

Paris When it Sizzles

by bellarossi

People are supposed to find romance on the streets of Paris, right? Well, what happens when Hermione gets a little more than she bargained for under those French stars?

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Chapter 1 of 4

People are supposed to find romance on the streets of Paris, right? Well, what happens when Hermione gets a little more than she bargained for under those French stars?

Thanks to my beta will be held until the reveal. Notes below.

In France, the year starts on the first Monday of September.

Everyone knows that, except for awkward foreigners and tourists who think they know better. This is called *therentrée*, when everyone comes back to work after a long holiday in the Rivière, or in Spain, or Switzerland, or wherever the hell they went for the summer. Offices, factories, even the transport and the café down the street have re-opened and there is a mass reunion on the streets of Paris.

This applies to the magical lot, too. They've probably assimilated themselves even better into the Muggle culture than we Brits have. I've only been here in 'Paree' for a few days, but so far I haven't found any particular 'wizarding' areas like Hogsmeade or Diagon Alley; the French even share their cafés with the Muggles.

In fact, British wizards could really take a leaf out of the French magic community's book. God knows the wizards could do with a little bit more of Muggle culture beyond 'fellytones' and 'eckelticity'. I love Mr Weasley, I do. But if he tries nicking off with anymore of my parents' plugs, I'm not sure if he'll be allowed back in our home anytime soon, wizard or no.

This isn't why I'm here, though. To share cafés au lait with the Parisians, I mean.

No, I'm here on a mission.

Except it's not going quite as smoothly as planned. Well, it's not going smoothly at all, actually. I'm in a magical portrait shop, negotiating with the exotically-named Nelimena Chille-Roux, the owner and painter. She doesn't seem to believe me what I'm asking her.

I don't exactly blame her, as I don't quite believe what I'm saying either.

'You want...'

'Two magical portraits of Severus Snape, yes.'

'Two?'

I exhale through my nose and cross my arms. *Eight... nine.... ten.*

'Yes, Mademoiselle Chille-Roux. *Two.*'

'Are you sure about this, Mademoiselle Granger? Magical portraits, *auss?*' Chille-Roux asks, eyeing me doubtfully. I can just see the thoughts running around in her head. Bad enough that she would want a likeness at all, I bet she's thinking. But a magical portrait, and two of them?

I glare back at her, nostrils flared. She holds her own, and I'm impressed in spite of myself.

Until she turns to her assistant and mutters dark and dire things in French. *Deux? Deux?*' she breathes, shooting glares at me every-so-often. *Quelle folle! Comment quelqu'un peut accepter ce conard, je n'en ai vraiment aucune idée.*

Well, it's a good thing I understand French. I almost want to laugh, until I realize that she's insulted both my sanity and my appearance in one fell swoop. Not to mention labelled Professor Snape as something I strongly suspect he's not.

I tell her as much.

She reddens slightly, but keeps her cool. *Pardonnez-moi, Mademoiselle Granger. I did not know that you knew French,*' she apologises, calmly skipping over her insults.

Damn woman. I bet she's a Slytherin.

I shrug, waving it away. 'Could we start again? And preferably in English, please. Speaking in French gives me a headache.'

The française harrumphs, but beckons me into her office, away from the portraits that have been staring at me...which is particularly disturbing when only the face is completed. Plus, I was perilously close to hexing the portrait of two giggling women...they were really beginning to get on my nerves.

She sits down behind her desk and I draw up a chair in front of her. She waves her wand and produces croissants and hot chocolate. I sigh and reach for an offered croissant. This is why I don't come to Paris, I tell myself. You can't be annoyed at someone when they're offering you hot chocolate and warm croissants. I suspect that Chille-Roux knows as much, judging from her smirk as she calmly dips her croissant into a jar of honey and nibbles at it.

Definitely Slytherin.

Chille-Roux sits back, watching me, before finally opening her mouth to speak. 'Mademoiselle Granger, I only ask because it is a most interesting request.' She speaks with a light accent, but her 'Eengleesh' is pretty good; she pronounces things better than Phle...I mean, Fleur. Gods, I have got to stop listening to Ginny.

'If I recall, you attended 'Ogwarts, non?'

I nod in reply. 'Yes, I was in 'Ogwar...I mean, Hogwarts.' Gryffindor, best friend of Harry 'The-Boy-Who-Lived-And-Lived-And-Lived' Potter, know-it-all, insufferable swot, etc. etc.

She nods back. '*Oui, oui.* I also went to 'Ogwarts,' she tells me, and holds up her hand to stall the question she knows I'm about to ask. 'I am only 'alf French, you see. My mother was English, and she wished for me to attend 'Ogwarts. Back then, Beauxbatons was not so prestigious.'

I'm surprised at the implication; I'd previously assumed that she was only a year or two older than me. She doesn't look that old; she's a bit like that Anglo-French actress, Charlotte Gainsbourg, the one who played Jane Eyre right down to her boring personality. I'm sorry, but everything in that book happens on a dark and stormy evening as she crosses a black cat's path and tumbles into a waterfall and dies a horrible dea...

'Mademoiselle Granger?' she asks, waving a hand in front of my face. I must have really zoned out then, imagining all the lovely ways to kill off Jane Eyre. I reach for another croissant and nod for her to continue.

She looks at me suspiciously, but she follows my suit and takes another croissant herself before continuing. 'Anyway, I remember my time there well. In fact, I was a Slytherin.'

She pauses, assuming that I'm extremely impressed by this. I can only say that being a know-it-all, especially a clairvoyant one, can be something of a burden. I'm guessing that, back in the day, Slytherin was a good place to be, until our year with dregs like Tweedledumb and Tweedledumber...I mean, Crabbe and Goyle. I raise my eyebrows in some semblance of respect, but I think it just makes me look more like Snape. It seems to work, though, and she takes a sip of her hot chocolate in satisfaction.

'So you must be around Bill's age?' I muse aloud. 'Bill Weasley, I mean.'

'Ah, yes, we were in the same year. At the time, Severus Snape was my Head of House.' She leans forward, staring me down with those sharp brown eyes of hers. 'I do not know how much you know of this man, Mademoiselle Granger, but 'pleasant' is not a word I would choose to describe him.'

'Thank you,' I reply coldly, highly affronted. Who does she think she is to lecture me on Professor Snape's character? As if I don't know. I glare at her to prove my point.

It's really not like I want these portraits. In fact, they aren't even for me. The first is going to hang next to Professor Dumbledore's portrait with all the other former headmasters, in the Headmaster's, or in this case Headmistress' office. The other, on Professor McGonagall's request, will hang in one of her family homes. I'm just the messenger girl because I happened to be visiting Paris anyway.

She sighs, but keeps going. 'You must remember, Mademoiselle Granger, that a magical portrait is not like its ordinary, unmoving Muggle counterpart. A magical portrait is...'

'...a portrait where, through magic, the painting takes on the exact appearance and personality of its subject,' I interrupt in my best classroom voice. Really, but I have done my homework, even if these portraits aren't even for me.

'*Oui, exactement.* Are you entirely sure you want the equivalent of a living Professor Snape hanging on your wall? Because I'm not sure I would, Mademoiselle Granger.' She raises her eyebrow to prove her point.

I roll my eyes in reply. 'Well, it's a good thing that it's not my wall he'll be hanging himself on, isn't it?' I retort, enjoying the double-entendre with a small smirk. 'Thank you for your time and for the snacks. I'll be staying at the Prince de Galles Hotel, so please owl me when you'd like to see me.' I pick up my coat and stand up.

'*Au revoir, Mademoiselle Chille-Roux,*' I say and Disapparate.

Thank you for flying Air Hermione. The seatbelt sign has now been turned off.

The streetlights are dim in the settling dusk, and although it's only around six o'clock in the evening, the street is quiet and nobody pays any attention to me. Everyone is at home on a Thursday evening with family or friends. The summer is beginning to turn into autumn already; the sun is setting earlier now, and the dusk sky is already slowly streaking with pinks and purples, giving the street a quaint glow that bathes the old terraced houses. I find that I like this side of Paris, where the streets are hushed and

almost pensive; even the cars seem to slow down, and they don't beep loudly in the slim alleyways. It reveals a side that I'd never known before and wouldn't have believed possible in a metropolis like this.

Despite my earlier reservations, I really do like Paris. It's been about a week and a half since I arrived, and it's actually beginning to grow on me a bit. Perhaps visiting the portrait shop first thing wasn't the best idea, because it dulled the rest of the day in a really quite lovely city. I mean, the smoking can get a bit much and you're constantly sidestepping chewing gum and cigarette butts and bonbon wrappers, but it's not such a bad place. I'm walking down the Rue St. Jacques and although it's September, I've still managed to get away with a leather jacket and a pashmina. And I actually look like a size 8 without all the jumpers I'd be wearing in London, underneath shapeless robes.

So, as I said before, ordering portraits isn't really why I'm in France.

No, Minerva managed to catch me about halfway through my packing because she'd just discovered the little note that I sent to her. (I was sort of hoping it would arrive after I left...I just knew she'd send me on an errand if she knew I was going, and I was really hoping to enjoy my month off the way I'd planned to. No such luck, apparently.) That's how I ended up commissioning portraits from Mademoiselle Chilled-Then-Roasted.

What I'm really here for is a certain potions ingredient called the Silver Star. More commonly known as the Edelweiss, famously sung by the dashing Captain von Trapp...and you remember because you always start to cry when his voice hitches at the end.

And your mother had a crush on him, too.

Actually, Remus, Neville and I are working together to create a cure for lycanthropy. And yes, I did say Neville. Whatever that man lacked in Potions...which was quite a lot...he makes up for in Herbology, and tenfold at that. Neville currently works in Rouen, which is about an hour out of Paris, and he owns and works in Greenhouses in a massive stretch of land that's irrigated by water straight out of the Seine. His business thrives because everything he plants is highly in-demand, not least because the quality is absolutely guaranteed. And Neville's doing what he loves.

Remus, on the other hand, is suffering due to his condition. It was because I began ordering my ingredients to brew Wolfsbane Potion that the research idea popped into our heads. Neville loves Rouen to bits, so on one of the rare occasions that he was in Scotland, I invited him over to talk business and somehow it led to an idea on how Wolfsbane could be improved, which could ultimately help us find a cure. We asked Remus to pop in and brought the idea up, and he agreed wholeheartedly to it.

The thing is, Remus is in something of dire straits. The magical community, despite everything, is impossibly backward in these sorts of things. 'Half-breeds,' even the ones who became ones through misfortune like werewolves, are one of them. It seems that, with all its talk of 'change' and 'a new era,' they are still too accustomed to putting their hands over their ears and singing to block anything unpleasant out.

Remus was an integral part of the Order, yet he only received an Order of Merlin, Third Class, while the rest of us happily walked away with our Orders of Merlin, First Class. Remus, being the person he is, never said a thing. And he never will. Remus may not have a voice in the Ministry, but Neville and I do, and we've decided that enough is enough. Clearly no one else is taking the initiative, so we're embarking on this project.

The research is moving slowly, and frustratingly. Sometimes, I really wish Professor Snape was still around. He may have been a bastard, but he was a brilliant bastard too. After all, he's the reason why I work in the Department for Research at the Ministry as Potions Director. I've even begun to channel him, and it's not just because the Potions Researchers in my department have begun muttering under their breath when they think I'm not listening. It often includes words like 'uptight', 'stick' and 'arse', and usually in the same sentence. And sometimes, I can hear the Hogwarts alumni of the department grumbling something that sounds suspiciously like 'Professor Snape'.

Don't get me wrong...I despised his methods at Hogwarts. I only really started to appreciate them when I was promoted to Potions Director, last year, at age twenty-one, making me the youngest Director in history...and the freshest bait. My team consists of seven people: Neil Abbot, Hannah Abbot's older brother by four years; Rachel Callaghan, seventh year in my first year; Daniel Nelson, who gets along famously with my father because they're about a year apart; Genevieve St Cyr, same year as Fleur at Beauxbatons; and Marco Rovelli, who's worked for the Ministry for about sixteen years. Then there's Cleo Lewis, an American citizen who's the same age as me, and Annie Lazelle, who's one year younger than me.

The point is, not only am I the youngest Director in the meeting room by about 30 years, my team is also mostly made up of people who have been working there much longer than I have, and almost all of them are older than me too. As a result, I had to quickly adapt to a leadership role that I hadn't realised I would have to, and I did it in the only way I could think of...I did my homework.

At first, I was trying for a Minerva effect: stern, but loyal and warm. But I hadn't realised how hostile a team of disgruntled Potion Masters could be and that they could bite, too. There's a lot of pride that goes into it, and I suppose that's natural; after all, we're part of a branch that actually *creates* new potions through research. Lots of ego involved there.

So I bit back, and I earned their respect before I earned their friendship. The key thing was, I had to show them that I didn't give a flying shit for what they thought of me or whether they liked me or not. It didn't matter that I actually completely did care and that I really did spend a few sleepless nights over the fact that I was convinced they all hated me. I couldn't show them that...I couldn't let my guard down. It's only now that they know me and they know that I'm ruthless when it comes to work that we've become much more tight-knit as a group, and through friendship, not intimidation.

It was much like a Muggle video game...you couldn't take your eyes off the video screen for a minute because if you did you'd lose a life in the blink of an eye.

And if you did it too often, pretty soon it would be Game Over.

It was around this time, when everything seemed to be against me, that I began to really feel for Professor Snape and his teaching methods. It was a bit like waking up early and grumbling, only to find yourself captivated by the sunrise...I'd hated his methods at first, but after finding myself under similar circumstances, I was beginning to see the light.

And Professor Snape would have had it a lot worse...not only was he the youngest Potions teacher when he began teaching, he also assumed the role of Head of Slytherin at the same time. (When I discovered how similar my leadership methods were to his teaching methods, I began researching everything I could get my hands on. It's a good thing that Madam Pince likes me...I don't think she'd have let me if she'd figured out it was about Professor Snape.) Not to mention he was also a spy for the Order, *and* nobody seemed to trust him, either, since he was a freshly renounced Death Eater.

My breath is beginning to mist in front of my face, and even though I've grown up in cold weather, it still manages to captivate me as I breathe out delightedly, watching it puff out little white clouds of vapour. I hadn't realised that thinking could be so time-consuming...the sky is now much darker and more purple, and the sun is just dying away slowly, its tips barely visible over the horizon. I'm almost there, in fact. I really got off-topic there, thinking about Professor Snape.

Anyway, so the apothecary I'm headed for stocks the Edelweiss. Strictly speaking, the best and purest ones are found in the Swiss Alps, but this is much more convenient, and that's also where this particular friend of a friend picks his. Neville is well known in the Potions ingredients circles, so he did a little bit of research and pointed me towards his friend who lives here in Paris and stocks what we need. His name is Christian Rousseau and he stocks the Beauxbatons supplies from his apothecary, most originally named 'Rousseau et Co.'

I can see the apothecary in the distance; there's a wooden sign creakily swinging in some sort of breeze, like a pub sign, painted in chipping red paint. The words 'Rousseau...depuis 1529' is barely visible in peeling gold letters, and most of it really has peeled off. As I'm approaching the shop I can see the window is cracked and dusty, and there appears to be only an empty shop with nothing inside. A youngish parisienne and her *petit ami* pass me, and she says, 'Zat shop 'as been closed for years.' Having lived in the wizarding world for about half my life, however, I'm not fooled, and I wait for them to turn the corner before opening the door.

The inside reminds me poignantly of 'Slug & Jigger's,' four long rows filled with standard potions ingredients, several shelves at the back with rarer, more expensive ones, and a counter on the left end of the shop. There is one fundamental difference, though...it smells very pleasant, which is something 'Slug & Jigger's' could really work on. A

little bell tinkles behind me as I walk in, and the pleasing scent of musk and jasmine coats the air.

I shake my head, smirking slightly. Only in France can an apothecary selling beetle eyes, pig bladders, slugs and other such things smell like The Body Shop.

A bored-looking salesgirl glances over at me. She seems to consider me unworthy of her attention and goes back to examining her nails. Despite this, I approach her anyway and introduce myself politely.

'Bonjour, je suis Hermione Granger. Je voudrais voir Monsieur Rousseau, s'il vous plait.' I beam my keenest new-girl smile at her. She looks up at me again with no change in her expression. Her nametag reads 'Constance' and she raises her eyebrow condescendingly at me. Thinking that this is some kind of French induction ritual, I glare right back. After our little staring competition, she gets up and knocks on the door without saying a word to me.

Well, enchantée to you, too, I suppose.

'Monsieur Rosseau, il y a une femme qui s'appelle Ermyknee Gronjair pour vous.' I can't help wincing...she makes me sound like some grotesquely disfiguring knee disease. Hello, Doctor, I seem to have come down with a rather bad case of Ermykneegronjair. Yes, I know, I can't bear to look at my knee either, but we'll do our best. One Arrypottair tablet three times a day? Excellent, thank you for your help.

I hear someone say, 'Ah! Oui!' behind the door and there's some rustling that sounds like parchment being shuffled, and a chair scrapes back against the wooden floor. Then the door is flung open, and brown-haired wizard in coffee-coloured robes steps out. He spots me and beams, making a beeline towards me. 'Miss Granger, enchantée, bien sûr,' he says, air-kissing me. Having been in Paris for a few days, I've acclimatised myself to this and calmly return the greeting.

'Monsieur Rousseau, the pleasure is mine,' I reply with a genuine smile.

He waves his hand at me. 'None of these English formalities,' he says. 'Please call me Christian.' He speaks English with a French lilt, and it's actually quite pleasing to listen to. He looks around Remus' age, maybe 40, maybe 50. Christian has a friendly sort of face with a smile that reaches his twinkling grey eyes, and he always looks a bit amused, as though he's got some sort of inside joke that you want to be let in on. I find myself drawn to him immediately, and I'm thankful that Neville has such good friends, not to mention networking skills.

He casually slides his arm around my shoulders and winks at me. 'Monsieur Longbottom told me you were a Potions Researcher, but he did not mention that you were beautiful also,' he says in that way that only French men can compliment a woman.

Sly, sly bastard.

I blush anyway, and he laughs at me. 'Now, we must get down to business, as you English say. You need the Edelweiss? It is a good thing that Neville contacted me earlier because we only supply on request, you see. But for you, we have the best Edelweiss in all the Alps!' He grins, and it's so infectious that I find myself grinning too.

Christian turns back to Constance, who's looking between us warily. I think she's sussed out by now that apparently it might have been a better idea to be more receptive towards me. 'Constance, he says, *'trouve l'étoile pour Mademoiselle Granger. Allez!*' he barks when she doesn't do anything immediately.

Hmmm. Loving relationship there, I see.

While she's gone, we discuss the Wolfsbane and how it's going along. I don't tell him too much since it's still unpatented, and I've heard horror stories being tossed around in the Department about formulas being stolen by unsuspecting friends who've misplaced their trust. I'm not about to lose this one, there's too much energy and emotion coming in from too many people to lose out to someone else. Mostly I just stick to the basic idea, which is general information which most people know...what the Wolfsbane currently does and how we're trying to improve it.

After this, Constance comes back holding a white lacquer box. I roll my eyes in spite of myself...honestly. I don't think the French ever actually stopped living in the Romantic era. They probably think Debussy's still alive, too, and that Delacroix paints everything.

These highly uncharitable thoughts of my hosts stop as soon as Christian gives me the box with another one of his amused little smiles, and I open it. I gasp as a blinding white light surrounds the room.

Suddenly, everything in the room is beautiful and pure...Christian looks about twenty years old, his smile lines gone; the beetle eyes and the frog intestines look like prettily-arranged spices in an exotic Indian market bazaar; even Constance's frown turns upwards into a small smile, and I notice that her eyes are a very pretty, molten gold colour, and she looks...well, calm. In the light I can't even see the flower, but it's probably the most beautiful thing in the entire room.

I shut it with a snap, chest rising and falling as if I've just done a marathon. Even though the light is gone, everything still has this glow around it, and I actually find myself speechless for a while.

Christian chuckles and plants a small kiss on top of my head. 'Use it well, my dear. That's hardly the most amazing thing about it,' he adds with a wink. Gently, he pushes me out of the shop, since I'm still a little too dumbfounded to reply.

I find myself walking back to my hotel without even realising it, since I'm still apparently on autopilot.

Slowly, gently, a smile grows on the tips of my mouth. It keeps growing, until by the time I've arrived, I beam at the receptionist and he's a bit taken aback, but smiles back anyway.

Suddenly, *everything* seems right in the world.

My prompt: 11. Hermione goes to the Artist, Nelimena Chille-Roux, to request a portrait of Severus Snape. Ms. Chille-Roux was a Slytherin and very well remembers her Head of House, Severus Snape and, agrees to paint two. One will hang in Hogwarts and the other in (you pick). Both are VERY lifelike and capture him EXACTLY/PERFECTLY. When Hermione goes to see the paintings and to take them for the dedication ceremony what does Snape say to her? What do they discuss?

Here are the translations:

Edit: Thank you to **snitchette** for editing some of my translations (i.e. the ones that couldn't be checked in the textbook, haha.)

Deux-- two.

'Quelle folle! Comment quelqu'un peut accepter ce conard, je n'en ai vraiment aucune idée!-- 'Mad cow (lit. what madness)! How anyone can accept that bastard, I have absolutely no idea.'

Pardonnez-moi -- Pardon me.

Exactement -- exactly.

depuis 1529 -- Since the year 1529 (think Ollivander's wand shop.)

petit ami -- boyfriend, not small friend!

'Bonjour, je suis Hermione Granger. Je voudrais voir Monsieur Rousseau, s'il vous plait.' -- Hello, I am Hermione Granger. I would like to see Mr Rousseau, please.

Enchantée -- literally, enchanted. It means 'pleased to meet you'.

'il y a une femme... pour vous.' -- there is a woman etc. etc. for you.

bien sur -- of course

trouve l'étoile -- find the star. (I quite like the double entendre in this one.)

'allez!' - go!

Café au lait is basically coffee with milk.

Some basic ones that will appear a lot are:

Au revoir -- Good bye.

Oui -- yes

Non -- no.

Bonjour -- hello.

s'il vous plait -- please

merci -- thank you

Other notes: A UK size 8 is a US size 6. Otherwise known as slim without being anorexic. The Silver star or Edelweiss really is a flower, and it's very pretty, though it's rare to find.

Deux

Chapter 2 of 4

In Hermione's last few days in France (or so she thinks), we see a little more about Neville, Remus and the Wolfsbane, a pleasant surprise, and Snape's finished portraits.

I don't know if I've said this before, but I've always loved the rain.

I don't mean the pathetic drizzle you get in London, where it just sort of drips all over you to trick you into leaving your umbrella in your bag, only to find that after you've been walking on the streets for ten minutes, you're soaking wet.

No, I'm talking about *real* rain. The rain that pours and pours and pours in the afternoon, when lightning strikes the sky and the thunder seems to rumble beneath you, and makes you squeak delightedly when the lightning gets too close. (Or hide under the covers, if you're that type of person, I suppose. Whatever floats your boat.) The type of rain that you sit inside with a hot chocolate and write poems in.

My father always used to call it 'creative weather', and I have to agree with him because I always come up with my best ideas in the fiercest storms.

The improved Wolfsbane Potion idea was born in that kind of weather, too. Remus, Neville and I were in Rouen, drinking whisky, and it was raining like hell, and I remember thinking that it was a really good thing I'd never needed to drive because the visibility was practically sub-zero, if that was even possible.

I'd said it aloud, and Remus chuckled in that bitter way that he laughs now, which always makes me want to hug him tightly because I don't know if bitterness alone can kill a man, but it sounds entirely possible.

'The way it's going now, I might just have to learn,' Remus had said with a smile that didn't have much to do with amusement. 'The Ministry's thinking of revoking Apparition rights for non-human species. And that includes werewolves.' He'd shaken his head and taken another sip with another bitter laugh that sounded forced.

At this point, Neville had surprised us all by slamming his drink down onto the table and standing up as a flash of lightning struck the sky. He'd had that look in his eyes that reminded me of that time when we were first years and he'd tried to stop us from saving the world.

'Damn it all to hell, Remus,' he'd growled and began pacing. 'There's got to be a way around all of this. If we can't change the opinion of the Ministry, then we'll just have to fix the problem itself. Hermione,' he'd said beseechingly, stopping to look at me with a pleading look in his eyes. 'There's got to be something that we can do. There has to be a cure, there just has to be! You're the best potions-maker I know. I'll supply the ingredients, but we have to do something about this. I hate this, this everyday refusal to acknowledge that being a werewolf *isn't the damn werewolf's fault!* Are you with me, Hermione?'

At this point I'd raised an eyebrow, shocked into speechlessness by Neville's rare display of anger. Then a grin spread across my face. 'Neville, do you even have to ask?'

Cue sudden end of storm as rays of sunshine peek through the clouds. Thankfully, that didn't happen. Rouen has a lovely way of raining continuously in that satisfying way all afternoon.

Rouen is a really interesting place, actually. It's supposedly where Erik from *The Phantom of the Opera*, only the greatest musical of all time, is from. It's also where the famous (or not-so-famous if you've never heard of it) Rouen Cathedral sits, looming over everyone. It's a quaint, historic sort of city where the yellowed walls and the creepers winding their way up and the cobblestoned streets tell their stories of war and romance and betrayal and tragedies, the kind of tales that your grandmother tells you on a rainy day while she's knitting a scarf.

Besides that, though, there's not a whole lot to recommend about Rouen. Neville's greenhouse, however, is an entirely different story altogether.

Being from an old pureblood family, and because his grandmother's finally thrilled about something he's doing for once in his life, Neville doesn't want for anything. He

owns several hectares of land which are packed with greenhouses, each more interesting than the last. It starts off simply with basic ingredients like the herbs that he sells to both Muggles and wizards, like lovage and valerian. Then you've got the more interesting ones, like the Venomous Tentaculas, Mandrakes, belladonna, Bubotubers, et cetera. There's a large natural lake which has aquatic plants like gillyweed growing in it, and then there's another one for the really deadly ones like Devil's Snare which only Neville has the keys to.

Put it this way: Henri Rousseau would have loved Neville's estate. There are so many different colours that it's a bit like looking through a kaleidoscope, only there's more green than usual. They're sorted by colour, scent, toxicity, level of fascination, whatever. And what's absolutely guaranteed is that if you want it, Neville has it. And it's probably the best quality, too.

It's not like I haven't been there before or anything; in fact I've been there several times. The thing is, there's always something new no matter how many times you go, and knowing Neville I'm quite sure that's on purpose. He stocks the standard potions ingredients types, but his real love is for the more unusual, thrilling plants that make you go 'oh!' with a delighted smile on your face.

This probably explains why, at the moment, Neville and I are lying on the grass right now devouring plums and nectarines, watching a patch of fluxweed. Despite the fact, of course, that it's September and eleven thirty at night, it gets kind of cold. I'm only putting up with it because, as I said before, this is probably something that will make me fall asleep grinning. And Neville, bless his soul, only does it to make me happy.

Fluxweed by itself is rather plain and unassuming; it's a standard green herb that's sometimes known as 'false pennyroyal' because it smells minty. It's picked at the full moon for Polyjuice Potion, and it's known for its morphing properties, which is why it's used in Polyjuice in the first place. It's a full moon tonight, and Remus will probably be pacing about in London waiting to transform. The reason why we're here, actually, is because I do need some fluxweed for exactly those reasons. For Remus' transformation and its changing properties, I mean. Once it's picked it retains its properties for several months, but to get those properties it has to be picked at twelve midnight, practically as the clock chimes. I've never actually seen fluxweed being picked at a full moon, so I'm interested in spite of myself.

Neville hires a lot of the local French boys to help him, especially with his Muggle buyers to guard the secret of the magical world. So in the daytime there's quite a bit of a bustle, when the little boys are running about with soil all over their faces, making them look a bit like soldiers in the trenches, only instead of rifles they're shooting herbs at each other.

I've gotten quite used to that kind of activity, so it's a bit eerie now because it's completely still. Neville and I are lying on our stomachs, propped up by our elbows, in about fifty layers of clothing and a blanket each. It's almost silent, save for the occasional rippling of the water in the lake and the crickets chirping. If I strain my ears hard enough, I can almost hear a nightingale song, but other than that, all is quiet on the western front.

I grab myself another nectarine and roll one to Neville.

'Cheers,' he says, sinking his teeth into it with a small sigh. 'Whussa tah?' he asks through a mouthful, tapping his wrist with his finger pointedly (pun not intended).

I roll my eyes. 'Eleven forty-five, and don't talk with your mouth full.' I give him my best haughty schoolgirl look as he does his puppy dog act with me and primly bite into my own nectarine, ignoring him.

He looks as if he's about to say something back, but then swallows and his face brightens suddenly. 'Hey, how was it with Christian? Did you get the Edelweiss?'

I grin back, remembering the white glow and how it transformed everything around it. 'It was great! He had this grumpy salesgirl called Constance who was pretty aptly named considering the continuous frown on her face. But when I opened the box with the flower in it, she smiled! And everything looked amazing. It's really gotten my hopes up because I'd had my doubts before. I'm really glad you pushed me to get one, or I don't think I would have done it.'

'Mione, I already know I'm amazing, you don't have to tell me, dear. But thank you.' He grins cheekily at me.

I chuck a plum stone at his head, rolling my eyes fondly when he winces, 'Oww! H'mione!' taking special care to elongate the 'e'.

The fact is, I can't say too much about the Edelweiss and how that comes in, and that's not because I'm being a prude either. If it hadn't been for Neville and his endless list of contacts, I don't think I actually would have bothered getting it at all. And I still don't really know how I'm going to use it. I've gambled a bit with it really, just because nothing else seems to fit as well into the figurative equation.

I chose it because of the obvious properties...healing, but also because of its purity and beauty. Werewolves are evil, by definition; the Edelweiss is pure and good. It's a bit like mixing black and white and getting grey. Since humans aren't purely good or purely evil, the 'equation' will balance itself to form something basically human.

But that's all theory.

However, since we are on theory, I'll also explain where the fluxweed comes in. Basically, if the Edelweiss has the properties of healing and purity, then the fluxweed should be the catalyst of change that triggers those qualities because of its morphing properties. It'll be a bit like mixing Polyjuice Potion and Wolfsbane together, so that the werewolf doesn't turn into a wolf at all, however harmless that wolf may be, but actually just stays human.

There's one little flaw behind all of this, though. The good news is that it is a very little one. The bad news is that we have no clue how to overcome it.

The thing is, both Wolfsbane and Polyjuice Potion are short-term potions. Wolfsbane lasts one night, and Polyjuice Potion lasts sixty minutes. This means that the next step would be to make it a permanent potion, and not just a monthly one. I mean, if we manage to even succeed in making a potion that stops the transformation, even if it's just monthly, that would still be pretty damn good.

Except that my name is Hermione Granger and I don't settle for second best, and that just damns everything to hell.

At this point Neville hits me on the head with a plum and hisses, 'Watch!'

I barely have time to look at my watch and see that it's midnight before the fluxweed begins to sway in an imaginary breeze. Slowly, so slowly, a silvery glow starts from the roots and steadily makes its way up through the stem, into the leaves, slowly, slowly. It keeps going and my eyes are watering because I don't want to blink and miss something. The area becomes bathed in this strange, moonlight-silver glow, until it reaches the purple flowers at the tips. The small flowers turn silver like the rest of the plant, and I almost blink until I realise it hasn't finished. From silver it turns to white, then a pale yellow. Pale yellow to orange, orange to blood-red, blood-red to a rosy pink, then to lavender, lilac, periwinkle, then blues, so many blues, from azure to ocean-blue to midnight-blue to indigo, then a deep, fathomless black. It streaks through several shades of grey before going back to silver, and then finally, a bright, pure gold that blinds us so Neville and I are peering through our eyelashes.

Then, suddenly, there's a small sort of *phut!* sound as the flower turns black and explodes in the space of about half a second. I finally allow myself to blink as tiny, delicate ashes flutter to the ground.

For a while there really is absolute, utter silence.

Then I remember that we're supposed to be picking this stuff, except that I think it's already too late.

This makes me say something very unladylike, and Neville grins fiendishly at me.

'If you're worried about why we're not picking this, don't worry. I've got enough to last you for at least six more months before I even need to think about picking more.'

'Oh,' I reply wittily. 'Then why are we here?'

He shrugs lightly. 'It was too beautiful for you to miss.'

I'm back in that stupid portrait shop.

I'm not thrilled to be spending my last day here in France in this shop, of all places I could have been in, but I do have to pick those portraits up.

When I open the door, all the portraits sitting on the side seem to go silent, like I've just walked in on some super private conversation. Then, out of one of the darker corners, one very familiar voice pipes up.

'Miss Granger,' it drawls, leaving me with no doubts as to whom the voice belongs. 'What an unparalleled displeasure it is to see you darken my doorway once again.'

'Professor,' I sneer back, all formalities forgotten. Portrait-Snape can't take house points or give detentions, after all. I find this reversal of power very satisfying, so I smirk and he glowers at me sulkily.

Out of the corner of my eye I can see the eyes of the other portraits flicking back and forth between us, like they're watching a tennis match. Portrait-Snape and I continue this staring match for a few seconds before Mademoiselle Chille-Roux bursts through the back door, forcing us both to break eye contact.

'Bonjour, Mademoiselle,' I say politely. 'I see you have the portraits ready for me, thank you for your owl.' I smile sweetly, then throw Snape another smirk for good measure. 'I trust that they're ready for me to take home?'

'*Oui*, they are finished,' she says, pulling out the two portraits. They look essentially the same, except one is Snape-less. There is a green wingback chair with silver ornaments, and some curtains in the background with books and other things on a small table. Snape himself is dressed in a long-sleeved black dress shirt and trousers, and there is a set of velvet robes which are so dark green that they almost look black folded neatly on the table.

'There is only one Snape, of course. But 'e will be able to go from one portrait to another, so 'e may choose where 'e stays,' she explains. 'I 'ope they are to your liking,' she adds, eyeing Snape warily. He scowls back at her and takes a seat in the chair moodily.

'They're perfect,' I assure her, Reducing the portraits to fit in my pocket and handing her a bag of Galleons. *Very* lifelike.'

A/N: Mmm. I do love Glenfiddich whisky. Good, well-aged whisky was always something I saw Hermione as the type to appreciate.

The fluxweed scene is a nod to 'What E'er Therein Is Promised' by Deeble, in which the scene is very similar. Author's honour, though: I wrote this almost three years after reading it, and only realised the similarity about three days after writing it. (Honest!) By the time I realised how similar it was, I couldn't take it out because it's essential to the whole story anyway. So yes, I did inadvertently steal that scene.

And if you have no idea what I'm talking about, which means you haven't read it yet, what are you waiting for?

Other things: Henri Rousseau was a French artist who painted jungle scenes and could use 50 different shades of green in his paintings. He never, in his life, saw a real jungle.

I also apologise for the shortness of this chapter; it was more of a transition than I would have liked, but I think the next chapter will make up for it quite nicely. :)

Trois

Chapter 3 of 4

The dreaded meeting with Portrait-Snape, and a strange sort of truce.

Oh no.

Oh no, oh no *oh na*.

I am going to kill Minerva McGonagall.

All of this, this infernal mess I now find myself in, started very nicely, of course. I came back with the portraits, Snape and I sneered at each other for a while, Minerva and I had a lovely tea, and I actually had two lemon sherbets while we talked about my trip and Neville and all that. I swear, Dumbledore must spiked those infernal yellow sweets with Cheering Charms back in his day, and she must be keeping up with that tradition because nothing she was telling me seemed to have registered.

Well, until now.

This very neat manipulation began when Minerva casually asked me how my work was going. She was tying one of the portraits to a rather large owl, which gave her a macho, Rambo sort of look before setting off. I didn't know owls could do that, but I suppose that's wizarding technology for you.

So, being the right ruddy dolt I am, I told her that I felt that being at the Ministry and working on this potion at the same time were just too distracting. Either it was the job, I told her, or the cure.

I vaguely remember being very good at multitasking once upon a time. Except back then I had a Time Turner, and with Time Turners you *can* steal some hours of sleep, too. But right now, apart from those blissful weeks in Paris, I was juggling a nine-to-five ...well, actually, more like a five-to-nine... job developing potions, and then the rest of my twenty four hours in a day researching another potion.

What's *really* frustrating about all of this is that I can't even lump them together and work on the Wolfsbane as part of my job. Oh no, because the Ministry has a broomstick, a wand and a Pygmy Puff its arse, and won't allow anything that might help werewolves.

'Too small clientele,' they told me, 'an' it won' make a profit after you've cured all them werewolves. Stupid idea, really, innit?'

Stupid idea my arse.

I've half a mind to sic all the werewolves of Britain on the Ministry and make them bite all those stuck-up officials. Then we'll see about that 'too small clientele'.

Whoops, I'm getting off-topic.

So there I was, pouring out all of my troubles to Minerva, surreptitiously aiming a wordless Silencing Charm at Snape's portrait under the desk, when she suddenly comes up with this seemingly brilliant idea.

'Well, Hermione dear, you know I've got that lovely little riverside apartment in Paris. Why not take a few weeks' leave and sort it out there? God knows you deserve it, too, and I'm sure you've amassed weeks and weeks of possible holiday time. Plus, you'd be close to Neville, close to that Rousseau fellow too, and the view is really quite wonderful.'

That really wasn't fair. Now that I think about it, she stole my persuasive tactics. Start with the idea, tack on some very desirable aspects, emphasise the need for it, then add something they can't resist. I was a goner right from the start.

And the more I sat there, thinking about it, in the cosy little Headmistress' office with all the previous Headmasters chattering about what a good idea that was and nodding their heads sagely (Professor Dumbledore seemed to think that the mere force of twinkling would convince me to go, there were literally stars in his eyes), the more I thought, why not. It was Paris, after all, not Timbuktu. I had a lead, too, a real one, and I really felt like this Edelweiss was going to answer at least some of my questions, if not all of them; I'm not that naïve, after all. If I could do it without the pressures of a job and people constantly wandering in and out of my apartment with various propositions... well, maybe I could do it!

And Minerva was right; I could visit Neville anytime I wanted to, instead of having to arrange times to see him. And I did have several months' worth of holiday leave because I really am just a sad workaholic, despite being a war hero which apparently equates to having a social life.

Well, it does for Ron, anyway, who seems to enjoy dividing his time between being an Auror and shagging supermodels.

Harry, of course, couldn't be bothered, and mostly spends his time arguing with Ginny over what their first child's name will be, even though she's not even pregnant yet. (Harry insists that it will be a boy and therefore must be called Sebastian, but Ginny figures it will be a girl and will therefore be named Eva. Personally, I'm just glad they weren't going to call them Lily and James...or worse still, Albus. That would have been *terribly* cliché.)

So, in what I still suspect was a Cheering Charm-induced euphoria, I said yes.

Bad, bad idea.

But I'm getting to that.

Everything seems to have happened in a bit of a blur, this last week. I have vague recollections of requesting for holiday leave for two months and actually getting it, which is strange enough as it is. Then I asked Ron if he'd be willing to stay in my apartment during that time because he divides his time between the Burrow and whichever new girlfriend's apartment he's shacking up at, and after explaining the situation at length, he agreed. I think that was more because I live in a fairly green part of London and I'm right next to High Street, which means two things: good food and pretty girls.

I love Ron, but sometimes his one-track mind surpasses belief.

Remus sort of agrees with the decision, but he's been telling me all along that I should have dropped it in favour of my job because he was worried that it was too much. Now that I've dropped my job in favour of the potion, he's secretly very pleased, but he's hiding it behind lots of parental 'are you sure this is the right decision' concern.

'Oh, drop it, Remus,' I told him, annoyed, because he'd asked me for the fifth time if I was really sure of what I was doing. 'Haven't you ever heard the saying, 'never look a gift horse in the mouth'? Can't you ever accept that someone is doing something for you because they want to?' I said it like I was angry, but I'm too fond of him and his shabby robes and his greying hair, so I reached over and hugged him tightly. 'I'm doing this for you, Remus, because I care and because I think it's worth it. So shut up and accept it.'

Although I only brought one (admittedly large) suitcase worth of clothes, amenities, potions equipment and notes, I felt like I was leaving my apartment quite bare. I'm twenty two, after all, and I've been living in that flat since I was eighteen. Four years is a long time to get attached to a place. It's not like I actually removed any of the furniture or anything, but the fact that I would be staying there for a while did seem a bit alien.

So, after handing over the keys to Ron and sending a silent prayer to the heavens to please, please let me come back to my flat in one piece, I gripped onto my suitcase and Disapparated.

International Apparition can be a bit fuzzy at the best of times, so when I first saw him, I was quite sure that I was just suffering from some side effects. But no, I was in the right flat: a penthouse apartment on the Rue de la Seine, with a brilliant view of the river, and practically all windows.

So why was Professor Snape attached to the wall?

'You!'

Oh no, I thought. Please don't tell me that this is what I think it looks like. Please, please don't tell me that Minerva decided to put Snape's other portrait in this place. Of all the possible places she could have picked, why, *why* did it have to be the one that she'd sent me to?

So here I am, staring at this portrait of my dreaded Potions master, which is hanging on the wall of the study. The room itself is nice enough: an ornately carved desk and a comfortable looking chair, with several bookcases filled with books. I probably would have dropped everything and inspected the books, but the portrait is currently consuming all conscious thought. I think my mouth is moving, but I've either lost all control over speech or simply can't find the words to describe this situation.

Fortunately, Portrait-Snape appears to have no words to describe the clearly catastrophic fate that has befallen him, so I haven't had to listen to anything from his end yet. I don't imagine this will last, though.

There are a few moments of blessed silence, but then I remember the fireplace next to one of the sofas and make a mad scramble for the Floo powder.

'Minerva McGonagall!' I cry desperately, tossing the green powder into the fire as the flames and watching as they erupt into bright green. Then, after a few moments of tense waiting, her head appears in the fire.

'Hermione! Oh, how lovely, you're already here! I hope everything is fi...my dear, you look as though you've just seen a Dementor. Whatever is the matter?'

'You might have mentioned that *he'd* be here!' I hiss, jabbing a finger in the direction of Snape's portrait, which has remained ominously silent so far.

She looks puzzled for a moment, but then it changes to a look of recognition. 'Oh, you mean Severus? Didn't I mention that I'd put it in the Paris flat?'

'You might have forgotten that one,' I reply weakly.

If I strain my ears hard enough, I could swear that I can hear chuckling that sounds suspiciously like Dumbledore. The satisfying idea of turpentine pops into my head before I mentally slap myself and turn my attention back to the floating head in the fire.

'Well, Severus knows quite a lot about the Wolfsbane, and he was doing much the same thing as you by trying to find a cure for Remus before... well, before.'

Wait a minute. I didn't know that. If Snape was working on a cure... well, maybe he found one!

I'm half-listening now, but Minerva seems intent on escaping in case I let the full extent of my Granger fury out on her or something. 'Anyway, hope everything is fine, must run along now dear, terribly busy, and there are lots of important things I need to get done. Goodbye!' she says and hurriedly fades out of sight.

'Was that true?' I ask Snape, moving away from the fireplace and standing behind one of the chairs. He still doesn't deign to speak to me, but he lifts an eyebrow questioningly, so I take this as a vaguely encouraging sign and continue.

'Were you really developing a cure for lycanthropy?'

'Maybe,' he answers unwillingly, eyeing me suspiciously. 'Why?'

I find it frustrating that even after all this time, Snape gets to be taller than me. Even when he's a portrait, he gets stuck just above the desk, so even when I'm standing, he's at least a head taller than me.

Life is really not fair.

'Well,' I say, sort of excited now because this might not be as bad as I thought, after all. 'I'm working on one, too. It's for Remus because the Ministry has tightened its so-called 'half-breed' laws, so if Remus was disadvantaged before, he's practically the dirt on the bottom of their shoes now.'

He rolls his eyes and sits down in the chair in his portrait, so I do the same. 'Typical. Those idiots always were out to get anyone who they thought beneath them, even after everything.'

I'm almost afraid of saying it because some small part of me is still Hermione Granger, First Year, Know-It-All Gryffindor, and is afraid of losing house points and getting detention. Then I berate myself for being stupid enough for being scared of a portrait and ask anyway. 'Sir, I'm using the Silver Star, the Edelweiss, in combination with aconite and fluxweed. Because...'

'Because the Edelweiss is pure, the aconite is needed in the reaction, and the fluxweed is the catalyst for change,' he says, finishing my sentence. I'm waiting for the comment to come about whether I took a Babbling Beverage this morning, or which textbook I memorised to come to this conclusion.

But no, he just sits there, actually looking sort of interested. And I'm having a civil conversation with him.

Okay, granted, he's a portrait. He's also probably come to terms with the fact that I'm going to be living here for a while, and he's stuck in that rectangular frame, so either he can bugger off to his other portrait at Hogwarts, or stick around listening to me. Since the other option is being surrounded by generations of Headmasters, Professor Dumbledore included, he's clearly decided to stick around here.

I'm sort of flattered, in a way.

'I did consider this, but I never had the means of procuring the Edelweiss. I was forced to try other, less successful methods,' he tells me. Then, as though he's just discovered that he's got ammo to throw at me, he sneers. 'You do realise, of course, that to make this happen, you need to have at least one of those elusive flowers?'

He looks triumphant, but I smile slyly and open the box, letting the light loose on the room for a second. It hasn't dimmed at all since that day, which is surprising, but I'm glad. The flower is still perfect with no sign of wilting or discolouration, and it will stay that way indefinitely, according to Christian.

Strangely, when my eyes have adjusted again, the lines on Snape's mouth seem to have disappeared; his nose seems smaller, his face more pleasant, his hair less greasy, his general appearance less forbidding. In short, he actually looks sort of... handsome.

Even he seems to be looking at me in a different light, but I catch him looking and he scowls at me, and I laugh at myself for even thinking of it. Snape? Handsome? Was that a pig that just flew by the window?

'Know-it-all,' he says with feeling, and I smile back.

'Bastard.' Then I think about it and tack on a mockingly polite 'sir.'

It's going to be a long two months.

A/N. Teehee. I hope you like that little note I snuck in which tells you exactly how I feel about Albus Severus 'I'm-Going-To-Be-Teased-At-School' Potter. I found myself giggling throughout writing this chapter, so I hope it meets expectations in the humour department. I'm sorry for the delay, I had to go to a wedding, and I had no hopes of getting access to a computer, so I sat in the plane and wrote out most of this chapter, and the person sitting next to me couldn't quite fathom why I was giggling so much!

Quatre

Chapter 4 of 4

An exasperated, upset Hermione is a dangerous one, as our dear Portrait-Snape soon learns.

'No, Miss Granger, you are doing it all*wrong*.'

I stomp my foot petulantly in frustration, fully aware that it makes me look like a two-year old, but I don't care. 'Well, if you're such a smart cookie*Professor*, why don't you come and do it yourself? Oh, wait,' I remind myself snidely. 'You can't.'

Snape, or rather, Portrait-Snape, rolls his eyes, unimpressed. 'Petty insults aside, if you plan on making unhappy werewolves around the world, or at least Britain, howl for an entirely different reason, I suggest you put the fluxweed in after the Edelweiss.'

'That doesn't make any sense! The fluxweed is the catalyst for change. Putting the Edelweiss petal in straight after the aconite renders it completely useless because it can't withstand heat, and there has to be strong heat for the aconite to work. It's an equilibrium reaction; either the temperature is high, which will increase the rate of the reaction, or I keep the heat down and put the catalyst in, which allows the Edelweiss to then work its magic. Pun intended,' I add as an afterthought.

He glares at me for a while, but after a week of this I'm quite indifferent to it. I get the feeling he still thinks that if he concentrates enough of his desire to be rid of me completely into his glare, he'll actually be able to create a laser beam with his eyes that will reduce me to a pile of ash.

How he'll sweep them out, of course, is a different kettle of fish entirely. Ash tends to leave a mark on the carpets, and these are rather fine Persian ones.

And anyway, I don't really relish the idea of being reduced into my constituent elements any time soon.

'Miss Granger,' Snape begins in an almost kindly voice, which makes me almost slice my thumb open with my cutting knife in shock, 'there is a rather large difference between Muggle Chemistry and Potions,' he continues, with the air of explaining that the Tooth Fairy doesn't exist to a disillusioned six-year-old. Still shocking, but this time, I'm more inclined to fling my knife at him.

Instead, I settle for slicing the aconite more violently still. Of course I know there's a difference. That's the reason *why* I'm working with Muggle chemistry theory. After all, it doesn't make sense to me that greater wizards, Nicholas Flamel included, have tried and failed to make a cure for this. Even the Wolfsbane Potion is a recent thing, and as far as I know, Professor Snape was one of maybe three or four Potions masters that could brew it. It's bloody difficult, and this is coming from someone who brewed Polyjuice Potion as an 'ickle second-year'.

The thing is, where my heritage would normally have been considered a weakness in most wizarding societies, particularly Britain, here it's an advantage. I know the basics of Muggle chemistry, and then I looked up what I didn't know. Then I applied that to Potions, and that's what I'm banking on. I *know* they're different, but there has to be something that some great wizard must have missed. What if it was just a refusal to consider what Muggles have up their sleeves?

While stirring the cauldron gently clockwise, I slowly scatter the sliced aconite into the thick grey concoction that my potion currently is. It hisses for a while, spitting and bubbling, before the potion turns silvery, gaining a mercurial quality. I stand at my makeshift lab here in the study of Professor McGonagall's Paris apartment, stirring it a few times before leaving it with a satisfied smile. According to my notes, I'll have to leave it to settle for about three days before I can start work on it again.

I stretch my limbs like a cat, straightening out kinks and circulating blood back into the rest of my body. It's bad for the soul, really, to be cooped up doing Potions for hours on end. I mean, look at Snape. That's concrete evidence if there ever was any.

I walk over to the window and open it, letting in a cool rush of autumn air. From the study, there's a wonderful view of the Seine, and the morning light makes everything much prettier than it already is. Leaning on the window frame, I let the soft breeze tousle my hair as I watch the water flow lazily away. I am seriously considering tendering my resignation with immediate effect if I can get a job at the French Ministry. Paris is like London with fairy dust sprinkled on it: modern, but nicer; busy, but calmer; pretty, yet more beautiful. Paris seems straightforward at first glance, but once you get into the *banlieues*, there's so much more to it. London is a melting pot of cultures, but Paris is kind of more segregated. I'm not saying that's necessarily a good thing, but when you're walking from *quartier* to *quartier*, it's like stepping into different worlds entirely.

I strongly suspect that I am just very bored with London, however. Don't get me wrong; I have a great job, and I miss my friends and family like anything. But the wizarding society here is so much more accepting and adventurous. Wizarding Britain seems to have one foot firmly stuck in the Regency period and doesn't look like it's stepping out anytime soon. If I didn't think Lucius Malfoy would kill a Muggle before blinking, I would swear that he thinks stepping into Muggle areas will result in being burnt at the stake.

That, and I'm pretty sure he carries a snuff-box.

From the lounge, I can hear a faint, bell-like sound, which must be Professor McGonagall's grandfather clock telling me it's breakfast time. I glance at my watch; it's just turned ten. Accordingly, my stomach growls for food, so I sweep past the study into my bedroom next door. Shrugging on a white coat, I attempt to braid my hair into some semblance of normality before wandering back into the study for my purse and keys.

Snape raises one eyebrow at me from his perch. 'Going somewhere?'

'Why? Will you miss me?' I ask cheekily.

'Hardly,' he informs me in a lazy tone. 'Far be it from me to enjoy the company of bushy-haired, buck-toothed, irritant know-it-alls.'

This sets me off somewhat, but I hold the flare of rage in check and raise an eyebrow instead. 'Care to run that by me again *Professor?*' I ask sweetly, but I can feel the flash of anger in my eyes.

Far from being intimidated, however, he merely smirks back. 'Certainly, *Miss Granger*,' he sneers, getting up from his chair to raise himself to full height. 'You are a disrespectful, unattractive, textbook-reciting dunderhead, just like the rest of the dimwits I was forced to teach at Hogwarts. You are stubborn, dull, and will always be nothing but an overachieving know-it-all.'

I don't care what a stupid portrait thinks of me.

I don't, I don't.

But despite what I tell myself, I can see every image from school coming back to me: sitting in the toilet, crying, in first year; Ron glaring at me, refusing to speak to me when Scabbers disappeared; Lavender and Parvati looking at me and giggling; Harry shouting at me; Cormac McLaggen in sixth year, roughly pushing me away; and finally, inevitably: 'I see no difference.'

I can feel the tear slipping down from my cheek, and I'm mortified. Angrily wiping it away, I fiercely button my coat up and snatch my wand from the desk, shoving it in my purse before turning furiously.

'You foul, hateful man. You always were, and always will be, an ungrateful, vile, greasy git! I hope you *rot* in that portrait. I hate you!' I shriek and slam the door on my way out.

Outside the room, I lean against the door, breathing heavily and sniffing silently. How could I ever have respected him? Found his company bearable? Wished, hoped, *prayed* that he was alive, even after all these years?

I hate him. I hate him, I hate him, *I hate him*.

After a croissant with honey and a glass of orange juice, I not only feel better, but I have been silently formulating a plan to get revenge on that tosser in my study. I think I have an evil sort of grin on my face, though, because lots of tourists seem to be pointedly glancing at me and whispering.

Oh well. It's all for the greater good, after all.

Well, I have a couple of options. I don't know how receptive portraits are to charms, but I have to say, tickling charms are a remarkably effective form of torture. One negative peep out of him, and *zap!* Instant easy torture.

Still, I'd have to test that theory on some poor, unsuspecting portrait to see if it works after all. Sighing, I jab my second croissant into the honey in frustration. I can't really think of anyone who deserves that kind of treatment, except maybe Dumbledore, and he'd probably enjoy it. Sir Cadogan, perhaps? But that would mean actually going back to Scotland, and that seems like far too much effort to be wasted on the portrait in question.

Option two: move the portrait into another room. I have to admit, though, when he's not being the git that he is, he can be very amusing. I just wish he hadn't done that to me. I thought we were sort of getting along, but I guess not. Plus, his advice has been helpful more than once during the calculations process.

Damnit.

I could always convince Harry to pay a visit. That would definitely shut him up; he still loathes Harry, even after everything.

However, I am fully enjoying the isolation from everyone I know right now, so having Harry around would probably ruin that. Plus, Harry is a little trigger-happy when it comes to Snape; I don't know how receptive he'll be to a portrait of him, no matter how 'defenceless' (ha!) Snape is.

What about levitating several candles perilously close to his picture? Hmm. That sounds wonderfully vile, but I have to say, there would be some disadvantages to that one. And people would probably wonder why there's a massive hole in the ozone layer directly above the apartment.

Ooh, what about getting a Parisian boyfriend and bringing him over? That would definitely rile him up, not to mention that he'd probably be really jealous. Not because he likes me (like hell), but because he is two dimensional and therefore cannot indulge in the pleasures of physical activities.

Ha! That is a definite possibility.

Only, he'd have to be a wizard. I don't know if I could play up the 'giant hologram painting... thing' excuse too well. That can be solved, though; I know Neville goes to a lot of Parisian wizarding functions. He could always drag me along as well.

Flinging him into the Seine sounds tempting at this point, but those paintings cost quite a bit, and I don't think Minerva would be overly thrilled with me. I don't want to spend the rest of my days being thwacked over the head with a kilt.

No, wait. I've got it.

Time to visit that art shop across the river.

'Say hello to my new friend,' I tell Snape the next morning with a sweet smile on my face, not unlike Umbridge's.

The smile turns into a malicious grin as I haul up a green bottle that looks like wine, except it says 'Térébenthine' in really big white letters across the middle. I plunk it down onto the table with a satisfying thud so that even Snape can't pretend indifference. I flick my wand at my bag, and a clean white cloth zooms into my outstretched hand. With another swish and flick, I let the bottle tip itself over, soaking the cloth. Still dripping, I direct the cloth with my wand, letting it settle just a few inches away from the portrait.

'Do you know what this is, Professor?' I ask, still in that sickeningly sweet tone that even makes me want to retch. He attempts to kill me by force of death-glare for a few moments, but even portraits can't summon that kind of latent magic. 'No? Shall I give you a hint? It's starts with 'T' and rhymes with 'serpentine'. Oh yes, and it can wipe that little sneer off of your painted face, if you'll pardon the pun.'

Judging by the way he's cranked up his death-glare by a couple of notches, I suspect he doesn't feel like forgiving me for that one.

'So, Professor. One word, one insult from you, and you shall find that my wand might just *slip* a little too far,' I say sweetly, tipping my wand over very slightly so that the turpentine-soaked cloth I'm levitating lurches dangerously close to the portrait. Against his will, Snape flinches very slightly. Then he stands up, turns on his heel and exits the portrait in a billowing swirl of black robes.

Oh well, ho-hum. No skin off *my* nose, after all, but definitely some off of his. Good Lord, I crack myself up. I'm *squnny* that I should be *punished* by, er, *joking* to death.

Snickering to myself, I get back to work on the base, humming in happily in the absence of the recalcitrant professor.

A/N: I am terribly sorry about the wait; I've been very ill, almost for two months now, plus schoolwork has gotten in the way because I have exams now. Summer starts soon though, so expect more regular updates soon! Thank you to everyone who has given me support despite the absence; it's so appreciated. I'm glad the silly humour has made so many people laugh. May it continue to do so for as long as I keep writing!

Translations for this chapter:

les banlieues -- suburbs.

quartier -- quarter (e.g. Latin Quarter, Arab Quarter, etc.)

Térébenthine -- turpentine, of course!

At the moment I am beta-less due to the disappearance of my previous beta. I would ask Southern_Witch, but she is terribly busy as it is with my other fic and her huge amounts of work. If you're interested, please email me at bellarossii@gmail.com and I would be thrilled to have your help. Also, if you catch any mistakes, feel free to email me. Alert readers are the most wonderful.

Lastly, thank you for all the wonderful reviews. Keep them coming! ;]