

Emissaries

by SS Lupin

During the war, Hermione begins meeting secretly with a murdering spy. Written before Deathly Hallows.

One-shot.

Chapter 1 of 1

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We run out of the cave, not stopping until we reach an outcropping that juts out into the dark waves of the ocean. I can still feel the flames that licked at my back when Harry took Ravenclaw's signet ring and the protective spells around it began attacking us, and my lungs are a solid aching weight in my chest as I'm sucking in fresh air.

Ron touches my arm, his breathing as harsh as my own. "Are you alright?"

It takes awhile for me to get the words out. "I think I burned my back. How are you and Harry?"

Ron waves my concern away, and Harry raises the ring up to what's left of the moonlight.

"You were right, Hermione. I didn't think it would be another ring, but here it is."

"Are you sure it's real?" I have to make sure.

"Yeah."

"Then let's get back to headquarters."

Ron nods and Disapparates first. Harry and I wait a few moments before following.

"Thanks for getting it right. If it weren't for you, we could've lost this one."

I smile weakly and think of my four Ds. *Destination, determination, deliberation...*

Deception.

~*~

When the boys are asleep, I leave number twelve and Apparate to the alley behind the Leaky Cauldron. He's already there, and I wonder how he's able to show himself here, hidden only by a cloak and glamour.

"How did it go?"

"Well." I shrug and then wince.

He surprises me when he produces a small jar from his robes and hands it to me. "For the burns."

"Thank you," I say.

He inclines his head. "September first."

"What?"

"You're supposedly intelligent. Figure it out."

I want to ask more, but he's already got his wand on the stone wall leading to Diagon Alley.

"Erm... Severus?"

The wall begins to separate. "It's all you need to"

"Be careful," I say, and he almost looks puzzled as he pulls up his hood and walks out of my sight.

~*~

I think I have time to tell them, but an attack comes before I could form the right explanation.

We are safe, but Diagon Alley wasn't, Death Eaters slaughtering innocents at random and setting almost every store on fire. At the end of it, there were six Dark Marks cast into the sky over the alley and droves of injured people sent to St. Mungo's. The wireless reports that Snape was seen fleeing the site, which brings Harry to curse and leave the drawing room, Ron close behind him.

I wring my hands together and decide to contact Snape again.

~*~

This time, I'm in a hotel room in Birmingham, sobbing for the first time since Dumbledore died.

"Why didn't you tell me about today?"

"It was a surprise attack. If the Order were all there"

"We could end this sooner!"

"The Dark Lord would've known," he states.

"It wouldn't matter by then! We would have won." Tears and snot begin to gather on my lip, and I wipe them away with my sleeve.

He stays quiet, standing by the door.

"You're still not sure, are you?"

"That is"

"You don't know what side you're on!" I shriek. "If Voldemort told you to kill me, you'd consider it first, wouldn't you?"

I have to get out of here. I have to leave him and his half-truths before he destroys me, before he ruins my mind and endangers my friends...

Snape reaches me and grabs hold of my shoulders. "Then you're still a foolish girl if you think that to be the case.

"This is a war. People die," he growls out. "Not everything can be spelled out, not to you, or me, or Potter."

Harry's name brings an uncomfortable clench in my chest. "The final attack why tell me?"

"As opposed to Minerva and the like?"

I nod, and my chin knocks into his chest. His hands fall away from me, and suddenly he is by the door again.

"You saw me at Dumbledore's grave but didn't attack."

"I had my wand out," I protest.

"There's the answer to your question," he says.

"One of my questions. You never answered the first," I say, my voice no longer cracking.

"You're safer from me than most."

I don't know what to say to that, so I Disapparate before he does.

~*~

A week passes and I haven't told them. A week passes, and there is another attack, this one on Hogsmeade. A week passes...

"Hermione!"

I turn to Ron and try to work exasperation into my voice when I tell him I'm reading.

"You haven't turned the page for almost twenty minutes," he says.

Harry closes up the chessboard they were playing on. "Is there something wrong?" he asks.

"Something you haven't been telling us?" Ron stands by my chair.

"Of course not," I say.

"That's a lie," Harry snarls.

"Harry," Ron warns, and my other best friend clenches his jaw and says nothing.

"We've been noticing something wrong for awhile. You're always mouthing off about something, but now you're silent, only piping up when you read in a book somewhere about a place where we could find a Horcrux... Only, you never show us the book."

"I must have."

"Never," Harry says. "But we'd get the Horcrux every time, so you obviously knew what you were doing."

Ron cuts in. "And you'd disappear all the time. Not for long, but enough that we'd notice."

"But at night "

"Ron or I would wake up and wonder where you had gone."

"Who you were with."

My breath catches. I think of Harry, face red with contained rage, and Ron, quick to hurt with words, but both wanting to understand.

I start with the grave.

~*~

"So you saw him at Hogwarts and didn't say anything?" Ron asks.

"I had to make sure I was right before you two would want to blindly attack."

"And what makes you think that he didn't murder Dumbledore in cold blood?" Harry has calmed down somewhat, and I want to keep it that way.

"There are parts of it that you've told me that have never seemed right," I say, ready to detail them all with the notes I've taken about spells with green lights that aren't the Killing Curse, with theories of Dumbledore's possible plans.

"So you're saying you don't believe Harry?"

"No," I clarify, turning to Harry.

"I believe both of you."

~*~

On the night of August first, an owl flies into my bedroom and perches atop the nightstand, waking me.

I retrieve the scrap of parchment in its beak. The message consists of a drawing of a snake with an x slashed through its head. The only words on it were cramped and small at the bottom.

Be careful.

Despite the fear coursing through me, I smile.

~*~

I dress quickly and reach the room that Harry and Ron share.

"Wake up! It's time," I whisper, ready to tell the others.

Ron was quick to get out of bed, crossing over to a still sleeping Harry and shaking his shoulders.

I rush to the bed and see Harry in the middle of a nightmare, his mouth set into grimace, his face pale and sweaty.

Ron keeps shaking him and whispering kind words, and Harry wakes up, green eyes wide and flashing.

"He's at Godric's Hollow," Harry gasps. "Waiting for us."

It doesn't take us long to prepare for the battle.

~*~

Mad-Eye Moody and the others want to get there first, but Harry insists he must go.

"I'm the one he wants to kill."

"Which he'll do, as soon as you Apparate in," Tonks insists. "Wait for us to scout the area. When one of us comes back, you can start in."

Harry looks at Ron and me. I respond by squeezing his left hand, Ron doing the same on his right.

The wait was only several minutes, but to us, it felt like hours. Tonks pops back in with a bloodstained cheek and singed brown hair.

"It's all yours," she says grimly.

But before we leave, she stops in front of me.

"Snape caught me in a Body Bind, and I thought I was done for. But then he said he wanted me to give you a message and ran off as he took the curse off me."

"What did he say?" I ask.

"*My mind is made up.* That's what he said."

Ron looks at me questioningly. I can sense the others doing the same. And as hope swells within me, I picture us in battle, masked bodies littering the ground, blood-stained robes sticking to my skin. I see Ron and me next to Harry, protecting him until he gets to the one Dark wizard who won't haunt him anymore.

My mind then settles on Severus Snape, spy and killer, the Death Eater committed to destroying every piece of his former master's soul. The man who chose to reveal himself to me.

We Apparate together.

And we run.

- end.

Author's Note: Thanks once again to Southern_Witch_69 for all her help. This fic was written for the summer 2007 sshg_exchange.

Answering the prompt: *Hermione catches Snape mourning at Dumbledore's grave shortly after the events of HBP, and they slowly begin to start meeting secretly. Somehow, Harry and Ron find out. Romance not necessary for this prompt!*