

Dangerous Liaisons

by bellarossi

A tale of set-ups, sniping and silliness in large doses. When Ginny sends in an advertisement for the 'Lonely Hearts' Section of the *Daily Prophet* for Hermione, neither friend really anticipates a reply--that is, until Lucius sends one behind Severus' back, neatly forcing Severus to continue the correspondence. Despite their initial arguments, Severus and Hermione soon find themselves enjoying their correspondence, though they have no idea who the other is and that they seemingly despise each other in 'real life'! How on earth will this unlikely match of mistaken identities, verbal sparring and postscripts resolve itself?

Threats and Set-ups

Chapter 1 of 7

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To: Professor Hermione Granger

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

The Scarlet Suite

Gryffindor Tower

Dear Professor Granger,

Thank you for placing your ad in the correspondence section. We are pleased to inform you that it will be featured in this morning's issue under the *nom de plume* you have provided. We have ensured that the utmost anonymity will be in place until you wish to reveal yourself.

We sincerely hope that you will be able to find a true kindred soul through your newfound correspondence.

Best wishes,

Zamira Gulch

Editor of Classified Advertisements

To: Ginny Weasley

You are a dead witch.

Hermione

To: Hermione Granger

So now you're resorting to death threats?

Classy, 'Mione. Classy.

Ginny xox

To: Ginny Weasley

Don't play innocent with me, Ginevra Molly Soon-To-Be-Malfoy-Weasley. May I remind you that I not only know how to deflect your Bat-Bogey Hexes, but also have a far more effective counter-curse?

Honestly, Ginny. I really can't believe you put my name in an ad for the 'Lonely Hearts' section *Lonely Hearts!* Isn't that for people who had no friends in school and still haven't been kissed? Yes! It is! And honestly. 'Miss M'? You couldn't find a better alias than 'Miss M'? It makes me sound like some sad woman going through a quarter-life-crisis. I just picked up the paper this morning and promptly dropped it in my coffee. I swear, Snape *snickered* at me.

Merlin knows I'm unlucky enough to have to sit next to the bastard, meal after meal after ruddy meal. It's just a damn good thing he didn't know why, judging by the way he muttered 'butter fingers' under his breath. I mean, really.

But I digress.

First of all, your efforts are in vain. I am *a*teacher. Teachers don't have social lives, remember? How many of our teachers do you remember seeing at the Three Broomsticks? Oh, what was that? Oh yes: NONE. That, or they date each other. Sorry, but the only possibly eligible man my age is Draco, and I am aware that you would hang me by my pinkie toenails if I ever so much as touch him. The only other male (since I don't bat for the other team, Ginny) less than forty years older than me is Snape.

Dear Merlin. Don't make me go there.

Secondly, no one will answer the advert. No one even looks at that section. I know I definitely don't, until today, unfortunately. Thus, no one will read it because it has a stupid name in a stupid column of a stupid newspaper and really, no one wants a penpal. So you will just have to kidnap me and set me up on a blind date with some poor hapless fool you picked up at the Ministry who's only agreeing because he wants to get in your pants. Er... robes.

Really, Ginny. You shouldn't have bothered. And, flattered as I am by your description of me (I particularly like the bit about my being 'a bright, attractive, successful young woman'; what did you sign me up for, a Muggle online dating agency?), I don't know about the 'looking for a fellow intellectual and verbal-sparring partner' bit. That's bound to put off... well, pretty much *anyone* who actually reads that section of the paper.

So thanks, Ginny. But no thanks.

Consider the next ladies' night to come out of your bank balance. And I'll make sure that I pick the oldest, most expensive Firewhisky of the lot.

Love, (but not very much right now)

Hermione

To: Severus Snape

Severus, old chap. Dear me, but it *has* been a while since we last met. Care for a good old fifty-year-old scotch whisky tonight? You know, reminiscing about old times, good times, general debauchery, what's the latest vampire fashion, how many seventh-years you've deflowered, et cetera. I do so love a good story.

Especially when it's about sex.

Lucius

To: Lucius Malfoy

Alright, Lucius. What do you want?

Suspiciously,

S.S.

To: Hermione Granger

Yawn.

'Mione, dear, you're twenty-three, the last time I checked, not one hundred! Teacher or no, you're a wee thing compared to... well, anyone, really. Surprise, surprise, but having a sex life is actually normal at this age! And let me remind you that our teachers were either a) married, b) over 100 or c) greasy gits. Also, I seem remember that one occasion when Trelawney got a little too comfortable with Firenze that one Christmas after all that eggnog... but this is not for civilised company.

So what if I put in a little ad about you? When was the last time you kissed...no*flirted* with anyone since you broke up with Ron? Let's face it: much as it pains me to insult my own brother, he was the biggest arsehole ever. I mean, honestly. Cheating on you for Lavender 'Won-Won' Brown not only shows that he's a prick, but that Lavender can't do any better. Double-whammy! And you win every time, babes.

If it makes you feel better, just humour me. Who knows? Maybe you'll meet your 'true kindred soul' after all.

Ooh-la-la.

Ginny xox

P.S. Oh, don't be daft. I'd kill you straightaway, of course. Much less blood involved; such a messy affair, torture. Leaves stains everywhere, and blood is awfully hard to clean out of the carpets, you know.

P.P.S. And don't say things like that. You know he hasn't proposed, and just the thought of it makes me think of large, lovely diamonds and lace and silk and...

To: Severus Snape

Really, Severus. Must you be so prickly? I am not in the habit of talking to cacti, you know.

Lucius

P.S. What's with this formal 'S.S.'? Have we not been acquainted for, ah, what was it *thirty* years? Surely that accords me a tiny bit more familiarity? Just a teensy smidgen?

To: Lucius Malfoy

Lucius, remind me what happened the last time we 'had a chat'?

Oh yes. You hooked me up with *Bellatrix*.

Forgive me for being more than a little wary of meeting up with you again.

And no. It's familiar enough.

Determinedly,

S.S.

To: Severus Snape

Well, really. I knew you were unsociable, but this is the limit. When was the last time you were laid, my friend? Please don't say twenty years. The thought of it just makes my cravat come undone.

Well, desperate circumstances call for desperate measures. Whatever comes next, my friend, I can only tell you that you had it coming.

Lucius

P.S. Merlin, but you are a spoilsport. You know I've always had that fantasy about dark and light and... that is, well, you really need to get that broomstick out of your derriere. It seems to be affecting your libido.

To: Lucius Malfoy

Do not make me come over there and hurt you, Lucius.

I don't care what sick sexual roleplay fantasies you have. I swear on Salazar that I will dye my hair blonde if you continue that thought.

And don't you dare try that staff/student one on me again, or I'll hex your balls off for good this time.

Really, Lucius. 'Whatever comes next'? I'm quivering in my figurative boots. It seems you've lost your touch after all these years. Have you been staring in the mirror too long again?

Contemptuously,

S.S.

To: Severus Snape

Well, don't say I didn't warn you, old chap.

And don't use such big words. That's my trick.

Lucius

To: Hermione Granger

'Mione, I'm sorry. I really don't know what I was thinking. Can you ever forgive me?

Yours,

Ron

To: 'Won-Won'

No.

A/N: Inspired by Prompt #3: "You've Got Mail" Instead of e-mailing there would be owls. Hermione and Severus (or whatever pairing you decide) are both teachers at Hogwarts and desperately want to have someone to talk to that is on their same wavelength. Maybe they are seeing other people. Hermione places an ad of some sort in the 'Daily Prophet,' looking for conversation, what have you, and the two of them start owling each other. They don't know it, and all the time they are sniping at each other and can't stand the other person, but then Snape figures out they are each other's pen pal and starts to mess with her mind a bit, kind of flirting and teasing her. When the time is right and he reveals whom they are to each other, what happens?

Friends and Favours

Chapter 2 of 7

How Severus gets roped into the mess, and just how much do Severus and Hermione hate each other, anyway?

A/N: Warning: Don't eat, drink or operate machinery. May cause unwanted side effects such as giggling, groans and spontaneous spurts of laughter.

To: The Mysterious 'Miss M'

Allow me to introduce myself as your new correspondent. Following along the lines of your own anonymity, as well as being a fairly private man myself, we will settle for the name 'Toby' for now.

Having read that utter drivel that passes for a newspaper these days, I must admit that your advertisement in the correspondence section piqued my interest. I am not the most sociable of men, nor the most talkative, but I understand the need for an intellectual connection; this is something difficult to find these days. In this way, I am, most assuredly, the right man to talk to.

As it happens, I am currently studying the effect of non-Latin curses. You wouldn't happen to know anything about them, would you?

I await your reply.

Anxiously,

T.P.

To: Lucius Malfoy

What the hell is this supposed to be? Who on earth is 'Miss M', and why in the name of Merlin's granny pants have you usurped my wretched middle name? Is 'T.P.' supposed to stand for Tobias Prince?

What in the name of all that is holy is going on?

Explain, Lucius, and fast. Remember, *friend*, that I am a Potions master. Which means I know several untraceable, colourless, odourless poisons. Keep that in mind when you pen your reply.

Insincerely,

S.S.

P.S. How the hell did you find out about my non-Latin-spells project? Have you been rifling through my papers again? Circe, even *mystudents* are more subtle than you.

To: Ginny Weasley

I don't believe this! Someone actually wrote a reply! I've attached the letter at the back.

If I wasn't so curious, you'd be dead right now.

Merlin, what do I say?

Hermione

To: Severus 'Toby' Snape

Oh, alright.

Before I tell you, though, allow *me* to remind *you* about that little favour you owe me. Remember, Christmas break, seventh year, when you were in denial over a certain little redhead that we shall not name? Of course you do. Merlin's cravat, Severus, but I don't think I've ever seen anyone drink as many vodka shots in one night as you did that Christmas. If it hadn't been for me, you would have been cast out of polite society *and* probably still paying alimony. I *saved* you.

Well, alright, and convinced you join the Death Eaters, causing a twenty-year-long series of unfortunate events. But we shan't get into little details.

Do you remember, Severus? Do you remember, the next morning, when you woke up in the guest wing of Malfoy Manor? You swore that if there was anything you could do to repay me, all I had to do was ask.

Well, I'm asking now.

So, Yaxley and I were having a drink, and you and your damned monk-like celibacy came up. He was quite convinced that you would never get shagged until you die. I, being the wonderfully loyal friend that I am, defended you, of course. 'Severus has many hidden qualities, you know,' I told him faithfully. 'According to Narcissa, he has quite a way with words. Sex-god version of Shakespeare, apparently.' (By the way, how exactly does she know that? I assure you, I *will* be asking about that later.)

Yaxley didn't believe me, so we struck up a bet. We were quite drunk at this point, you understand. He's had his eye on my estate in the south of France for years, you see. You know, that lovely little place on the coast, with all those beautiful young witches...ah, it's been too long. The thing is, Yaxley's got this exquisite mansion up in Spain, and Narcissa's been walking in on a few, er, slightly compromising situations. The plan: I ship her off to Spain for a while to frolic with young Spanish men, which leaves me to continue my debauchery at leisure.

So, we made a bet. He said that if you could actually manage to get laid by the end of the year, I get the mansion. If not, he gets the France estate. And you can't go whoring, or use love potions, or anything. She's got to actually fall in love with you.

Which is brilliant! You, with your charm, good looks and easy conversation, will achieve this in no time, my friend.

Only, here's the catch: the thousand-year lease on the France estate ends in three months from today, which is a day before the deadline. Normally this wouldn't be an issue, except that Narcissa and I had a bit of a run-in with a few French Muggles, and, well, let's just say we haven't been back since. And won't be anytime soon, if we value our lives, or our genitals. Which means I really can't renew it without losing some vital organs along the way. (Annoyingly, though, thanks to Draco's previous association with a certain Fleur Delacour, he's allowed in with no problem. Damned little blood-traitor.)

Apparently, Yaxley can hold his drink better than I thought, because he even managed to turn it into a wizarding bet. Which means that the prize must be functional and, in this case, accessible. If not, I drop dead on the day of the deadline.

Don't forget, Severus, that you owe me. Technically, if I die, it'll be all your fault. You wouldn't want my death on your hands, now, would you? Narcissa would be ever so upset.

Well, she'd also be rich. So perhaps not.

Anyway, so I took the liberty of checking the correspondence section of the 'Daily Prophet', and, lo and behold! There was an ad there, practically with your name on it! 'Fellow intellectual and verbal sparring partner'? Sounds just like you.

Now go frolic with that delightful young woman.

Lucius

P.S. That letter I sent you? It's already been sent to 'Miss M'. Do tell me when you get a reply.

P.P.S. Of course I rifled through your papers. It's not my fault if you don't even ward your desk, you know. Damned careless of you, old chap.

To: Lucius Malfoy

Mere words can't even describe how much I loathe you.

Stunned,

S.S.

P.S. Rifle through my papers again, Lucius, and I'll kill you in your sleep, bet or no bet.

To: Severus Snape

Merlin, Severus, what's gotten you into such a snit? I haven't seen you this agitated since Sybill tried to seduce you at the start of term.

Don't tell me she's at it again.

Minerva

P.S. I expect you to assist Hermione as escorts this Hogsmeade weekend. No arguments.

To: Miss M, a.k.a. Hermione Granger

Ha! I knew you'd get a reply. Quite the smooth talker you've got there! He must've used a Dicto-Quill, because I don't recognise the handwriting at all. It's really neat and cursive, which is pretty unusual. For a male, I mean.

Merlin, I don't know. He's your new boyfriend! You figure out what to write back.

Ginny xox

P.S. Sorry about the end of that last letter. I added it as I was tying it to Aminta, and I tried to stop her from flying away, but she nipped me! Bitch. See if I give her any owl treats this week.

To: Draco Malfoy

I don't believe it! She actually got a reply. I only did it as a joke. I never thought she'd actually get a reply from someone who actually sounds vaguely interesting!

Gosh, but this is going to be an interesting ride. And we've got front-seat tickets. Excellent!

Ginny xoxoxox

P.S. Wanna come over this weekend? Chloe's away on a trip, and I've figured out a way to smuggle you into the Auror dorms.

To: Ginny Weasley

New boyfriend? Ginny, I don't even know what he looks like.

I'm too shocked to write anything today, but I'll start on it tomorrow morning.

Hermione

To: Minerva McGonagall

It's Lucius. I'm about this close to killing him.

Remember that time, twenty or thirty odd years ago, when I was in denial about Lily dating James 'Fuckwit' Potter? Well, apparently, I was determined to make the next redhead I met the first Mrs Severus Snape. Her name was Rosemary, and she was a Healer-in-training.

I was seventeen. I was grieving.

I'd had way too many shots of vodka.

Lucius found me in the middle of ring-shopping at midnight, forced some Sobering Syrup down my throat and dragged me back to Malfoy Manor to wallow in my misery.

I'm enclosing a copy of the letter. I don't have the time, inclination or energy to rewrite the bullshit that Lucius has dumped on my lap.

I'd rather be married to a Healer than do this.

Disbelievingly,

S.S.

P.S. No.

To: Severus Snape

Merlin's kilt. I'm speechless.

Come meet me in my office in ten. I've got some wonderful brandy, and you can rant all you like.

Call it compensation for making you go this weekend.

Minerva

To: Hermione Granger

Minerva has seen fit to force me to accompany you as chaperone for the next Hogsmeade weekend.

Much as this pains me, I have little choice but to comply. You, Miss Granger, will keep your incessant questions to the minimum. And don't even try to drag me around all of Hogsmeade to shop with you. I refuse to fall prey to your petty womanly whims.

Sneeringly,

S.S.

To: Severus Snape

What a pity. As I recall, she paired me with you to avoid from calling on Sybill to accompany you.

But seeing as you obviously enjoy her company so much more, I shall hasten to let Minerva make alternate arrangements.

And that's Professor Granger to you, Snape.

Hermione Granger

P.S. Sybill particularly likes Madam Puddifoot's. Do you like candied hearts and pink confetti, Professor?

To: Ginny Weasley

Wait a minute, Gin. Let me get this straight. So, you sent in an advertisement pretending to be Hermione, but you didn't actually expect anyone to reply? And now that someone *has* replied, you actually want her to hook up with this guy?

Merlin. I'm dating a Slytherin in scarlet robes.

Well, sweetheart, I suppose the only thing left to do now is to let her do her own thing. If it works out, then we'll celebrate. If not, I'll help you set up a blind date. Or I'll convince Minerva to hire someone her age next year, since Hagrid's transferring to Beauxbatons next year. (Who would have guessed?) Terry Boot, perhaps? Blaise Zabini? Zacharias Smith?

I'm joking, dear.

Love you,

Draco

P.S. Actually, if you can get away for the weekend, I've got this wonderful little mansion in Marseille, south France. French food, good wine and lots and lots of time to ourselves. Plus, there's a private beach, which means that *au naturel* is the name of the game. Who needs clothes, anyway?

To: 'Professor Granger'

I sit next to you at meals, Granger. Don't make me slip you Veritaserum tomorrow morning.

After all, we've all been wondering precisely how *intimate* you and Weasley really were. Wouldn't it be just wonderful if all of Hogwarts could finally be put out of their misery, Granger?

Oh, whoops. I mean, *Professor Granger*.

'Truthfully', if you'll pardon the pun,

S.S.

To: The Greasy Git of the Dungeons

I had no idea you were so interested, Professor. Jealous?

I guess Sybill must not be such a great catch after all.

Hermione Granger

P.S. Bite me.

A/N: Thank you for all the wonderful reviews! Hope this is to your liking.

Teasing and Temptations

Chapter 3 of 7

A new face, and Ron proves to be a bastard... but he just can't top Severus Snape.

Warning: Don't drink and drive, and don't drink and read. May be harmful to health. (Particularly the former.)

Thanks very much to my beta--oh, what? Can't say the name, you say? Well, bother. Thanks anyway!

To: Alice Sparks

The gods continue to tempt me by dangling your beautiful image before me whenever my eyes slip closed. I have no respite from it...only the knowledge that sleep is no longer safe for me when you continue to appear in my subconscious like a blue-eyed siren, constantly calling me to you. It's always the same: we kiss, passionately yet tenderly, as I tangle my hands into your strawberry-blond curls. You run your hands along my chest and torso, tracing the lines and scars beneath the rippling muscles, and sigh. 'Lucius,' you moan into my mouth, and I move my lips to your neck as my hands slip away from your hair and further into unknown, exciting territory. My gentle hands move to caress your breasts, sliding your brassiere off in one smooth move as my fingers take hold of your...

Oh, damn and blast. Narcissa's trying to read over my shoulder.

Merlin's cravat... I've married a fishwife.

I will write to you again as soon as she disappears. 'Til then, my beautiful, blue-eyed siren.

Yours always,

Lucius

To: Hermione Granger

I was at Hogsmeade this weekend, with colleagues at the Three Broomsticks, when you and Snape walked in and sat down for a drink! Please tell me I was dreaming, 'Mione. Or is this the real reason why you dumped me? For *Snape*?

Say it isn't so. Merlin, Hermione, I love you. Are you really going to blow me off for that greasy git?

Yours forever,

Ron

To: Toby P.

I must admit, I'm very surprised. You see, I didn't put that advertisement in...my friend did it for me. I told myself that I would steadfastly ignore any letter that was sent my way on principle.

Having said that, your letter has piqued my curiosity. I hadn't considered the effect of non-Latin curses, but now that you've mentioned it, I'm sure that it must have an effect on the outcome of the spell. I wonder if there are different brands of magic that we, as British wizards and witches, are unaware of. Perhaps the Beauxbatons and Durmstrang, for example, use different brands of magic in their own tongue? Anyway, I spent last night researching it, and I've attached my findings on the back of this letter. I'd love to know what you think of it.

By the way, please call me MJ (like the abbreviation for Mary-Jane, though that's not what it stands for). 'Miss M' is such a silly nickname, but I like the idea of anonymity, at least for now. It lends a certain brand of excitement into my recently very boring existence. Also, mine is a well-known name around these parts; I would hate for you to form an opinion of me when we have just barely met.

M.J.

To: Won-Won Weasley

Oh no. You caught me; the game's up. I dumped you for Snape.

Nothing to do with you cheating on me. Nothing whatsoever.

To: Hermione Granger

Are you out of your mind? You're dating Snape?! I bet he slipped something into your drink. No way could you have dumped me for him without some sort of influence, right?

Right???

Yours,

Ron

To: A Particular Git I Am Unfortunately Acquainted With, Esq.

Did you know that gullible was taken out of the English dictionary?

H.

P.S. It's a trick question.

To: Hermione Granger

Stop teasing Ron. You know he doesn't have a sense of humour when it comes to you and other men. But thanks for the laugh, anyway.

Love,

Harry

P.S. How about a drink at the Three Broomsticks next weekend? I'll put the tab on my brand-spanking-new Team Leader Auror's salary.

To: Harry Potter

I take it he showed you the letters, then. I appreciate you not taking sides, Harry, and I know it's hard for you. But I really can't accept his apology, not with all the bullshit that comes with it. Ask me another day.

And I know you wanted us to marry and live happily-ever-after, because that's the kind of person you are, and why I love you (among other things). But it was never meant to be; I see that now. I need someone whose daily conversation is not limited to Quidditch, broomsticks, women and sex. And Ron wants someone like Mrs Weasley, who will marry him and happily bear six (or more) children for him. Someone who would be willing to give up her job for a family. You know I can't do that, Harry. My work is everything to me. As much as I would like to have children, I refuse to give it all up for a man who's too selfish to realise that there are some things you have to reach a compromise on. This just wasn't possible between us.

In some ways, I'm kind of relieved that he cheated on me. Dumping Ron on any other terms would have meant that I'd be shunned by the Weasley family. Even if we didn't work out, I'd hate that. Mrs Weasley has been so wonderful to me, and I've already been on the receiving end of her wrath when it comes to her son and romance. (Remember the Easter egg episode, fourth year?)

This way, I stay in everyone's good graces (as it should be), and I'm no longer shackled to someone I don't want to spend the rest of my life with.

Well, it's over. I wish him luck with Lavender Brown.

How are Daphne and little Sasha? I love that child. Auntie 'Minnie' might have to stop by and say hello soon. And congratulations!! That's really wonderful to hear. You'll have to tell me all about it when we meet up. Drinks sound lovely. How about Friday? I've got the nightshift for rounds next Saturday.

Hermione

To: Hermione Granger

Well, actually, Ron's been a little sore lately, with you dumping him, my promotion to Team Leader and Ginny dating his supposed arch-nemesis. Despite the fact that the rest of us all know that Draco's been practically disinherited since he did that complete turnaround, what with us becoming friends, and him becoming DADA professor at Hogwarts and dating Ginny, Ron doesn't appear to have gotten a clue yet. It was already apparently a big deal for him when I went ahead and married Daphne last year, because according to him, 'Gryffindors and Slytherins just don't mix' and 'Daphne Greengrass is no better than Draco Malfoy'.

Unsurprisingly, I haven't gone out of my way to talk to him since that whole debacle, even if he doesn't bring it up anymore.

Plus, word on the street is, Lavender dumped him for not lasting longer than five minutes! Ouch.

So if he does anything crazy... well, not that I would condone anything he ends up doing, but just keep those things in mind.

You're right, I am disappointed, but I trust you, and more often than not that's usually a good idea when it comes to you. So if you're bent on making this decision, it's probably because you're right. He doesn't talk to me much anymore, and I can't say I've made the biggest effort either. It's a little weird, really. I don't know how many times you can say 'I didn't ask for a promotion', but I'm definitely hitting the limit.

I've got to go, we've got a Leaders meeting in ten minutes, and I thought I'd see how Daphne and Sasha are. They're doing really well; Sasha's been chewing on just about everything she can find. And I bought her that toy broomstick like you suggested, and she loves it. She just keeps zooming around the place like the mad little Quidditch tyke she is. Please come over, Sasha loves seeing her godmother, and Daphne could do with the company.

See you soon!

Love,

Harry

To: Hermione Granger

Draco's off to get some supplies for tomorrow, so I thought I'd drop you a line. How was the Hogsmeade weekend with Snape? I hope it wasn't too terrible. And anyway, I bet you gave him as good as you got.

Marseille is *wonderful*. Draco and I have been together for almost forty-eight glorious hours, and even though we have to go back tomorrow, we're more than making it up. The other good news is that Malfoy Sr. never comes around here, even though Draco's not sure why. So, no rancour between houses and no interruptions; just the two of us. And the weather is surprisingly pleasant for October. I wish you could be here, you would absolutely love it.

Oops, Draco's back. Must run, but reply soon!

Ginny xoxo

To: Ginny Weasley

It was pretty predictable, actually. Lots of insults, snarkiness and general lambasting of one another. As much as I dislike having my appearance, heritage, choice in friends, romantic relationships, family, career choice (a particularly ironic one) and countless other things insulted, it was secretly kind of enjoyable. I can't think of anyone else who could keep up with me in verbal abuse.

The first half was kind of awkward because we tried to avoid talking as much as possible. But once we got started, it was non-stop sparring. We even went to the Three Broomsticks to order drinks and continue to cheerfully insult each other. And that's apparently where Ron spotted me and later accused me of dumping him for Snape.

But that's a whole other kettle of fish.

Put it this way: I'm all out of creative insults. I'll have to spend all of tomorrow making up suitably appropriate new ones.

As wonderful as it sounds, I'd rather not be the third wheel, thanks. And anyway, I'm pretty sure Draco would want you all to himself. Speaking of, has he popped the question yet?

Hermione

To: Hermione Granger

Wouldn't it be terribly hilarious if Snape turned out to be T.P.?

...Hah! I crack myself up.

Incidentally, Harry told me about the incident with Ron. It was awfully amusing because, really, Ron was asking for it. I hope you do end up hooking up with this T.P. fellow, just to spite him. But that's the kind of horrible sister I am.

Sadly, no. I can tell he means it when he says he loves me, but dear Merlin, I wish he'd get on with it already. Believe me, though: next weekend, I'm setting up a weekend escape at Malfoy Manor, and then I'm going to go exploring. Maybe he's hidden it in his bedroom drawer?

Or perhaps it's all just wishful thinking. Sigh.

Ginny xoxo

To: Ginny Weasley

Oh, Ginny. Chances are, he's just waiting until your Auror training is over. Because then you two can live together, either at Hogwarts or at Malfoy Manor. As much as I (platonically) love Draco, he's a spoiled brat. He'll move heaven and earth to get what he wants. And right now, my lucky friend, that's you.

Hermione

To: Hermione Granger

Learn to keep your mutt on a leash, Granger, or I'll put poison in his watering bowl.

Unimpressedly,

S.S.

To: Minerva McGonagall

Minerva, I'm so sorry. I had no idea Ron would take what I said to heart. He has this completely mad idea that I'm dating Professor Snape because he saw us together at the Three Broomsticks on Saturday morning when we were on Hogsmeade duty. Now he thinks I've been having an affair behind his back, despite the fact that I dumped *him* for the whole Lavender Brown thing.

I should really have him committed, or checked out at the very least.

I'll even replace the pot he broke out of my salary. And I'll send a note to Professor Snape to say I'm sorry, too. It was all my fault, and it's my responsibility to deal with it.

I really do apologise for all the trouble. Please don't fire me.

Sincerely,

Hermione

To: Professor Snape

As much as I hate agreeing with you, please be my guest. I've had about all I can take of Ron's antics lately.

I'm not sorry, though. It wasn't my fault.

Hermione Granger

To: Hermione Granger

Oh, Hermione dear, of course I won't fire you. You're one of the best Arithmancy teachers Hogwarts has seen, and that includes dear Septima Vector, bless her soul. In any case, it wasn't your fault.

And you will charge that vase to Mr Weasley, thank you very much. He's got his own salary now, so he'd better learn to pay for his own mistakes.

If you're free tonight, come up to my office. I've just gotten a fresh batch of scotch-whisky, and you can tell me all about this history of yours.

Minerva

To: Mr. Ronald Weasley

Please find attached bills for the following:

Healing Potions used to treat Severus Snape: 3 Galleons, 4 Sickles, 6 Knuts

Replacement of broken vials: 7 Galleons

Contaminated Potions ingredients: 30 Galleons, 14 Sickles

Minerva's favourite vase: 60 Galleons

Expression on your face when you receive this: Priceless.

Gleefully,

S.S.

A/N: Thanks once again for the astonishing number of reviews! They are wonderful. :)

Lost in Translation

Chapter 4 of 7

Proof that there are no secrets in Hogwarts and a lesson on decapitation.

Warning: Do not eat or drink while reading unless the monitor is due for a good spit on. (Thanks to Ravenswing for this one!)

I'm really enjoying the guessing games regarding what M.J. stands for, so I'll pit you all against each other and see who can come up with it first. (No cheating!) **100 house points** for the correct answer and **50 house points** for the most creative answer! Good luck!

Thank you to my wonderful and very hard-working beta...oh no, not again. Fine, see if I care!

To: Severus Snape

You bastard! How the bloody hell am I supposed to pay for all of this? I'll go bankrupt!

Ron Weasley

To: Ronald Weasley

Far be it from *me* to care. After all, no one *asked* you to try and loosen some of my molars.

You are what Rev. Spooner would have described as 'a shining wit'.

Write me again next year when you figure that out. Or is this being too optimistic?

Insincerely,

S.S.

P.S. Actually, don't ever write to me again.

To: Harry Potter

I'm seriously thinking about having Ron committed.

Hermione

To: Hermione Granger

Oh boy. I really have been out of the loop lately. What's he done this time?

Harry

To: Harry Potter

He actually tried to beat Snape up.

Snape, Harry.

As in, Severus 'I-Helped-Kill-Lord-Voldybutt-With-My-Mind' Snape.

Merlin, but fist-fighting for Snape must be child's play considering what he had to go through.

Of course, he's still a bastard and all. But let's at least give him the credit for being a bastard who you'd think twice about before going up against.

Needless to say, Ron got slapped with a bill that's about three times the size of his monthly rent, not to mention Snape's wrath. Who knows what we'll find if Ron comes

around again? Snape will probably a) poison him, b) turn him into a howler monkey or c) set up wards against him.

It doesn't look too good.

Hermione

To: Severus Snape, Minerva McGonagall, Harry Potter, Draco Malfoy, Ginny Weasley

Dear all,

Once again, I apologise for all the trouble Ron caused by coming to Hogwarts. However, I am honestly quite worried about Ron. Negative publicity could seriously harm his career if this ever got into the hands of the press. I would never do something like that to him, even after everything.

I would very much appreciate it if everyone kept this incident to themselves.

Thank you.

Hermione

To: Rubeus Hagrid

Did you hear about the incident with Ron? Rumour has it, Hermione cheated on him with Severus! Can you believe it? Though I heard that Hermione dumped *him* for cheating on *her* with Lavender Brown!

I do so love our alumni.

Stella

To: Stella Sinistra

And Ron actually managed to break his nose? Again?

What is it with Gryffindors and Severus' poor nose?

Filius

To: Filius Flitwick

I heard it was something to do with Harry and Daphne Greengrass.

But Sasha is such an adorable baby. Any feuding should have really ended right there.

Pomona

To: Pomona Sprout

I'll bet you ten Galleons that the relationship between Hermione and Severus doesn't last past the bedroom.

Stella

To: Stella Sinistra

Dear, there is no relationship between them.

I believe you just lost ten Galleons!

Pomona

To: Mary Jane

Although you told me already that this is not what 'MJ' stands for, I quite like having a name to give you. It makes you a little more real, you see. Thus, I will call you Mary Jane, as you refer to me as Toby.

I apologise for not replying sooner. I had a little bit of... trouble. It's been dealt with, however.

Regarding your theories, I agree with almost everything except your comment about the side effects of using German as a possible substitute for creating spells due to its notoriously difficult pronunciation.

Frankly, you would have to be a complete dunderhead to create a spell in any language that you weren't absolutely sure you could pronounce with confidence. Merlin knows that even French is doomed. 'Lingerie', for your information, is not actually pronounced, as we 'Anglo-Saxons' have murdered it, 'lon-je-ray', or even 'lon-je-ree'.

It's 'lan-jree.'

À bientôt,

Toby P.

To: Toby P.

True, but think about all those umlauts.

And no one *really* knows how to pronounce 'schadenfreude'.

Even if it applies to them.

M.J.

P.S. Honestly, it's a relief to hear from you. There was an incident here, too, and my colleagues are driving me round the bend.

To: Mary Jane

I beg to differ. I know exactly how to pronounce it.

Now Arabic is when it gets fun.

Or Zulu. Think about all that clicking of the tongue and whistling.

One wrong click and there goes your head.

Pondering decapitation,

T.P.

To: Toby P.

Exactly how many heads have you seen blown off by one wrong click?

That's what I'd like to know.

And anyway, I could think of much harder languages. Mandarin, for example.

'Ni hao ma' means three things depending on the sound of the 'a': hello, hello Mum, and hello horse.

I can just see the headlines now: 'MUM BECOMES MARE IN THREE SYLLABLES'.

M.J.

To: Mary Jane

That orange stain on the parchment next to your name is where I laughed so hard that pumpkin juice came out of my nose.

Look what you made me do.

Still laughing,

T.P.

To: Severus Snape

I just thought I'd let you know that I've actually met the love of my life.

Or, at least, the lust of my life.

Lucius

To: Lucius Malfoy

You mean your mirror?

Sneeringly,

S.S.

To: Severus Snape

Ha ha fucking ha. No, Severus. Remember Alice? Same year as you, Ravenclaw? Looks like that famous Muggle, only slimmer: what was her name? Mary-Lynn... something. Mondo? Monlow?

I just bet you do.

Lucius

P.S. So now you're deigning to talk to me again?

To: Lucius Malfoy

You're kidding me.

Alice? As in, Alice Sparks? Blue-eyed, red-haired, richer-than-you Alice?

Oh Merlin. Now you're in for it. I should know.

And it's Marilyn Monroe.

Astonished,

S.S.

P.S. And no. I'm insulting you. There *is* a difference, you know.

To: Severus Snape

That's the one. And what do you mean you should know?

Please don't tell me you've shagged Alice. That would just ruin everything.

Lucius

To: Lucius Malfoy

Whatever makes you happy.

Amusedly,

S.S.

P.S. I personally think her sister Isabelle was much better in bed.

To: Severus Snape

I can't even speak to you anymore.

Lucius

To: Minerva McGonagall

Merlin's bollocks. Lucius has done the unthinkable.

He's actually shagging Alice Sparks.

Shocked,

S.S

To: Severus Snape

I remember Alice. Such a dear girl, and so pretty, too. Why would that be a bad thing?

I mean, besides the fact that Lucius is married, of course.

Minerva

To: Minerva McGonagall

Put it this way: Narcissa is by far the better deal. At least he can placate her with a few diamonds.

Now Alice, on the other hand, is a whole other kettle of fish.

Oh, it starts out well enough. She's a great shag, no doubt about it. And having her on your arm to attend functions...self explanatory.

Then she takes all of your money out of your bank account and spends it on the most ridiculous things you can imagine. Books (that she'll never read) to match her cushion covers. Robes she found in the *Witch Weekly* that she doesn't even actually like, just that someone told her they were 'in' that season. Pointless postmodern sculptures that you can't make head or tail of.

And when you demand your money back, she lapses into hour-long crying jags. Even though she can afford everything perfectly well herself. Only, she conveniently 'forgets' her purse whenever she's out with you, of course.

And then comes the clingy phase. Why haven't you returned my letters, Severus? Why won't you come and see me? Why don't we ever go out to Madam Puddifoot's, like *normal* couples?

And then you wonder why I haven't dated since I was twenty.

Nostalgically,

S.S.

To: Severus Snape

Merlin's tartan, I had no idea. She was one of my favourite students, too.

I suppose that tells you just how much of a distinction there is between one's school personality and one's ~~sea~~ personality.

Minerva

To: Minerva McGonagall

Quite.

Well, I wish him luck. She isn't my problem anymore, thank Merlin.

Relieved,

S.S.

Confessions

Chapter 5 of 7

Of matchmaking, 'Sevvwyevvypoopoo' and a large, healthy dose of sniping.

Warning: Do try to keep anything that might block the throat passage away from your mouth. (This includes food, drink, pencils, the mouse, small animals, etc.)

My most deeply sincere apologies for the wait: real life got in the way as much as it could manage and the bunnies were chased away momentarily. (Not to worry, they are back in full force now!)

Here are the winners of last chapter's guessing game! The answer was 'Mione Jane', derived from 'Miss M' or 'Miss Mione'. (:

elsolel receives **100 house points to Ravenclaw** for the first correct answer!

25 points to reets67, Slytherin.

Most creative was a tie between peppermint's 'Mischievous Jarvey' and snitchette's 'Molly Junior'. So 50 points each!

Thank you to my fantastic beta, She-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, for her tireless work.

To: Daphne Potter

Thanks for a fantastic time yesterday. It's been ages since I've seen Sasha! She's adorable as ever, and looking really healthy and happy. I hope she likes that Muggle fairytale book. All those magic references now make me wonder if it was written by a wizard after all! I need to come over more often. You and Harry are just so wonderful together. Not to mention, you *know* how to cook...a definite prerequisite to being Harry's wife!

Listen...don't worry too much about Ron. He's said some nasty things, but he doesn't mean it. I'm sure our discussion last night didn't do much to change your view on him, but let me tell you: jealousy does not sit well with Ron. He's always felt like he's been in Harry's shadow, and it doesn't surprise me that he hoped that would change once the war was over and Harry was just... well, Harry. Needless to say, he is *not* happy that he not only has an inferior job title and salary, but also does not have a gorgeous wife on his arm *or* a baby.

Once he (or someone else) pries out the broomstick he's got stuck up his arse, everyone will be a lot happier.

Hermione

To: Hermione Granger

Hermione, if I had been in your position and Harry had treated me like Ron had treated you, I think I would have not only burned down *his* house, but Lavender's, too.

And I probably would have wiped his bank account clean and spent it on something really frivolous and unnecessary.

Like... sex toys.

In other words, you are perfectly entitled to be angry for the next fifty years or so.

Stop being so forgiving!

Much love,

Daphne

P.S. Dearest, you are welcome over any time. Actually, this Saturday, we were thinking of holding a small barbecue party for friends. So you are of course invited!

To: Hermione Granger

Hermione dear, I'm afraid I'm going to have to pair you and Severus together for this weekend's Hogsmeade trip again. Also, he has requested some assistance with picking Potions ingredients in the Forest, so I volunteered you up.

Thanks for your help! Must run to do some errands now.

Minerva

To: Minerva McGonagall

Prospero's prick, Minerva. Once I can understand, but twice? You couldn't find *anyone* other than Hermione 'I-Lost-My-Virginity-In-The-Library' Granger? Which fuckwit do I have to bribe to get what I want around here?

Remind me again how many bloody teachers there are in this school?

Thoroughly Annoyed,

S.S.

To: Severus Snape

Now, Severus, don't be cruel. In case you hadn't noticed, the only available teachers right now are Draco and Sybil. Draco has most obligingly agreed to chaperone Sybil because he is aware of your... ahem, *history*.

Besides, Draco is taking leave next weekend to see Ginny, and he's the only one other than Hermione with a working Potions knowledge.

And only then because of your blasted favouritism, you slimy Slytherin.

Please refrain from calling Hermione such dreadful names. If you don't, I shall give her full permission to call you various forms of your own name, such as 'Sev', 'Sevvykins' and 'Sevvywevvy poopoo'.

Don't make me do it.

Minerva

To: Minerva McGonagall

If you do, don't be surprised to find a colourless, odourless, slow-killing poison in your meal tomorrow.

Suspiciously,

S.S.

P.S. I still think you're trying to hook me up with her. And I don't like it. Exercise your matchmaking tendencies on someone else.

To: Severus Snape

Of course I'm not trying to hook you up. Don't be ridiculous!

Minerva

To: Aberforth Dumbledore

Well, of *course* I'm trying to hook them up. They are just wonderful for each other. Of course, if they'd had relations as a student and teacher, then... well, that's a different story. But here we are, as equal individuals, and they are practically soul mates staring each other in the face!

Well, and insulting each other.

Bastet's bollocks, but I do miss Albus. No one has any fun around here anymore.

Minnie

To: Mary Jane

I am thoroughly convinced that everyone around me is going mad and I am the last sane person left on earth.

Or maybe I'm just going insane, and everyone else is still normal.

Which do you think is more likely?

Possibly insane,

T.P.

To: Toby P.

If 'everyone' includes me, then no, you're the insane one.

But if I'm included in the group of sane people left, then I agree with your second theory.

Seriously, what is it with people not being able to just leave you alone to do your own thing in peace? Why can't one just live life without having to deal with unwanted drama and annoying things being shoved into one's face? Is it so difficult to just maintain peace for a little while after one's life has been so hectic?

Like, for example, my friend signed me up for that *Daily Prophet* thing. I had no say in it whatsoever. Not that I'm complaining, mind...I find it a lot easier to talk to you than anyone else I know. My boyfriend, who was also my best friend, cheated on me; my other best friends are so happily in love that I feel as if ranting to them would just be unfair. And not having to *be* anyone special to you, not being a name that you immediately associate with words and events and people, is really comforting. I think I'd explode if I didn't have something like that.

Okay, rant over. I apologise. But you have no idea how much better I feel now, so I hope you don't mind.

M.J.

To: Mary Jane

It's strange; I thought hell would freeze over before I would say something like this, but I completely understand. I have spent my entire life being manipulated by people; for once, I would like to live life on my own terms. I thought once the war ended it would all change, but this is solid proof that it hasn't. But like you, I'm glad that there's a silver lining to this particular storm cloud, because it's the first one in a while.

One of these days, I would like to meet, fall in love with and marry someone wonderful and move to Timbuktu.

Or even Wales. If my seclusion package has to come with sheep, then so be it.

Thoughtfully,

T.P.

To: Severus Snape

Do tell me, which poisons are we planning to pick ingredients for?

I'd just like to know. Maybe even prepare myself a few antidotes.

Just in case.

Hermione Granger

To: Hermione Granger

How presumptuous of you to assume that I would even give you the time of day, let alone brew a poison to kill you at breakfast time.

But I thank you for the suggestion. I could do with a few less irritating know-it-alls in my life.

Sneeringly,

S.S.

To: Severus Snape

Thank you for your flattering description of me. Now perhaps you should take a look in the mirror.

And you still haven't answered my question.

Hermione Granger

To: Hermione Granger

Funny how people seem to think they're so *terribly* amusing

Really, but that almost ranked with the 'greasy git' insult. I think reading Bram Stoker's *Dracula* made me laugh more.

You'll find out when you turn up. Hopefully, something horrible will occur, such as that blasted ginger furball of yours developing chronic diarrhoea for cats, and you won't turn up at all.

One can hope.

Unamused,

S.S.

To: Severus Snape

Yes, I imagine reading about bloodsucking, psychopathic counts would be right up your alley.

Wait, wait, don't tell me: your second favourite book is *Interview with a Vampire*, right?

Hermione Granger

To: Hermione Granger

However did you guess?

Maybe sleeping with your copy of *Hogwarts, A History* gives you some sort of incredible intuition.

Sarcastically,

S.S.

To: Severus Snape

Much as I would love to continue this conversation (...not), I have better things to do than exchange childish insults with overgrown, immature, greasy vampire bats.

Give that poor owl a rest, will you?

Hermione Granger

Vultures

Chapter 6 of 7

Reminders, owls, more owls... and a little surprise, too.

A/N: I'm so so sorry about the huge wait! Thanks to everyone for their continued support, particularly my beta, She-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named or You-Know-'Oo. I've been incredibly busy, but thought I'd slide a chapter in before the deadline, just to remind you all about me. :)

Not the funniest of chapters, but we needed a sensitive one at some point, right?

As usual, keep all things edible away from your computer, there, that's better. It will thank you for it someday.

To: Severus Snape

Not to be a party-pooper, Sev, but it's already November. The clock is ticking. Tell me you've been laid. Please? Alice is driving me nutters. She's just bought a bloody volume of French poetry. *French poetry!* Merlin's fucking cravat, Severus, she doesn't even *speak* French! She said she bought it because it 'looked pretty'.

If it weren't for all this 'reformed Death Eater' Thestral shit, my hands would be around that pretty little neck of hers in a second.

Lucius

P.S. *Don't* say it.

To: Lucius Malfoy

For Merlin's sake, Lucius, don't send me things like that. If that reached someone other than me, we'd probably both be thrown in Azkaban.

Well, you would probably deserve it, but let me tell you, I have better things to do than to let Dementors try and suck my soul out.

To answer your question, no, I haven't. And anyway, what am I getting out of this, besides a shag that I don't even want, let alone need? *You* will receive Yaxley's mansion in Spain, and Narcissa out of your hair.

I am forced to continue corresponding with a woman who, for all I know, might not ever be a woman. Who is possibly a wizard in his late hundreds with a penchant for... oh Merlin, I don't even want to think about it.

Or a troll using a Dictoquill. Oh gods.

Disturbed,

S.S.

P.S. I told you so.

To: Severus Snape

Don't be daft. A troll wouldn't know the difference between a Dictoquill and a piece of meat.

Well, it *might*, but I doubt it.

Lucius

To: Lucius Malfoy

Thank you, Lucius. That was very comforting. Now I can sleep in peace at night, knowing my correspondent who may or may not be human, let alone female *isn't* stupid enough to be a troll. That really limits the possibilities, doesn't it?

Disgustedly,

Severus

To: Hermione Granger, Draco Malfoy and All Redheads Associated With 'Weasley'

Daphne told me to make proper invitations but I can't be bothered, and you're all welcome whenever you want to come, so to hell with formalities.

(Nevertheless, you probably shouldn't let her see this.)

Anyways, so we (that is, Daphne, Sasha and I) are having a barbecue this Saturday at my place and you're all invited. Feel free to bring friends and booze and such. As usual, there's only one rule: have fun!

Harry

To: Hermione Granger

Hermione, I am so, so, so sorry about Ron. He shouldn't have brought Lavender, for one thing, and secondly, the things he said to you were completely out of line. I just don't know what's gotten into him lately. I would talk to him, but he just isn't the same person anymore. He won't speak to me because of Daphne and the promotion, he won't speak to Ginny because of Draco, and now he's gone off his rocker when *he* was the one at fault.

Ron is hereby banished from all Potter family events and probably from most Weasley events, too, until he apologises to you.

I hope you're alright. Write back soon.

Harry

P.S. Hermione, this is Daphne. Harry said most of what's on my mind, but if you need a little bit of cheering up, you know our door is always open.

To: Hermione Granger

Darling, are you alright? Would you like me to send Fred and George after him?

Ginny xoxo

To: Harry & Daphne Potter, Ginny Weasley, Draco Malfoy, Fred & George Weasley

Hi everyone,

Thank you so much for thinking of me. I'm fine, really. If Ron wants to break his ties with us then let him. We have tried to reach out to him and clearly it isn't working. When he's ready to grow up and accept our decisions, then I can forgive him.

Harry, please don't apologise for him. He is being a fuckwit and you know it. Daphne, being called a 'slut' and other similar things beginning with 's' is *nothing* compared to the rudeness he showed towards you by turning up at *your* house, for *your* party, eating *your* food, and then treating you this way. That's far, far worse.

Thank you, Ginny, but that won't be necessary. Whenever you're free, though, let's have a drink. It'll be on me.

Draco, thank you for the beautiful new eagle quill. No, I will not be using it to stab him, but I'll keep it in mind anyway.

Fred and George, much as I disapprove of the Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes, I have to admit that there are some pretty impressive tricks in that box set. Maybe if Ron ever comes around again...

I'm truly blessed to have such wonderful friends. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Love,

Hermione

To: Ron Weasley

You spineless, turdfaced *prick*.

I'm telling Mum.

Ginny

To: Ginny Weasley

You wouldn't.

Ron

To: Ron Weasley

Weasley, if you must receive a Howler, do it on your own time, would you? I don't think there was anyone in Calais that didn't hear your mother's colourful use of alliteration.

Kingsley Shacklebolt

To: Toby P.

I actually received your last letter a few days ago, so I'm sorry I haven't replied until now. I've just had a really upsetting week, and I thought it would be nice to talk to someone who wasn't involved in what happened. Suffice to say that someone I considered a friend is most assuredly not anymore.

How was your week? Better than mine, I hope. Tell me something about yourself. I'd like to get to know you better. I feel like I've known you for years, like an old friend whose name is at the back of my mind. I really hope someday we can meet. Your letters have been the highlight of my last few weeks, and writing to you is incredibly therapeutic.

M.J.

To: Mary Jane

Don't worry about it. Your letter was wonderful to read; I don't think anyone has ever told me such a thing, and if you knew me personally, you probably would not be surprised, either.

Nevertheless, now I'm worried. Is everything alright? I'm assuming you don't want to talk about it. You don't have to tell me if you don't want to. Let's discuss other things.

Something about me? Well, I love Potions. Doesn't seem very interesting, but it is my passion and I do not apologise for it. Ever since I was in school, it has been an interest of mine, and I have since continued to pursue it. I hope one day to be able to research and develop new potions, but I am content where I am for now.

Speaking of which, have you read the latest article in *Ars Alchemica* about the purity of Amazonian ingredients? Frankly I'm surprised this is a new thing. I thought it was common knowledge that wood from the Amazon rainforest would obviously be better quality in potions that use tropical woods, such as the Blood-Replenishing Potion. I've attached a copy of my notes along with this letter. I would be interested to read your opinions.

I hope it makes you feel better.

Sincerely,

T.P.

To: Toby P.

Ah, a man after my own heart. Toby, of course it made me feel better. Oh, but you wouldn't know that about me. Well, I love to learn. Especially Potions. It was one of my best subjects at school, although my professor didn't like me very much. Well, I liked all of my subjects, really. Except for Divination, that was a load of nonsense. Oops, no offence meant, if you believe in it. I just... don't.

I wrote my stuff on the sheet, but I have to say, your notes are brilliant. I had never considered that precious minerals from the Amazon Basin could be used in potions with such dramatically increased effects. Of course, they would have to be used sparingly. But, Toby, some of your notes... if you applied them to things like medical research, your contributions would be invaluable. You could *save lives*! If doing R&D for potions is what you want to do, then I would say, absolutely go for it. As far as I can tell, you're *amazing*.

You must attend a lot of conferences. Probably some of the same ones as me. Merlin, we've probably even met and I have no idea! Oh, now I'm very curious.

M.J.

To: Ginny Weasley

Let's go out for dinner tonight. I have a surprise for you.

Love you,

Draco

To: Hermione Granger, Harry & Daphne Potter, Fred & George Weasley, Molly & Arthur Weasley

HE PROPOSED!!

Realisations

Chapter 7 of 7

Draco proposes to Ginny, Ron's a bastard and 'MJ' and 'Toby' plan to meet up finally.

A/N: SO SORRY about the huge long wait. I have this thing called the Six Chapter Syndrome. I get to six chapters and my muse just dies. The good news is, I had the whole story completely planned out, so it's really just a case of sitting down and writing the damn thing. Thanks for everyone's support and for voting for me in both the challenge and the After-Voting Awards! I'm really thrilled to be second place since there was so much amazing stuff out there competing with me.

Now I can finally thank my wonderful beta, Katie (i.e. You-Know-'Oo), who puts up with all my whims and still sticks around (God knows why.) Thanks, you're a star!

Oh, and to keep up tradition:

Warning: Having your cake and eating it is not acceptable while reading. May have unwanted side effects.

To: Draco Malfoy

Congratulations, Draco. I would be delighted to attend the wedding, thank you for inviting me. I hope you are happy, as that is what matters most.

Sincerely,

S.S.

To: Severus Snape

Thanks, Uncle Severus. I really appreciate the support. I'm not sure Father is going to look at it the same way, which is why I informed him ~~before~~ announcing our engagement. I might be practically estranged, but I'm not heartless. He deserves to know, even if it kills him.

Draco

To: Severus Snape

A Weasley! He's actually going to marry a *Weasley*! I'm going to be related to those filthy blood traitors! Malfoys and Weasleys! Oh Merlin, what is the world coming to?

Surely there's something in the family will that forbids this kind of thing.

Lucius

To: Lucius Malfoy

She's a pureblood, Lucius. *Pureblood*. Be grateful it wasn't Hermione Granger, or you'd probably be in Azkaban for trying to murder her on the spot.

Blast it, Lucius. Can't you just be happy for him? At least ~~he~~ was still willing to try.

Disbelievingly,

S.S.

To: Ginny Weasley

Oh Ginny! That's *brilliant*! He finally did it! I'm so happy for you. When's the wedding date? How are the Malfoys taking it?

Love,

Hermione

To: Hermione Granger

Oh, I'm just so over the moon about it! I knew it would happen eventually, but... oh, Hermione! I'm getting married *Me!!!*

Not too sure about Draco's parents. I'm guessing no news is good news; Draco owed them the day before we announced it, but they haven't replied. Well, we haven't dropped dead or anything like that, so that's a start, I suppose. If they don't accept it, well... there's nothing any of us can do about it. I just hope that they can find it in them to support their son. He's definitely taking it hard, though he doesn't show it. This is supposed to be one of the happiest times of his life; they have no right to take that away from him. Even a curt "congratulations" would be good enough for us.

The wedding's in three weeks. I know it's really soon, but we'll make it just in time for New Year's, and frankly, I can't wait longer than that. It'll be a small thing with just our close friends, so I think we can manage it. Mum will blow her top when she realises how little time she has, but you know her. She'll get over it eventually.

Well, I hope so anyway.

Ginny xoxoxo

To: Ginny Weasley

Can I come back in now? I don't hear anything, but for all I know, the apartment could be up in flames, judging by *that* Howler.

Geez, Ginny. Only your mum could send you a Howler about your wedding date, then soften it by asking if you and "that dear boy Draco Malfoy" are happy and saying that he needs to eat more.

Chloe

To: Ginny Weasley

Draco Malfoy.

You are actually going to marry that filthy ferret? You're going to sully our name by marrying that piece of crap!? How could you, Gin? First Harry, now you? Daphne Greengrass, I can understand...at least *her* father didn't try to KILL him!

Don't bother inviting me.

Ron

To: My Fuckwit of a Brother

Oh, Ronald. When will you ever learn? The war is OVER! People are different now. Draco, Daphne, even Snape...none of them deserve the kind of crap you give them. "You're going to sully our name"? That's exactly the kind of thing we hated Draco for! How dare you be so fucking hypocritical!

You know what, Ronald? I'm starting to think that if you were twice as smart, you'd still be a halfwit. I suppose it would be too much to ask that you should just be happy that *I'm* happy. Me, your little sister. Or have you been so intent on losing your friends that you've lost your family, too?

Ginny

P.S. I won't.

To: Ginny Weasley

Ginny, love, don't worry about it. Ron's going through a difficult phase, and if he rejects all our attempts to reach out to him, then... well, there's not much we can do about it. I guess we just have to try to be there for him when he comes out of it. I'm sure he will.

In the meantime, we have a lot of planning to do. And I want to see that ring!

Love,

Hermione

To: Hermione Granger

Thanks for that, Hermione. I know you don't like shopping but that actually made me feel a lot better. I'm really glad I have friends like you. And of course, I would be thrilled if you would be my maid of honour. Draco and I agreed that it would be an honour for us.

So how are things with the mysterious Mr. Toby? It's been two months already, don't you think you should try and meet up with him? Make sure he's not, you know, a goblin or anything? Ooh, I just can't wait to find out who he really is. I wonder if we've met him before? Oh, the anticipation....

Ginny xoxoxoxo

To: Ginny Weasley

Thank you so much, Ginny. It would be an absolute honour, and I look forward to it.

About Toby... I've actually been feeling the same way. I think it's time I asked him to meet up with me. The thing is... I think I'm starting to fall in love with this man. It's wrong! I don't even know who he is! And yet, I get this feeling that he understands me more than anyone, and vice versa. He seems like a really private person, but he tells me things that really make him human and real. I know it's only been two months, but I feel like this is the right thing. I can just feel it!

Looks like I'll have to thank you after all. Yes, yes, you told me so. Don't make me say it again, you lovable harpy.

Love,

Hermione

To: Hermione 'Miss MJ' Granger

Do it! I promise I won't spy on you or anything. Well, maybe. Depends on how I'm feeling that night.

Ginny xoxo

To: My Husband-To-Be

Oh, it was so exciting to write that. It's like I'm a schoolgirl all over again, writing 'Mrs Draco Malfoy' all over my textbooks. Next thing I know I'll be saying 'hubby'.

... Hmm. Maybe not *that* far.

Any news on the parents? Also, do you think we should make Harry our best man? The twins would be so immature, and Percy's head would inflate to the size of a football field. I suppose Bill or Charlie could do it, but I'd really like it to be Harry. I think he'd really like that. Of course, before, I would have said Ron, but now... well, you know. I still can't believe it, you know. He's family. I'm still reeling from the blow.

Oh! Hermione's going to meet up with her penpal! Promise me you'll spy on her and find out where they're going so we can see who it is, too. I just know she'll keep me waiting as long as possible, that wench.

Ginny xoxoxoxoxoxoxoxoxoxox

To: Toby P.

Dear Toby,

Thanks for your last letter; I'm sorry I wasn't able to reply for a bit, but I really enjoyed reading about 'The French Connection' and how French food may have some kind of influence on magical ability. I'm not sure I subscribe to it, but the next time I have a plate of escargot I'll let you know!

We've been writing each other for two months now, and I was wondering if you would like to meet up? I know you are a private man, and if you don't want to that's totally fine, I will completely understand. But I'd really like to get to know you in person. I've learnt so much about you and I've told you so much about myself, more than most of my friends know. And you're so intelligent, more than most anyone I've ever met. It's always a pleasure to talk to you. I hope you agree.

M.J.

To: Mary Jane

I would be delighted to meet with you. I feel the same way; you know me far better than most people, and that says a lot about me, if you knew me. Well, I suppose you will, soon enough.

Why don't we test out that theory about French food? Let's meet at Le Carillon De L'Angelus at Diagon Alley, 8 pm this Saturday night. I've heard their salmon is excellent.

Let's wear a flower somewhere on our person so we can recognise each other. I will wear a white rose on my lapel.

I look forward to meeting you at last, Mary Jane. I have longed to place a face to your letters.

Hopeful,

T.P.

To: Toby P.

Sounds brilliant! I'll be there. I'll wear a white rose in my hair. Oh, I can't wait!

M.J.

To: Mrs Draco Malfoy

Who are you, and what have you done with my sweet, loving, not-nosy fiancée? Come on, Gin. Leave her alone. I can think of far more enjoyable things we could be doing while she and Mr. Mysterious are getting to know each other.

Love you,

Draco

P.S. I have to admit, I enjoyed writing that too. I never thought I would, but I guess I'm just a sap like everyone else.

To: Draco Malfoy, My Fiancé

Boo. You're such a party pooper. But you have a point....

Ginny xoxoxoxoxoxoxoxox ;)

To: Minerva McGonagall

Oh, fucking Merlin.

Mary Jane is Hermione Granger.

S.S.

A/N: Hope you liked it! Tell me what you think. :]