

# The Murder of Miss Hermione Granger

*by bound\_by\_passion*

Hermione's body has been found, alone, in the snow. But who killed her? And why?  
Severus must follow the clues to find the deeply twisted truth.

## Part 1

*Chapter 1 of 6*

Hermione's body has been found, alone, in the snow. But who killed her? And why? Severus must follow the clues to find the deeply twisted truth.

Disclaimer: I do not own these characters. They belong to JKR. I make no money.

A/N: This was a christmas mystery fic for all the lovely people over at GrangerSnape100. Can you guess the killer before Severus does?

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In all of my life, however bizarre and unpredictable it has been, there has never been a more intriguing investigation than that of the murder of Miss Hermione Granger, or the Case of the Little Ghost Girl, as the media seem to have dubbed it. It was so wonderfully simple whilst appearing so awfully complex that, had Lady Luck not entered the equation when she was required, it is doubtful that it would ever have been solved.

You see, I was the poor fool sent to investigate the crime, which is what, I think, the killer was counting on.

----

It was snowing the day I found the body. She was outside on the muddied ground of the moor, her corkscrew curls trailing in a deepening puddle. Her clothes, damp and heavy, covered her motionless frame, leaving only her face exposed to the wintry weather. It was a dead face, devoid of all life and colour.

I remember feeling my heart lurch at the sight of her. Each body is as much of a tragedy as the one before, make no mistake, but to see someone I cared for so dearly dead before me sent a chill through my bones.

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Perhaps it was a little foolish to refer to her as my beloved, even if only in my own head. Back then, when everything seemed so black and white, she had somehow become the object of my affection, filling my waking moments with hope, admittedly false, that she could, one day, be mine. If only I dared to tell her so.

If only... A phrase I so often use.

But there was no going back now. She was dead, gone, and though my heart ached, I couldn't tell her. I couldn't compromise the investigation with all that tricky Time-Turner business.

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No, there was only one thing left I could do for her. I could catch the criminal that took her from me; I could set him behind bars as food for the Dementors.

I lent down, my breath catching as I did so. Snow had fallen upon her cheek, and I longed to brush the frozen flakes away, as though she could still feel. Instead, I picked up the wand that lay discarded at her side.

Ebony. Unicorn Hair. Nine inches.

Not her usual, but I remembered she had broken that only a few days before. This wand was new.

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Dusting for fingerprints required rather more effort in the cold. I had to remove my gloves to grasp the brush, and the icy wind bit into my fingers with sharp teeth. They had turned a brilliant red by the time I finished, my search fruitless. Hermione had been wearing gloves, but I had hoped, perhaps depended on, looking back, that the killer hadn't. Priori Incantatem had confirmed that her own wand was responsible for her death.

I considered suicide. But the angle wasn't quite correct. Or the spell. Unforgivables were, by their design, useless for suicides. Malicious intent was needed.

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There were no footprints around her body. The snow lay as flat and as crisp as it had before, only disturbed by my own boots and the boots of those who had found her. The killer had cleaned up. Or she died before the snow fell.

The wintry weather had lowered her core temperature far quicker than it should have done, leaving me without even a rough estimate of the time of death. The liver is such a useful organ, but its temperature more so.

The snow had begun to fall on Friday. It was Saturday when we found her.

----

Night had fallen by the time I finished, but I had precious little to show for my labours. A wand, a body. No hair, no fingerprints, no DNA. Everything I found belonged to Hermione or could be traced back to her. The killer had simply vanished, leaving nothing but a dead woman behind as a gruesome calling card.

I was at a loose end.

I remember watching as the Aurors wheeled the body away. I have no idea how long I stood there after they had taken her. Or whether it was snow or tears I felt upon my face.

## Part 2

### *Chapter 2 of 6*

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The Mortuary was cold like the inside of an industrial fridge. I shivered as I strode in, my surgical gown fluttering in the breeze created by the air conditioning unit in the corner. Though masked by the heavy scent of disinfectant and Luna's perfume, I still believed I could smell the stench of rotting corpses and putrefying flesh. Death can never really be hidden from us, you see. It still lurks long after the bodies have gone, reminding those who wander of the room's original purpose.

The sound of metal against metal filled the air as Hermione's drawer was opened.

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I remember busying myself with washing my hands and gloving up. Anything to avoid looking at her. For, once I did, I knew that would be the end. I would no longer be able to deceive myself into believing she was still alive.

The thought hurt.

I rubbed my sternum, willing away the pain. There is no fool like a lovesick fool, they say, and I was most certainly lovesick. It was, after all, not the first time I had felt for a dead woman.

Unable to delay the proceedings further, I took a deep breath and raised my head.

---

Seeing her on the cold metal table of the Mortuary, the fluorescent light bouncing off the contours of her body with an unforgiving harshness, made many things apparent.

Marks on her wrists, the deep purple of trapped and decaying blood, showed signs of a struggle. I liked to think that Hermione wasn't, perhaps, as defenceless as she first seemed. The skin under her fingernails seemed to suggest so. Of course, that was before we found out that the epithelial DNA matched her own.

It was an intriguing discovery, for there were no scratches to be found upon her body.

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I felt a little uneasy watching as Luna undressed her, exposing her cold and decaying flesh to the harsh lighting above us. It was almost as if I was invading her privacy,

seeing things that only a lover should see. Never before had I felt this sense of guilt, though I had, by then, seen countless victims, most in far worse condition than this.

I fought the urge to look away, in case I missed something important. My own feelings were irrelevant in the grand scheme of things. And I was sure Hermione would not have minded, considering the circumstances.

---

She was far thinner than I had expected. I could count her ribs; I could see the shadows that lurked at her hips. No doubt, had I attempted, I could have grasped her waist and felt the tips of my fingers at the other side. Deep hollows lay beneath her cheekbones and around her eyes, looking for all the world like bruises, accentuated all the more by her dark lashes.

Clearly, the stress had taken its toll on her. But then, I reasoned, being sued for malpractice can do that to a person. Her career choice certainly had its hazards.

---

I watched as Luna finished her external examination, lint and other such pieces of evidence collected and meticulously set aside for magical processing. There wasn't much on the body.

Luna turned. A set of sharp instruments gleamed at her side, but she bypassed them, grasping, instead, the showerhead and switching it on. Water, cold, splattered across Hermione's skin, washing it clean, getting it ready for the final invasion of privacy.

Dirt spiralled down the drain, leaving a muddy, brown trail. Perhaps, had I been paying more attention, I would have seen it then. The key to the whole damned thing.

---

The sound of her bones braking, of the flaying of her skin will stay with me forever. All that destruction, that invasion of privacy. It pains me to think of it, of how I watched as Luna cut through the layers of fat and muscle.

I wondered how many times Hermione would have done this. Tens? Hundreds? Perhaps she sought comfort in the fact that, when she cut and sliced, it was all for a good cause. That her patients were living, breathing. That they consented to such treatment.

Or perhaps not. Perhaps the money was good enough for her.

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When the autopsy was finished, I made my way upstairs with the evidence. My legs shook with every step, and I feared I would collapse before I got to the lift. I wiped the Vicks from beneath my nose, hoping to wipe away the memory of her with it. I was unsuccessful, and the vision of Hermione, her chest open and her organs gleaming, stayed with me for the rest of the day. I am not afraid to confess that I did not get much sleep that night.

I didn't cry again. I merely lay awake alone with my regrets.

## Part 3

### *Chapter 3 of 6*

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I woke the next morning to the sound of sirens. The downside to living near a motorway is that one often finds himself waking to sirens as yet another careless driver meets his maker upon the slippery tarmac. This occasion, I found out later, was no exception.

The bed felt empty, though it often was. As much as I wished otherwise, Hermione had never slept here. I had never quite plucked up the courage to ask her to spend the night. Or even for a simple kiss. I am more of a coward than most historians will have you believe.

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Regret, that is to say, is one of life's more troublesome demons. It gnaws away at your insides, at your soul, without you even realising, until one day you find that all your humanity has gone. That you are left a mere husk of a man, with only the tired concept of love to see you to the end.

Perhaps, in retrospect, that is the reason why I so longed to find Hermione's killer. I had nothing else. You may call me sentimental, and rightly so, but love is the most important thing in the world. And I loved her.

---

I was walking towards the kitchen when the phone rang, the loud wail echoing down the empty hallway like a Banshee. A Muggle device, I realise, but the Ministry seemed to have become a lot more reliant on Muggle devices. Well, the useful ones, at any rate. Besides, it was far more convenient than the Floo: no fireplace was required.

Still drowsy, I answered, surprised to hear the voice of the Head Auror reply. Hermione's case had been given to the Dayshift, rather than Night, like the Lab. And, apparently, they had been doing some detective work of their own.

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They had two prime suspects: the patient, and the secretary. The first had gone missing on the night the murder was assumed to have taken place. The man, James Turner, had filed a malpractice suit against Hermione after a complication arose in surgery. The case was to go to court the following Thursday, but the outlook wasn't good. Perhaps James had taken justice into his own hands. The motive certainly fit.

The second, a meek woman named Rebecca Dawes, had been the last person to see Hermione alive. But the established motive, I thought, was rather too trivial for murder.

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Talks with the woman had revealed nothing particularly interesting. True, there was certainly no love lost between Hermione and Rebecca, but something told me that this woman was not a killer. Her objections seemed more likely to be voiced through words than actions.

Rebecca, it appeared, disagreed with Hermione's personal life, rather than her professional one. She was very much of the opinion that a widow should act like a widow.

It had been almost eight years since Ronald's death. But, unlike Rebecca, I couldn't blame Hermione for trying to get on with her life. Nobody wants to be alone.

---

Of course, it rankled somewhat that she never gave me a chance. But, looking back, I suppose it would have hurt more. One night, one week, one month; her relationships never lasted any longer. And I very much doubt I could have given her up once I got a taste of life with her. Friendship, for all of its drawbacks, had some advantages.

I said goodbye to the Head Auror and put the receiver down. My head buzzed with thoughts and ideas, all of them about Hermione. I had to solve the case. My sanity seemed to depend on it.

---

After a breakfast of coffee, I changed and made my way to the Lab. A pile of paperwork awaited me, as did the evidence to be processed, cluttering up my usually immaculate desk. As it was, I found myself in too much of a state to care. I knew that the key to Hermione's killer lay somewhere amongst the mess. It was now a question of finding it. Time was of the essence.

Then, you see, I believed that every second counted. That the killer was running. Of course, it was only later I found out how wrong I was.

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Nothing of any note had been revealed in the Autopsy, save that Hermione had had surgery. Not recently, as her medical records soon confirmed, but about four years ago. Her nose, forehead and left cheek had been remodelled, skin and plastic recreating that flawless finish she'd once had. Beauty is entirely superficial, and it seemed that she could no longer live with her scars. I thought no less of her for it. The war was hard on all of us, and perhaps it helped her to forget. It is terrible to be reminded each time one looks in a mirror.

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I ran the nail scrapings first, only to find a mixture of dirt and her own DNA carefully locked away in epithelial cells. The slightest trace of acetone came up on the slides, identified by the spike in the Magi-Spec reading. A common chemical found in nail varnish remover. The Muggle variety.

Hermione was of Muggle descent, so it did not seem unusual for her to use Muggle remover. What did seem unusual, however, was her need to use it. She never wore nail varnish. I dimly remembered her saying it gave her a rash.

Something else that did not fit.

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The wand had not been tampered with. It was as pristine as ever, without even a scratch on the handle, almost as if it had never been used.

But it had.

Out of the five spells cast, only the Unforgivable had been identifiable as out of the ordinary, the rest relating to her work: healing spells, most of a more complex nature than those ever used by our dear departed Poppy.

It would have taken hours to unravel their precise nature, but their general description gave me enough of an idea. Sometimes it pays to be vague. Sometimes it doesn't.

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I spent three hours processing, checking every fibre, every substance, and still nothing had flagged up as unusual. No foreign DNA, no abnormal fibres, no fingerprints. I was left with nothing but the theory that, perhaps, in the last couple of hours before her death, she had worn nail varnish, and subsequently removed it. Which left the problem of the rash. Surely, if she was allergic, there would have been some sign of anaphylactic shock. But no. Her skin remained as pristine as ever. It was vexing, to say the least.

There was only one option that remained open.

Polyjuice.

---

I took a strand of her hair, one with a skin tag, and began to process, slicing it in two and feeding the half without the skin tag under the microscope. The rest would go to DNA.

Polyjuice is an amazing potion. It can change the appearance of a man so completely that even his own mother would be fooled. A seemingly flawless potion then, frequently used; the opportunity to change victims at will has its appeal for several reasons.

However, Polyjuice like all other potions, has its tells. It is easily enough identified, providing you know where to look.

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Polyjuice cannot alter the keratin structure. It can only give the appearance of altering it. And, whilst keratin can be found in many places, the easiest to use is hair. The microscope would reveal its true nature.

I looked through the eyepiece, down to the hair below. The hair was interesting, but not in the way I imagined it would be. No Polyjuice. No potions at all, in fact. But that didn't make it ordinary.

I picked up the phone. My heart was thumping in my chest. Suddenly, everything made sense. I had only one question left to answer.

'Why?'

# Part 4

## Chapter 4 of 6

Hermione's body has been found, alone, in the snow. But who killed her? And why? Severus must follow the clues to find the deeply twisted truth.

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Ten minutes later, the documents I had requested lay upon my desk. The papers, yellowing and curling at the edges after almost a decade in a filing cabinet, had been brought straight up from Central Filing by two Aurors, but I was hesitant to open them. I knew, or at least suspected I knew what lay within those files, and it wasn't going to be pleasant. It was fighting the inevitable, I realise, but at that moment, I was willing to do whatever it took to save Hermione.

Taking a deep breath, I opened the file and began to read.

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*Upon the twenty-second of October, 2001, nine meet to try the case of Hermione Granger, a doctor of our fine city. Present: the accused, nine representatives of the most noble Wizengamot, and Geoffrey Morgan acting as clerk. The indictment is read by Dolores Umbridge. The judge appointed to try the case in question is Cornelius Fudge, former Minister for Magic. The accused conducts her own defence.*

I had the correct file in my hands. Sighing, I plunged back into the account.

*DU: We are here to try a most unusual case involving a member of the recently liquidised St Mungo's.*

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*DU: Dr. Hermione Granger has been accused of the murder of one Mr. Ronald Weasley through the method of poison. Upon administering the poison, which we know to be none other than the Belladonna from her potions cabinet, she then attempted to dress the murder as suicide. She is being tried on one count of murder, and one count of wilful deception.*

*Let the Aurors bring the accused in.*

*(A young woman is brought before the nine. Her hands are bound behind her back. Her head is held high. A small smile plays about her lips.)*

I imagined the scene.

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*DU: Dr. Granger, you stand accused of the murder of your husband, Mr. Ronald Weasley. How do you plead?*

*(The woman bends forward in the dock, leaning gently on her forearms in a gesture of arrogance. Umbridge turns pale at the sight of her.)*

*HG: Guilty. On both the count of murder and wilful deception.*

My eyebrows rose in shock. It was an answer I hadn't expected. It certainly explained the security measures placed upon the document. And why the trial was hushed up. Back then especially, Healers like Hermione were getting rare, and they couldn't afford to alienate another.

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*CF: This is most irregular, Dr. Granger. Would you care to explain yourself, or are we to be forced to make our own assumptions as to your intent?*

*HG: Ronald Weasley died of an overdose of a mixture of belladonna, hyoscyamus and xanthoxylum. My late husband was using the mixture as a cure for alcoholism. With limited success, may I add. He received more than the dose recommended after two injections, the first by himself, unbeknownst to me, and the second by my hand. He died within the hour.*

*(Fudge leans back in his chair, seemingly mollified by her response.)*

---

*DU: I wonder if you realize, Miss Granger, that the use of belladonna in the detoxifying of alcoholics has been outlawed within the wizarding world for over one hundred years for safety reasons. Surely the thought that this was perhaps foolish and dangerous occurred to you.*

*HG: It was a mistake. One which I paid for most dearly. But when left with no other option...*

The conversation stopped there. I assumed there was a page missing, for the next section did not follow the first. However, some sort of conclusion seemed to have been reached. And Umbridge appeared most upset.

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*DU: But, Your Honour, I must protest. The woman has admitted her contribution to the crime. Murder cannot go unpunished!*

*CF: Settle, Delores. Dr. Granger has made her point, and we have come to the conclusion that, though her deeds will not go unpunished, they were done with the best of intentions. And most certainly not in cold blood, as you seem to suggest.*

*(Fudge stands.)*

*CF: Dr. Granger, you have been found guilty of wilful deception and must fulfil the suggested sentence of ninety-four hours of unpaid service.*

I snapped the file shut. I needed to see no more.

---

Everything clicked into place. I had my 'why' and my 'how'. All that remained now was to confirm my suspicions, which meant another trip to the Mortuary.

I ran full pelt down the corridor, the soles of my shoes slipping on the polished marble floor. Luna was in her office, and I rapped on the door with the back of my hand, beckoning her into the Storage Room.

"Open Hermione's drawer," I said, ignoring her puzzled look. This was no time for idle explanations.

She complied, unlocking the catches with a snap and sliding out the body.

"Check her face."

---

Luna reached over to the side, taking a box of latex gloves from their place on the counter. She snapped a pair on, sending a puff of white powder into the frozen air, not waiting long enough to sterilise her hands. It was against Lab rules, but I didn't care. I was too anxious for the answer.

The room seemed eerily quiet as Luna smoothed her hands over Hermione's face, checking for something I wasn't even sure was there. She traced the scar tissue and the bone structure underneath, feeling for any abnormalities that suggested the use of unauthorised magic.

---

Minutes passed, and as time ticked on, I became more and more disheartened. I was so sure I was right. My theory was entirely plausible, but it all depended on this.

I remember turning away to leave, defeated, when she found it.

"Severus?"

Luna's hands were poised over the bridge of Hermione's nose, her fingertips just touching the cold, rubbery flesh.

"Yes?" I asked, entirely too much hope evident in my voice.

"Something's not right. There's residual magic tingling just beneath the nasal cartilage. But it's somehow damped, almost to the point of non-existence. It's so small I missed it."

---

"Do you think it's from surgery?"

Luna made a small noise in the back of her throat, as she often did when thinking hard. She flicked her hair out of her eyes, the blonde strands almost white in the low light.

"Most certainly. But it's not like any I've ever seen before."

She turned to me, her blue eyes wide behind her glasses.

"None of the old scars have been disturbed, and there are certainly no new ones. It's cosmetic, certainly, but why Hermione's done it, I can't imagine. It wasn't for enhancement; she looks exactly the same as before."

---

Exactly the same.

"Luna, you knew Hermione," I said, looking straight into her eyes for any trace of deception. "Did she dye her hair?"

She shook her head violently, her radish earrings swinging back and forth.

My insides felt as though they had turned to jelly. I was right. But I was wrong too. We had lost so much time by following my assumptions, and I felt guilty.

"Run her DNA."

I made my way to the door, the sound of the drawer rolling back clear in my mind.

"Why?" I heard her call.

"I don't think this is Hermione."

---

## Part 5

### *Chapter 5 of 6*

Hermione's body has been found, alone, in the snow. But who killed her? And why? Severus must follow the clues to find the deeply twisted truth.

A/N: The penultimate part of the tale.

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I remember running from the building, out into the biting wind, without even bothering to don my cloak. My feet slipped upon the black ice on the pavement, skidding from underneath me as though they had a life of their own.

I drew my wand, pointing it forward.

After that, I remember little else. How I got to number 49 Highfield remains somewhat of a mystery. I assume I Apparated, but I cannot be sure. I was in such a state that it is surprising I did not splinch myself. You see, nothing else mattered then but finding Hermione alive.

---

I rushed up the steps, taking two at a time until I reached the door. It was green with a lion's head knocker. A very Gryffindor house, even if the owner was a Slytherin through and through.

"Alohamora," I whispered, watching with amazement as the door opened. My hands shook as I pushed against the wood, my head filled with thoughts of Hermione.

I hadn't expected it to open. I was expecting far more complex locking and warding charms, but from the looks of things, whoever had locked the door was in a hurry. Or wasn't expecting to be found.

---

The hallway was dark, heavy with the scent of must and decay. Great curtains rose like mountains from either side, blocking out the moonlight that lit the world beyond the glass. I walked forward, the tops of my fingers brushing against the dusty velvet. Beneath me the floorboards creaked, the noise amplified to an almost unimaginable volume by my mind.

It was foolish of me to come alone. Of course, I knew who waited for me at the other end of the corridor, but not what. The mind is fragile, and I didn't know just how damaged hers had become.

---

I found the door with relative ease. A light shone from beneath it, acting like a beacon in the darkness. I walked towards it, no longer caring how loud or hurried my footsteps had become. I was almost there. So close that I believed I could feel her presence. It was an encouraging point. There was no way to escape now.

My hand fumbled for the knob, but after what seemed a lifetime of trying, I managed to grasp it. I twisted it sharply to the right.

The door swung open, revealing a pair of very familiar dark brown eyes.

---

"Severus?"

I watched as Hermione, or who I assumed to be Hermione stumbled backwards, slamming her elbow hard into the desk behind her. The crack resonated through the room with a sickening echo.

Blonde hair, curled slightly at the ends, fell across her face, hiding her eyes from view – the only part that I still recognised, the only part of her countenance that still said 'Hemione'. She looked like the secretary. A glamour, I thought. And a very complex one, at that.

"Dr. Granger, I presume," I said, my words cold, bitter.

I watched as her face began to dissolve.

---

Slowly but surely, the Hermione I remembered began to appear in front of my eyes, her image fuzzy as the molecules that made up her skin, muscle and bone began to realign themselves. Lips, red and seemingly disconnected from the rest of her face, began to form words.

"Why are you here?"

I stuffed my hands into my pockets, the tips of my fingers brushing against my wand. She seemed calm, but I wanted to take no chances. Hermione was as devious as she was back in school, if not more so.

"Because you have been a very naughty girl."

---

Her face reappeared with the muscles pulled back in shock. Her eyes wide, she looked back at me, not quite believing I was real. It would have been amusing to watch such a self-confident woman lost for answers had the situation been any different. Had we not been stood in a dark, dank backroom somewhere in the middle of Birmingham, facing one another as enemies rather than friends.

In the blink of an eye, her hand shot into her top pocket and removed a wand. It was hers. The one she'd said she'd lost.

"Not nearly naughty enough," she whispered.

---

Caught unawares and not nearly quick enough to the draw, I became pinned with my back to the door, her wand at my throat. She was faster than I had expected.

"I'll ask again," she said, her voice low and dangerous. "Why are you here?"

She was less than a hand's breadth away, and I could feel her breath, hot and damp against my cheek. She smelt of roses, the tiny ones with sweet scents. There was something else there too, but I couldn't identify it. Something unwholesome though not unappetising. Deadly but desirable.

"Why did you murder Rebecca Dawes?"

# Part 6

## Chapter 6 of 6

Hermione's body has been found, alone, in the snow. But who killed her? And why? Severus must follow the clues to find the deeply twisted truth.

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A/N: Okay, the final part. I hope this answers your questions. Appologies if the solution isn't as fantastical or as logical as you expected, but I hope you will enjoy it anyway.

---

"I don't know what you're talking about," she hissed, pressing her wand deeper into my neck, catching the bone of my lower jaw.

I tilted my head in response, wincing as the back hit the door behind me. The wand slid down a fraction, aiming straight for the carotid. She smiled as she felt the rapid beat of my pulse, the flutter at my throat making the handle vibrate in her hand. It was as good as a lie detector. And I was as good as dead.

"Oh, I think you do," I said, all caution thrown to the wind.

---

"I think you know exactly what I'm talking about, Hermione. You've lead me on quite a trail, my dear, but it ends now."

I smirked at her, revelling in the thrill it gave me. A spark flashed in her eyes, her ire increasing. Perhaps it was more than a little foolish to provoke her so, but she was so beautiful in her anger. She seemed to come alive; her too pale skin flushed at the cheeks; her painted lips curled back to reveal sharp teeth, stained faintly yellow from years of use.

Now my pulse raced in anticipation, not fear.

---

"Poking your greasy nose into places where it doesn't belong, Severus? I thought you'd left that habit back at Hogwarts along with you credibility."

Hermione brought her hand to my face, her long nails trailing across my cheek, sloughing off the topmost layer of cells. It stung, but no less than my pride. I would have marks in the morning.

"You're quite the clever little witch," I said, hot air escaping my lips in a puff of white. "It took me ever such a long time to figure out why you did it. Why you chose her, of all people."

---

"I barely knew her. She was little more than an acquaintance. What purpose would her death serve other than ridding the world of one more useless bint with ideas far above her station?" she spat.

"You killed Rebecca Dawes to save your own skin. She was going to spoil everything, wasn't she? Reveal your little secret to the world, send you straight to Azkaban."

I leant closer, inhaling the scent of her perfume and her sickness. It was addictive.

"Tell me, did you get as much of thrill when you killed her as you did when you killed your husband?"

---

The hand on my cheek contracted. Pain sliced through me, and I felt the telltale trickle that told me she'd broken the skin. I gasped but ploughed onwards, taking no prisoners.

"I know you killed Ron," I whispered into her ear. "And so did Rebecca. She was going to reveal it at the trial, show that it wasn't the first time you've had a problem with dosage. And the cases are so strikingly similar."

"It was an accident."

"On both counts? I think not. You're either incompetent, or you have something to prove. I'm rather inclined to believe the latter."

---

A tear fell, making its way down her cheek in a trail of water and mascara. The hollows beneath her eyes seemed to deepen, becoming as dark as bruises. She wasn't sad. She was angry.

"Some people deserve death," she said, her voice quiet but filled with malice.

Her wand left my neck. She smiled. There was no humour there, only an emptiness that I couldn't quite imagine. The Hermione I knew had gone. And it made me wonder if I ever really knew her at all.

I didn't see the flick of her wand, but I saw the blade.

---

It flashed in the corner of my eye, slicing towards my throat with a deadly accuracy. I twisted to the side, just missing the blow, and watched as Hermione followed through, the blade hitting the wood with a dull thud.

I moved behind her, reversing our positions as she yanked the knife from the door. She came at me again, her eyes wild, but I was ready, grabbing her wrists and pinning them above her head. Her wand dropped to the floor with a clatter.

"Pinned, like the butterfly you are," I whispered, pressing hard against her. Holding her still.

---

She pushed against me, trying to free herself, her curves fitting against my body in an almost distracting way. I could feel the softness of her chest against mine, the curve of her thigh by my waist. Perfection wrapped in poison.

A groan passed my lips, and she smirked in response.

"Pity," she spat. "You only ever got me like this in anger when all you wanted it to be in lust. I expected so much more from you. But, if you can't deliver—"

I silenced her with my lips, pressing them against hers with violence rather than love.

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Her taste was distinctive, and it plays around my memory even now, tantalising me with things I can't ever experience again. All sweetness with a bitter aftertaste, very much like the medicine I swallowed as a child. But she wasn't in the least bit good.

Her mouth opened against mine, and my tongue duelled for dominance with hers, all slickness and heat. Her taste made its way down my throat, and I felt as though I was falling. Kissing her was like a drug, and I hated myself for wanting it, for moving closer and touching her like a lover.

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She stopped struggling and her arms went limp. I slid my hands from her wrists, tracing up her soft skin to her palms. My left linked with hers, our fingers interlocking, my right took the knife and dropped to my side. The handle was smooth and cool between my fingertips.

In one quick move, I sliced upwards, embedding the blade beneath her ribs, puncturing a lung. She let out a muffled whimper, her scream silenced by mouth. I hated myself for hurting her, but it had to be done. She wasn't right, and I couldn't have her hurting anyone else.

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"I'm sorry," I whispered against her lips, tasting blood that wasn't my own.

She slumped against me as though she were drunk, her brown eyes wide with shock. Her fingers gripped at my shoulders, tearing the black fabric that graced them as she struggled with gravity.

"I loved you," she said, her words red and liquid.

She fell to the floor, her knees hitting the ground hard. Her face was pale and drawn, tiny flecks of red adorning it like rubies. She was dying, and it was my fault.

But I didn't care. Not then. And not now.

"I know."

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I remember little else about that night save the light leaving her eyes. The Aurors found me sometime later, her blood upon my hands and tears on my cheeks. I was taken to Azkaban and later tried by the Wizengamot. I was sentenced to death on the 3rd of March that year. Nobody attended my funeral. Those who I loved, and who loved me in return, were dead and buried. My ashes were scattered to the wind, and I began to roam, carried forever by the winter wind.

*This is the tale of Severus Snape.*

*The story of a murderer.*