting

by ayerf

Snape and Hermione meet unexpectedly in the Room of Hidden Things.

One shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: The Potterverse isn't mine.

AN: For Duniyazade

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Pacing up and down in front of the currently blank wall opposite the tapestry of Barnabas the Barmy, Hermione Granger muttered under her breath as she tried to think of the same combination that Harry must have used around a month before. A lifetime ago, when Dumbledore was still alive and Snape was still one of the teachers Hermione respected most.

Sniffing, Hermione blinked repeatedly until the threat of more tears passed. "No more crying, you know he's not worth it," she rebuked herself under her breath. "I have to find his book; it might come in useful even if those scribbled spells are decidedly dodgy."

More precious minutes were wasted, until Hermione had half a mind to find Harry and get the right combination from him. But in his current vengeful mood, she rather doubted that Harry would be interested in recovering anything to do with Snape, whether it would be helpful or not.

"I don't have much time," she murmured, frowning down at her watch. The departure of the Hogwarts Express was not long off. She could spare around a quarter of an hour searching for the Prince's Potions book, and even then she'd have to run to catch the train. "If only the Room would appear with that *book*," she spat the word, "on an otherwise bare bookshelf."

Unfortunately no door appeared to the summons of that train of thought. "Oh, please! I need to find the room where it's hidden. Come on..." Hermione moaned, concentrating fiercely as she resumed walking back and forth. To her relief, the door finally materialised. That relief evaporated as soon as she saw what awaited her inside.

The Room of Requirement had become a cavernous room, far larger than the Great Hall. Dim daylight streamed in through high windows, illuminating a veritable maze of what Hermione could charitably call junk... with the exception of the stacks of dusty books she could see strewn around the room. If this chaotic mess was where Harry had hidden the Prince's book, Hermione had to reluctantly admit to herself that it would almost certainly be a futile search.

She half-heartedly approached the nearest precarious tower of books, her hope that Harry would have hidden the book in such an easily recoverable position quickly fading. None of the tattered books were Potions books, let alone the one she sought.

Grimacing, she darted out of the room, closing the door and resumed her march up and down in an effort to get a better result. To her disappointment, the interior of the room didn't alter whatsoever.

A glance down at her watch revealed that the time she could spare was fast running out. Hermione could only hope that a Summoning Charm would work as it had earlier with the books about Horcruxes. 'Accio!'

Something clattered deep within the room. It seemed that Harry had been thorough in hiding the book. So thorough that it was taking far longer than it should for the book to come...perhaps it had been caught up in some of the detritus littering the room? Repeating the Summoning Charm had no effect. Instead, now that she knew that the book was certainly in the room, Hermione utilised a modified Point Me Charm so that her wand could lead her to it.

With a few false starts choosing the right path between the stacks of junk, her wand swivelling in her loose grip to point the way forward, Hermione walked into the maze. The looming shape of a troll broke through her intent focus on the movements of her wand. Hermione had to bite back a scream before she realised that it was stuffed. Ever since her encounter with a troll in her first year, she'd had a recurring nightmare featuring the brutish magical creatures.

Breathing raggedly, Hermione turned her attention back to her wand. She edged past the stuffed troll, hurrying along as her wand almost jumped from her hand: the book had to be close.

There was a large cabinet a few metres ahead, the double doors partly open. Hermione almost walked straight past it, only for her wand to jerk directly towards it. Reaching out to open it fully, she only had time to gasp as it opened independently. As soon as it was open, a dark, cloaked figure standing inside gestured with a wand. Hermione's wand flew out of her hands, her fingers stinging. Turning on her heel, she tried to run away, only for the walls of assorted hidden debris to close in, blocking her path.

Skidding to a halt, Hermione pushed off from the newly formed stack of clutter, spinning around to face her attacker with her head held high. Inhaling sharply, she took a step back until her back was pressed against the assorted broken furniture and damaged books.

It was Snape, his wand trained on her, clutching her wand in his left hand together with the book she had attempted to Summon. He scowled down at her, almost making Hermione feel as if she was back in the classroom.

"I cannot have you running off, Miss Granger," he growled. "No one must know I am here."

Her heart skipped a beat when he raised his wand. She flinched when the tip of the wand flashed as the spell was unleashed, but to her surprise it wasn't aimed at her. Instead it hit the cabinet next to Snape with a sharp crack of breaking wood. The barely noticeable faint glow on the cabinet faded.

Mind racing as she tried to understand what had just happened, Hermione almost groaned at her own stupidity when the truth occurred to her. That must have been the Vanishing Cabinet Draco had mended to let the Death Eaters into the castle. But why had Snape just broken it? Why would Dumbledore's killer destroy the Death Eaters route into Hogwarts? Unless... unless Snape was still on the Order's side, unless he was still Dumbledore's man.

"It is far too risky to allow you to jump to conclusions," Snape said, giving her a penetrating look as he aimed his wand at her again. Clearly he knew exactly what she had been thinking.

For a moment Hermione thought that she was wrong about him and he was about to kill her, her heart dropping like a stone as she tried to cling to her fragile hope.

"I am not going to kill you, silly girl," Snape sneered. "You really are no Occlumens. Any Legilimens could break into your mind," he added scornfully.

"Wait!" she cried, raising her hands as if he were pointing a gun at her. "Please, don't. It's more a theory, a hope, than a truth. Please don't take my hope from me."

"*Hope*," Snape spat. "Hope will not defeat the Dark Lord. Would you take the risk that if you are right about me, that your hope endangers my life?"

Shamed, Hermione lowered her head. "No, sir."

Instead of casting the Memory Charm immediately, Snape stepped forward, offering the book to her. She didn't try to take her wand, doubting that he would trust her with it. "Do not rely too much on books in the months ahead," he admonished her. "And I am no longer your Professor."

"Yes, s...I..." Hermione floundered, trying to find something she could say. While it was possible that she was wrong about him, she clung to the belief that Snape could be trusted. Whatever the truth of his allegiance, he was going to be in great danger. If he were Harry or Ron, words wouldn't have been needed; she could have hugged him or kissed his cheek. But this was Snape. If she tried anything like that, he'd probably hex her. "Good luck," she eventually managed to say, wishing that she was brave enough to do as she would have with her friends.

Snape looked quite taken aback even with that minimal response. "Thank you, Miss Granger," he said, so quietly that Hermione wondered if she had imagined it. He raised his wand, pointing it between her eyes with a steady hand. "*Obliviate*."

Hermione blinked, looking around herself in some confusion. The Prince's book was in her hands, yet she couldn't remember picking it up. She sneezed, shaking her head to clear it.

"Must be the dust," she mumbled, glaring at the dusty stacks surrounding her before sneezing repeatedly. Straightening up, she checked that she hadn't dropped either her wand or the book she'd retrieved in her sneezing fit. Looking down at her hands, her attention was drawn to her watch. "The train!" Unless she sprinted all of the way and used as many shortcuts as possible, she'd miss it. Pondering her unusual fit of forgetfulness could wait until she was safely aboard the Hogwarts Express.