

For the Greater Good

by HermioneWeasley1972

Hermione receives a strange, anonymous owl and comes face to face with someone she doesn't expect.

Past Ponderings and Owl Postings

Chapter 1 of 9

Hermione receives a strange, anonymous owl and comes face to face with someone she doesn't expect.

A/N Thank you to xxx for betaing(name hidden before revealing).

Disclaimer – I don't own anything but my imagination, everything belongs to JKR.

Hermione stood up from her desk. It was hard to believe that it had been two years since the final battle. Harry and Ginny had married almost right after everything had calmed down. There had been whispers that she was pregnant, but Hermione knew the truth. Harry just wanted some happiness, and she didn't blame him. Nearly his whole life had been spent trying to please and to help everyone else. Now was the time for him to enjoy life.

Things had been strained between her and Ron. The death of Fred had really hit him hard, and when he and Harry had started training to become Aurors, he had thrown himself completely into his work. She was proud of him, but it was hard to see Harry and Ginny together and not have someone special to be with her...

Shaking her head out of her morose thoughts, she headed for the door. She had nearly left her office when she heard the screeching of an owl. For a moment, she contemplated ignoring the bird's screeches. After all, she *had* come in early that morning to deal with the problem of illegal dragon breeding, and it was nearly 7 P.M. now. Their induction to the Wizengamot was the next day, and she wanted to look her best. Maybe *then* Ron would notice her...

The bird's screeching became more insistent.

"Oh all right!" Hermione turned and went back into her office where a large owl sat on her desk. "I suppose you want me to open it while you are here, don't you?" She removed the parchment from the owl's leg and opened it to find a phoenix feather and a note which read:

Dear Miss Granger,

This feather is a Portkey, which will activate at 7 P.M. sharp this evening. I will see you then.

The letter was unsigned. Hermione picked up the phoenix feather and, as the clock struck the hour, felt the familiar tug behind her navel. A moment later she arrived at her destination.

"Welcome, Miss Granger," a familiar voice said.

Hermione turned, and her eyes grew wide at the sight which met them.

"Professor Dumbledore!"

Prompts used in this story:

10. It's been two years after the war. Harry and Ginny are married. Neville has been hired as an assistant to Professor Sprout and will assume her job as replacement next term. Harry and Ron are finishing Auror training and Ginny flies for the Harpies. Hermione is Head of the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures and has completely revamped the Department. Ron, Harry, Neville, Ginny, Luna and Hermione have received owls inviting them to be members of the Wizengamot. Hermione also receives an odd letter and a

Portkey, requesting to see her: no name, no address. Who sent it and why? Yes, it could be Severus Snape or Lucius Malfoy.

3. Potions master, capable at nonverbal spells, Voldemort's potions brewer... Snape had the anti-venom on him. He had used Nagini's venom in many potions so clever, cunning Snape built up antibodies to the poison. Only he's too weak (blood loss from the bite) to give it to himself... Who finds Snape and helps him?

Questions, Quests, and Quizzical Looks

Chapter 2 of 9

After finding out who sent the owl, Hermione has more questions than answers.

Hermione knew that she was standing there with her mouth agape, but she couldn't help herself. Of all the people that had sent her the owl, Professor Dumbledore was one person she *didn't* expect. Still in shock, she didn't realize, at first, that there was another person in the room.

"I can see that, for once, you have nothing to say, Miss Granger."

There was no mistaking that voice. That was the voice that had put fear into the hearts of students in every house but Slytherin over the years and had chastised her many times for helping out Neville Longbottom.

"I can tell that you have many questions," Dumbledore said, his eyes twinkling, "and they will all be answered. Why don't we have a seat and I will answer them all." He used his wand to draw up three comfortable chairs and gestured for her to sit down.

"How do I know that you are really Professor Dumbledore and not someone who is Polyjuiced to look like him?" Hermione's face remained stoic, and she refused to take a seat until he answered the question. Her right hand was at in her pocket where she kept her wand, ready to grab it at a moment's notice.

"Alert as always, Miss Granger. Ask me something that only I would know."

Hermione thought for a moment. "What made my third year of Hogwarts different from every other year, and what did you tell me that we needed?" She knew that only Dumbledore would have the answers to these questions because as far as she knew, he hadn't shared it with anyone else.

Dumbledore smiled. "Your third year was different due to the fact that you were given a Time Turner so that you could take more classes. I told you that we needed more time in June, and also that more than one life could be saved."

Hermione nodded and accepted the proffered chair, sitting down, but keeping her eyes trained on Dumbledore.

"Still afraid of me, Miss Granger?"

Hermione narrowed her eyes at him. "You have been alive all this time and you weren't there when we needed you!"

"Miss Granger —" Snape started but Dumbledore held up his hand.

"Your anger is founded, but I cannot explain now. I promise you that all will be revealed in time. Just know that I was there helping everyone."

Seeing the sadness in Dumbledore's eyes, Hermione was placated for a moment.

"Let me put your mind at ease by explaining what I can. Harry had to believe that I was dead because that gave him the strength that he needed to face what he had to do. The body that was in the grave was a transfigured item, made to look like me." Dumbledore stopped and Hermione knew that he wouldn't volunteer any more information until he was ready. She knew then, without a doubt, that he was truly Dumbledore. No one else could be so annoying.

Several moments passed without another word being spoken. Finally the silence was broken.

"I am sure that the two of you are wondering why I have brought you here."

Hermione looked at Snape in surprise. She had assumed that he knew the reason, but she could tell that he was in the dark as much as she was.

"As you are aware, Severus, there has been a problem of late with the Wolfsbane Potion. It's not as effective as it used to be, and chances are that it won't be long before the current potion recipe is completely useless. To this end, I am sending you out to do research and see if you can develop a new potion that will work better during the full moon. I chose you because you are the best Potions master I have ever known, and I know that you can get the job done."

"Very well." Snape's expression remained stoic, but Hermione could tell that he was pleased.

Hermione was wondering where she fit into the plan when Dumbledore spoke again.

"Miss Granger will be accompanying you on your quest."

Hermione and Snape exchanged looks, then looked at Dumbledore.

"What?"

Their combined voices echoed through the room, and Dumbledore just stood there, his eyes twinkling and a knowing smile on his face.

Arguments and Decisions

Chapter 3 of 9

Dumbledore is obviously hiding something, but what?

"You cannot be serious," Severus said, looking at Dumbledore. He was certain that the old man had finally lost his mind. The stress of the war had finally gotten to him.

"I can assure you, Severus, that I have never been more serious. This is an important mission, and Miss Granger's skills may come in very handy."

"But she is just a —" Snape didn't get to finish the rest of his thought.

"Now wait just a minute," Hermione interrupted, her hands on her hips and her eyes flashing. "*Don't even think that!* I am not a child. I have not been a child for a long time." Her eyes went from Severus to Dumbledore. "And before you start deciding what I should do, or what I skills I can offer, don't I have a say in this?"

Both men turned and looked at her. Severus opened his mouth, but thought better of it when he saw the look on Dumbledore's face.

"Very well, Miss Granger. I will hear your arguments." Dumbledore turned in her direction and gave her his full attention.

"Well, for one thing, there is the matter of my job. I can't very well go off for Merlin knows how long without warning."

"I can assure you that your job will be well taken care of, Miss Granger. If you go on this mission, there will be someone who will be in place to take care of your duties at the Ministry. And when you return, your job will be waiting for you."

Hermione waited for Dumbledore to say more, but it was soon clear that he wasn't divulging any more information. She knew that what he was asking her to do was important, but her job at the Ministry was also important. She could feel the two of them looking at her and knew that they were waiting for an answer.

She was about to tell them that she didn't want to go, but then she thought of someone who had been lost in the war. A wonderful professor, a wonderful man, and a wonderful friend. If for no other reason, she had to do it for him.

"I will go on this mission, but if for no other reason because Remus Lupin was a great friend to Harry, Ron and I. I don't want any other people who are affected by lycanthropy to have to suffer because I let my pride stop me from doing what is right."

"Thank you, Miss Granger. I have arranged for the two of you to have the use of a house while you are doing your research. There is plenty of room and should be more than adequate for your needs. Here are Portkeys for each of you," Dumbledore said, handing them each a piece of candy. "Yours will activate tomorrow at 11 a.m., Severus, and yours will activate tomorrow at noon. That will give you each time to go home and to gather the items that you will want to bring with you."

"And to contact Harry and Ginny to let them know where I am?" Hermione asked, slipping the candy into her pocket.

"I'm afraid that won't be possible, Miss Granger. This mission that I am sending you on is secret and no one must know about it. I can't tell you more now, but you will have to trust me on this."

"But they will know that I won't be at work."

"You can tell them that you are going away, but you may not tell them why."

Again, Hermione was frustrated because of Dumbledore's evasiveness, but she knew from experience that no matter how much she asked, he wouldn't volunteer information until he was ready.

Finally, the silence was broken by another voice which hadn't been heard for several minutes.

"Why do I have the feeling that there is much more that you are not telling us?"

After a few more minutes of instructions and general information, Dumbledore excused them to return to their homes. The first thing that she did when she reached her flat was to send out an owl to Harry and Ginny.

Dear Harry and Ginny,

I am going away for a while. I don't know how long I will be gone, and I can't tell you why I am going or where. I will be back as soon as I can.

Love,

Hermione

She briefly thought of sending an owl out to Ron as well, but then thought better of it. He had enough on his mind as it was. She was sure that Ginny and Harry would let him know if he asked. She watched the owl fly off into the night and then turned to her next task.

Taking out the trunk that she had bought to replace her Hogwarts trunk, she started packing it with everything that she thought she would need. All of her potions books went into it, along with books on werewolves, clothes, parchments and quills. She topped it off with other books that she had purchased when she had gotten her new job with regards to magical creatures, and her packing was complete.

A rumble of her stomach reminded her that she hadn't had any dinner yet. As she sat down to a hastily prepared meal a few minutes later, she realized that this would be the last meal that she would be eating in her flat for Merlin knew how long. She was off on a secret mission for a guy that was supposed to be dead, with a man who used to be her professor.

Life was never dull.

For the Greater Good

Chapter 4 of 9

Sometimes one must choose between what is right and what is easy.

He couldn't believe the position that Dumbledore was putting him in. There were plenty of people that he could have sent on this mission with him, or Dumbledore could have sent him by himself. It wouldn't have been the first time. Why did he choose *now* to send him with a partner?

He looked around at the house where he had arrived just a few minutes earlier. One thing was certain, there was plenty of room, and they would each have ample space so that they would not be bumping into one another constantly.

He found the kitchen well stocked with provisions, noting that it would be several weeks before they would need to shop for food. He had almost expected to see a house-elf here, but considering who his partner was going to be for this mission, he wasn't surprised.

How in the name of Merlin am I going to do this? He thought to himself as he acquainted himself with the rest of the house. There were four bedrooms and a large study. There was also a rather sizable library, which he figured the bookworm Granger would want to claim for herself. Well, he wasn't above compromise. She could take the library, and he could use the study for brewing. The more they stayed out of one another's way, the better of they would both be.

He had just finished setting up the room he had chosen for himself when he heard the arrival of Granger. He had taken so much time to look around the house that he had wasted the hour between his arrival and hers. He thought briefly about busying himself so that he wouldn't have to face her, but he knew that he would have to face her sooner or later. With a sigh, he left the sanctity of his room, took a deep breath, and headed downstairs.

Before he even spotted her, he was assailed by a large orange blur.

"Crookshanks!" The voice he remembered so well, that annoyingly know-it-all voice, scolded.

The owner of the voice came into view, and his eyes widened in surprise. Her hair was up in a ponytail, and she was wearing jeans and a shirt. Her trunk was floating along behind her.

Quickly recovering, he narrowed his eyes at her. "You will need to teach that animal some manners, Miss Granger, if he is to stay here."

A loud bang reverberated throughout the room as her trunk fell to the floor. Placing her hands on her hips, she glared right back at him. "He is usually very well behaved; he just doesn't like traveling by Portkey." She took out her wand, and for a moment he wondered if she was going to hex him, but she simply levitated her trunk again.

He watched as she went up the stairs and then disappeared into the study. This was going to be harder than he had anticipated.

Thank Merlin for levitation spells, Hermione thought to herself as she made her way up the stairs. She remembered the times when she had seen her parents moving heavy objects, and had wished she could do magic outside of Hogwarts because it was so much easier.

Reaching the top of the steps, she found herself at a long hallway with doors on either side. Three of the doors were open and lead to bedrooms. The fourth was closed, and there were two others. One lead to a bathroom, and the other one lead to a closet.

Making her choice of the three available bedrooms, she set her trunk down and began to unpack. She had brought a few robes with her, but mostly she had brought Muggle clothing. She didn't know what type of people she would be encountering when they were out looking for ingredients, and she wanted to be as inconspicuous as possible.

She was pleased to find that her bedroom also had a connecting bathroom, which was well stocked with toiletries, soaps, and lotions. From what she had seen of the house it was very nice and much more spacious than her flat. Truth be told, she could afford a bigger place. Perhaps that was something to consider when this mission was over.

Going back into the bedroom, she looked around to make certain that everything was put away properly. She knew that she was stalling, but she couldn't help herself. She had never expected to see him again, much less be living in the same *house* as him. Things were much too complicated after that night two years ago...

Shaking her head, she pulled herself out of her thoughts. That night must not come up; things were awkward enough as it was. But if the memories of that night came flooding back, neither of them would be able to accomplish what needed to be done. Gathering up her books, she left her room and headed back downstairs.

There had been many things that she had learned over the last ten years. Nothing in life was simple, and sometimes you had to make a choice between what was right and what was easy. What she was doing was for the greater good of the wizarding world and in honour of a wonderful friend whose life was cut short way too soon.

"For the greater good," she whispered to herself, not knowing that an unseen pair of ears had also heard her.

That Night Two Years Ago

Chapter 5 of 9

That night two years ago changed both of their lives...

For the greater good? Severus thought to himself as he pretended to work but was really following her movements very carefully. So this was as hard on her as it was on him. He almost used Legilimency on her but decided not to. He decided that he would rather not know.

Did Dumbledore know about that night? Did he know what had happened between them? If he knew... Severus didn't even want to think about the possibility. That night was something that was forever embedded in his mind, and he couldn't stop thinking about it no matter how much he tried...

His body was wracked with pain, and he was near death. He could feel the cold hand of death creeping up his body. If only he could move, if only he could reach the phial that he always carried with him in case this were to ever happen. But as loath as he was to admit it, he was as weak as a baby. All he could do was hope that someone would come back and help him.

The Dark Lord was dead. He could tell that much, for the place where his Dark Mark had been was cold. But was Potter still alive? Had all he had done to protect him all these years been in vain? Or had the Dark Lord finished him off as well? He had to know.

He struggled in a vain attempt to sit up and then slumped back to the ground. It was useless. If only he had the strength to sit up, he would be able to reach the antidote that was in his pocket.

He knew that his time was growing short. If someone didn't come soon, he would be dead and go on to the afterlife. At least he knew that his dear Lily was waiting there for him. But he couldn't face the fact that Potter might be there too. That would mean that his mission had failed. The room grew dark...

The next sounds he heard were footsteps as they walked across the floor towards him. Behind his closed eyelids, a light shone brightly. With Nagini's poison coursing through his veins, he didn't even have the strength to open his eyes to see who it was. The footsteps stopped, and he could hear the breathing of someone as they knelt down next to him.

He could feel a finger as it was placed beneath his nose to check for his breathing, and then he was gently rolled over onto his back. He could feel a hand being eased beneath his head before his head was lifted up and his lips were met by a phial.

Since he didn't know who the person was or what they were giving him, he struggled against their efforts.

"Drink this, it will help against the poison." He recognized the voice but couldn't place it.

Against his better judgment he drank the contents of the phial, and it wasn't long before he felt his body getting stronger. He almost expected the person to leave after he drank the potion, but they stayed there by his side.

Opening his eyes he looked in the direction of the person who had saved him, blinking his eyes to bring the image into focus. Once he saw who it was that sat next to him, he almost died from shock.

"Miss Granger?" He couldn't keep the surprise out of his voice, even though he normally tried to keep any emotion from his voice.

"Harry told us what he saw in the Pensieve," she said, conjuring a blanket and laying it overtop of him.

"Everything?" He wasn't so sure that he liked the sound of that. But at least he knew that Harry was alive and that he hadn't failed.

"He told us why Dumbledore died," she answered softly. "Then when I had time to think about it, I figured that you may not be dead but too weak to be able to help yourself. So I came back."

He looked at her for a long time before saying anything more. His black eyes locked with hers, and he could see her blushing under his scrutiny. For the first time since he had started teaching her seven years ago, he saw her for the beautiful woman that she had become. He started to reach up towards her face, then stayed his hand just inches from it.

"Thank you for coming back," he said.

"You are welcome."

That night was over two years ago, but it seemed like only yesterday. He really owed a great deal to her. If it hadn't been for her coming back to check on him, he would be dead right now. Even without using Legilimency on her, he could tell that she remembered that night as vividly as he did. He could see it in her eyes, at the way that she turned away when she saw him looking at her...

He pushed back his chair and stood up from his desk with a sigh. Leaving the study, he turned in the direction of the library because he knew that is where he would find her. He stood outside the open door of the library for a moment before knocking, watching as she read and absent mindedly twirled her hair around one finger. Mentally, he shook his head. He couldn't let her get to him like this.

His knock brought her out of her deep concentration, and she looked up at him with her eyes locking on his.

"Since we are both in this situation together, and we are both adults, I was thinking that perhaps we should be less formal when we are addressing one another."

She placed her book down on the desk and regarded him with an amused expression. "Very well. What would you propose that I call you?"

"Since I am no longer your professor, Professor Snape is no longer appropriate. You may call me Severus, if you wish. It appears that Professor Dumbledore has made us colleagues even if it is only temporary, and that is what my colleagues called me."

"Well then, you may call me Hermione, but only because we are colleagues."

"Agreed. I will be in the study... Hermione." As he turned and walked out of the library he wondered why it was that he made things more difficult on himself.

Once his back was turned to her, Hermione's eyebrows raised in surprised and amusement. This certainly was an interesting change of events.

She tried to go back to reading her book but found herself unable to. Her mind was filled with thoughts and confusion.

Potion Preparations and Albus Annoyances

Chapter 6 of 9

With two days left until the full moon, Hermione and Severus find out what exactly Albus has in store for them.

Author's note – I apologize that this took so long, but RL has been busy. I hope you enjoy this chapter and that it was worth waiting for. Thank you to my beta.

Hermione walked back to the house where she and Severus had been staying the last few weeks, her bag full of plants and other things that were indigenous to the area. It was only two days until the full moon, and Dumbledore had sent a Patronus early in the morning, telling them to expect a visit from him that evening.

The first few days had been strained, but once the two of them remembered that they were no longer professor and student but equal partners in a business relationship, things had gotten a little bit easier on the both of them.

Severus had made several potions out of the ingredients that she had brought for him, but what was frustrating was that they would know nothing about how effective they were until the full moon. They didn't know how they were going to test the potions out, but something that Dumbledore had said in a letter had alluded to the fact that he would take care of it.

After a hurried greeting from Crookshanks, she made her way to the study where Severus did most of his brewing. Two raps on the door announced her presence, and she opened it only when he called to her through the door.

"Have there been any more owls from Dumbledore?" she asked when he looked up from his cauldron. She was shocked at the weariness that was etched on Severus' face. They both knew how important this potion was to the wizarding world, but it was proving to be harder than they'd thought.

"No, there hasn't."

His answer was sharp and curt, leaving her feeling as if he had struck her. Biting back an angry retort in reply, she looked at him. "I have brought the ingredients that you asked for, as well as some new ones. I am going to go bathe before Dumbledore gets here."

* * *

Severus watched her as she made her way out of the study. Why did she have this effect on him? He just hoped that in two days it would be over, that one of the potions would work so that the two of them could get back to their own lives.

His thoughts turned to the coming visit of Albus Dumbledore. Merlin only knew what that man had planned for them. His owls that he sent were always cryptic. He had stopped by a few times while they were living there – sometimes he forewarned them, sometimes he did not.

Shaking his head at the lunacy, yet brilliancy, of Albus Dumbledore, he allowed his mind to wander to the beautiful woman who was upstairs taking a hot bath. He could only imagine what she looked like. Would her hair be piled on her head as she soaked in the tub, or would it be flowing down her back? Did she have bubbles in the tub, or was the water crystal clear so that her naked body was...

No! They had work to do and precious little time for thoughts of the flesh. The safety of the wizarding world depended on them creating a new Wolfsbane Potion. He looked down and realized, with embarrassment, what the thoughts of Hermione had done to him. A cold shower was definitely in order before the meeting with his former boss and mentor.

Several hours later, they found themselves sitting in the presence of Albus Dumbledore.

"I am certain that you are both wondering how you will be able to test your potions that you have created. I am here to let you know that I have procured several willing participants for your study. They will be staying at another house that can be reached only by way of Portkey or by Floo. . They are there now, and you will be able to get through to them by way of the Floo until the day of the full moon. Then you will need to use the Portkey. The Floo name is Chocolate Frogs."

"How many are there?" Severus asked. "And what precautions have been taken?"

"There are five test subjects, and each of them will be chained in a separate room. I really appreciate what the two of you are doing. I have reason to believe that the Ministry has had something to do with the fact that the Wolfsbane Potion isn't working, but I don't have any proof yet. That is the reason for all of the secrecy." Albus stood up. "I must be going. I will be back again after the full moon to see how you fared." With that, Albus disappeared, leaving a still warm but empty chair where he once sat.

* * *

The Ministry may be the cause of the Wolfsbane Potion crisis? Hermione thought to herself. *Well, why not? It had been corrupt before. It seemed like something it would do.* Realizing that Severus was talking to her, she looked up at him.

"I'm sorry, could you repeat that?" she asked, feeling her cheeks burning.

"I was asking if you wanted to go and meet our test subjects. Since we will be working with them, we should get to know them."

"You are right. Give me a few minutes and I'll be ready." She went upstairs and changed into something more casual than she wore for the meeting with Dumbledore. Severus went through the Floo first, and then she followed.

When she stepped out of the Floo, there were four witches and wizards of varying ages in the sitting room.

"I thought that there were five of you," Hermione said, looking around the room.

"There are," a familiar voice said as its owner stepped into the room.

"Ron!" Hermione exclaimed, and the darkness closed around her.

More Problems Arise

Chapter 7 of 9

After Hermione's talk with Ron, she and Severus realize that things are much more difficult than either of them had imagined.

A/N: Thank you to my wonderful beta. To my readers – I hope you like this chapter. I had debated on which way to go with it, but I thought you would like some background.

The room was coming into focus as Hermione struggled her way back to consciousness. Before her eyes were completely focused, she could make out the shape of a person sitting next to her bed. The person's back was to her, so she couldn't see their face.

"Severus?" she asked, figuring that would be who was sitting next to her.

"Erm, no," the person said, turning around.

She blinked as she came face to face with Ron. "I'm sorry I fainted. I just never expected to see you."

"How do you think I felt? You went off to Merlin knew where without even saying goodbye."

"Ron, I didn't have time. I got the owl from Dumbledore and had very little time to get things packed and ready."

"You owled Harry and Ginny," he said quietly.

Realizing that he was feeling left out, she decided to turn it around on him. "Wait a minute. You were bit by a werewolf, and you didn't tell **me**. So we were both keeping secrets from one another."

"I wasn't bit, Hermione. In fact, I didn't even know I was a werewolf until last month when the full moon came."

"What do you mean you weren't bit? That's how the disease is transmitted, through a bite." This didn't make sense. If he wasn't bit, how did he become a werewolf?

"That's what I thought too. But a few weeks before the last full moon, I was out, investigating suspicious activity with my partner. We were ambushed. My partner was killed, but I was only stunned. The last thing I remember is someone coming towards me with this sharp thing. I had never seen anything like it."

"It sounds like a syringe. Muggles use them to administer medicine. So you think that this person injected you with something that turned you into a werewolf?"

Nodding, he said, "Must have, 'cause I don't remember getting bit."

Hermione rubbed her temples as she thought about what this could mean. "Maybe it was saliva, or blood, or a concoction of both..." Realizing that Ron was looking at her, she blushed. "I'm just thinking out loud."

"Used to it by now," he said, getting to his feet. "Good to see you again. If anyone can figure out how to make a new potion, you can."

"Thanks, but I'm not working on this alone."

"Oh, yeah, Snape is helping you. Don't think I didn't notice you thought it was him sitting with you."

"Ron, it's not like that. We're just working together to help the wizarding world."

"Right. You keep thinking that, Hermione." Ron headed in the direction of the door, and soon he was out of her sight.

What in the world did Ron mean by that?

Severus watched as Potter's sidekick left the room where Hermione had been taken after her fainting spell. He could tell it had been a shock to her, seeing her friend as one of the test subjects. He hadn't wanted Weasley in there with her, but he couldn't protest too much without arousing suspicions.

When Weasley was out of sight, he made his way into the bedroom. He was relieved to see Hermione was sitting up and that her color was better. In fact, she seemed to have the same calculating look on her face that he had often seen at Hogwarts.

"Did Ron tell you how he became infected?" Hermione asked, looking at him.

"No, Mr. Weasley didn't have a word to say to me. He seemed to have eyes only for you." Severus' eyebrows went up as he looked at her.

"Yes, well, that is in the past. But what he told me may make things more difficult. Apparently, he wasn't bitten. He was attacked, and it sounds like someone injected something into him to turn him into a werewolf."

Severus thought for a moment. This did make things more difficult.

"Have you ever heard of something like this happening before?"

Shaking his head in response to her question, his face masked the worry that he was feeling. "We should head back to the house. We have research to do."

Less than thirty minutes later, Hermione was in the library again. She chewed on the end of her quill thoughtfully as thoughts of everything she'd learned went through her head. And, as she had so many times at Hogwarts, she started making a list.

Injection Serum possible ingredients

Werewolf saliva

Werewolf Blood

Reasons for injection over biting

Quiet infection

No alerts for Aurors

Person infected unaware until too late

Serum can go right into bloodstream and possibly make a stronger werewolf

She looked up as the door to the library opened.

"Are you alright?" Severus asked as he entered the room.

"I'm fine. I'm just trying to get into the minds of whoever is doing this to Merlin knows how many people." She held out the list to him and waited while he read through it. "It's not finished yet, but it's a start. I thought I would delve deeper into the books that we have already read and see if there is anything in them that sets a precedent."

He nodded, looking distracted. "That is a good idea. We should also find out whether or not Mr. Weasley is the only one of our subjects who was affected this way. What works for those who were affected in the usual way may not work for him. Well, I will leave you to your work. I too have some work to finish before full moon." He placed the parchment back on her desk and turned to leave.

She watched as he left the room, closing the door behind him, and then turned back to her list. There was nothing else that she could think of to add, so she put it aside and picked up one of the books from her desk. Taking out a fresh piece of parchment and a quill, she opened the book. It was going to be a long night.

Full Moon

Chapter 8 of 9

On the day of the full moon, Hermione and Severus face uncertainty as they wonder what potions, if any, will work.

A/N Thank you to my beta. To my readers – enjoy the chapter

Hermione stretched and opened her eyes. Today was the day of the full moon. She knew that all of their hard work could have been for nothing – there was no guarantee whether or not any of the potions were going to work.

During their interviews with the other werewolves – Marie, Isabel, Mikhail, and Justin, they discovered that Ron was the only one who had been infected with a needle. The rest had been bit by one of the feral werewolves that were a part of Greyback's pack. Greyback was dead, but his legacy of terror lived on.

After a quick shower, she made her way downstairs to the study, where she knew Severus would be, knocking on the door before entering. She almost expected to see him brewing another potion, but instead he was making notations on a parchment. She waited for him to finish before she spoke.

"Do you think any of the potions that we have brewed are going to work?"

"I do not know. You do know that what may work on a werewolf that was infected due to a bite may not work on Ron." The sentence was said as a statement, but there was a question in his eyes.

"I know. Even if we have found a potion that will work, it may only be the beginning. Only time will tell."

Severus watched as she got a faraway look on her face and knew how hard the last few days had been on her. He couldn't imagine what it would have been like for him, finding out one of his friends was a werewolf. Dealing with knowing Remus Lupin and Fenrir Greyback had been enough for him. Although Hermione had given no indication of having feelings for Weasley other than friendship, he still was bothered by what he saw.

To cover up his own thoughts, he said, "I have written down the ingredients that are in the potions and which subject we will be giving the potion to. This way we will know which potions work and which potions don't." Severus knew that there was a good chance that none of the potions were going to work at all.

"What time is moon rise?"

"Nine pm sharp, so we will need to make sure that they are all secure and given their potions in plenty of time for us to get back here. We shouldn't linger longer than necessary."

"I'm not going to take any foolish chances," she snapped, the words coming out sharper than she intended.

"I don't want –" he said, then stopped, changing his mind. "I don't want any accidents tonight. Perhaps I should be the one that chains Mr. Weasley and gives him his potion."

"No, I'm perfectly capable of doing it. Besides, I don't want him to think that I am avoiding him because he is a werewolf." Turning, she stalked out of the room.

Severus watched as she left the room, shaking his head. He didn't know what her emotional outburst meant, but he had a feeling that this wouldn't be the last of it.

How dare he assume that she couldn't do her part? Didn't he know her better than that? After all, she had held Ron and Harry's hands for most of their Hogwarts days. They wouldn't have passed their classes if it hadn't been for her!

She knew that Severus was just trying to spare her the pain of having to see Ron chained up, but she wasn't really angry with Severus. It was Ron that she was angry with. How dare he insinuate that something was going on between her and Severus? Their relationship was purely professional. Wasn't it?

Ron was always jealous and insecure. It all started back in fourth year when Viktor Krum had asked her to the Yule Ball. Well, if Ron had asked her first instead of as a last

resort, she would have gone with him. But no, he had to wait for a prettier girl.

Well, now he keeps to himself and doesn't even tell her that he is a werewolf and he thinks that he can presume to tell her whom she can and can't see? Even if there ~~was~~ something more to her relationship with Severus, he had nothing to say about it. With that last thought, she went to make certain that everything was ready for that evening.

The hours passed quickly, and soon it was 8 o'clock in the evening. They had agreed on a time of 8:15 to get everyone secure and to administer the potions. That gave them plenty of time to finish and to take the Portkeys back to the other house before the moon rose.

"I'll take Mikhail, Justin and Marie, if you will take Isabel and Ron," Severus said, looking at her. He still didn't know why she wanted to torture herself by having to chain up Ron, but he supposed that she knew what she was doing.

"Alright." She took the potions from him for Isabel and Ron and picked up her Portkey. "I'll meet you back here." At 8:10 her Portkey activated and she vanished.

Grabbing his own Portkey, he waited for it to activate at 8:12. He knew that both Portkeys would return them to the safe house at 8:35, so they would have to work fast. As he chained up Mikhail and Justin and gave them their potions, he thought briefly of Remus Lupin. Even though he had shown much distaste for him, he had respected him as an Order member and as a professor. It was a pity that the man had not survived.

Refusing to dwell on the past, Severus moved on to his last charge for the evening.

Hermione had gone to Isabel first, wanting to spend a few minutes with Ron and give him a piece of her mind. After Isabel was secure, she made her way to the room where Ron was waiting for her. She glanced at her watch – it was only 8:20. She had time before her Portkey would activate. From inside the room she could hear thumps – it sounded as if Ron was playing with a Bludger or something in there.

"Ron, it's –" she started as she opened the door. A large, red furry creature launched itself at her and she threw up her arms to protect her throat. Her body screamed in pain as the teeth clamped down on one of her wrists, tearing into the flesh and grating on the bone.

"*Petrificus Totalus!*" Hermione heard from behind her. She watched as the werewolf that had been Ron dropped to the floor, frozen in time.

"Get back behind me!" Severus shouted. While he was certain that Ron could no longer do any damage, he quickly got the chains and locked him up, then locked the door behind him. Looking around, he searched for Hermione. He found her in the middle of the hall, bleeding profusely from her wrist and barely conscious. She was losing blood fast.

Cursing the Portkeys that would not activate until 8:35, he took his cloak and wrapped it around her wrist, trying to staunch the flow of blood.

"The moon hasn't risen yet," Hermione whispered.

"You need to save your strength," Severus said, looking down at her. Hoping and praying that he could summon a Patronus, he cast the spell and sent off his message to Albus. He just hoped it wasn't too late...

Times Have Changed

Chapter 9 of 9

Severus has to face what has happened and what it means for the future.

A/N Thank you to my beta and thank you to my readers. I really hope you enjoy this chapter.

=====

Albus watched as the vixen ran into his room

Albus! Hermione has been bit. Come here immediately. After giving its message, the vixen disappeared.

That's Severus' voice. Interesting. Albus thought as he gathered up the items that he would need. He shook his head sadly; things were not going well. First Ron, and now Hermione. There had to be a connection.

Minutes later he arrived at the house with Madam Pomfrey. Pomfrey was shown into the room where Hermione lay, and Albus took Severus aside.

"What happened?"

"It was Weasley. He forgot to inform us that his transformation took sooner than a normal werewolf."

Frowning, Albus looked thoughtful for a moment. "He transformed before the moon rose?"

"At least an hour before, perhaps more. Hermione went into his room at approximately 8:30 I believe. The time for moon rise was 9:00 pm. From what I saw, he was completely transformed."

"Is there anything else that I should know?"

"Ron was not infected in the usual way. He told Hermione that he was attacked over a month ago and that the person killed his partner and injected him with something. On the next full moon, he transformed." Severus looked in the direction of the room where Pomfrey was working on Hermione.

"She is in good hands, Severus."

"It should have been me. I wanted to be the one that gave him the potion, to secure him, but she insisted."

"There was no way that you could have known this would happen."

Severus knew that Albus was right, but he couldn't help blaming himself. If only he had insisted... The door to the room opened and Madam Pomfrey came out, looking worried and haggard. "How is she?"

"She has lost quite a bit of blood. The teeth cut one of the arteries in her wrist, but she should be okay, with time. I have left some Blood-Replenishing Potions and some potions to help with the pain. We just have to watch for infection. Keep an eye for fevers, for swelling, anything that looks abnormal." She came over to him and put a hand on his arm. "This is going to be hard for her. The main thing is to be there for her. I'll check back tomorrow, but I am only a Floo away if you need me."

"Is there anything you need before we go, Severus?"

Other than Weasley's head on a platter? Severus thought to himself, but simply shook his head.

"We will both return tomorrow to check on Miss Granger," Albus said. "But please let us know if you need anything."

"I will, thank you."

After Albus and Pomfrey left, Severus made his way into the room where Hermione was resting. Quietly, he sat in the chair by her bed and watched as she tossed and turned in a feverish sleep.

I lost Lily, I can't lose her too, Severus thought to himself. No matter what Albus had said, he blamed himself for what had happened.

Looking at Hermione, he couldn't believe how pale she was. Even with the Blood-Replenishing Potion, there wasn't much difference between her face and the stark white sheets that were on the bed. The only thing that kept her from disappearing was her dark curly hair.

His eyes dropped to her right wrist, which was heavily bandaged. Blood was still seeping through the bandages, but the flow of blood was not nearly as heavy as it was. Thank Merlin for Madam Pomfrey. He knew some healing spells, but nothing that was strong enough to heal her injuries on his own.

Now that Hermione was out of danger zone for the moment, his worry was giving way to anger. Why was Weasley so irresponsible? Why didn't he tell Hermione that he transformed sooner than other werewolves? Surely Weasley wasn't that stupid as to have forgotten an important detail such as that? Then again, Weasley wasn't that bright. Perhaps he had forgotten.

He heard moaning coming from the bed, and turned his attention back to Hermione. Her eyes fluttered open and focused on his.

"Don't try to talk; you need to save your strength," Severus said quietly. "Are you in pain?"

She nodded slightly, and he helped her to sit up to take some of the potion that Pomfrey had left.

"Is there anything else you need?" he asked when she was laying back down

She shook her head slightly, and it wasn't long before she drifted back off to sleep.

When Severus was certain that she would be all right for the moment, he left the room, leaving the door open in case she needed him. This was a new experience for him, having to tend to a person who had just been bit by a werewolf. He knew that he didn't **have** to tend to her. He could have very well told Pomfrey that he would need her to stay, and chances are she would have.

But the truth was that he was starting to have feelings for her. She was a brilliant witch, and he had been truly impressed with the work she had done these past few weeks. The problem was that he didn't know how she felt about him. He knew that she'd had feelings for Weasley years ago, but it was obvious from her reaction at seeing him that she knew nothing about him becoming a werewolf.

Could she accept him for what he was? He was almost twice her age. And could he accept her for ~~what~~ **what** she was? She was now a werewolf. He would like to think that the feelings he'd had years ago towards werewolves were now gone. But were they?

Times were different. The situation was different. And only time would tell what the future held for the two of them. For now, he would try and help her get through this and see where the future would take them. They still had a job to do, and now success was even more important than ever.

These were not just nameless people who were affected by this dreadful condition. Now it also affected the woman he may be falling in love with.