

Marvolo Riddle was his name; and at the end of his life, he might have been considered a fine wizard. Few wizards could think more their abilities than he did; nor could a Death Eater from any established wizarding family be more delighted with the place he had held in the community. He had considered his attempts at unifying and cleansing the wizarding world as inferior only to the blessings of his power. And the Lord Voldemort who united these gifts, was the constant object of his own warmest respect and devotion. Unfortunately, his strong conviction in his supremacy resulted in extremely high-handed behaviour, which instead of endearing him to his supporters, only succeeded in alienating even the staunchest of them. This same self-confidence in his own powers and importance that had propelled him into ascendance soon turned into an insatiable need for affirmation, acquisition and immortality. In short, he had come to think on himself as indispensable to both his constructed coterie and elitist cause. Soon, it became perceptible that ritualised cleansing of blood, however, was too insignificant a matter in his quest for everlasting power and immortality.

When Voldemort began to show signs of an unstable narcissism, several of his followers grew uncomfortable. Among these, Severus Snape was the first to discern the emptiness of his promises of power, glory and victory for his followers. From the frequent punishments meted out to those perceived as incompetent in a particular field or inept in a certain task, Severus came to observe that Voldemort was not one to share power. That he had valued innovation and loyalty was apparent; however, his penchant for wanton bloodshed and his desire to mould his followers in his likeness proved him to be one who spends his resources instead of using them. To Severus's logical mind, this was most unacceptable. His perspicacity correctly divined that Voldemort hoarded power and because of it, the dark wizard was a constantly disgruntled creature. He did not keep to that which was just while acquiring the most; as such, he did not use the most while keeping to that which was noble. When one used resources, one was working towards one's individual desire. However, when one *spends* one's resources, one no longer indulges the self; instead, one spends these resources on one's followers and friends, thus benefiting them and rendering them beholden unto one. Appraising Voldemort and Albus Dumbledore, his employer at Hogwarts' School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, on this level therefore made disparity between them more apparent. Severus saw Voldemort as a selfish, self-indulgent megalomaniac who exploited his resources for his own use. Dumbledore, on the other hand, spent his resources evenly among several endeavours. Thus, the more Severus observed, the more apparent it became to him that he would not obtain the acceptance and recognition he desperately sought in Voldemort's camp.

The Fates were kind to him, for they allowed him to be a part of another organisation, which gave him the latitude to be himself without dissembling. There, in the Order of the Phoenix, he had reclaimed his inalienable rights to parental affection and trust. Though he never received the much coveted Defence Against the Dark Arts chair, he was content to know that he was capable of eliciting some form of warmth from the Headmaster, Dumbledore and the Deputy Headmistress, Minerva McGonagall.

Voldemort's initial defeat at the bawls of the infant Harry Potter was only provisional. Severus could feel it and accordingly, made it known to Dumbledore. Having long made provisions should Voldemort resurrect himself, Severus willingly offered to play the reconnaissance role he had adopted upon his tacit defection to Dumbledore's Order. His speculations were founded when Voldemort returned after a long hiatus to wreck havoc on the fragile peace that had grown in his absence. Severus, once again, at great personal risk, infiltrated the dark wizard's inner circle. Fortunately for all parties, Severus was able to exploit Voldemort's vanity to the advantage of the Order. He further ingrained the dark wizard's inherent belief in his own indispensability to his cause through his research and development activities in the Death Eater camp. Furthermore, his youth giving elixir for the said fiend had been coupled with the barest trace of a delirium potion. The administration of this tampered elixir and Severus's constant advice soon had its desired effects. The Dark Lord became increased conceited with his abilities so much so that he had declared his omnipotence to his Death Eaters. So sure was he of his own power that he took Severus's suggestion to heart. Voldemort believed that if he collectively faced Dumbledore and the Golden Trio, consisting of Harry Potter, Ronald Weasley and Hermione Granger, he would possess eternal youth and everlasting power. His crazed imagination believed that this easily assured victory would command him the unflinching loyalty of his followers and immortality. When this scheme was revealed to the Death Eaters, a myriad of reactions ranging from alarm and indifference to indignation and relief came to the surface, marking an indelible schism in the highly factionalised Death Eater corps. Little wonder then, that those perturbed by Voldemort's inspired case of lunacy turned covertly to the Ministry of Magic so as to safeguard their lives in the wake of their leaders' demise. The Minister, Arthur Weasley, chose not to incarcerate them at Azkaban; instead, he turned them over to the Aurors in Dumbledore's Order. Unaware of this slight defection within his number, Voldemort strove to bring his plans to its logical conclusion. Thus, in a fit of righteous bravado, arrogant stupidity and conceit, Voldemort fell prey to the Order's plan.

There were casualties on the side of the Order at this final assault of Voldemort's stronghold, as could be anticipated. But the death toll for it would have been higher if the Death Eater faction keen on self-preservation had not doubled up as its rear guard. Young Ronald Weasley was not one of the survivors. He was tragically killed from the *avada kedavra*. He had fallen prey to the dark wizard's curse when he sought to protect Harry. Voldemort, sly devil that he was, did not want to face his old adversary, Dumbledore, without a display of his powers. Possessing no honour so to speak, he opted to destroy the Golden Trio one by one before finally finishing Dumbledore. He wanted the kindly old man to suffer for the insult of mistrusting him during his school days. Originally choosing to eliminate the Auror-in-training, Harry Potter, for being a constant thorn in his side, he was none too pleased when he found that he had killed the other prospective Auror, Ron Weasley. Ron's death effectively ended the sacred trinity of power, loyalty and mind as denoted by Harry, Ron and Hermione respectively. Once shattered, the remnants of the Trio posed grave repercussions for Voldemort, as Severus had calculated. So long as the Golden Trio remained in tact, Voldemort was almost invulnerable. On the devastation of the delicate balance among them, a power even more vengeful and dangerous than Voldemort's emerged. Such was the power of hate that Severus had chosen to harness. Ron's death enabled the Order to realise their plan of extirpating Voldemort. While the rest of the Order concentrated on taking down recalcitrant Death Eaters, Harry, Hermione, Dumbledore and Severus channelled their powers to Voldemort's wand so as to overload it. In so doing, they managed to reduce both the wand and its owner to dust as the dark wizard shrieked at Severus's treachery.

While almost everyone was rejoicing over Voldemort's demise, Harry was anything but sanguine. Amidst the cheers from the survivors at the fiend's hideout, Harry's scowl and Hermione's silence almost matched Severus's. Dumbledore observed that Harry and Severus were intently glowering at each other. Hermione had sought to defuse the situation by dragging Harry away. She knew better than to further antagonise her former Potions Master when he wore his intelligible glower of contempt. Harry, however, stood his ground and quietly snarled, "You did this, Snape. You killed Ron! How could you! Why did you allow it, Professor Dumbledore! Why! I hate all of you!"

Such were the memories the pensieve chose to present to the Hogwarts' Headmaster. Albus Dumbledore sighed, rubbing his eyes in anguish. How could their victory turn out thus? Was he right in agreeing to Severus's plan? Was he right in consulting everyone *but* Harry? Hermione had assured him that Harry would understand; but reality proved otherwise. He should have known better than to suppose Harry was capable of rational thinking. "Enough, Albus!" he scolded himself, replacing his half-moon spectacles on his nose. "The blame should devolve on my shoulders not Severus's."

Dumbledore sighed again, leaning back into his chair as he popped a sherbet lemon into his mouth. There was no other way to defeat Voldemort and he knew it. Diotima Vector and Hermione had evinced the truth of Severus's hypothesis. It *must* be so. Severus had already informed him that there was *no viable alternative*. Ron Weasley had practically volunteered to sacrifice himself for the cause; he had readily agreed to it. Was it prudent not to have told Harry? Hermione, the observant arithmancy apprentice advised that it must be so if Harry was to be kept in check. Dumbledore shut his eyes to stem the tears that were rising anew. It had been six months and Harry was still resentfully furious with everyone in the Order. He had simply snapped and quickly spiralled out of control. When it became clear that he was increasingly prone to harming himself, Hermione and Dumbledore decided it would be to the young man's best advantage if he were to be committed to St Mungo's. A completely nervous wreck, Harry now vacillated between moments of lucid hatred for the Order and delusion memories of his youth where he spoke as if Ron was still alive. Hermione had hypothesised that given time, Harry could get over the grief and see the light, but Dumbledore privately doubted it. He knew Harry's disposition and wondered whether Voldemort had transferred his mad streak to the promising young Auror-in-training when he bestowed the scar on him. Severus came out of the incident free from visible psychological scars. He had not been affected by Harry's accusations. Dumbledore smiled wryly as he recalled the Potions Master informing him: "Potter is perfectly justified in detesting me. Perhaps we will finally be able to ignore each other with equanimity now that we have acknowledged each other's contempt."

A victory over Voldemort for the estrangement of the members of the Order was it worth it? Why had he agreed to the plan? Why had everyone else in the Order voted in favour of it? Why was he suddenly overshadowed by self-loathing? Dumbledore tried to think of the good that had come from it, but found that his habitual levity eluded him. He laughed at himself as he wiped the tear trickling down his long hooked nose. Sybil Trelawney's prophecy has been right after all -- the trade-off would be Harry's madness. Severus would be silently amused by this, thought Dumbledore, rolling his liquid blue eyes. Noticing his owner's despair, Fawkes nudged the Headmaster's fingers gently. "Am I due for the meeting already?" whispered Dumbledore as he smiled sadly at his phoenix. Fawkes eyed him dolefully before thrilling a brief tune. "Better get going now, shouldn't I?" Dumbledore quietly said with a wink at the phoenix. He was becoming like Severus by wallowing in self-reproach and guilt. He now knew *exactly* how Severus felt. He shook his head firmly in an attempt to dispel these unpleasant thoughts. He was the Headmaster after all; he could not allow his personal sentiments to cloud his judgement. He would not be less than his usual self. Rising to his full height with a final sigh, Dumbledore proceeded to make his way to the staff room.

Chapter 2 - A Terrible Accident

Chapter 2 of 8

As he makes his way to the Great Hall, Severus muses on the events after the final battle. There, before everyone, a shocking accident occurs...

Instructing the Professor

Chapter 2 A Terrible Accident

It sometimes happens that a man is handsomer in his manners at forty-one than he was at twenty; and generally speaking, if there has been neither death nor other entanglements, it is a time of life at which scarcely charm is lost. It was so with Severus, for he was still the unapproachable Professor Snape that he had been at twenty-two. Dumbledore and Minerva McGonagall might be excused for thinking they and Severus as young as ever, amidst the wreck of the war on everybody else. Indeed, if not for the facts that Ron was dead, Harry was institutionalised at St Mungo's and Hermione was to be elected to a teaching chair, the school's two chief administrators would have almost believed that time had stood still for them.

Severus did not quite equal his two esteemed colleagues in personal contentment, nor was he completely devoid of guilt from the final battle as Dumbledore had supposed. For nigh twenty years, he had been Potions Master at Hogwarts, presiding and directing his lessons with a self-possession and decision which could never have given the idea of him being more civil than he was. For nigh twenty years, he had been doing the honours and laying down the domestic law in his dungeons and leading his dunderheads down the path to a thorough education. Nearly twenty years' revolving autumns had seen him opening his scintillating lessons with his famous first year speech; and almost twenty winters had passed in which he played the role of Dumbledore's spy in Voldemort's court. He had the remembrances of all these events, and he had the consciousness of being no nearer to the Defence of the Dark Arts chair, to give him some regrets and even more apprehensions. He was still fully satisfied of being quite 'fearsome' in reputation as ever, but he felt his approach to the years of lonely danger. While he did not conceal his antipathy towards Harry Potter, he did not strive to conceal his innate sense of justice. It was true that he had a foul unreasonable temper that he neither denies nor hid. Unbeknownst to many, he was not naturally vicious. It could be acknowledged that he possessed an unsociable taciturn disposition, but those who claimed intimate acquaintance with him knew that he had no improper pride.

He was a haunted thinker a visionary philosopher in the educational field and a steady logician. These three traits culminated in his sense of justice which sought to work towards the cultivation of a quiet impartiality. Accordingly, Dumbledore and Minerva, who looked on him as a son, believed that Severus was sensible and just, original and inventive as well as unobtrusively affectionate. His cold reserve and general unapproachable demeanour, however, meant that these traits remained securely locked within his soul. Truth be told, he did feel a pang of guilt at Ron's passing. He did not believe in the slaying of innocents, even if the innocent in question had volunteered to be the sacrificial lamb. No, it was inevitable. "It was a war for crying out loud," Severus scolded his brain in a bid to silence the insistent gnawing guilt. Ron had agreed to the scheme with that idealism he lacked. It was a war of all against all sacrifices had to be made there was nothing else to be done. Ron could be held a culpable instigator of the scheme and Harry had been selfish enough not to see how a single sacrifice could turn the tide of the war.

"Damn Potter and his impudence!" Severus cursed quietly, finishing his sixth glass of firewhisky. "Not only was he unable to see that it was not all about him, he was unwilling to acknowledge that others, such as Weasley, had true courage. Stupid boy! To think that he was the target of a mad man's quest for power! Was he so blinded by his own self-importance that he failed to see his friends for what they truly are?"

Despite Severus's conviction in his plan, he felt a certain unease knowing that Potter lay unhinged at St Mungo's. There must be something that could be done to help the boy! But the St Mungo healers assured him that this was almost impossible. Severus looked at his hands as if disgusted by them. They were stained with Weasley's blood. He had been the instrument of the boy's demise, he had instigated his death he had all but sent the boy to die for the *greater good*! He sneered at himself, raising his glass of firewhisky, "Where's your much vaunted sense of justice now?"

The gnawing feeling of guilt further intensified when the burning liquid trickled down his throat. "Damn Miss Granger!" he spat, throwing his empty glass into the cold fireplace. "Does she think she is *my* moral centre? Telling me that it was beyond my control! Bah!" He paused, pondering as to how Hermione Granger could have penetrated his veneer. Did not he project himself to be calm, aloof and masterful? How could she discern the inner torment he felt? He laughed bitterly at himself. Here was a woman whose perspicacity superseded his and he admired her for it. "Confound her!" he snarled, clenching his fists. Ridiculous! Weekly tea sessions for the past six months and he admired her ways! "Stupid!" he muttered crossly, curling his lips contemptuously at himself. He had lately been having very odd dreams of his student years at Hogwarts, but they were nothing compared to her audacity. She had imposed herself on his company a day after the end of the war. She merely swept into his potions office with an almost regal command and ordered tea from the house elves. She had apologised for Harry's outburst and had been so indifferent to his insults that he found himself unable to do aught but to allow her to arrive the next week, and the next, so much so that it became an unspoken arrangement between them.

He checked his clock and saw that it was time to present himself at the Great Hall for the dinner which opened the new school year. As he strode there, scowling at the whispering gossipy portraits, his thoughts flew to Hermione. Among the members of the Trio, she was the most sensible and under-appreciated. Harry was always interrupting her reservations with shouts of protests and Ron would always stare vacuously at her. The two *boys* evidently did not share her ability of judging correctly. Hermione was indeed a wise judge of people and situations and she always placed the right interpretation on everything she heard. Unlike Harry, she weighed both sides of any circumstance before jumping to any conclusion. Wrapped in these thoughts on her merits, Severus found that he had entered the Great Hall just as the sorting ceremony was about to commence. The older students cowered as he strode purposefully to the High Table. He gave Hermione a look of studied disinterest as he took his seat beside her; she gave him an unconcerned glance in return. How odd it was that she should dress in grey; she reminded him of someone he had half a recollection of. However, the fleeting thought left him as soon as the sorting commenced.

He inwardly growled as Hermione surreptitiously read a book under the table. Catching her occasional looks of disinterested benevolence at the student body, he acknowledged that he would have been almost diverted if he were not otherwise preoccupied with guessing the title of her book. He was struck by her appearance that evening and had an odd sense of déjà vu. He scolded himself and rationalised it as his subconscious recollections of the years she sat at the Gryffindor table with her friends. He looked at her and suppressed a smirk. Even though she now wore her hair in a tight bun, he knew she still possessed the same untameable bushy hair. He could see that a lock was clearly loose and was valiantly struggling to be free; he was momentarily tempted to assist it but changed his mind. Examining her more closely he felt the bun improved her countenance, matching her mind with a proper serious look. The more he looked on her, the more he felt as if he had some prior claim of acquaintance with her.

"Naturally," agreed his mind, "You've seen her for almost ten years. Vector's always pushing her to you when she's out with her latest beau. You've been having tea with her so often it must have clouded your temporal judgement." He nodded with satisfaction. "Ah," chided his left brain to his right, "But even as an eleven year old, you were struck by how familiar she appeared to you." As the two halves of his brain vacillated between logical explanations as to his current interest in Hermione and the gnawing sensation of déjà vu, the sorting came to a timely end. Before he could ask her an inconsequential question, Albus Dumbledore got to his feet and beamed at the students with wide open arms. "How quickly he recovers himself at moments of utter desolation; he is a better actor than I am," mused Severus.

As if sensing his ex-student's thought, the Headmaster turned to him with a nod. "Welcome," Dumbledore began, his voice booming throughout the Great Hall. "Welcome to another year at Hogwarts! Before we begin our banquet, I would like to say a few words." Some groans were audible from the older students. Dumbledore's eyes

twinkled impishly as he wagged a long finger at the student body. "Just some basic housekeeping matters," he chuckled. "First years should note that the forest in the grounds is forbidden to all pupils. And a few of our older students would do well to remember that as well. Mr Filch wishes me to remind you that there is to be no magic usage between classes in the corridors. He informs me that this is the three hundredth and seventh time he is reminding you. This year, we are pleased to have Professor Lupin as the new Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher. Those of you with older siblings may be aware of the fracas that emerged some years ago as to Professor Lupin's suitability as a teacher given his *health*. You will be glad to know that due to the efforts of Professor Snape, the ailment no longer plagues him." Dumbledore gestured to Severus while winking at Remus under his half moon glasses. Severus scowled his response, bowing curtly as Remus grinned shamelessly at him.

"Thanks to Professor Snape," continued the Headmaster, "Professor Lupin is no longer a werewolf." Rapturous applause broke out in the Great Hall and soon reached a crescendo, which was only silenced when Dumbledore held out his hand with an indulgent smile. "Let me get through my news please. I am as peckish as you are," he half pleaded in a jest, much to Minerva McGonagall's stern disapproval and the students' delight. "Professor Vector has decided to retire this year and as such, you will have Professor Granger as your new Arithmancy Mistress. She is the youngest Professor we've ever had, mind you, only twenty-one. Be kind to her, eh?" He winked at Hermione before looking seriously at the student populace. "Now that we're done, let us feast."

Severus ignored the noises around him as he automatically picked at the food Hermione had placed on his plate. She met his blank look with a studied glare. She looked as if she belonged at the High Table; it was as if he had seen her there before from another perspective. She had a look about her that highlighted her archness, kindness and severity. He stared almost insolently at her as he drank from his chalice. The lights from the candles threw a certain golden hue over her brown hair. She looked acutely familiar in that light. As he flicked his greasy hair from his face, he was struck how much Hermione resembled someone he once knew but was unable to place. She playfully pushed his hand away from the book that she had placed at the table. Baring his teeth in mock annoyance, he deftly grabbed the book and was about to read its title when a commotion broke out at the Ravenclaw table.

A pretty fifth year Ravenclaw prefect, Miss Butler, was struggling to free herself from the unwarranted attentions from two boys. In the scuffle that ensued, both Severus and Hermione rose to contain the matter. One of the boys tripped Miss Butler and a shiny silvery hourglass flung itself off her little neck. The girl tried to catch it but failed. Fully aware of the bureaucratic problems that might arise if it was shattered, Hermione leapt forward, diving onto the ground to grab it. Severus, on his part, reprimanded the two boys for their refractory behaviour. As Hermione skidded towards the rapidly spinning time turner, all the inhabitants gasped in dismay. Not only was she unable to save the time turner from destruction, she was also unable to decelerate; and as the delicate hourglass shattered, she came into contact with its contents and disappeared completely before everyone's eyes.

Chapter 3 - Going Incognito

Chapter 3 of 8

Hermione finds herself in Hogwarts in Severus Snape's 7th year. She discusses her problem with the resident Potions Master and Headmaster Dumbledore

Instructing the Professor

Chapter 3 Going Incognito

The sudden appearance of Hermione Granger at the staff room, with her steadiness in concealing its cause, filled the mind and raised the immediate wonder of a very old, kindly looking wizard. Hermione ran through the list of Hogwarts' teaching staff and realised that she was unacquainted with him. For a moment, she panicked as her relief at remaining in Hogwarts after the time turner accident faded. She speculated that she must have travelled back in time rather than forward by virtue of the fact that the furniture in the staff room looked newer than she remembered. As she stared politely at the strange old wizard before her, she wondered how far back in time she had travelled. She was safe and in one whole piece and somewhat shaken by the experience.

"Who are you, my child? And what are you doing here? Do you want to frighten me to death?" questioned the strange figure gently.

Hermione's eyes flitted from the surroundings to the wizard; she sank into a chair, white from shock, still choosing to say nothing. She silently appraised the man as he called on the house elves for some tea. As he offered her a cup, she decided that he had an easy elegant air about him. He smiled lightly at her, his dazzling emerald eyes with their tiny flecks of gold dancing in distress at her sudden collapse into the chair. It was evident to Hermione that he had been very handsome in his youth. His squarish spectacles added a certain distinction to his retroussé nose; his lips were thin and kind. Though his long silvery hair was neatly braided and his moustache trimmed, his hoary beard was untidy. Despite that, he appeared neat, genial, tall and very spry in his long moss coloured robe. "Better, my child?" he asked gently as Hermione accepted the teacup. "Now dear, tell me how did you manage to defeat the protective wards in apparating here?"

Still tightly clutching the teacup and its saucer, Hermione only shook her head firmly.

"I don't bite you know," chuckled the strange old wizard.

She cocked her head to one side, studying his gestures. "Does this have Veritasium?" she asked, biting her lips when the man gave her an amused quizzical look. "I'm sorry, sir," she said quietly, recovering herself. The older man cast her a casual sideways glance, encouraging her to continue. "I would like to speak to the Headmaster, please."

The wizard laughed heartily at the request, infuriating Hermione, who found her question utterly reasonable. He looked at her with a lively interest as he wondered the reason for the young lady's appearance. He was certain there must be some kind of distress that only the Headmaster could solve. "Something very melancholy must be the matter," said he, suppressing his boisterous laughter. "Poor Albus! I wonder why he is so pursued by the ladies. You must be the youngest so far. I am afraid you might have to take a queue number."

He stopped his raillery when he saw that Hermione was trembling and gravely pale. "Dear me," he sighed. "You youngsters take yourselves far too seriously for my liking. Are your circumstances truly bad? Is that why you want to see Albus?"

She turned her large chocolate eyes to him and inwardly remarked that he was very well preserved for his age and had very few wrinkles. She curled her lips into a twisted unnatural smile in a bid to compose herself. She thought she had heard the name 'Albus'. She knew only one Albus and prayed that this wizard referred to the same Headmaster. "Do you mean Albus Dumbledore is still the Headmaster?" she questioned in one breath, her tone incredulous. Her heart thrashed wildly as she watched the older wizard's eyes widen in mild amusement.

"Of course he is!" declared the wizard, his emerald eyes dancing merrily. "Who were you expecting? Phineas Nigellus?" Hermione blushed and reiterated her earlier request. "Oh, all right, dear," he agreed at last with an indulgent smile.

He opened a tin near the fireplace and took a handful of its contents. Throwing it into the hearth, he commanded, "Headmaster's office!" To Hermione's relief, she soon

saw Dumbledore's head in the magical fire.

"Still there, Nicolas? I was under the impression that you'd left," joked Dumbledore.

"You know very well Perenelle insists on picking me up," the wizard beside Hermione answered with a snort and dismissive wave of the hand. "If you must know, old boy, there's a young lady here to see you. Almost apparated here, I would say"

The Headmaster in the flames scratched his chin thoughtfully. "Is that her?"

He nodded. "Shall I send her up? The lady refuses to tell me anything," said the wizard whom Hermione now identified as Nicolas Flamel.

Dumbledore was about to reply when she gasped, "You're Professor Flame!! The only known creator of the philosopher's stone!"

The wizard in moss green bowed elaborately with a wide grin before turning to Dumbledore. "As you can see, she knows who we are but refuses to enlighten us as to her identity. Most vexing indeed!"

Dumbledore laughed aloud at his old friend's joke. "You must gain the ladies' trust *before* they reveal anything to you," he chuckled. "Send her up!"

Flamel gestured Hermione to go through the floo network with a gentle smile. "I do hope he's able to help you, my child," he said, shaking her hand. "You must be quite a witch to get past the anti-apparation wards!"

She thanked him and chose not to disabuse him. Then, straightening herself, she proceeded to step into the grate to Dumbledore's office.

"So, you're the young lady," said Dumbledore with perfect ease as she cast a cleansing spell over herself.

"Professor Dumbledore, you should get these fireplaces cleaned, being covered in soot is not fashionable by most people's standards," she said crossly. She looked around his office, taking in the sight. Amazing everything was more or less the same. "Remarkable," she murmured as she saw the phoenix burst into flames and collapsing into ashes. "Oh!" she exclaimed, ignoring Dumbledore's bemused look as she approached his desk where the phoenix's gold perch stood. As the tiny wrinkled newborn bird poked its head out of the smouldering ashes, it looked balefully at her. She gasped, "Fawkes is cute like that. Harry's told me, of course, but I never imagined watching a rebirth would be so fascinating. He does not do justice to the creature!"

Dumbledore stared at her with a weak smile. "Just who are you and what are you doing here?" he asked.

Hermione coloured in embarrassment at making a fool of herself. Dumbledore's penetrating pale blue stare brought her back to her present reality. "Well, sir," she began slowly, folding her arms and standing erect before him. "You must wonder how I know so much about you." She paused, frowning slightly in dissatisfaction at her explanation. "May I sit, Professor Dumbledore?"

Upon receiving his assent, she related her history and the accident, omitting no detail in her narration.

He looked sombrely at her, digesting her words. "My dear Miss Granger," he said thoughtfully whilst sucking a murray mint. "Would you mind dropping your memory into the pensieve for me? I would like to examine it so as to establish the reason for this time turner accident."

"Not at all," answered Hermione in a clipped tone. She knew exactly why Dumbledore wanted the memory he wanted to verify her story before deciding his next course of action. She heaved a sigh of relief releasing the breath she had been unconsciously holding when she saw that Dumbledore was still the disarming fox she has always known. He gestured her towards the pensieve where she hastened to oblige him. She was eager to unravel this mystery. She grew increasingly uncomfortable at the thought of her prospective arithmancy students and sincerely hoped that Dumbledore would be able to help her to return to whence she came. After a tense indeterminable lapse of time during which the Headmaster sombrely examined Hermione's memory and Fawkes curiously studied her expressions, the air of the office seemed to still.

At last, Dumbledore looked up at her with a mixture of gentleness and sadness that Hermione believed he was almost on the verge of tears. "Are you convinced as to the veracity of my story? Or shall you have to perform legilimency on me?" she asked testily, impatient with his long silence.

"It would not be necessary, my dear," he said with a little smile. "I'm glad to see Severus turning out so well. He is a bit of a handful now."

"Professor Snape is here?" she gasped, her chocolate pools dilating in surprise.

"It's his last year, rather, it *will be* his last year here. He has always been a conscientious student, his personal proclivities, however, have tended to use his keen mind cruelly," sighed Dumbledore, closely watching Hermione's look of forced calm. "It will take some time before we figure out a way of transporting you back. Have you any opinion as to what you would do during this time?"

Hermione bit her lower lip in consternation. Was Dumbledore throwing her out of Hogwarts? What would she do? Where would she go? How could she return to her own time? What about her parents and friends would she ever see them again? Fighting back these questions and meeting Dumbledore's twinkling eyes, she held her breath and muttered, "I do not know."

He chuckled and offered her a murray mint, which she hesitated to accept. "It's not poison you know," he said with a laugh as she finally popped it into her mouth. "I cannot offer you the arithmancy chair as we've just hired Diotima Vector. However, I can offer you the potions position; Nicolas is retiring, as you know. It would save me the trouble of teaching that subject. I am so terribly rusty at alchemy these days."

"I would like that very much," Hermione answered with a smile. "When do I start?"

"The students will be here tomorrow. Oh, and my dear, have you considered what is to be done? I cannot impress upon you how important this is *you must not* effect any changes to the schema of things yet to come," said Dumbledore as he stroked Fawkes' wrinkled pate with his finger.

Hermione twisted her monogrammed handkerchief in her hands and grimaced at herself for failing to factor the future in her present predicament. Rubbing her forehead for a while, she mentally reviewed her duties and the students whom she expected to teach. All of a sudden, she leaned forward in her chair, her eyes dancing with animation. "Just tell them that I've transferred from a Beauxbatons affiliated institution." She beamed and continued conspiratorially in a flawless French accent, "Call me Herigone Grenarm."

Dumbledore laughed, clearly tickled with the hilarity of the necessary deception. "I doubt any of your students would remember you even if they meet you in the future." Pouring a few murray mints into her hand, he added, "You might want to head to Diagon Alley to order some clothes, charge them to my Gringotts vault number 128 and I'll have Mr Filch prepare your second floor classroom for you."

She glared incredulously at him and resisting the impulse to curl her lips in annoyance, she lowly said, "I want to move my lessons and living quarters to the dungeons."

"If you so wish, my dear," he acceded with a shrug. After reminding Hermione to keep to her adopted persona, he dismissed her with a worried smile.

Chapter 4 - The Notice

Chapter 4 of 8

Various students discuss their new Potions Mistress, among them (1) a Gryffindor trio, and (2) two prominent Slytherins. A clash is waiting to occur. What trouble lies ahead in their lesson? Read on...

Instructing the Professor

Chapter 4 The Notice

As the various students awoke on the first day of lessons, they were all astounded to find a memorandum on their common room notice boards. The earliest Gryffindor risers, however, were unexcited at the news. These early risers were an incongruous trio: a Quidditch star, a quiet sickly looking intellectual and a mischievously handsome lad. These three young men sat up in their common room staring at the notice, which read

Attention all students: Professor Herigone Grenarm wishes to inform you that your potions lessons will henceforth be held in the Dungeons. She will be keeping to Professor Flame's consultation hours for seventh year students.

The dark-haired young man in glasses tousled his hair slightly and flopped into an armchair. The rakishly handsome one with a bored look did the same, watching his quiet prefect friend still examining the notice. "Where's Peter?" asked the second fellow with a slight yawn to no one in particular.

His dark haired companion with the faux windswept hair gestured to both his friends with a wicked grin, his eyes brightening at the prospect of mischief. "Shall we wake him?" he asked, laughing and rubbing his hands in anticipation.

The shy unassuming prefect replied with a sigh, "Let him sleep. Unless you want Lily to nag at you again."

His two friends laughed and proceeded to move to the boys' dormitory. The prefect glared at them disapprovingly. "You three won't be getting much rest next week when the moon..."

The bespectacled young man pouted somewhat. "You have a way of badgering us, Remus," he said with some contrition.

"What!" cried the rakishly handsome lad in thwarted disbelief, "We aren't waking Peter then?"

"Don't be disappointed," chuckled the shy prefect named Remus. "Maybe this time, I'll bite one of you before I transform!"

* * *

An hour later, the Slytherin common room bore witness to an almost similar scene. A pale aristocratic young man with shoulder length hair that was equally pale sat forward in his chair and motioned his companion to do the same. He moved a rook on the chessboard to take his opponent's knight. His companion chose to remain shrouded in the shadows and tapped a foot impatiently. The pale blond tossed his head and stretched his hand back to feel his hair. Pleased that it remained in its place, he returned to his chess game. His companion coughed rudely at his vanity. It was apparent that he was a lad who prided himself on everything, his looks, his eighteenth century styled hair and his epicurean knowledge. He carelessly moved his knight and watched his friend's pawn smash it into submission.

"Have you read the notice?" asked the silky voice from the shadows.

"Oh, that!" the blonde aristocrat laughed, "She may be a Slytherin, seeing how she houses herself in Old Salazar's quarters. It sounds like your kind of thing, doesn't it?"

Some young Slytherin girls passed him and batted their eyes coquettishly at him. He smiled in return with a slight nod.

"She's too young to be teaching at twenty-one," said the young man from the shadows as he finally leaned forward. He had a stringy pallid look about him, his hooked nose setting off his face with distinction as he made his move on the chessboard. "Do you think she's *qualified*?" he continued, flicking aside a lock of his greasy looking hair aside with great force. "Check."

The blonde laughed heartily. "Is that all you care about? Whether she's a good teacher? I thought she quite turned your head."

"I am concerned about my education, as you should be, Malfoy if we are to serve the Dark Lord effectively, we must have something to offer him *rather than* blind loyalty," snarled the dark haired student as he moved his bishop.

"I cannot understand you," said his friend with an ugly twisted grin. "You and your preoccupation with books and knowledge. What about wealth? What about the possession of things? What about acquisition?"

The student with the hooked nose narrowed his eyes. "Lucius, Lucius," he murmured in a dangerous purr, suppressing the urge to curl his lips in scorn. "The truly beautiful things are those which are nebulous. The greatest things are often elusive. Those things that we cannot see, such as the beyond, knowledge and power are the most tantalising. We can never possess them totally yet they seduce us precisely because we cannot tame them; we don't know what they are like. You've always received what you wanted; you don't know what it's like to want something with an expectation that you cannot *ever* possess it. This thing, that you want but cannot have, is infinitely more beautiful than anything tangible." He moved his black queen and smirked. "*Checkmate.*"

"Trying to be profound? So serious," mocked the wizard named Lucius Malfoy as he knocked the pieces off the chessboard. "You should go into academia if that romantic pursuit of the intangible and unattainable is what you want. No wonder you always eye up the wrong women McGonagall and Lillian Evans." Ignoring his dark haired companion's calculative glare and absentminded tracing of the lips, he added, "And now the new Potions Mistress? Why, she's not even beautiful! French, my arse! She's coarse looking and common; nothing like my fine boned Narcissa."

A stout looking classmate swaggered up to them with the reminder that it was time for breakfast.

"In that case, we should get down to the Great Hall soon," said the dark-haired student with the prominent hooked nose. "Before we are accused of other heinous deeds."

"Nott," answered Lucius, elegantly rising from his chair and gesturing for his companion to do likewise. "We shall join you shortly, as soon as ~~she~~ gets over his latest love of the year."

Tired of his friend's wild insinuations, the pallid student rose to his full height and swept out of his common room without a backward look at his laughing friend.

* * *

The seventh year Potions students filed into the classroom and seated themselves as they chose, waiting for their teacher to arrive. The original silence that had fallen over them at the expectation of her entrance soon gave way to a sea of various conversations. The Gryffindors on the right exchanged their speculations on the new teacher - so eager were they to know what she was like. The Slytherins at the opposite end of the room, on the other hand, cast sideways glances at the Gryffindors in between their latest plots and intrigues.

"What do you think Snivellus is doing?" sneered the rakishly handsome Gryffindor as he pointed to the dark haired Slytherin with the hooked nose.

"Leave him be," advised Remus when he saw that the object of his friend's conjecture was engrossed in reading a book. "He's..." Before he could continue, a buzzing rapidly moving thing flew past his eyes. "James!" he exclaimed with a sigh. "I thought you promised Lily to be rid of it!"

The bespectacled student merely laughed as a thin, small fellow at his elbow chortled sycophantically, clapping his hands.

"Sirius! Help me!" pleaded Remus, his voice thick with exasperation.

The rakish Gryffindor only threw up his hands and whistled with feigned innocence as he turned away. Shaking his head at his friends' behaviour, the shy prefect's eyes caught the diminutive panderer staring intently at the greasy haired Slytherin and wringing his hands in nervous uncertainty.

"Peter, are you all right? You've gone pale, do you want a bit of chocolate?" he asked in a suspicious voice missed by the skinny little toady.

"Ha! Look at that!" cried Sirius with malicious glee. Remus sharply turned his head in the direction of his friend's gaze. He had sensed something amiss, he could smell it in the air. The joys of being a werewolf, he thought sardonically. The proud pale blonde Slytherin wizard chased away the buzzing golden article away from his face with a bored expression; the object then flew beside him to the reading hooked nose student. The pallid fellow chose to ignore the annoying buzzing entity as James and Sirius egged it on.

"Seeing how long you can stand it, Snivellus?" jeered Sirius amidst much laughter.

"How pathetically puerile," hissed the antagonised fellow, turning paler with rage as he shut his book dramatically. "Rather it than you and Potter," he declared quietly, his lips curling in disdain at the support the Gryffindor Quartet amassed. He glared meaningfully at Peter and scowled at Remus when Sirius and James strutted to the centre aisle of the classroom.

Lucius blocked them with a tart remark that made nearly everyone gasp. The pallid teenager flew to his friend's side and drew his wand when he saw James and Sirius pointing their wands at him. At that exact moment, when the students thought things could not get any worse, the Potions Mistress stormed in, her long grey robe billowing behind her. She loped forward, drew her robe closer to her long grey dress and disarmed the four students.

"What are you trying to do?" she questioned impatiently in a heavy French accent. "There will be no foolish wand waving in my class!"

"Professor Grenarm," interjected Remus, hoping to defuse the situation.

"Monsieur Lupin, this is not your concern and my name is pronounced Grey-narh, ne pas Gree-nam," she said coldly, leaning on the old clerk's desk.

Sirius sniggered and muttered, "Loo-pahn? It's Lupin! What kind of a name is Herigone Grenarm?"

The hooked nosed Slytherin stared at him in shock while the Potions Mistress narrowed her eyes. She smiled slightly, as sly as a cat, that was about to pounce. "You English! Ne pas *Harry-gone*; c'est *Er-ree-go-nee*, like the priestess of Artemis."

She studied him leisurely with disinterest. "So, you must be the famous Monsieur Black." She lowered her voice into a soft hiss as she caught the flying buzzing object. She looked at it disdainfully and threw it sharply to the bespectacled student. "Monsieur Potter, return this to Madame Hooch before you *hurt yourself* with it."

The Slytherins burst into laughter at that remark.

"Silence!" she barked, her chocolate eyes glittering in anger. "Et vous, Monsieur Malfoy?" she continued, appraising him with utter contempt when she caught his smug look. "You should know better than to provoke idiots!"

The pallid teenager fixed his eyes at his Potions Mistress with astonishment how did she know their names? She was a new teacher; she had yet to see the class register. Even if she had, she could not have already associated the names with the faces. Why had she ignored him in her acerbic remarks? Was she taking special care to overlook him? Just who was she?

The Potions Mistress cleared her throat as Lucius stood tall and the two guilty Gryffindors looked askance at each other. "Shall I break your wands, I wonder?" she taunted, playing with the said objects in her creamy white hands. "For flouting school rules, twenty points each from Gryffindor and Slytherin."

The students in the room gasped.

"Do that again and I will take more. You could have hurt yourselves and each other if you started hexing. What if you hit other students? Their safety has never a moment's thought in your thick skulls! If you want to kill each other, by all means, do so. Unless you want to scrub the blood from my floors, do it *outside my classroom*. Why are you still here? Return to your seats!"

All but the pallid dark haired student obeyed; he stood his ground meeting her hard gaze without flinching. "Je veux ma baguette, Professor Grenarm," he said flatly, ignoring Lucius's hiss of 'you stupid fool'.

She arched her brow to signifying her diversion. "Après la leçon, *peut-être*," she replied coolly, folding her arms in a commanding gesture and curling her lips contemptuously. "Et Sev...Monsieur Snape," she quietly called out upon dismissing him to his seat with a flick of her wrist. "Ten points from Slytherin for your," she paused, her chocolate eyes glittering stragely. "How shall we say...*cheek*."

The young Severus Snape returned to his seat completely stunned. Professor Herigone Grenarm had nearly addressed him by his given name! He was all astonishment! She had teased him! No female had ever teased him before! She was everything a witch should be, he noted as she snapped her fingers to conjure the day's potion procedure on the blackboard. She was nothing like his mother who was weak and helpless. Professor Grenarm was fiercely independent, stern but not in the dry manner of McGonagall. She was young and spirited; she possessed such grace and wit. She was powerful in mind and ability, he observed as she sharply flicked her wrist to banish Peter Pettigrew's failed potion. She did not require a wand to work. She had even done the unthinkable she had scolded Potter and Black! She was completely impartial and possessed such a coldly dispassionate look that whenever Severus looked at her eyes, his heart missed a beat. Oh, if he were only privy to the machinations of her mind. She clearly knew what she was about, she was familiar with her material and was impossibly exacting in her lesson. To his immense joy, at the end of the class, she had detained him when she returned his wand. She had asked to see him two days hence to discuss his final year potions project. He noticed that she did not seek to revile him, neither was she repulsed. Instead, she had been almost disinterested in his appearance. She was only concerned with his work. "Such professionalism!" he muttered as he left for his next lesson, "What an extraordinary witch!"

Footnotes:

"Ne pas" is loosely translated as "not".

"Et vous, Monsieur Malfoy" means "And you, Mr Malfoy".

"Je veux ma baguette" means "I want my wand." As you can see, Severus is as insolent as ever.

"Après la leçon, peut-être" means "After the lesson, perhaps."

Having received several notes on the "baguette" reference, let me clarify myself.

According to the Wordsworth French-English & English-French Reference Dictionary, "bâton" (nm) means staff, stick or conductor's baton.

"Baguette" (nf) means (1) rod or wand, or (2) a long stick of bread. If you wish to stress that the wand is magical then it is "la/une baguette magique", which means "magic wand".

Having received notes on the Lily Evans reference, allow me to clarify something.

If you read the earlier section with the Marauders, you will realise that I used Lily. Lucius's reference to Lillian is deliberate, hence Severus's scowl/glare. Lucius doesn't care much for muggleborns, as we well know. Thus, his 'butchering' of the name. And yes, I took liberty with Lucius's age.

P/S I know the plot is a little slow moving; but we're now at the halfway mark.

Chapter 5 - Early Suspicions

Chapter 5 of 8

Herigone is twice interrupted in her musings and marking. First, by a discussion with a fellow alchemist, and second, by an invitation. What do these two 'interruptions' portend?

Instructing the Professor

Chapter 5 Early Suspicions

Hermione could not feel easy at being in Hogwarts in 1977. She had been there for the past two and a half months, and there were no further developments on the methods to get her home. Nicolas Flamel had been actively corresponding with her on probable potions and spells, which she tried without any success. Anger and frustration had finally given way to despair. She wondered whether she would get home. Contrary to her personal sentiments, the situation was not all that bleak. She had an active occupation with which she kept her mind suitably animated. The students in the 1970s were more conscientious than they were in her time. At least more students bothered reading up before class; assignments appeared on her desk before the deadline and students seemed to be more aware of school rules. To her surprise, the Slytherins were rather tasteful in their tricks and contrivances. During her time, they lacked the subtle and debonair style displayed by young Nott, Avery and Lucius Malfoy. Even the Goyle and Crabbe she taught seemed less insipid than their dense sons. These Slytherins seemed less wayward than their sons. Hermione smiled wryly perhaps Quidditch practice was useful in channelling their nervous energies away from tomfoolery.

She looked up from her marking and shook her head resolutely so as to clear her thoughts. It was unfair to compare her former schoolmates and their fathers when they were completely different individuals. How foolish she was to expect the same behaviour from their fathers! She continued her grading and realised that she was going through James Potter's parchment. She rolled her eyes in displeasure at its untidy blotches and inaccurate observations. Harry seemed to take after his father in lacking the aptitude and predisposition for the fine art and exact science of potion brewing. She laughed lightly Professor Snape had been right after all in their first year. The man ought to know; he did have first-hand experience. Remus Lupin, at least, seemed to know what he was doing. His handwriting was neat and his potions were always acceptable. Though he was not amongst the best students, he could certainly be labelled the best of her Gryffindor students. Peter Pettigrew's script was next and she groaned aloud. It was already bad enough that Sirius copied his answers off Remus; Peter Pettigrew incensed her because he wrote in such a small hand that she had to use a magnifying charm to read his words. His friends must be imbeciles if they did not notice how nervous he was around Malfoy and his group. She quickly gave Peter a nominal pass grade and moved on to her next parchment in a furious temper.

Deciding that it would be more impartial to her students if she rested a while by the fire, Hermione extracted her papers and tea things to her sofa. Picking the first parchment she laid her hands on, she wearily read its contents. Her ire grew as she was hard pressed to find any flaws in it. Its spidery handwriting was easy to read; it was detailed and meticulously researched. "Wait!" she exclaimed with sudden realisation.

The hand *had* been familiar; she could recognise the spiky letter 'F' anywhere. She glanced to the top of the parchment and confirmed her speculations. It was indeed Severus's script. He was *her* star pupil, if such a vulgar phrase could be used. "Ah, dear Severus," she muttered, reading his essay with much satisfaction. He was a good student with an active mind and was extremely resourceful. He was the same in his seventh year as he had been in her time. She could tell from his demeanour that he suffered from a natural gloominess of temper and had faced many injuries and disappointments. She liked him, in spite of his reserve and gravity; as such, she beheld in him an object of interest. His manners, though serious, were mild and his reserve suited him. Although she took pains to separate him from Lucius and his crowd, she could not be seen doing so in an open manner. She did not wish to excite undue student speculation. She was relieved not to see the dark mark on his left forearm yet, but it was little comfort to her. She knew that the moment he left Hogwarts, he would turn to Voldemort. Hermione gave him the highest grade she could think of and replaced his papers with the rest. She felt mentally drained. She was stuck in the past and had to remain there without effecting any major alterations even though she was sorely tempted to do so.

She rose and paced around the office, looking very much like a shadow in her long grey walking dress. She scratched her hair in irritation without really knowing why. Her students feared her as far as she knew. They shied away whenever she strode past them. Her silent gliding movements and billowing grey robes had earned her the moniker 'shadow ghost'. She smirked at the thought of how they would cower when she so much as gave them a reproving look. Even the Gryffindors disliked her. She laughed at that thought. It was indeed a neatly contrived irony. James Potter and Sirius Black had dubbed her the Potions Bitch among other things and she had merely bowed at that appellation. They no longer dared called her names to her face after she threatened to inform the Headmaster of her new titles. Pity she was growing to enjoy the attention. Severus, Hermione mused with a smile, had valiantly risen to her defence during the name-calling and not even Lucius could restrain him. "So, that's where he gets his respect for teachers," she chuckled as she kicked off her shoes and peeled off her knee-high stockings.

"Accord me the respect that is due, he says," she muttered in a light laugh, scratching her hair again in frustration. Getting quite fed up of it, she released it from its coiled prison and tossed her head to free the unruly locks. "And he thinks he gives me respect! The way the poor boy looks at me, one would think that he augurs nothing but misery in his life. Then again, the Severus I know also feels this way. The poor silly puppy," she mumbled with a sigh as she ran her fingers through her bushy hair to disentangle any knots in it.

Hermione realised that she would have to change her tactics vis-à-vis the young Severus. If she could not threaten him or bully him into maintaining a distance between them, she could ignore him. It would likely mean that she would be disobliging her profession, but in a circumstance such as this, decorum preceded kindness. Yes, she

could ignore him. But how could she do so? All his circumstances pointed towards a want of proper attention. In fact, she pitied and esteemed him all the more because his peers slighted him and his so-called Death Eater friends exploited him. He deserved some compassion and respect for his mind. Yet, she had to discourage the boy; he was not the Potions Master she knew in her time he was, at present, *her student*. Why did he constantly seek her out then? He came by her office almost every other day, ostensibly to work on his potions project, but Hermione could sense that there must be an ulterior motive for these unsolicited visits. She knew he had always been comforted by the dank dungeons; and she observed that her presence did nothing to ease the tumult in his mind.

Perhaps she should be plain with him and tell him off. "No!" she declared aloud, pacing with her arms akimbo. He had faced rejection so many times she did not want to add to the psychological chips on his shoulders. In all likelihood, it was repeated rejections from his parents, society, his peers and so on that led Severus to turn to Voldemort's grandiose lies of power and acceptance. She flung her hands up in annoyance and placed them on her head there was no good polite way about it without hurting his feelings. "He is not your Potions Master!" she reminded herself.

The fire hissed and crackled violently at that comment as if approving her intended course of action. She spun around to return to her desk and found herself staring at Dumbledore's face in the flames. "My dear, I have news," began Dumbledore with a bright smile. "There is an obscure time travelling spell written by Copernicus. Nicolas will see if he can find a complete version."

Hermione frowned at the information. "What do you mean by *complete version*?" she asked cautiously. She had learnt in the past few months not to put too much stock in one plan. Her numerous failed attempts have evinced her of the improprieties of such forward and confident sentiments.

"The Edinburgh astrological conservatory houses a draft copy of it. I've seen it today," offered the Headmaster kindly. "I have copied it down. I'll send you a copy and you can make what you will of it."

Hermione bit her lower lip in anxious thought as she sank into her sofa. "Was it ever published? Has it been successfully attempted? Was it just one of those scrawls found amongst his papers at his death?" she questioned in one breath, feeling suddenly tired.

Dumbledore smiled weakly at her, fully comprehending her scepticism. "I don't know any more than you do. Nicolas will look through the matter for us. He does have *lot more time* on his hands now," chuckled the Headmaster. He laughed merrily at his inane joke. However, he abruptly stopped and looked sombrely at his Potions Mistress. "There is someone at your door, my dear. I'll come by later."

As soon as he disappeared from the flames, Hermione carefully listened for any sound. Hearing nothing but her heart beating frantically with irrational paranoia, she briskly strode to the doors and forcefully swung them open. Albus Dumbledore's all-seeing vision had been right; she did indeed have an eavesdropper lurking in the shadows.

"Bonsoir, Monsieur Snape," she said in her calm low French accent, beckoning him to enter her office. "Do you use your liberty so frivolously? What brings you to my hermitage?"

The young man bounded forward, his eyes glinting with unspoken suspicion. He followed her to her desk and sat where she placed him. After he carefully scanned the office, he fixed his eyes steadily at hers. "Who are you?" he asked quietly.

She merely smiled and mildly said in her thick French drawl, "Your Potions Mistress."

Hermione collapsed gracefully into her chair and carelessly swung her feet up to rest on the desk. Severus gaped in amazement. She had the most perfect little feet he had ever seen; they were soft and supple looking, and were appropriately white and pink in places. They looked almost smooth to the touch.

He swallowed hard and tore his eyes from them. "I've heard your English; I can discern your accent; you sound like an Englishwoman," he accused lowly in that dangerous tone she knew so well.

She leaned back into the chair so as to better rotate her ankles and flex her feet. She noticed him staring unblinkingly at her wriggling toes. As she did so, her long grey skirt slid down her outstretched legs. She earnestly hoped that her poor manners would put the boy right. Unfortunately, for the besotted Severus, her legs captivated him. The voluminous skirt hid far too much, he thought nervously. The skirt stopped some centimetres above her ankles and he could discern how finely turned her calves were.

Mistaking his intent stare for revulsion, Hermione scratched her shins and said in her thick French drawl, "One of these days, your curiosity *will kill you*, Monsieur Snape. You followed Monsieur Lupin once and look what almost happened?"

He paled violently before roaring, "BLACK TRIED TO KILL ME!"

She waved her hand dismissively. "*Oui, oui, c'est un crétin*. I know he is an arrogant bastard."

"How did you know?" he asked in a slow and deliberately quiet manner, his eyes narrowing.

She curled her lips into a contemptuous smirk. "See, Monsieur Snape, *that* is a better way of inspiring fear and respect. Self-control is everything remember that."

"How did you know?" he repeated in a quieter voice.

"Ah," laughed Hermione before adding in a dangerous purr, "Do you imagine me ignorant of your consequence in the greater schema of things? I have my ways."

He glowered at her, his eyes glinting intelligibly at hers. "How do you know so much about us?"

"I just do," she answered lazily in her lilting accent as she stretched in her chair.

He focused on her legs and noted with interest that she was not one to shave them. They seemed beautiful and perfect to him. She had left the legs as they were as nature had intended. The hairs looked dark, but he had no doubt that they were fine and soft. Here was a truly modern witch who cared little for the opinions of the world. If only he could learn to be like her in that respect. She appeared self-sufficient, independent and intelligent. Severus noticed her observing him closely as if greatly intrigued. He put down his left hand, whose fingers had been engaged in tracing his lips. "Where are you really from?" he enquired as politely as he could.

"Impertinent boy!" she hissed, making him shudder at her accent. She bit her lip and decided to tell him a half-truth. "Somewhere very far from here," she answered sharply, rising abruptly from her chair.

Pique was written all over her face and she pounced on his chair so quickly that he was unable to escape. She held on firmly to the armrests and stared straight into his obsidian eyes. "What do you mean by interrogating me, Monsieur Snape? You will find yourself in a lot of trouble one day in the not so distant future due to it. Pourquoi? Because of your *other* activities like eavesdropping and *spying*. I answer to no one but myself and I advise you to do the same. You and your nonsense of always wanting to prove yourself to others! Do you realise you only do so because you despise yourself?"

He glared at her penetrating eyes and whispered, "I don't like myself."

This admission was so softly uttered that she had to strain her ears to hear it. Hermione released him from the prison of his chair and sighed, "How do you expect me to like you as a person if you do not like yourself? Do you really want to grow up bitter and cynical?"

"You're a fine one to talk, Professor Grenarm, *if that is your name*?" he rejoined, threatening her with his full height.

She only laughed hollowly to show that she was both unimpressed and not the least intimidated. "Tell me *mon petit*, what is your real business?"

"Come to the Quidditch match tomorrow," he said suddenly before realising that he could not retract the offer. He mentally kicked himself for his effrontery.

"Impulsiveness *will* not bode well for you, Monsieur Snape," she quietly replied with a smirk. "I know you are taller than I, no need to make a show of it," she added, drawing a faint colour to his cheeks as he drew back. "You know I do not attend the matches."

"I am... *We are* playing against Gryffindor tomorrow, if you could come..." he muttered in a low hiss, flicking a lank greasy lock from his face.

"If I grace this occasion, you will stop your questioning and leave me alone?" she asked quietly, twisting her handkerchief.

"Yes," he lied, speaking through his clenched teeth.

"Alors, Monsieur Snape," she said much deliberation, drawing a curled upper lip from him. "I will humour you *just this once*." Having pacified her student, Hermione sought to push the tall young wizard out of her office. Once that was accomplished, she collapsed onto her sofa, feeling quite sorry for the poor lad.

Footnotes:

"Oui, oui, c'est un crétin" is "Yes, yes, he is an idiot." My French beta informs me that it is not "Il est un crétin". Apparently, it's idiomatic. If you do not like "crétin", there's "abrutit" or "nigaud" as well.

"Mon petit" can be loosely translated as "my dear". It should be noted that "petit/petite" is a form of affection address which can mean "dearie" or "sweetheart". Depending on context, terms of endearment can also be used condescendingly in French. Make what you will of this phrase.

A few have asked me how I derived at the name "Herigone Grenarm"; it's easy - look at the name carefully. If you can't, it matters not; i shall reveal it in Chapter 8.

Chapter 6 - Quidditch & Qualms

Chapter 6 of 8

At a Slytherin-Gryffindor Quidditch match, an accident occurs and Severus experiences the first signs of an uncertain jealousy...

Instructing the Professor

Chapter 6 Quidditch & Qualms

The following day proved to be a remarkably fine day for November. The gossips and speculations du jour were all directed towards the Quidditch match between Gryffindor and Slytherin. Severus was quite ready for breakfast as soon as he was up; and when he had swallowed his coffee and consumed a sandwich, he was eager to head for the pitch. Noticing his unusual agitation, his friends sought to entertain away his edgy get-up-and-go with morsels of anecdotal stories. Lucius Malfoy was chatty and convivial, and was no friend to the notion of early preparation for Quidditch matches. Nott and Avery sought to amuse him with stories of the latest occurrences outside the school. Severus, therefore, had little reason to feel poorly. From the amusement afforded to his mind that Potions Mistress had condescended to attend a Quidditch match, he was willing to overlook his friends' impositions and improprieties. His good humour was further heightened by the fact that he had received no taunt from the Gryffindor Quartet that morning. Perhaps he should rephrase that to *Gryffindor Trio* now that Peter Pettigrew had moved to the side of power. Severus smirked in self-satisfaction with the knowledge that even Potter and Black's friend could not tolerate their blatant arrogance.

The Gryffindor table broke into a loud peal of laughter as Potter said something; Severus scowled in disdain. Evidently, the sweet tempered Lily Evans did not improve that useless excuse of a human being. Her grace and talents were completely wasted on Potter. She was certainly not forceful and proudly insouciant like Professor Herigone Grenarm. He turned his attention to the High Table to see if he could catch her eyes. To his immense surprise, she was conspicuously absent. He sighed inwardly, he should have known better than to think a greasy git like him could inspire anything but annoyance in anyone.

Whatever Severus's sentiments before the Quidditch match, he was greatly heartened to see her looking as indifferent as she was to everything when she appeared in the Teacher's Box. His Potions Mistress made no attempt to catch his eye, nor did she dress to indicate her support of any team. She was still in one of her severe grey dresses and billowing grey robe. He smirked to himself when he noted her curling her lips scornfully to some students offering her Gryffindor and Slytherin scarves. She appeared to be mouthing something to the effect of '*allez-vous en*'.

"She came just as she had promised," he whispered to himself. His constant furtive glances at her direction did not succeed in catching her attention. He noted with slight disappointment that she was too engrossed in her book to bother about the Quidditch match. He curled his upper lip into a smirk when he approvingly noticed her pointed disregard to Professor Flitwick's attempts at conversation. Besides, it was a most distressing game thus far. Potter and Black were the darlings of the Quidditch crazed student populace and though the Slytherins were playing a good game, they found themselves trailing behind the Gryffindors. He neatly spiralled out of a Bludger's way when Lucius shouted at him as he passed him the Quaffle.

"Good Lucius," he thought with a sardonic grin. He was vainer than Potter, if that was possible, and it was clear that most of the girls fancied him even if they were too frightened to run after a Slytherin.

Severus dodged again as he heard a whistling sound past his ear followed by Sirius's laughter and James yelling, "Snape, get out of the way!"

"Why?" he retorted above the roar of the wind, careering out of James' way. "So that you can win? You already have your prize, Potter, leave me to my own devices."

"Snape, you fool!" shouted the bespectacled Potter looking quite exasperated. "Sirius has done something..."

The Bludger zigzagged past him as he simultaneously dodged it while hitting the Quaffle to Nott.

"Snape, listen!" insisted James, pushing his glasses up his nose bridge and twisting upside down his broom alongside Severus. "Snape! Watch for the Bludger!"

But the warning came too late; as soon as those words passed James Potter's lips, the heavy object hit Severus in the nose just as he rolled upside down to avoid it. Sirius laughed mischievously, its ringing tones resounding in Severus's ears as the Bludger renewed its attack and smashed into his nose again, effectively pelting him off his broom. The stunned spectators were left speechless as Severus hit the ground with a dull thud. He tried sitting up and found that he was unable to do so and everything faded to black. He soon came around to find himself lying on the Quidditch pitch weakly rolling to avoid the Bludger that had started to bludgeon his arm. While rolling for his life, he heard a distinctively feminine voice shout, "Finite Incantatem!"

There was a sound of a small explosion following it and he strained his neck to determine the scene about him. The owner of that voice then rushed towards him. He heard the rustling of a skirt. "Not again!" he heard her mutter.

Though riddled with pain, he smirked triumphantly at her and declared quietly so that only she could hear, "Your accent's slipping, Professor Grenarm."

A thicket of legs soon gathered around him as Sirius's characteristic snigger was heard above the gasps and half muted whispers of horror.

"Potter!" commanded Hermione in her thick French accent, her face completely pale but emotionless. "Fetch Madame Pomfrey. Now!" She clapped her hands sharply to emphasise the urgency. "And you dunderheads! Let him have some air! Monsieur Snape, do not fidget."

She pressed a white handkerchief to his nose and she turned brusquely to Sirius. As she did so, her impassive mask fell. Severus inhaled her scent from the handkerchief and fingered the embroidered H and G on it. Damn Black and his so-called *'jocular antics'*! He would not be surprised if that miscreant one day betrayed his friends.

Severus heard his Potions Mistress's slightly trembling shriek, "What were you trying to do, Monsieur Black! Do you want to kill him!"

"Oh, Professor Grenarm," he laughed mirthfully, clutching his stomach. "It was only a joke!"

"A JOKE! A JOKE!" Hermione screamed, struggling to maintain her accent. "I have seen something like..." She paused to calm herself when she saw that Lucius had helped Severus to sit up. "Je l'ai déjà vue. Imbécile! *I know* what damage it can do! Detention with Monsieur Filch for a fortnight!"

Having dismissed the unapologetic Sirius, she flew back to Severus's side. She was not surprised to find him staring at her with that intelligible look she knew so well. "Non, Monsieur Snape," she said in his brain when she felt him probing her mind. "Do not try your legilimency on me! I've studied with the best."

It was now Severus's turn to be taken aback. How did she now he was about to probe her mind? She must be a formidable witch from one of the aristocratic French wizarding families. He smirked weakly at her when she revealed to his mind the truth of her parentage. "No," he thought as Madame Pomfrey examined him and chased everyone but Lucius and the teachers away. "She is not who she says she is and she's a mudblood! No! She's muggle-born. Damn my eyes! Would I never had set eyes on her!"

His eyes followed her movement when she rose to speak to Dumbledore. Her eyes shone brilliantly; she had one arm on her hip and another angry hand sternly pointed in his direction. She was so agitated that a stray lock had fallen from her chignon. To everybody but Severus, she almost resembled a shrieking madwoman. He sighed inwardly and thought on the beauty of her character. Her temperament was like her lovely hairy legs unfettered and wild. The true stature of her moral fibre spoke for itself. And she was a mudblood, his brain reminded him. "What was it with me and these muggle-borns?" he mused with some distaste as Madame Pomfrey moved to help him to the infirmary. First, Lily Evans and now Herigone Grenarm! He laughed bitterly, alarming Lucius who tried to shush him.

"He's delirious," muttered Madame Pomfrey to a dishevelled and anxious looking Lucius, who nodded in concurrence.

Severus groaned as they got him to his feet. His Potions Mistress was an amalgamation of Minerva McGonagall and something else that was distinctly cold and shrewd. She had been concerned for his welfare! He was somewhat pleased. But that pleasure soon faded when he noticed the object of his observations accepting the Headmaster's arm. He felt a pang of an uncomfortable stirring above his stomach when he saw them stroll towards the Forbidden Forest. He shut his eyes at the pain coursing through his body and his breathing quickened she *did not bother to stay with him* She preferred an old man like Dumbledore to him! It was not fair!

Such thoughts occupied his stay in the infirmary; nothing would lift his despondent frame of mind. Avery had coerced the house elves into giving him a cup of his favourite Turkish coffee but he was in no mood to drink it. Not even Lucius's gift of a book of dark potions restored his cool logic. He scowled at his friends and snapped at anybody who came near.

"Severus, old boy," said Lucius as he flicked his long blonde hair away from his face, "We'll teach Black a lesson tomorrow!"

He coldly regarded his friend. "Have you no finesse or sense, Malfoy?" he spat, "Dumbledore *would know* it was you! You leave your marks around too perceptibly, even Filch would know it was your effrontery!"

Avery laughed at the invalid's ill humour. "Didn't you once say 'nothing ventured, nothing gained'? Or do you think the Potions Bitch will rescue you again? I guess after today, anything is possible!"

Severus turned to him with a hateful glare and a twitch of a nerve by the lips that Lucius knew meant trouble. However, he chose to do nothing, for he liked nothing better than watching mayhem unfold.

"*Do not* call her that in my presence again!" snarled Severus through his teeth in a quietly judicious manner. Lucius cocked an eyebrow; he had expected Severus to explode with rage instead of moderating himself. As Severus had fallen silent and was staring intently at something past Avery, he followed his friend's black eyes and found that they rested on Professor Grenarm. She was leaning casually at the doorway, waiting for an opportune time to speak to him.

"Ha! Ha! Severus's preserver has arrived. Come, Avery, we know when we're not wanted," said Lucius with a disapproving look at his friend. "Let us leave him to the lady."

Severus stared at her as she made her way to the chair next to his bed.

"How is the patient?" she asked carelessly, her face emotionless as she gestured him to keep the proffered bloodied handkerchief.

He scowled, unconsciously folding and refolding her handkerchief. "Why the pretence? You can drop your accent *with me*, Professor," he drawled in a dangerously low tone, tracing his lips.

"Very clever, Monsieur Snape," she replied, thickening her French inflection. "Walls have ears, n'est ce pas?"

"Who are you?" he asked when she bent to inspect his nose. His stomach warmed considerably when she took his chin in her hand to better examine his features.

"You look all right, almost as handsome as ever. You should fix your teeth it spoils your smirk," she rambled, ignoring his question.

He paled at her compliment and told himself that she did not mean it. "Why did you come back?"

"WHAT?" she hissed, sounding herself again.

Severus smirked. "My dear Professor Grenarm, am I to believe that my charms are as great if not better than Professor Dumbledore's?" he purred lowly, narrowing his eyes and curling his upper lip exultantly. "I know my features are striking."

"Insufferable! Can you put your analytical mind to better use?" she retorted crossly in her French drawl.

Both of them then sullenly folded their arms and glowered at each other.

"He is sprightly and cheerful, is he not?" he asked in a mock French accent.

She hotly rose from her seat and stormed to the door. It would not do to leave the conversation on this unpleasant note. Placing her hand at the archway, she sighed and steadied her temper.

"You are delusional, Monsieur Snape. You must realise by now that there are some things beyond your comprehension. There are necessary secrets that we all bear; these secrets we either keep close to our hearts or share with those whom we trust. There are times when information must be exchanged away from everyone else. *You understand this, no?* I am a woman who prides myself on my ability to keep secrets. A trait that you share, *mon petit*. You of all people should be aware of the importance of one's privacy," she responded still sustaining her lilting drawl. "You'll be graduating next June, Severus, try to grow up a little," she added seriously. "You have greatness within you and it will manifest itself at your *darkest moment* only if you learn to deal with the chips on your shoulder," she quietly said as she stood at the doorway with her back towards him.

Severus leaned back into his pillow, suddenly tired. She was an enigma. What did she mean by her cryptic words? So perturbed was he by these thoughts that he fell asleep still preoccupied with them.

Footnotes:

"Allez-vous en" means "Go away."

"Je l'ai déjà vue. Imbécile!" can be understood as, "I've seen it before. Imbecile!"

"Non, Monsieur Snape" is "No, Mr Snape."

"Mon petit" can be loosely translated as "my dear". It should be noted that "petit/petite" is a form of affection address which can mean "dearie" or "sweetheart". Depending on context, terms of endearment can also be used condescendingly in French.

Chapter 7 - Toleration

Chapter 7 of 8

Dumbledore visits Hermione in her Potions Office so as to discuss options to transport her 'home'. Minerva McGonagall walks in on them with an uncharacteristic accusation. What drama will unfold?

Instructing the Professor

Chapter 7 - Toleration

Hermione, who had acquired little tolerance for anything like impertinence, vulgarity, inferiority of parts or even deficiency of all mental improvement, was growing to be particularly ill disposed to be pleased with Dumbledore's visits. It was now late January and she had been in the past for the past five months. While the state of her spirits and general dour manners forbade the advances of her students, it did little to deter the curious questions of the staff. Her youth and reticence had excited much speculation, which was intensified all the more because of her unvarying coldness towards her colleagues and students. However, the novelty of questioning her soon wore away as her taciturn scowls checked every endeavour at intimacy on their sides; at least, it had checked everyone's attempted intimacies but Dumbledore and Severus's.

Severus, she could easily keep at bay with a well-placed glower and curling of the lips. Dumbledore, on the other hand, would not allow such displays to get the better of him. He had purposefully imposed on Hermione by conversing with her every evening on probable plans to transport her home. This evening was no exception. He sat with Hermione in her office before the fire, trapped in another speculation that she felt certain would end in failure.

"I've tried that already, Professor Dumbledore," she sighed, tucking a stray frizzy lock behind her ear. "The potion did not bind to the spell as I had hoped. And your first proposal is even more ludicrous! I've checked the books and found that it is not feasible; in fact, the prodigious number of ingredients renders it quite impossible. They are not even available on the wizarding black market!"

Dumbledore chuckled as he watched her fish through her pockets for a hairpin to adhere the errant lock to her chignon. "Nicolas and I are working to finish Copernicus's time travelling spell," he said, offering her a nougat candy.

Hermione glared at him and curled her lips contemptuously. Tapping her fingers on the small tea table, she spat scathingly, "And what makes you think you will get it right this time? Every week I try another harebrained scheme. In fact, short of exploding myself, I believe I've tried almost everything!"

The headmaster pretended to wipe mock saliva off his face with a poor imitation of a frown. "If self-detonation did not come with the danger of dying, I do believe it could work," he offered, his eyes twinkling roguishly. "We could charm an amulet to work like a portkey-cum-time turner."

"And how are we to do this? What incantation are we to use? Has it been proven to work? And what if it transports me anywhere but home? You seem to forget, Professor Dumbledore, that the properties of the portkey and time turner hybrid render it too unstable to reverse!" she cried in almost a shriek. Fortunately, she checked herself in time. It would her no good to lose her temper. The only thing worse than a woman with an irrational temper outburst was a woman in hysterics. She closed her eyes to steady her mind and calm her tumultuous emotions.

"Is this about Severus?" Dumbledore asked, kindly patting her hand.

"Which Severus Snape are you referring to? My Potions Master or my student?" she asked in a vitriolic tone as she snatched away her hand.

"Does it matter?" he quizzed.

She narrowed her eyes and wrapped her robe closer to herself, before folding her arms defensively. "I want my Potions Master. I am not to be pursued by my student! I am flattered by the attention yes not even Ron or Harry treated me like that. But he is not the Severus I know!" she hissed.

Dumbledore scratched his chin thoughtfully. "Let me put it to you this way. From what you've told me, he's likely to remain as fractious as ever. You both are feisty; both have tempers that could flare and tongues that could lash. If I understand it correctly, you admire the electricity of your Potions Master's mind and he admires the electricity of your soul. The seventeen year old Severus can see that something in your soul; you know, I think you're the only person he has ever judged correctly thus far. He's making a huge mistake with Lucius and that lot!"

The Headmaster looked up in resignation. "And you've told me how he will end up! Poor lad! Ah, but Hermione, you must see that the two of you, your potions master and you you two share an enormous need to talk."

Hermione snorted in an unladylike fashion. "I do believe we are both *rather sociable!* He would rather be alone in his rooms reading and I wish for the same," she flicked

her wrist dismissively as she leaned forward in her seat.

The Headmaster shook his head dolefully. "You're well read, my dear, you should know we adopt Goethe's maxim of defending a genius by loving him."

"And what good will it do me when he's there and I'm here?" she protested vociferously as she narrowed her eyes.

"All the more you should hope, my dear," counselled Dumbledore, popping another sweet into his mouth.

"And what about my student?" she challenged quietly. "Do we cast a memory charm on him? Why stop there? We might as well cast it over the whole school!"

"That will only be necessary as a last resort, if and when the situation escalates out of control," he solemnly declared before adding in a lighter tone, "Seriously, my dear, Copernicus's incantation seems to our only hope. I've never known Copernicus to be wrong."

"I cannot make sense of the sketchy notes. And you've been working on it for the past two and a half months; do you expect me to have faith in your abilities?" she casually questioned in a steely voice. "Three alchemists working on an incantation that has never been tested; it does not make coherent sense to me!"

"Do not imagine me ignorant of your reading habits, Hermione," Dumbledore cautioned. "As Severus's student, you should know that according to the ancient Greeks, incantations only limit those who love honour that has been accorded to virtue."

"Ah," said Hermione in a low dangerous tone, "But I'm an arithmancer as well; and my calculations advise prudence. Incantations are all very well when one knows what one is doing. In this case, however, the point is moot. The time travelling spell here is a seductive incantation; we know so from examples such as Odysseus's experience with the sirens. If they are seductive, they are, therefore, dangerous. The corruption of the incantation manifests itself in the violent struggle for superiority in every known field!"

Dumbledore threw his hands in exasperation as he rolled his eyes. He was about to respond to her misinterpretation when a pale and unusually dishevelled Minerva McGonagall burst into the potions office. Her wild eyes surveyed the scene before her in revulsion. Both the Headmaster and Potions Mistress stared at Minerva, whose thin frame was protected only by a pale blue nightdress and tartan dressing gown.

"Professor McGonagall," began Hermione slowly as she pasted on an artificial lopsided smile. "Perhaps you have lost the knocker on my door?"

Her mordant remark only elicited the ire of the older witch who hardened her eyes unnaturally at the effrontery. She pointed a trembling bony finger at Hermione and shrieked, "Harlot! How dare you! What arts have you employed?"

Dumbledore rose and tried to calm his transfiguration teacher. "Minerva, this is not what you think it is," he quickly offered, taking her hand.

Fully aware that he was trying to mollify her, she forcefully flung his hand off and as she did so, her neatly piled hair tumbled down over her shoulders. "What sort of a game are you playing, Albus? Are you toying with her the way you did with me? Am I too old?"

"Minerva, listen to me," pleaded Dumbledore as he closed the doors.

"I see," she spat in a quivering voice, "You collect young women, don't you? I'm not another bead on the string! I am not an award that you can collect and cast aside!" She flew viciously at Hermione's throat.

"What does she have that I do not?" continued Minerva, miffed that her supposed rival had the sense to cast a protective circle around herself. "Is it just her youth? Or is she better in bed? What does she have that I do not? WHAT IS IT, ALBUS!"

The Headmaster flushed and cast the stunned Hermione an apologetic look. He was thankful she had the guile to adopt a look that was a cross between serene disinterest and faint amusement. "My love, Sweetness there is a perfectly rational explanation for this!"

"Oh?" Minerva shot him a calculative and hateful glare. "I am *all ears!*"

Worried at the consequences that might arise from this unnecessary misunderstanding, Hermione interjected as Dumbledore was about to reply, "Perhaps we should tell her, Professor Dumbledore."

"So formal with him? You bloody vixen! You won't keep him like this, you know!" screeched Minerva before she descended into her thick Scottish brogue of profanities.

"I think she's jealous," revealed Hermione coolly as she nodded knowingly to a visibly flustered Dumbledore.

He concurred with her assessment as he stared worriedly into his beloved's face. He smiled warily at both ladies. "Minerva, *cannot* tell you. Trust me, my pet. She requires assistance and I'm merely helping her. Ask Nicolas Flamel if you don't believe me. Trust me, dearest, *this is out of my hands.*"

"How convenient!" she shrieked, flailing her arms. "You come here every night and you expect me to believe it is nothing!"

"That's it! I've had enough!" announced Hermione, her lips curling in disdain. She swished her wand and carefully pronounced, "Petrificus Totalus!"

"Now you've done it, Minerva! See what you've done!" chuckled Dumbledore sadly as the transfiguration teacher fell over as stiff as a board. Although she was technically immobile, her glowering eyes still managed to dart hotly between the accused parties.

"Tell her, Professor Dumbledore!" insisted the potions mistress impatiently. "Hurry and tell her before all hell breaks loose! Worse comes to worse, there's always the memory charm!" Hermione sat down again with a forced calm. "I know you are distraught, but really, Professor McGonagall, I expected better from you."

Dumbledore looked askance at the ladies as he sat beside Minerva's rigid body.

"Oh, hurry up, Headmaster!" chided Hermione, "Do you want her screaming at us again?"

Dumbledore smiled nervously and explained the situation in its entirety to his lady. As she heard the narration, her eyes softened as they flitted from Dumbledore to Hermione. When the eyes expressed Minerva's assent to behave rationally, Hermione released the Transfiguration Mistress from the total body bind.

"Honestly, Professor McGonagall, you are nothing like this in my time!" muttered Hermione under her breath. "Such a dereliction of decorum!"

The Transfiguration Mistress rolled her neck gently as her lover helped her to a seat. "I have overreacted," she confessed with a light blush. "Albus receives so many offers of marriage that I am afraid he will leave me for one of those younger, more beautiful witches."

"You exaggerate my charms, Sweetness," laughed Dumbledore as he kissed her hand and stationed himself at her feet.

Hermione smiled and dryly replied, "Indeed, Professor Dumbledore does have a way about him that is sincerely capable of attaching a lady." She shut her eyes so that the couple would not see her rolling them.

Minerva coloured becomingly as the enormity of her outburst sank in. "I am sorry, my dear I should have known better."

"No," Hermione answered coldly, "You should have trusted Professor Dumbledore."

As the two ladies were about to conciliatorily exchange information on men and relationships, Dumbledore silenced them by placing a long finger on his lips.

Hermione understood the implication immediately and smiled at the bemused Minerva. She loped to the door, her grey robe billowing and enveloping the path behind her. Signalling the two heads of the school to be silent, she opened the doors to Severus Snape.

"Must you always eavesdrop on my private conversations, Monsieur Snape? Or shall we put you in detention for insubordination?" she hissed softly in a French lilt.

"It's Monday, Professor Grenarm, we are to have my potions project meet," replied Severus, curling his lips disapprovingly at her memory as he sniffed the air.

"Would you mind if I cancel today? I am otherwise engaged."

He arched his brow. "Pas de tout, professeur," he purred lowly, "I know you *arbusy with Professor Dumbledore*" He paused to school his face into indifference as the sickening feeling in his mind and stomach coursed through his body. He would not allow base emotions to get the better of him. He managed to meet her amused smirk with a half-hearted one of his own. "I only wanted to give you something."

She scowled in disapproval and curled her upper lip. "The asphodel essay is not due until Wednesday; you might want to check it through first." She moved to close the doors.

"You *will* hear me out, company or no," he snapped, jamming the door with his foot. "You can read, can't you?"

"You mean you cannot?" she retorted with mock incredulity.

He smirked at her reply. "Then read my essay," he said quietly, pushing the scroll towards her and removing his foot from the doors.

"Before you go," said Hermione, staring at the scroll and his slightly turned profile. "I would like you to assist me tomorrow when we complete the liberati tempus solution."

He bowed with an arch look.

"Thank you for your conscientious work, Monsieur Snape."

"No, *thank you*, Professor," he murmured lowly before leaving.

Hermione shut the doors firmly behind and smiled at the quietly conversing couple by her fire. As she unrolled the parchment, she found another smaller piece enclosed within it. "For Prof. HG" was scrawled on the top; the next line, presumably its title, was underlined. Intrigued by this clandestine message, she read on:

The Insouciant

Deceptively subdued with unspoken judgements

Weaving the loom with a ponderous air sublime

She does not see or hear the ample smitten cries

Of clamorous chiefs of lounging ways duly amorous.

Quietly censuring all with justified cavils

As the intoxicated mob waft more offerings

Tittering into her bosom sacredly fair

She finally declines with dismissive tone even

Tinctured with a last insouciant privileged tone

"Severus, how can I tell you it's impossible," she muttered as she hastily slipped the note into a book on her desk. Quickly composing herself, she drew herself up and rejoined Minerva and Dumbledore by the fire.

Footnotes:

"Pas de tout, professeur" means "Not at all, Professor."

The poem is mine. If it is terrible, I apologise.

My internet connection has been ghastly of late. The last chapter will be up (hopefully) by the weekend. At the very latest it will be up by 16GMT on Monday next. Thanks to all my kind reviewers. I know this is not an easy story to follow.

Chapter 8 - The Return

Chapter 8 of 8

An explosion in the potions class sends Hermione back to the 'present'. What will happen when she finds herself transported to the Potions Master's chambers?

Instructing the Professor

Chapter 8 The Return

The students slowly sauntered into the dungeons when they realised their truculent Potions Mistress was not at her usual perch by her desk. Not quite believing their luck,

most of them struck up conversations with their immediate neighbours and exchanged the latest gossips in harsh whispers. Lucius had, of course, been unable to resist the temptation to trip Peter Pettigrew; and much to the amusement of the class, the fallen diminutive Gryffindor merely rubbed his scarlet face as he remained splayed on the ground. The laughter, however, soon died when Sirius confronted the haughty blonde. Severus and James were unable to restrain their friends from the would-be scuffle, and realising this, Remus helped Peter to his feet and sought to mediate in the dispute. Hearing Sirius's demands that Lucius apologise to Peter, Remus was proud that his rakishly impulsive friend had decided to exercise caution. Though he was pleased with Severus and James's good sense this once, he was struck by Peter's unusual silence and his refusal to accuse Lucius of any wrongdoing.

Unable to separate Lucius and Sirius effectively, Remus contemplated stunning them. Prudence, however, dictated that such an action should only be a last resort. Just then, as Lucius flicked his hair back, Severus leapt forward and seized the back of his robes; Lucius struggled and snarled at both the Gryffindors and his friend. James and Remus did likewise with Sirius and thus managed to pull the two young men apart. The dungeon doors propitiously swung open with a reverberating thump as the two wizards stood flailing under the pressure of their friends' restraints. Hermione appeared in her usual grey dress and robes. Her chocolate eyes narrowed maliciously and swept across the room to the two sets of wrestling boys. "Fighting are we, Malfoy, Black, Potter, Lupin, Snape?" she said in her cold sneering French drawl. "Twenty points each from Gryffindor and Slytherin. Release the fighting cocks, Snape and Potter, or it will be *detention with me*."

At that injunction, Severus met her glinting eyes and reluctantly released his friend. Detention with Professor Grenarm! Oh la la! That woman certainly gave an impression of power even though she was thoroughly impartial. It was then that Severus knew what he wanted to do. He ultimately wanted to teach the dark arts; it was a feasible option, the Defence Against the Dark Arts position was open every year. He wanted to be exactly like his Potions Mistress. There was nothing better than having a sense of power and superiority over others, and teaching the dark arts to impressionable young minds would allow him to achieve just that. He realised that as an educator, he could also ensnare their minds, bewitch their senses and corrupt their souls. He curled his lips into a cruel smirk oh yes, it would be delicious indeed. His reverie was broken when Hermione closed the dungeon doors with an echoing bang that effectively silenced everyone.

"You may realise," said she in her low sneering drawl, "That we will continue the liberati tempus solution today." She gestured to the student shelves in a dim corner of the dungeon. "You will find your concoctions as you left them last session. If correctly made, they *should* have matured well over the weekend Instructions." She paused to wave her wand. "On the board."

The students stared blankly at her, a few trembled in fear and uncertainty.

She clapped her hands twice sharply, startling several students. "Have I petrified you? Get into your pairs and collect your cauldrons from the shelves! Monsieur Snape, help me with mine if *you do not mind*"

Severus bowed his assent. That was it, he decided he would teach. He would command fear and respect from lesser beings than he as Professor Grenarm did. He would return to Hogwarts and he would see her again and who knows? His Potions Mistress had been right; a low hiss is sometimes more effective than a shout. Apparently, image was the key to striking fear he would remember that. Bah! That could be easily done! He was a Snape after all. He gently stirred the cauldron as she cut up the ingredients and explained the procedure. She did everything with such precision whether it was grinding, cutting or mixing. She handed him the ingredients and instructed him as to the process, drawing the class's attention to how it ought to be properly done.

"As you can see, the solution should be turquoise at this juncture. Merci, Monsieur Snape," she coldly said with a curt nod. "You may return to your seat after you extinguish the flame. And you dunderheads remember, add the two drops of unicorn horn and salamander blood mixture *after* you take the cauldron *off* the fire," she announced quietly with great irritation.

She cast a withering look in Sirius and James's direction as soon as Severus sat down. "Try to remember that, Black and Potter!"

Following that thinly veiled warning, the class proceeded to work in near silence. Half an hour into their progress, Hermione looked up from her book and called, "Your solution should simmer for three minutes. If you did it correctly, a pale blue vapour should rise."

At the sounds of hacking coughs, she glided to the originators of the sounds still clutching her book. She looked down her nose at the perpetrators. "Ah," she exclaimed with a smirk on her face as she watched the cauldron prodigiously spit thick grey smoke into the air. Potter, Black, your dexterity has done you yet another service! Do you understand the words *'slow revolutions'*?" She looked pointedly at their messy worktable. "Clearly, youthful vigour isn't everything," she sneered in her drawl.

"No marks again, then, gentlemen." She was about to empty the cauldron with a wave of her wand when she stopped with a malicious smirk. "Perhaps you can remedy this?"

The Slytherins sniggered at James's discomfiture. Only Sirius stared defiantly at her. "Of course, I can," declared Sirius stoutly as he poured the dried fluxweed into his solution. Severus instinctively divined the intentions of his archrival and sprang forward from his seat with a loud "NO". He had wanted to grab her out of harm's way. One step shy from her, he heard the loud boom of an explosion and her belated command of "evanesco".

When the smoke had cleared, all the students gasped in horror as they realised that the open book and its gently fluttering on the floor was all that was left of their Potions Mistress. Severus ruefully picked up the copy of *The Paradox of Socrates*, which she had been clasping, and found his poem sandwiched between its pages. He glanced at the visibly shaken Sirius Black and pointed his wand at the culprit.

Before the events were aggravated, Headmaster Dumbledore descended to the dungeons and without waiting to have his request of admittance answered, he let himself in the classroom. All the students could see that he wore a look of grave concern.

"Oh dear," he murmured, taking in the scene and looking absolutely distraught. "Is everyone all right?" he enquired in a faltering voice as he scanned the room for his Potions Mistress. He firmly took Severus by the arm and tearing him away from Sirius, demanded an explanation. The information was revealed with alacrity and Dumbledore nodded and frowned at the appropriate intervals. Severus heard him murmur, "I hope she's safe where she belongs."

"Detention with me, Mr Black, beginning tomorrow!" announced Dumbledore clearly. He withdrew his wand. "And as for the rest of you *Obliviate*."

"NO!" cried Severus in protest.

Severus awoke with a start, shouting, "NO!" He sat up rigidly and rubbed his temples; he was disturbed by the images that had just bombarded his mind. It was if that Granger woman had No, it could not be. She's a mere child, how could she have... He quietened his mind and ran his fingers through his lank greasy hair, which was damp with perspiration. He scowled in spite of himself. She had been his teacher! Ludicrous! How could she have saved him from a rogue Bludger? McGonagall and Madame Hooch had done so; the latter was refereeing the match. Yet the images were so vivid. He shook his head and curled his lips at his own hallucinations. He tried listening to the sounds of the night but found that he could only hear his heart beating.

"Lumos," he muttered, lighting his bedroom. His mind was satisfied that he was still in his chambers and was most assuredly ~~not~~ in his seventh year at Hogwarts. He looked at his nightstand and found that his favourite books were neatly stacked there. He clenched his fists and felt the warm satin of his black bed sheets. "Good," Severus mumbled, closing his eyes, "It was only a dream; a bloody fitful dream!"

He opened his eyes and frowned with consternation. It had seemed real enough; it did answer several of questions and had successfully filled the blanks of the memories of his seventh year. "Only one way to prove this," he growled, pinching his prominent nose. He walked over to the bookcase in his bedchamber, which housed his rarely used books and carefully scanned its contents. After a short interval, he finally found the volumes he wanted. Picking up the book from the top shelf, he blew the dust off its spine to confirm its title. If he had paled upon reading the title, he turned ashen when he fanned the pages and found an old piece of parchment containing his handwriting lodged there. Replacing the book, he picked up the second book. After furiously flipping to his desired section, he proceeded to read the author's observations on time

travelling with trembling hands. "By Merlin!" he exclaimed, sinking into a nearby chair. "The Fates do toy with us mortals! Predestination indeed!"

Hearing a sound in the antechamber, he summoned his wand and hastened to investigate. A petite female figure had evidently fallen over a small side table, knocking over the books there in the process. Issuing a command to light the room, he was unprepared to find a figure clad in grey face flat on the carpet moaning softly.

"Just what do you think you're doing in my private rooms?" she hissed in a low French drawl as she strove to extricate herself from the tangle of her robes, the books and the carpet.

Severus quickly regained his composure at the familiar lilt. "Stop thrashing, insufferable creature!" he snapped in a cold sneer before casting a spell to restore everything to order. He smirked at her suspiciously narrowing eyes and bowed. "At your service," he purred, offering to help her up, pausing momentarily as he pushed aside thoughts of hexing her. "Why have you intruded in *my* chambers? How have you entered my sanctuary without breaking my wards, Professor Granger?"

Hermione's eyes widened and her hand flew to her mouth. "What did you call me?" she gasped, sounding very much herself.

"Silly insufferable woman!" he snarled in a low tone, stepping forward. "Do not try my patience!"

Expecting his colleague to back away, he was taken aback when she flung her arms around him in a tight embrace and kissed him several times on the cheeks. He could only clasp his arms firmly to his side and scowl. "Will you cease molesting me, Professor Granger?"

"Severus! I'm back! I'm back!" she muttered joyfully, squeezing him tightly.

Deciding that he would make the best of the awkward situation, he tentatively raised his hands to stiffly stroke her back.

She kissed his cheeks again fervently. "I'm so afraid this is a dream. Pinch me and tell me I'm back!"

"And bruise you so that you can complain to Dumbledore and McGonagall?" he sneered, curling his lips contemptuously and gently pushing her away.

"How long have I been gone?" she asked eagerly, grasping his hand with warmth.

"Do you wish to cut off my circulation?" he snapped as he sat next to her on the carpet. "Nineteen days," he answered coolly. "We should inform the Headmaster of your fortuitous return."

"Only over a fortnight! I've missed our tea sessions so dearly. I feel as if I've been gone for ages," she squealed excitedly and embracing him again. He noted disconcertedly that it was not an unwelcome sensation.

"My dear Professor Grenarm," he said quietly, breaking free from her grasp and dusting some imaginary lint off his grey nightshirt. "I think I know it all."

She gasped in embarrassment and disbelief as he rose to the fireplace. "Headmaster's quarters!" he commanded after throwing in the floo powder.

"Do you mind, my boy?" yawned Dumbledore's head in the fire. "It's three in the morn!"

"Professor Granger has returned *safely*," Severus said simply in a low purr.

"Jolly good!" replied the Headmaster, his eyes suddenly twinkling. "I will be down shortly."

"How long have you known?" she enquired softly as she took his hand.

He snatched it away. "The moment you fell over the table," he coldly explained, his eyes glittering as he traced his lips. "Everything makes sense now."

"What does?"

He narrowed his eyes at her and crept closer to her. "Stupid woman! Do you know how I've suffered with these half-recalled memories?" he spat accusingly.

"Oh, it's all about you now," she said crossly, folding her arms. "You haven't grown up at all, Severus!"

"And you are the yardstick for maturity and sensibility?" he growled in a dangerously low tone as he shook her by her shoulders.

"Well, I'm sorry! The pretence was necessary! I had to discourage the seventeen year old."

"Was it so *unbearable*, so abhorrent?" he spat, shaking her again. "When I've *unknowingly* spent half my life waiting for you..." He paled when he realised he had uttered what was foremost on his mind. He released his grip on her shoulders with a cruel haunted smirk. He sought to leave but was stayed by her hand on his.

"Do you know why I discouraged the seventeen year old?" she asked gently, lacing her fingers with his.

"What does it matter!" he hissed violently, unsuccessfully attempting to tug his hand from hers.

"I'll tell you anyway he lacked the self-reflective abilities of the forty-one year old. He was *not*my disagreeable forty-one year old visionary thinker."

Severus, though stunned by this, affected a nonchalant air. The pregnant silence was only broken when Dumbledore let himself into the chambers.

"Glad to see you being so amiable," he chuckled at the sight of both their sullen faces.

Hermione smiled weakly. "Did you ever finish Copernicus's time travel incantation?"

"Alas, no! I had to cast a memory charm though, ghastly business. Severus has told you about it, hasn't he?" He looked meaningfully at his Potions Master. Severus curled his lips and mumbled something unintelligible. "Yes," muttered Dumbledore as he nodded sagely. "Only Minerva and I kept this to ourselves for the past twenty years. Certain things, it seems, are meant to be. Surely, her initials were enough of a hint, my boy?"

Hermione looked askance at Severus when he scowled.

"Do not patronise me, Headmaster," snapped Severus irritably. "I know it's an anagram, *a very poor one*."

"Give me more credit than that!" she fumed, slapping his arm. "I needed to account for my initials on the handkerchief."

"You don't seem very promising now, so no credit," he coldly answered. "Explain, Headmaster, how she was meant to be in my seventh year."

Dumbledore chuckled. "You know the answer, my boy; spatial time is very flexible in the wizarding world if you know how to manipulate it." He yawned loudly and scratched his beard. "I'm not surprised you managed to break the memory charm. Your legilimency and occlumency skills have doubtlessly brought your slumbering sub-consciousness to the fore. Well," he yawned languidly again, "I need not elucidate anything for you. And Hermione, in case you're wondering, it's Sunday. Good night, all!"

Leaving them to their own devices, Dumbledore potted out of the dungeons and returned to his quarters.

"It's late, I should return to my rooms," Hermione whispered at last. Catching him thoughtfully tracing his lips with a deep frown, she added, "We can talk tomorrow during tea. Will you be all right on your own?"

"I hardly know," replied Severus quietly, barely moving his lips.

"Tell me why you waited then?" she asked, pressing his hand warmly and tucking his lank greasy hair behind his ears.

"I suppose you now make it your purpose to know the minutiae of my *riveting* life?" he snarled, sizing up the silent woman before him. "Other than your prattling every hour over it, what will I gain from this?"

"Just tell me!" she exclaimed in exasperation. "Why did you decide to wait?"

"Foolish woman! I wait for no one!" he spat. Catching her light shake of the head, he added vehemently, "You wish to know? Very well! I became a teacher *here* because of you! Are you satisfied now?"

Hermione stared at him, white with disbelief.

"Though I did not know it, you were my idol. Your half remembered presence haunted my rooms. You were everywhere and still *you did not return*. Then you came to Hogwarts as a know-it-all eleven year old. I felt a familiar sensation of compassion and respect emanating from you. I was unconsciously angry with you for using me so callously that I treated you with great injustice," Severus spat violently, his lips curling with distaste at his admission. "How else could I have acted? *If I had known!* By Merlin, *if I had known!*"

"Now, you do," she said, kissing his cheek.

He smirked and returned the pressure of her hand. "I've something of yours. *Accio Paradox of Socrates*." The book immediately flew to his outstretched hand. He handed it to her. "Open it."

Hermione did so and found the poem entitled *The Insouciant* within its pages. Although the parchment was yellow with age and the black ink had faded somewhat, it was still very well preserved.

"For the professor who sought to inculcate temperance in me," he purred smoothly in a low tone.

She sighed and carefully placed a protective charm the parchment on the poem before placing it on her pocket. Touched by his gesture, she summoned a quill and ink. She proceeded to write on the book's title page:

"For S.S.,

the professor who taught me more than potions.

H.G."

Returning the book to him, Hermione crept into the sofa and heard him whisper, "Bonne nuit, mon cher professeur Grenarm. Et fais des beaux rêves."

~Finis~

Footnotes:

"Bonne nuit, mon cher professeur Grenarm. Et fais des beaux rêves" can be understood as "Good night my dear Professor Grenarm and pleasant dreams". It is "mon cher" rather than "ma chère" because 'professeur' is a masculine noun.

Speaking of the infamous 'professeur' reference. I have received many emails as to my "incorrect use of the noun". Let me clarify matters. When I studied French, the prof told us, "There are some nouns that express entities with gender for which there is only one form, which is used regardless of the actual gender of the entity (example: *personne* (always f), *professeur* (always m).)" According to him, only the Québécois use the 'new fangled feminine term of *professeure*'. Since I belong to the old school of political philosophy, I subscribe to using the noun as always masculine. I shall give you my old prof's explanation of "A couple of years ago a position description posted to the LINGUIST list caused quite a bit of discussion: a Canadian university (Laval or Université de Montréal à Québec) was looking for "professeur ou professeure". The French speakers of France said (to paraphrase weeks of discussion) that this was silly - all the more so because the -e in the feminine was not pronounced - since the word "professeur", although grammatically masculine, could refer to women or men. The Québécois, on the other hand, insisted that non-sexist language dictated a new, clearly marked feminine form."

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