

# Shelter from the Storm

by livvy6

A seventh year is a victim of a Death Eater gang-rape. Now she must put the pieces of her life back together, with the help of Severus Snape, but no one can know she still lives. How will she be able to trust or love anyone? Inspired by Bob Dylan's "Shelter from the Storm."

## 'Twas in Another Lifetime...

Chapter 1 of 10

A seventh year is a victim of a Death Eater gang-rape. Now she must put the pieces of her life back together, with the help of Severus Snape, but no one can know she still lives. How will she be able to trust or love anyone? Inspired by Bob Dylan's "Shelter from the Storm."

□

Mary Anders

A/N: Warning! This is a very dark fic. It is not my intention to glorify violence or rape, but to show how rape victims cope with the aftermath. I realize this chapter is extremely graphic. Unfortunately, it needed to be for the rest of the story to unfold. So you have been warned. Thanks to my betas, Augurey27 and ImOnMedication.

\*\*\*

*I bargained for salvation and they gave me a lethal dose,*

*I offered up my innocence and got repaid with scorn,*

*"Come in, he said, "I'll give you shelter from the storm."*

*Bob Dylan, "Shelter from the Storm"*

I walked through the corridors alone. The cold air seemed to help. I pulled my leather jacket around me tighter. I was grateful for my old Muggle clothes. I still couldn't bear the sight of my school robes. But what did it matter, anyway? I was no longer a student.

I looked up at the sky. The stars were blinking, and all seemed calm and serene. I took a deep breath. The calm, cool air helped me sort out the terrible thoughts in my head. Sleeping was difficult. When I did sleep these days, it was because Severus made me a Sleeping Potion.

Once, I had been pretty. I had long, copper-coloured hair and hazel eyes. I had what my mother called a "swan neck," long and graceful. I had beautiful, white skin and an ample figure. Now, I wore turtleneck sweaters and jeans. My once beautiful "swan neck" had a long, thick gash as a memento from that terrible day. One long scar on the left side of my face from my mouth to my eye also remained behind. Cursed scars could never be healed.

I found it hard to look at myself in the mirror, found it hard to not look at any part of my body without wanting to cry. I just wanted the pain to end. I looked up at the moon, so beautiful, round, and perfect. A light breeze blew across my skin and played with the wisps of hair around my face. After they cut my long hair, I decided to keep it short.

Again, it didn't matter. There was no reason for me to pretend I could be pretty anymore.

"Are you finished?" a dark voice called out to me.

I whirled around with my wand at the ready. "Dammit, Severus! Don't do that!" I swore, angrily.

"You do realize you are putting more people than just yourself in danger if you are spotted?"

I turned back around and ignored him. After a few minutes, I felt him standing next to me. I knew what he was going to ask, but I didn't want to hear it, so I just blurted it out.

"Look, I didn't want to take the potion. I didn't feel like sleeping, so bugger off."

He continued to stand there and I was a bit shocked he didn't take my head off after saying that to him. He finally spoke, and when he did, it was with great deliberation, and my interest was immediately piqued.

"Mary, you cannot continue living like you have. You will either kill someone by accidentally hexing him or her into oblivion, and I certainly don't want to be that person. But, since the number of people who know your current living arrangements are significantly few, the chance that I will be your target is very high. Or, you are going to end up committing suicide because you are so angry at life. Either way, I don't see these options as preferable. Since I *am* your husband, why don't you allow me to help you...*handle*... your troubles in a more...*productive*... way."

I glared at him. *What did he think he could possibly do to help me?* I thought angrily.

"So, what do you suggest?" I questioned him with disdain.

"Let me think on it," he answered mysteriously.

\*\*\*

"Shite!" I cursed under my breath. Another potion ruined! Snape was going to have my hide for this one. I grazed the bottom of my cauldron to see if I had ruined it *sure enough!* I cringed. A black shadow appeared over me.

"Miss Anders."

I rolled my eyes and sighed before I turned to face the coal black eyes of my Potions teacher. He lowered his face to meet mine. "What precisely do I have to do to impress upon your imbecilic mind the importance of *paying attention?*"

"*Evanesco!*" he thundered. At once, my botched potion disappeared. I sat down in my seat with my hands on my head. When was I ever going to get this right?

After class was dismissed, Snape called me up to his desk. "Miss Anders," he began, "it is apparent to anyone that comes within a five kilometer radius of your person that you *lack* the temperament and aptitude for advanced potion making. Your work before your O.W.L.'s was acceptable, but since you began your N.E.W.T. levels, your work has been shoddy to say the least. If you want to become an Auror, you'd best change this, and on your own time. I don't coddle sixth years. And if you destroy one more cauldron, you will receive detention from me for the rest of the year. Have I made myself quite clear?"

I looked at him. I hated this man. *He was no teacher! A big bully was more like it. But, what could I do?*

"Yes, sir," I muttered.

"Fine," he said with a glint in his eye. "Get out."

\*\*\*

That had been my sixth year, when I was still a lanky girl with wild, copper hair and geeky glasses. I was a "late bloomer." Then that summer before my seventh year, I learned to train my hair, the glasses came off, and I changed overnight. I grew tall and long-legged. My breasts also became fuller. My mother was terrified for me to return to school. I loved my copper hair now that I had a figure to match its distinction. I loved putting it up in creative hairstyles or just leaving it down and curling it. I felt grown-up and secure in myself for the first time ever. I couldn't wait for school to start.

The school was soon buzzing with the gossip about my transformation. I laughed at the more ridiculous piece of rude gossip that I had performed an Engorgio Charm on my bosom and that was what accounted for my enlarged chest. I thought my transformation was complete. No longer the mousy, insecure, little Mary. I was now the formidable, sexy, and accomplished Mary! That was, until I resumed Potions class.

Professor Snape was an insufferable git, but he wasn't an idiot. Unfortunately for me, he also had the memory of an elephant, so another disastrous result of my "lamentable potion-making skills" had landed me in a yearlong detention. What a way to start my final year! It was as if he took great relish in the fact I was going to miss out on some dating experiences. The pleasure he took to make sure I spent my seventh year in detention made me think he was in cahoots with my mother! As I scrubbed cauldron after cauldron...without magic...during that first detention, I couldn't help but think vindictively that someone really needed to either kill this man or at least get him some fuzz.

The other Gryffindors thought it was hilarious that I had detention for an entire year...and my final year at that! Fred and George Weasley teased me over it day and night until I told them if they didn't shut their pie-holes, I would hex their bollocks clean off.

\*\*\*

Early one Saturday morning, I went out walking with Hermione and Ginny. Even though I was older, I really liked Hermione. She was a brilliant witch and quite mature for her age. She was also a Muggle-born, like me. We Muggle-borns had a bond unlike any other relationships with our classmates. We knew what it was like to be different. So, that morning Hermione came to my room and told me she and Ginny wanted to talk to me about the incident at the World Cup.

"I'm dead serious, Mary," Ginny piped up bravely. "It was disgusting what those Death Eaters did to that Muggle family."

Hermione stood shaking her head. Finally, she spoke up. "People are going to have to be on guard. Muggle-borns like Mary and I aren't safe. Look what happened two years ago when You-Know-Who possessed Ginny into opening the Chamber of Secrets?"

Ginny shook slightly in remembering. "Well, I know my Dad is going to make sure more attention is paid to those we know are really You-Know-Who's followers."

We each exchanged knowing looks and in unison all said, "Malfoy."

We were silent for a while, and then Hermione spoke again, but this time in a dreadful voice. "Seeing the Dark Mark in that sky, I just know You-Know-Who is coming back."

Ginny broke the gloom. "Look, we're going to have the Triwizard Tournament this year...lots of new boys from Drumstrang *Ladies*, it's going to be a fabulous year! Be positive!" she smiled cheerfully.

We all giggled then. But I didn't know what was coming around the bend. As the weeks passed, we were all quickly distracted by the insane turn of events. Harry Potter was a *fourth* champion in the Triwizard Tournament. I should have been aware, on guard at least. My new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, Mad-Eye Moody, called it "Constant Vigilance!" I should have been... vigilant... After all, I wanted to be an Auror.

It's hard to recall exactly what had happened; my mind is still fuzzy on some details. Others are painfully too vivid. When it all began, I was serving my detention in Snape's dungeon when two men came in the classroom looking for the Professor.

"Girl, where is Snape?"

I looked around. I had been completely involved with my tasks. I hadn't thought to notice his comings and goings.

"I dunno. Sorry."

The other man looked at me strangely. "What's your name, girl?"

"Mary Anders," I answered, suspiciously.

"I don't know any 'Anders', do you Goyle?"

"No. What year are you, girl?" asked the man whom I assumed was Goyle.

"I just started my final year."

"How old are you?" Goyle pressed.

"Seventeen."

The men chuckled. Goyle whispered something to the other man and that man laughed. He spoke up in a demanding voice. "I don't know no 'Anders'. Now, tell us the truth. You a Mudblood?"

My mouth dropped. No one had EVER called me a Mudblood. Not even Malfoy, though I'm positive he'd said it behind my back. But, never to my face!

"How dare you!" I yelled at them. In a split second my wand was drawn, and I was ready to have a go at them. Suddenly, Snape appeared out of nowhere.

"Miss Anders!" he bellowed. "Put your wand down. NOW!"

I shook my head, not taking my eyes off the two and steeled my grip. "Never. Not until these vermin apologize for calling me a Mudblood."

Before I knew it, my wand flew out of my hand and was caught deftly by Snape. "Miss Anders, your detention is over. Leave and return to your common room immediately!"

The timbre of his voice bordered on the murderous, and since he did have my wand...taken by a nonverbal spell...the bastard...I gave up the fight. I whipped off my apron, threw it on the floor and then in one fell swoop cleared the counter of cauldrons, sending them clanging and exploding on the floor. I marched out of the classroom and, once safely out of sight, gave a hand gesture that I only wish I'd been brave enough to do to in front of all their smug faces.

When I reached the common room, I was so angry I could have screamed. I told Hermione all about it, but what worried her most was that I needed to get my wand back from Snape. I told her how utterly creepy and revolting the men were. She said their names were Crabbe and Goyle... as in the fathers of the Crabbe and Goyle that hung about Malfoy as his pseudo-bodyguards.

"And also Death Eaters!" she concluded. "Mary, get your wand back, whatever you got to do...do it!"

The next day was Double Potions. Instead, I got double trouble and a tongue lashing from Snape that I thought would leave physical bruises, he was so vile! Professor McGonagall stood there by his side in his office while he railed at me. Finally, she spoke up.

"Severus, I think she now understands the importance of maintaining her temper. I'm sure this will never happen again." She looked straight at me and jerked her head towards Snape.

"Yes, Ma'am," I said, chastened. "I deeply regret my actions, sir."

Snape whipped out my wand out from his desk, and I gladly took it from him.

"Detention, Miss Anders, will continue tonight." He leaned in close to me from across his desk, and in a dead calm said, "And if you don't want to me to continue to haunt your steps into your Auror Training...and believe me, the Auror Department would gladly accept my assistance...please try to maintain some decorum and hold your infernal tongue."

I turned and left.

Detention was going to be out with Filch that evening. I was to collect some various herbs and mushrooms for the Professor's stores. I couldn't stand Filch, but at least I could get some air and not be stuck scouring my life away in the dungeon!

It was late, nearing curfew, and Filch and I were heading back out from the edge of the Forest. I remember seeing two hooded figures and a red light flashing.

\*\*\*

*Breathe, breathe, breathe.... I can't move my arms, can't move my legs... Breathe, breathe. I can't see, I can't see.*

I realized I was covered in a cloth mask. My stomach was churning and flipping, and I was burning up *Why am I so hot? Well, idiot...your heart is racing as if it's going to explode!*

The hood came off, and I saw a group of cloaked people in black with masks on. I was in some dungeon, but not the dungeon at Hogwarts. The smell wasn't the same. I looked around and saw I was naked and my arms and feet were bound to the corners of a bed with magical ropes. *Oh God! I thought! What h-has h-happened to me?*

I remember I screamed and screamed. There were no words. I just couldn't stop screaming. And they all laughed. My terror made them laugh. They spoke amongst themselves, like bidding. First, second, third, there were numbers said. Then one of them came to my side and took off his mask. Lucius Malfoy. *Son-of-a-bitch!*

Words were coming from his mouth, but I couldn't register them. My head was shaking, quivering in absolute terror. He softly stroked my long, thick, copper hair. Then, in a swift jerk, he yanked the length to one side and sliced it off with a knife. I thought, *My beautiful hair I had started to love so much!* He threw the wad of hair on the floor. Then, he mounted me and leaned into my ear, whispering, "Whores don't deserve such long, luxurious hair, now, do they?"

Then it started.

A thousand knives pierced between my legs as he forced himself inside me. His blonde hair kept falling into my face. I frantically twisted my face to breathe, anything to get his hair off me. There was laughter. Then another man came, but he wanted to cut me. He slashed my breasts, stomach, and legs with a knife. Then, another round of a thousand knives thrust inside me worse than before. The magical ropes cut into my flesh as I struggled and strained. My ankles and wrists were bleeding. I felt my whole body was being ripped in two, and I felt gushing blood pool around my bottom. When it was over, another man came and grabbed my face as he mounted me. He looked at me through his Death Eater mask and covered my mouth with his thick hand.

"You will not scream. Anymore." He then placed a Silencing Charm on me. I realized I had never stopped screaming from the start...before the first rape.

There was laughter from the men. "Crabbe," said Lucius, "why do that? We love to hear the squeals!"

"No, Malfoy," I heard one Death Eater say, "Crabbe prefers to hear his own squeals!"

Laughter, laughter, laughter, just went on forever. *When was it to end?* I tried to count. *Six. Three down, three to go.* Crabbe dismounted and howled, "**SECTUMSEMPRA!**" A deep slice to my face appeared from my corner lip up the left side of my cheek. He released me from the Silencing Charm. I began to choke on my blood. For the first time, I felt I was going to cry. Lucius took notice of my choking, horrified face as another Death Eater started undoing his trousers. He knelt down to the side of my face to speak to me in a sickening, sweet tone.

"We dearly wanted to wait for the guest of honor, but he seems to have been too late. He really should have been your first, but alas!"

"Go, McNair!" he hollered.

I closed my eyes for another assault, when all of a sudden, I heard footfalls and then crashing sounds. *Another one!* I mourned to myself.

"What is the ness...?" He stopped short.

The man in the mask came to me and took stock of my face. *I know this man. I didn't know how, but I know this man!*

"McNair get off her! Lucius, what the HELL are you doing?" he shrieked.

"Oh, come now, Severus!" Lucius started playfully.

"YOU!" I half-screamed and half-gurgled in blood. I spat out the blood in his direction.

The mask came down and there was Severus Snape. I swore to myself I will kill him. *I will let the others live...for now, but him, I'll kill...all because he is my teacher. He knew. He was to watch for me.* I remember thinking, *If he touches me, I don't care if I have to rip my hands off to free myself, I will kill him before I let him lie on top of me.*

I could see Snape was livid, but I was too busy in my own murder plans to fully comprehend what was happening between the two men.

"The Dark Lord is back, Severus!" Lucius smiled as he clapped him on the arms. "We should be rejoicing and celebrating. In only a few months, he will have all his powers back! Don't you see?"

"What I see here, Lucius, is my student being raped and tortured. Has it slipped your mind that I am still under Dumbledore...through the express wishes of the Dark Lord? I am to remain until his return. If this gets out, I'll be sacked and there will be NO ONE to spy for him. You idiots! You have complicated and compromised my station!"

There were mutterings. I swear I heard the killing curse mentioned, or to modify or Obliviate my memory...something, but I was so woozy. The man McNair, straddling me, punched my face. "OY!" he yelled, "wake up girlie, I'm next!"

"No, you are not!" Snape thundered. "Get off her now...release her!"

McNair growled as he slowly dismounted me. Lucius released my hands and legs, but I could not move them. I was so sore, the more I tried, the more my body shook in rebellion. I wanted my nakedness to be covered, and I wanted to die. Then just when I thought it was over, McNair took his wand, pointed it at me, and hollered, "**SECTUMSEMPRA!**" Snape rushed to me, throwing McNair across the room. My throat was sliced badly. I couldn't breathe. I was dying. I was dying. The last thing I saw was the angry face of my Potions teacher hovering over me. The last thing I thought was that he would now rape me and I would die.

## Imagine a Place Safe and Warm...

### Chapter 2 of 10

Married and ensconced in the dungeons, Mary faces the realities of her new life and her anger.

A/N: Thanks for sticking with me thus far! Big thanks to my betas, Augurey27 and ImOnMedication. Thanks also to Angel Mischa, and Sempra for their patience!

\*\*\*

I was lying in a hospital. I slipped in and out of consciousness. There had been a kind nurse, and also an unknown person I couldn't see, but was aware of a presence that remained by my side. My legs were propped up and separated. There was so much pain. The mediwitch tried to explain the damage, the healings, and the curses that could not be healed, something...

The next thing I knew, I was facing Madam Pomfrey. Hers was the sweetest face I could hope to see. I was at Hogwarts. I wasn't dead. Then I remembered what had happened to me. I wanted to die. I tried to cry, but I couldn't. She told me she had to charm my eyes so I couldn't cry and ruin the trial healings that were being done on my face.

"What trial healings?" I mouthed. I could barely speak because of my slashed throat.

"Oh, Professor Snape has been working feverishly to find the right salve for your cuts. Ever since you came here from St. Mungo's! My dear, they were cursed cuts. They may never heal." She started to cry. I turned from her, and I only could think, *Snape is here. I'm going to kill him.*

\*\*\*

Unbeknownst to me, while Madam Pomfrey sat by my side, a very tense staff meeting was taking place in Dumbledore's office.

"Albus," began McGonagall, "we need to fully discuss exactly what occurred to Miss Anders. I demand you and Severus tell me everything."

Dumbledore sat in his chair wearily. "Severus, you need to tell this story." His voice was full of sadness.

"Very well, Headmaster," Snape began. "Miss Anders was serving detention with Filch during the night in question when two Death Eaters ambushed her. She was then stupefied and taken to Malfoy Manor."

McGonagall's face went white with anger. "What in the bloody hell was she...a Muggle-born...out serving a detention for you with Filch? Unprotected!"

"Minerva," Snape said uneasily, "the evening prior, Messrs. Crabbe and Goyle came to visit me. A dark revel was on their mind. I found them nearly accosting Miss Anders, so I threw her out, and thought it would be better for her to do her next detention away from the dungeons. I should have been there. I accept full responsibility. My only explanation is that I believed I needed to be on guard in the dungeons for their possible return. While there, I received an Owl to meet them at Malfoy Manor for a special party to be thrown in my honor." He stopped talking.

"Go on, Severus!" McGonagall bellowed.

Snape shook his head slightly in disbelief. "I almost didn't go, and the thought of that...is difficult." He clasped his hands behind his back and clenched his jaw. "But when I arrived, I found things were already in play. I cannot reveal to you how I managed to get her out alive, but I did." He looked away from them, feeling deeply ashamed and angry.

McGonagall looked at Dumbledore with shock. "Albus, I'm at a loss. What shall we do? We can't Oblivate her memory. She is marked. Her wounds, they are cursed!" She rounded on Snape. "Have you seen what they did to that poor child? Seventeen! She will never have children. She is permanently disfigured inside and out. And what about her mother? Her mother was her only family! Who will tell her the Death Eaters...?" Snape winced inwardly as her words sliced at the guilt he already felt.

"No, Minerva," Severus said as he cut her off. "There was no Dark Mark. It was McNair, I'm positive. He was...*on*...her when I stopped them." Snape turned nearly purple trying to explain the situation. "He never got to rape her, so he cut her throat with a curse."

"And then went and killed her mother?" Minerva finished, shaking like a leaf, staring at Snape.

"I believe so," Snape agreed.

Minerva turned to Dumbledore. "Well, Albus, what will happen to this child?"

"Minerva, she is no longer a child. You know the law. Sixteen is the legal age to marry. And as you pointed out, she is seventeen. She is an adult," he replied sadly.

McGonagall took a deep breath before speaking. "Albus, this GIRL is a Muggle-born. Yes, she is seventeen, but she has only lived in our world such a short time, please!"

Dumbledore stood his ground. "Minerva, she is seventeen and has been compromised. Raped or not, she has been publicly disgraced. The news has already leaked out from St. Mungo's about the state of her condition and that she was *intimate* with more than one man. Alone, she will become an outcast, or worse, a potential target. Do you not think these men will try at any cost to find her and finish what they started? Her very life is proof of their treachery! We must do everything in our power to preserve and save this girl from any and all harm, whether it be physical or then...in later life...social!"

McGonagall threw her hands up in mock futility. "What do you suggest we do? Lock her in a tower until He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is finally revealed and defeated?"

"Not exactly," Snape said calmly as he stared into Dumbledore's eyes.

Dumbledore nodded sadly in silent agreement with the younger man. McGonagall was dumbstruck. "What? I don't understand!"

"The only course, Minerva, is for Severus to marry Miss Anders and keep her with him secretly in the dungeons until we can sort out this situation. Until then, we'll spread the rumor around that Snape has had her put away. The marriage will not need to be revealed until we can bring her out of hiding. Once we are able to bring her out in the open, the marriage contract can be revealed, thus stopping any rumors that Snape was forcing a young girl to live with him for... *immoral* purposes."

"Insane!" McGonagall shrieked. "This is barbaric and..."

"Minerva," Snape interjected, raising his hand. "Please, this is a marriage in name only, to protect her. I will never touch this girl. I am the one who saw her in her shame. As far as the gossipmongers know, I am the one who brought her to St. Mungo's in her condition; therefore, I must be one of the men involved! But importantly, I am the only one who can understand her feelings of betrayal, violence, and can deal with the backlash of the anger that will be emanating from her. This level of anger and rage will cause her magic to become volatile and unsafe around the students. This girl is going to need a place of greater safety than what her *common room* can give her. I will take all of it on myself, after all, if I had only been on ... *time*..." Snape could not finish; he held up his hand in apology and turned away from his colleagues, his eyes stinging with tears and his anger rising dangerously. *Damn this insanity! I'll never be free!* he thought.

"Albus, where do we go from here?" McGonagall whispered.

"Let us go and check on Miss Anders. Poppy will appraise the situation, and we will tell her only the information she can handle."

\*\*\*

Madam Pomfrey's lips pursed together in anger before she spoke. "I have never, *ever*, seen such barbaric treatment on a human being!" Her voice shook with feeling. "Her cervix was destroyed. It had to be removed at St. Mungo's. She will never be able to carry a child. As if... as if that ... oh!" She burst into tears. McGonagall put a supportive arm around her.

"I'm alright." She cleared her throat. "She is laid with a sheet separating her waist-up and waist-down. Her entire perineal area was ripped to bits. It had to be completely reconstructed. The Healers at St. Mungo's were able to do that well. She'll be normal once the swelling reduces. The cuts, however, Professor Snape...I just don't see how it can be working. They are just too powerful." Snape stood mute and pale, unable to speak.

"Can we see her?" asked McGonagall quietly.

"Yes, but as I said, she is on the bed with her legs elevated and separated so she can heal properly. So please, do not look between the second and third sheet. She is not aware... I don't think she processed what I told her. So please be cautious."

\*\*\*

"Mary, Mary, dear,"

I opened up my eyes towards the soothing voice. "Professor," I murmured. I turned and smiled at the Headmaster and then saw *him!*

My eyes bulged and my chest seized as I felt my body convulse. I started to scream, but nothing but a hoarse sound emitted from me. My throat burned and my eyes rolled

up in my head. Madam Pomfrey rushed over and pushed the three out. Once she gave me a Calming Drought and was able to rouse me, she asked what the matter had been.

"Snape," I mouthed.

"Professor Snape," she urged.

"He did this...made this happen," I wheezed.

"Oh no!" Poppy said, shaking her head. "Mary, Professor Snape saved you. You would be dead if he had not found you and brought you to St. Mungo's. My dear, he was with you the entire time. He was desperately worried for you."

All I could think was that bastard had been with me, near me, seen me. I then passed out.

As I lay unconscious, a very upset and disturbed Snape was vomiting in a nearby rubbish bin.

\*\*\*

It was weeks before I was able to have visitors. Once I started getting up and walking, I went to the loo for the first time, I saw my face and throat in the mirror. My hands clawed at my reflection. I was overcome with shock. I wanted to scream, but could not. I gripped the sink in horror. It wasn't me. My eyes were hollow and sunken in, and my face was *mutilated!* Madam Pomfrey heard my grunts and moans, came to me and held me. I cried silently. By then, the charm against my being able to cry had been lifted. I wanted to die; I just wanted the nightmare to be over. I asked her over and over, in my hoarse voice, "Where's my mum?" It was then Madam Pomfrey felt I should be ready to have some proper visitation. Hermione came to cheer me with all the exciting news of the Triwizard Tournament, how Harry had fared, and her new friend from Durmstrang, Viktor. I could barely register her words. She was talking, but I couldn't hear her.

"Hermione?" I interrupted, still staring off into the distance. "Where's my mum? Is she dead?" I looked at her when no answer came.

Her eyes were full of tears. "Look, I brought you chocolate frogs, your favorite!"

"Thanks."

"Mary, Dumbledore wanted me to tell you something. You need to know about what happened after Professor Snape took you to St. Mungo's."

I started to breathe heavy. "What did that bastard do?" I seethed.

"Professor Snape?" she asked confused. "No Mary, Professor Snape didn't do anything wrong. It's your mum."

I cut her off with my hand. "She's dead, isn't she?"

She nodded, tears falling down her face. "How did you know?"

"She would have been here, near me. Hermione, I was dying. They destroyed everything...I just knew." I started laughing as the tears came running down my face. I just sat there, stupidly, crying all over my lap full of chocolate frogs.

Madam Pomfrey came over. "Okay Poppy," I said with my best fake smile as I wiped my eyes dry. "I need to know everything now, 'cause I got a sinking feeling there's a lot more to divulge. So why don't we all just get the whole bloody show over with?" As she walked out, Hermione excused herself and I sat alone, waiting for something that wasn't going to set well with me. I decided crying was going to get me nowhere. Anger, and lots of it, would serve me better.

\*\*\*

"I want you to go to hell."

That was my answer to Professor Snape's proposal.

"If I could, I would get up and kick your sorry arse into next week."

His eyes narrowed as he looked into mine and then began to speak roughly to me. "Understand, Miss Anders. This is a precautionary step. No one here wants you dead or further harmed. I can protect you. This is not a real marriage. Just a piece of paper and shelter."

"You can take your offer and shove it up your arse," I said bluntly, fixing my eyes on his like daggers. "Because I know...you may have all these people around here fooled, but not I. I know your game, and I know you were the one who orchestrated this whole thing. Lucius told me. You were to have me first." Tears were coming down my face, heavy and hot. "But, you were too late for YOUR party. You also took the side of those wankers when they called me a Mudblood in your classroom and DISARMED me!"

I started to rise out of bed, and the adults around me instinctively backed up. I saw McGonagall and Snape slowly reach for their wands as I compulsively toyed with my wand in my hand.

"You disarmed me, you...you bastard! You took my power away, and when you did that, you showed them they could do whatever they wanted with no repercussions for their actions. *You*, in my mind, raped me first! So, go to hell. You've always hated me, you've never been nice to me, so get away from me." By now I was heaving and couldn't breathe. Snape, being the closest, grabbed me by the arms to stop me from collapsing to the floor.

"Don't... touch... me!" I gasped.

Poppy tried to intervene, but Snape cut her off. He ignored me and placed me firmly in the bed, covering me with the blanket. He came within an inch of my face, fastened his eyes on mine, and began to speak to me in an ice-cold tone.

"Right, Mary. This is how it is going to be. You are going to accept that I tried to do my damndest to ensure your survival. I risked a great deal to get you out of that dungeon. If I only wanted you there in the first place, why would I insist on leaving with you and not partake of you as the others had?"

I tried to interrupt, but he cut me off.

"I know, you believe I raped you after you lost consciousness. I did no such thing. I bound your wounds, tried to heal your wounds, and delivered you to St. Mungo's where I spent two weeks watching over you so the Death Eaters would not get you again and kill you. I do not want you to die. But I am guessing you wish I had let you die. Well, go ahead and hate me. Nothing will change. You and I WILL sign that paper, and you WILL live with me in the dungeons where I can watch over you. That is all there is to it. Now, let's get on with it, shall we?"

I looked at Professor McGonagall and the Headmaster. They both nodded in silent approval.

"Fine," I muttered bitterly.

In minutes it was over, and I was married. Snape was told his could "kiss his bride." He took my left hand that now had a gold band on it and kissed it lightly. I didn't look at him.

\*\*\*

Time passed and a week before the Yule Ball, I was officially well enough to leave the hospital. I went down to Snape's rooms and found only one bedroom with a King-sized bed.

"You're off your nut if you think I'm sleeping with you," I yelled at him. My voice was back, but deeper because of the damage. I liked it. I could yell as well as he could now.

"Mary," he said exasperatedly, "this is a King-sized bed. There is no reason you cannot remain on your side, and I on mine. Besides, I will not risk a night ambush. You will remain within reasonable reach for me to watch over you."

"Fine!" I hollered. I grabbed a pillow and threw it at him. "Take that and transfigure your sofa into a bed. You can sleep in the same room, but I will be damned if I will get in the same bed with you!"

He looked at me, I think, with fear or respect. I couldn't tell. But he did say this,

"Dumbledore is right. You're not a girl anymore."

"Too right you are, Severus," I retorted as I unpacked without looking at him. "Your friends took care of that." I looked up at him standing there, frozen solid in anger. "Didn't they?" I goaded him with a sickly smile and condemning eyes.

\*\*\*

"What do you think you are doing?" he asked me sharply as I got into my bed.

"Going to bed," I answered with an annoyed tone.

"You are wearing your clothes."

Now I was angry. "Right," I muttered to myself as I got up to face him. "I will wear what I want, when I want, and how I want. Have I made myself clear?"

"I don't think it's healthy," he replied softly, his temper rising.

"Well, shite, Snape, I guess it's a good thing then it's my body and not yours. So PISS OFF!"

His eyes flashed and I saw a vein flicker on his temple. I started at him, daring him to take me on. He backed down and turned away from me.

Actually, I was really shocked how much verbal abuse he took from me. It was really a wonderful treat to have my own personal whipping boy to vent my frustrations on. Although, things did come to a head after a couple of weeks, when Snape announced I take either a shower or a bath.

He confronted me first thing in the morning as I was trying to go pee. He blocked the doorway and told me in no uncertain terms I was not leaving the bedroom today unless I thoroughly washed myself.

"How dare you, you greasy git! I wash every day!"

He stood at his full height, in an attempt to tower over me, which was not a whole lot, since I was very tall for a girl, but in an attempt to exert himself over me, he crossed his arms over his nightshirt. Even in his nightshirt, he was still daunting. "You do not wash thoroughly. Tell me, when was the last time you took off all your clothes and bathed? Or even changed your clothes? You have lived in these disgusting Muggle clothes for two weeks. You smell. *Wash*. Or I will cancel all my classes and stay with you all day until you comply." His face was emotionless, like stone.

He had me good this time. He was right, but I couldn't. And I was at a loss as to explain. I started pacing up and down like an animal.

"Look, I get it. I understand, you're right. I admit it. I stink. But you don't know what you are asking me to do. I can't." I rubbed obsessively on my wrists, feeling the remnant of scars left from that terrible night.

He took a couple steps toward me with his arms still crossed in front of his chest. Quietly, he spoke. "Mary, I know exactly what I'm asking. I'm asking you to be naked. That has to be frightening. You haven't been naked since that night. You've had bandages to cover you and sponge baths to cleanse you...temporarily...but now the time has come for you to face yourself. You have to look in the mirror and look at your scars. You're going to cry, and it's going to be very emotionally taxing for you. Today, you don't have to do anything else if you don't want to. Just do this one task."

"I can't face it. I can barely look at my face in the mirror." I turned away from him. I heard him moving, shuffling.

"Mary, look at me," he demanded.

I turned and saw he had slipped his nightshirt off down to his waist. His white, thin chest was scarred. I knew what he was thinking, and it wasn't going to work.

I crossed my arms and rubbed my eyes with one hand in frustration. "Look, it is not the same for women. Men have scars and its virile...sexy, even! But for me...no...I'm disgusting and disfigured." I eyed him with venom. "You can't change how I feel about that!" I yelled.

I sat on my bed, turning my face from him as he covered up in silence. He then grabbed the Floo powder and hollered into the fireplace. "Minerva, a word?"

I tuned out; I didn't care what he had to say. Then he turned to me and said, "Miss Granger is coming down and she will help you bathe. You know how meddlesome she can be. Very thorough, no nonsense, that girl! I expect you to be properly groomed by lunchtime."

"I thought everyone was to be told I quit Hogwarts, that I've left the country, in *myshame*," I spat out bitterly.

"Miss Granger is nothing if not eager to please. She will keep this confidence. Also, it will be good for you not to be completely without other companionship around your own age."

He left me to go wash and dress. He came out dressed in his usual black robes. He waited for Hermione to come down. He whispered his orders to her and left.

\*\*\*

Hermione poured a warm bath with lavender. She said the lavender would soothe me and make me feel comfortable. She took a bunch of towels and covered the mirrors so I would not have to see myself if I chose not to. "One step at a time," she said. I started to cry as she took off my sweater. My arms went across my chest.

"Oh, Mary!" she cried. "What have you done?"

I had taken bandages my first night in the dungeon, two weeks ago, and bound my breasts to make them flat. "I was scared. I didn't want to be anything that would cause..." I didn't know the words to say how I felt.

"You were afraid Professor Snape would hurt you if he saw you as female?"

I broke down as she undid the bandages. "I don't know how to live like this. I wish I didn't have breasts. I am so scared all the time!"

Hermione just nodded and helped me out of my pants and knickers. "How are you healing down there?" she asked.

"Good, started my cycles again. No more pain after the reconstruction was finished and healed."

She helped me into the bath, and it felt so good, I sighed in delight. She let me soak there and rest.

"Can I give you my appraisal as one female to another?" she asked timidly.

"Okay," I mumbled, a little embarrassed.

"Professor Snape did a good job with the salve. The cuts on your breasts and legs are just of the lightest silver. You still are beautiful, Mary."

"Hermione, my face, my neck ..."

"Mary, your eyes, they are such a beautiful hazel, and your hair... 'Copper-top.'" I giggled, recalling my old nickname. She spoke again, slowly. "You still have beauty. You have beautiful shoulders, a curvy waist ..."

"Stop, please, I'm torn between being repulsive and being *something*. I don't want to be anything that *he* would find desirable."

"You're really scared Professor Snape would try to hurt you?" she asked incredulously.

"He is technically my husband, and what if as I get older, or as time goes by, he thinks, 'Hey, I deserve something,' and forces me?"

"You need to talk to him, Mary. Believe me, Professor Snape understands more than you think. From what I heard, he was horribly abused by You-Know-Who, years ago."

That bit of information made my chest tighten and my stomach ill. "I'll think on it," I said finally.

Hermione helped me bathe and was very patient each step of the way. I cried a lot, but after it was over, I felt very proud of myself. When I went to my bed, I found a large oversized flannel pyjama shirt and pants on a freshly changed bed.

"Well, I wonder!" I said to Hermione.

"Here is a note," she said, handing it to me.

*Mary,*

*I took the opportunity to have your bed linens changed and also to acquire this Muggle pyjama for you. I thought it might be more comfortable than sleeping in your jeans.*

*Severus*

Hermione smiled and patted my back. "See?" she urged. "He really isn't wicked."

I raised an eyebrow at her and squinted my eyes. "Hermione, what the hell have you done with your teeth?"

She laughed and told me the story of Malfoy's hex and how she managed to get her teeth magically adjusted.

"Hermione," I sighed as I dressed in my new pyjamas. "You failed to tell me how Snape reacted."

"Oh, it's not... really..." She tried to brush it off.

"Ah!" I said. "Tell me."

After she finished her tale, she was quick to tell me all her excuses for him as I shook my head in anger.

"You're just like Harry...you want to see the worst in him!" she blurted out. "You just don't know how bad it is for him. There is this old Death Eater from Durmstrang here and remember our teacher, Mad-Eye Moody? He's been dogging Snape's every step. He even searched his storerooms and office. I thought Snape was going to have a fit when he wanted to check in here, but Dumbledore put his foot down and said he trusted Snape. So, Professor Snape really has to be on his guard. If he weren't being a prat to us Gryffindors, it could really blow what he's trying to do."

"And what is it that he's trying to do, Hermione?" I asked in an accusatory tone.

"Protect you!" she said incredulously. "Mary, this man has a protection barrier around you ten walls thick! He is constantly on his guard. And yes, he is as foul-tempered as ever, but I really am starting to think there is more to him than what meets the eye. Be grateful, Mary."

She looked at her watch. "Gotta go, lunch...Professor Snape will be here soon. Bye."

I raised my hand in goodbye. I sat down completely gobsmacked. *Okay, Mary, I thought. Time to take the first step...into trust.*

## A Creature Void of Form...

*Chapter 3 of 10*

Mary lowers her guard with Snape, and they settle into their new life. A disguised visit to Diagon Alley and a fight near the Forbidden Forest bring about a new direction and purpose in Mary's life.

A/N: This is probably my favorite chapter in this story. Please Review and let me know how you like it! Thanks again to my betas, Augurey27 and ImOnMedication. Thanks also to all the admins here at TPP!



\*\*\*

I paced the floor that evening, waiting for him to complete his bathroom rituals. He came out and found me standing right in his way. His face contorted into immediate distrust. Never before had I allowed myself to be in any form of close proximity with him. I saw his eyes flicker to my waist.

"Don't worry. I'm wandless." I smiled as I raised my hands.

"How... *unusual*," he muttered as I let him pass.

I didn't know where to begin. So, I blurted it out. "Look, um, go ahead and sleep in the bed. I think you have earned a degree of trust, and I think it would be good for my own personal progress to demonstrate my... *need* to trust someone again... *a man*, that is." My eyes darted around the room, waiting for his reply.

"Very well," he said calmly. "But I refuse to sleep in this bed while you hav*that*."

He was pointing to my wand. I pressed it against me as if it were my first-born. "I need my wand, Severus, I need... to ..." I stopped talking. He was shaking his head. "What?" I yelled.

"Mary," he said in his silkiest voice. "I am not going to have my bollocks hexed off me in my sleep. Yours is a violent temper that only exceeds my own because of your youth. You are hot headed, stubborn, and vindictive. He walked to me and whispered, "You exude wrathfulness, and I am quite aware of your thoughts."

My face turned slightly and peered into his black eyes. My mouth opened slightly. "I knew it!" I whispered. "You read minds!"

He rolled his eyes and walked away to his side of the bed. "I do not! Perhaps one day when you are older and more mature, we can discuss the more advanced areas of magic that I am capable of producing. Now, give me your wand!" he snapped impatiently. He held out his white hand, and I debated whether or not to comply. I heard his impatient sigh and gave it over.

"Wait!" I burst out suddenly. "Where is your wand?"

"My *wand* is by my side at all times. But, I do not need a wand to enforce my wishes. I will stay here and you will stay there*Do not* make me hex you," he warned dangerously.

I was affronted. He had nothing to worry about. I, on the other han, was the one to be afraid*Well*, I harrumphed. *This is a change... but definitely!*

\*\*\*

*I was being shaken violently and severely. Someone was screaming. A hand came down hard over my mouth. I bit down as hard as I could. A yelp came from the owner. I was frantic to escape. Where the bloody hell was I?*

"MARY!" Snape's voice boomed out in the darkness. He said, "*Lumos*."

I was huddled in a corner and was soaking *wet. I was screaming!*

"Mary!" Snape shrieked over my screams.

I stopped. I was dizzy. He had me by my arms. I finally regained control of my senses. Then I started to cry. I collapsed onto him like a broken doll and cried. He rocked me in his arms and held me tight. Finally, I stopped crying and drew away from him.

"I peed my pants," I choked out, embarrassed as a three-year-old.

"It's okay," he said. "Let's get you cleaned up." He walked me into the bathroom. I was so weary from the release of crying I didn't realize he was taking off my pyjamas and washing me. All the while he spoke to me in soft tones.

"It's my fault. With our new sleeping arrangement, I completely forgot to give you your Sleeping Potion. It took me years before I could sleep without one. I used to wake up in terror, the Dark Lord...his methods of training and bending you to his will is terrifying. One does not forget easily. But, the memories dull with time. Some of his followers take on so well with his taste for torture, others, like myself, have no taste for it. Unfortunately, if you don't want to participate, you still have to be there and watch. I regret you ever had to know this part of the Wizarding World, Mary, more than you'll ever know. There now, all clean. Let's get you dressed."

I allowed him to lead me, naked, back into the bedroom. He dressed me in one of his own nightshirts. He bent down and looked into my eyes. I was in a daze. "Shock," he muttered. He led me back into bed and adjusted the covers. I waited while he brought me a phial to drink. I slept well that night. I think I felt safe and perhaps grateful that I had friend.

\*\*\*

One evening, there were noises coming from right outside the rooms. I jumped up, the hairs on the back of my neck rose in anticipatory fear. Snape was already up and fuming. After he had left, I heard yells and muffled threats. When Snape finally returned to the bedroom, he was livid.

"How dare that nosy, son-of-a-bitch!" he growled.

I kept silent. I didn't know if he wanted my questions or input. He raved for a while about Filch, Potter, Mad-Eye Moody, and something about "insinuations of hiding something in his rooms."

"Well," I laughed. "Aren't you?"

"That, Madam, is not the point!" he snarled.

With that, he went to his side of the bed.

\*\*\*

"Mary, we need to discuss your attire," Snape said absentmindedly from his desk.

"Why?" I asked.

We were in the middle of my lessons. Since I was married, there was no way for me to continue as a regular student. Besides, I was in hiding...confined to his personal rooms during the day and after curfew, his offices and classrooms. Snape explained my new "educational situation" to me as the Muggle equivalent of being "home-schooled." He was still my teacher, but not only for Potions. He taught me everything he felt to be relevant to my being a N.E.W.T. student bound for Auror Training. Spring was upon us, and I was getting restless in the dungeons. That was when I started to pretend I was taking my potions to sleep, but instead, I'd slip out and enjoy the night air. That was until I got busted by my husband and had been given notice that he would "think on" what to do to help me deal with my anger.

Snape was still focused on an essay I had written as he spoke. "Tomorrow we are going to Diagon Alley. I don't think it would hurt if you were to done proper attire at times

to counterbalance these Muggle clothes you insist on wearing."

"Like what?" I asked suspiciously. "Look, you are not getting me back into robes. Fuck that!"

"Language, Mary." Snape frowned in disgust.

"No more school robes." I was deadpan in my seriousness. I had regained more of my memory of that terrible night, and I could now recall being unable to move from being Stupefied, having those men strip my robes from my body while being blindfolded, rubbing themselves against me. Then someone had pushed their finger inside me. I was helpless to fight them and had to endure listening to their lewd comments about the "schoolgirl virgin."

Snape eyed me and relented. "Very well. But you will wear what I think is appropriate."

"And what about what I think is appropriate?" I snapped at him.

"*Alright*," he said. I thought I saw a smile creep across his face as he turned to lay down my essay. He faced me again and said, "Tomorrow is your eighteenth birthday, is it not? Well, go on then," he said as he crossed his arms against his chest. "*Enlighten me*," he said sarcastically.

"Well," I said. "What's wrong with what you wear? Black is the 'timeless classic,' after all."

"Indeed, and you want to wear the pants as well?" he added sarcastically.

"Perhaps," I replied evenly. "I could have both. And I could wear the pants when I feel I need to."

"That would be all the time, Mary," he said dryly as he turned from me to pick up my essay. "Let us not quibble over a pair of trousers. There might indeed be a use for you to have them, if all goes well."

"What?" I asked.

"Later...now this essay. What is it you are trying to convey? It is nonsensical!"

\*\*\*

We went to Diagon Alley after Snape created a Polyjuice Potion to conceal my true identity. He had stolen a hair from an unsuspecting Muggle woman who had my similar dimensions and height a week prior. Obviously, he had been thinking of this excursion for a while now, since the potion took so long to create. We took a flask full with us, just in case we were detained longer than one hour. I received my first grown-up witches dress, all in black of course. I required my dresses to be form fitted and imposing, just like my husband's attire. Snape approved of my choices with a smirk, and then we went to his clothing store and there shocked the life out of the poor wizard who worked there when I asked to be fitted for trousers. After some stammering and stalling from his end, and my threatening to hex him from my end, it left Snape roaring with laughter upon our exit...with my trousers.

"What are you laughing at?" I snapped at him, finding his laughter rather irritating.

"Oh, you my dear. You are a very evil-tempered woman!" he chuckled. "Pity, though," he mused. "If only there were some *skill* and *power* behind those barbed threats, you might be invincible."

I rounded on him in the street. "I am perfectly capable of doing extreme harm to anyone who dares to cross me with my wand...or without!" I added for good measure.

That evening after curfew, Snape took me for a walk along the edge of the forest. I remembered that it was the first time I had been there since that terrible day. Feelings of rage and vengeance came over me, and my old prejudices and anger towards Snape came rushing back.

He stopped me and said, "I can feel your rage, your hate for me. What are you going to do about it?" He tapped his long, white finger against his lips as he walked a predatory circle around me. I made sure he did not leave my sight. "I recall you telling me the day I proposed marriage to you that you would...what was it? 'Kick my arse into next week?' Have you actually *considered* doing it, now that you are mended?"

"What are you playing at?" I demanded with my wand drawn at his chest.

"Oh, no, Mary," he said menacingly as he waved his hand and whisked my wand out from my fingers. "Let's do this the Muggle way. Let's fight. I'll let you hit me first, since that seems to be all you can think about right now."

I ripped off my jacket and pushed up my sleeves. "Fine. You're a right foul bastard! I know you have the Dark Mark. You *are* a Death Eater, probably a rapist in your own right. I wonder, how many women you've mutilated over the years?" I hoped I was goading him into a fury. It was my only chance to get him off his guard so it could be a fair fight.

It worked. His jaw clenched and his eyes went blacker than I had ever seen them. I swung and decked him across the left side of his head. He bowed, but didn't go down. He straightened and laughed sadistically.

"Have you ever heard the term 'cruel to be kind?'" he asked, rubbing his sallow cheek. "My turn."

He swung and I blocked his blow with my left arm. I sank my right fist into his stomach. His long white fingers savagely grabbed my left wrist, and I was swung around. He forced me on my knees, gripping my wrist behind my back with one hand and his other arm wrapped around my neck. I could feel him pressing himself into me and forcing my back into his chest.

He tightened his grip and I winced in pain. His breath was hot on my neck. He whispered in my ear, "You have the rage and the will, but you *lack* knowledge. If I were a true Death Eater, you'd be dead right now. I don't rape. *I kill*." With that, he threw me on the ground and rose over me. I slowly got up, never taking my eyes off him.

He extended his hand in friendship. I accepted it heartily. I didn't care where he took me from here. He knew how to kill. I wanted to learn it too.

## I'll Always Do My Best For Him...

Voldemort has returned! Snape barely survives the encounter with his old master. Mary makes a life-changing decision as she treats her wounded husband.

A/N: Thanks to my beta, Auguerey27! Hope you enjoy this chapter. I worked hard to keep it all canon compliant. Warning: Squick, and the aftermath of violence involved.

\*\*\*

For the next two months, my life began to change in ways I never thought it would. My husband, teacher, and mentor became everything to me as he led me down the path to darkness. Occlumency, Legilimency, Wizard Dueling, fighting "Muggle style", as he called it; I worked harder at fighting and put more energy into these particular disciplines than I thought my body was capable. My husband was far more disciplined than I, but he was older and more experienced. After one successful lesson, however, I had come very close to disarming him. He told me in all honesty that at eighteen, even with all the Dark Magic he knew, I would have been able to match him in a duel.

I would be awakened at 2 or 4 in the morning with questions shouted at me. Intimate questions would assault my mind while he stood above me screaming "*Legilimens!*" right out of a deep sleep to catch me off my guard. That was hard to discipline. My mind rose too quickly to anger.

"Control your anger!" he would pound into my head over and over again. There were times I felt my mind was being raped, and I feared I would sink and succumb into madness. Indeed, there were moments I thought I was losing my sanity. But Snape was ever present, never relenting; he would never let me fall. By June, I was starting to tread water.

"You have disciplines now that I had not acquired until I was in my early twenties," he confided in me one day as we walked together after an afternoon lesson in the forest. He turned sharply to face me. "Now, you have the knowledge and the patience. If Crabbe, Goyle, or MacNair ever had the misfortune of meeting you today, you would be able to disarm them and even kill them with absurd ease. Now Malfoy, he is very good at dueling. *Very good, indeed.*"

At the mention of his name, I stopped dead in my tracks. "He was the first one," I whispered.

Snape whirled around. I never spoke to him about that terrible day. He never knew any details, at least from me.

"He was the one who took my virginity," I said softly, my eyes glazed over, lost in memories.

I looked up at my husband. "I want him to suffer—cruelly."

"As do I," he declared, reaching out his hand for me to take.

After seeing me to the castle, he was to make his way to watch the final portion of the Triwizard Tournament. As we walked in unison, I peered up from under my hood to watch my husband's face. It disturbed me that we had spent so much time together, and I could still feel so numb towards him. I didn't know if I was even female anymore. I just wanted to be a machine that could never be hurt. I looked up at my husband, my model, and I smiled.

"What cold eyes you have in that smile, Mary," he appraised.

"Thank you, Severus," I replied as I turned from him. I never saw the frown on his face.

\*\*\*

He came back so late. I had been afraid. As soon as I saw him, I knew something was amiss.

"What happened?" I barked.

"Cedric Diggory is dead, the Dark Lord has returned, and Harry Potter escaped from him barely alive. Oh, and Mad-Eye Moody was actually Barty Crouch's son in disguise—using MY POTIONS!" he roared.

He moved about so fast, changing shirts gathering papers. I couldn't grasp it all.

"Wait, WAIT!" I yelled.

He stopped. "Mary, I have to meet the Dark Lord, NOW." He showed me the Dark Mark, black as sin.

"I've kept him waiting for two hours. I can not be distracted!" He swung on his cloak and said goodbye.

I thought to myself, *they would all be together: Crabbe, Goyle, Malfoy, and MacNair. I want to be there. I hope there will be pain for them!*

I stopped myself. "*My God! Listen to me—I'm just so full of hate!*"

I wanted to sleep, but I had no potion. I paced up and down, tried to study, but couldn't focus. Finally, he came back around four in the morning, and he was a mangled mess.

The door crashed open and he staggered in. He tried to brace himself, but fell to the floor.

"Oh my God—*Severus!*" I screamed. I turned him onto his back and assessed the damage. He had cuts and burns, just a bloody mess! I didn't even know where to start. I grabbed his shoulders and pulled him all the way in and closed the door. I grabbed a pillow and put it behind his head, kneeling at his side.

"Severus," I called to him.

He moaned in pain. "Severus!" I called louder.

"Wake up! What happened?"

"Cruciatus," he whispered.

*Bloody hell!*

I hesitated. I didn't know how to begin treating him or if I should. *Oh, well, he's seen me naked!*

I slowly eased off his clothes, at times even ripping parts that were too mangled. I got my wand and levitated him onto the bed *Why the hell did I not think of that before when I drug him through the door?*

"Because you are Muggleborn," he laughed painfully.

I lifted my head sharply. "I thought you couldn't read minds!" I snapped.

"When the emotion is so focused and powerful, you might as well be screaming it down the hall," he murmured as he chuckled softly.

It took a long time to treat all the wounds. He told me what to use and where. The worst was when I pulled down his underwear and saw he had been tortured in his private areas. My throat reacted with the urge to retch at the sight. He told me to get a specific bottle, and I applied it to his genitals. His face was red with shame as he turned his face from mine. I focused on the task and refused to shrink from him.

"No need for shame, Severus," I said stoutly as I applied the medicine. "I know how you feel. You know how I feel. There is no shame with us."

After all the wounds had been tended and he was finally asleep, I slipped into the bathroom. I closed the door softly and slid down to the floor and cried. I didn't know which pain was worse: my own or witnessing his. One thing was clear: his pain was mine, just as he had taken my pain upon himself for me. I looked down at my bloody nightshirt and bloodstained hands. His blood. I choked as I sobbed soundlessly, wrapping my bloodied hands around my legs shaking in agony. I knew then we were truly married. No other act could be more sacred than the acts of mercy we had both preformed on each another.

When I finally opened the door, I felt as if the scared, hurt, little girl was gone. I felt suddenly much older and wiser than my eighteen years. Why? Because I felt for the first time I knew nothing for certain, except the need to care for the man who had sheltered me—who was now entrusted to me.

I sat on the bed and moved his head onto my thigh. I stroked his hair and looked hard into the face of my husband. When he awoke, he got up without complaint and dressed.

"We're going to my home for the summer," he announced weakly.

"Fine." I stood and began packing. He stared at me and frowned.

"Mary," he called.

I looked up at him. "Yes?"

"You undressed me, treated my wounds. You saw ..." His face turned to a shade of brick.

"Yes, Severus," I admitted. "I treated all your wounds exactly in the manner you advised."

"You *touch*ed me," he whispered, almost accusatory.

"Yes," I replied as I looked deep into his face. "You are my husband. It is my responsibility to care for you. That includes your physical state. And it is also my honor."

I turned back to resume my packing. I never saw the look of respect for me on his face.

## Beauty Walks a Razor's Edge...

### Chapter 5 of 10

Severus and Mary settle in at Spinner End for the summer. Unknown to each other, the physical aspect of their relationship now is on their minds.

A/N: Thanks again to my betas, Augury27 and ImOnMedication! Please review! I want to know your thoughts!

\*\*\*

"So this is Spinner's End?" I asked as I looked around the sitting room.

"Yes," he answered dryly. "I know it's not much, but it is home."

I appraised the house sharply. *So like Severus: isolated and neglected.*

"Well, let's settle in then, shall we? We've a lot of work to do."

"What?" He turned sharply in my direction.

"This house is in disrepair. It's right tip! My mother raised me better than to keep an untidy house! And I also believe in equality. So, you are going to pull your weight as soon as you are feeling better to help me get this 'tip'...tidy!"

"This room here," he stated, as his hands swept the sitting room, "is mine. You will not be doing any of your womanly domesticating in here, is that understood?" he growled.

I scrunched up my eyes and debated. "Fine," I acquiesced. "I respect your need for a space of your own. "But..." I turned back from my exit to make one last request. "I am allowed to peruse through your books in this room. I assume the old rules still apply? No one is to know of my existence?"

"Correct," he nodded in agreement. "Fine, you may 'peruse,' but for God's sake, be respectful and don't misplace or put them back out of order. Understood?" he barked. He obviously was not happy about the prospect of my "womanly domesticating."

"Fine," I agreed. We shook hands on it. *Good Lord, it's like we are signing an armistice agreement, or something!*

So life settled in for us during the summer. Severus was gone a lot, doing work for the Order, and also meeting frequently with the Dark Lord. His returns from those meetings grew to become less vile as time passed, but unfortunately, the Dark Lord was still a vindictive and sadistic bastard. I grew more familiar with my husband's body, probably more than he would like, but someone had to tend to him. I learned the patterns of the old scars and memorized the routes of the newer ones. As I washed and massaged every inch of him, I felt more and more in tune with each muscle, bone, and vein. I silently claimed his body as mine as I continued to touch and caress him while I applied the medicines for his healing. More than once, his body would react to my massaging touch, and I would gently stroke and bring him to orgasm. It never took

long. I believed it was purely physiological...involuntarily release...as he was unconscious. I never felt squeamish about it. I figured it was what he really needed. I longed to touch and care for him, for his body was mine and everything I did was a sacred act of mercy from a wife to her husband.

After a month, I started to think about the strangest thing. I realized that after all that had happened to me, and the fact I was married, plus that I had seen and touched my husband's nakedness as much as any real wife, I had never been kissed.

I was making dinner one night. Severus was reading the paper, and I just started crying. I was overwhelmed by my sudden realization, and I felt such a loss that was indescribable. My legs gave way, and I sat down at the table and tried to calm down. Severus came over to me and sat in the chair next to me.

"What is it?" he asked darkly.

"I I don't know if I can talk about it. I don't know how to explain," I said numbly.

"Try," he urged.

I told him all my thoughts, what had been occurring during the times I nursed him when he returned from the Dark Lord wounded, how I had been touching him to relieve him, and then finally, my realization of never being kissed. After I finished, I felt so stupid and weak. I had been scared to tell him I had been bringing him to orgasm while tending to him. *What if he thinks what I did was dirty?* He had no reaction to that bit of information, but he did react to my realization of never having been kissed.

"Do you want me to kiss you?"

I knew I heard the words. They just seemed so far away. "What?" I asked, shaking my head.

He fumbled with the napkin on the table. *I said, do you want me to kiss you?* he repeated in a very soft, shy voice.

I shook my head and tried to laugh lightly. "Please, I'm not 'kissable.' I'm sorry...I don't know what came over me. I apologize for putting you in this situation," I stammered out.

I jumped up and continued my work, furious with myself. *As if anyone would ever want to kiss me! I am UGLY! I know what my scars look like. Who wants to kiss a mouth that has a huge gash running from it? Get your head straight, Mary. This marriage is a piece of paper and shelter. That is all.*

I was far too consumed with my self-loathing to notice the sad look on my husband's face as he watched me make dinner for him. Eventually, he went back to his paper until I announced dinner was ready.

\*\*\*

Hermione watched Snape as he made his way out of the kitchen to leave Grimmauld Place. No one asked him anymore to stay for dinner. His answer was always a firm "NO!" Hermione and McGonagall were the only ones at Grimmauld that knew the reason why: Mary Snape.

It had been so long since Hermione had been able to talk to her friend, and she was concerned. She made sure no one was in the hall when she leaned out of the adjoining room next to the front door and hissed at her professor.

"Professor!" she whispered. "In here!"

Snape obliged her, knowing her reason to speak to him would be about Mary.

"Yes, Miss Granger?" he asked impatiently.

"How is she?"

"Doing well, thank you. I'm sure she sends her warmest regards."

Hermione bit her lip. "Is there any way that I can visit?" she asked hopefully.

"Absolutely, not!" he hissed at her.

Hermione was taken aback. *Why is he so angry?* she thought.

Snape sighed. He hated having to explain things to children. "Miss Granger, you and Professor McGonagall are the only ones in this wretched domicile to have the privilege to know the more intimate details of my private life. My wish is for that situation to NOT change."

"Professor, I would never...!"

Snape raised a hand to silence the girl. "Miss Granger, I have relied on your abilities of secrecy and discretion for months now. I take it you are truly invested in Mary's future happiness?"

"I am!" she answered resolutely.

"Fine. I have the following chore for you, as tedious as it might be; however, someone must do it. I assume, being the know-it-all you are, you are familiar with Occlumency and Legilimency?"

Her eyes widened, and she began to start a lengthy answer to his question.

"Yes, yes," Snape interrupted her warily. "I don't need the text-book answer. I am perfectly aware of this branch of magic. However, there will come a time when Mr. Potter will need to learn and apply this discipline in order for...well," he stopped short, not sure about how much he wanted to divulge.

"Let me put it to you this way, Miss Granger. Can I count on you to make sure Potter actually *works* on his abilities to develop the discipline of Occlumency? Will you use your endless, badgering abilities to make sure he remembers it is vital that he practice and discipline his mind?"

"Of course, Professor. Don't worry. But, when...I mean, how will I know when he starts the lessons?"

Snape smiled wryly. "Don't concern yourself, Miss Granger. Believe me, you'll hear about it." And with that, he turned swiftly around and was gone.

\*\*\*

I was searching through the endless volumes of books that walled his sitting room when Severus came back from his meeting.

"Granger sends her regards," he said dryly.

"Oh, thank you. I do miss her!" I exclaimed sadly.

"It has come to my attention that the Dark Lord and Potter have formed some sort of mental bond. It is far too dangerous to have Hermione, or anyone, know exactly where you are staying. I hope you won't object to having my sole company for a season?" he asked roughly.

"Of course not," I whispered.

I went to go sit down and settle in, but he grabbed my hands and led me to the sofa. The book fell to the ground in my shock, but I allowed him to guide me out of my trust for him. He sat us down, leaned in close and gently rubbed his nose against the scar on my face. I turned in revulsion, but his hand grasped the back of my neck and kept me close to him.

"Do I repulse you?" he whispered.

"No," I whispered brokenly. "I repulse myself."

"Mary, you are so beautiful," he murmured in my ear. "You've been so good to me."

He lightly traced my scar first with his fingers and then his lips. His breath was ragged, and I closed my eyes and allowed myself to become lost in his devotion. His fingers and lips trailed down to my lips. I opened my eyes and watched him kiss me ever so chastely on my lips.

He drew back and asked, "How was that?"

I nodded my head, my voice choked up and my eyes full of tears. I wanted to tell him that was the only virginity I had left in me and I was so grateful it had been him to take it. Instead, I burst into tears and fell onto his chest, sobbing. He held me and rocked me gently in his arms. Later, after I fell silent, he took my hand and led me to our bed. After we changed, we lay on the bed, the feeling so intense and powerful.

"May I hold your hand while we sleep?" he asked.

"Yes," I whispered.

I slept soundly that night, with the thrill of my husband's hand on mine and the memory of his kiss on my lips.

The next morning, over breakfast, we discussed what had transpired between us.

"It's so strange. All the intimate things are ruined, but the simplest things... Sorry, I can't explain," I said embarrassed at my futile attempt to explain my meaning.

"Perhaps intimate acts will not *always* be frightening," he mused quietly. "We could, perhaps, slowly have something in the future. Things take time. But, it's important for you to know there is more to you than your face and figure." He shifted uncomfortably in his chair.

I saw his face was lost in thought. *He is such a different man when alone with me,* I thought. *Perhaps I could... well... grow to love him.*"

## Just to Think it All Began on an Uneventful Morn...

Chapter 6 of 10

Back at Hogwarts, Severus and Mary finally come to grips with their growing feelings and fears about their desires for each other. Warning: Angst and Explicit Sexual Content.

A/N: Hope you love this chapter. It was exhausting to write, but I was happy with the result. Please review! Again, thanks to my betas, Augurey27 and ImOnMedication.

\*\*\*

We returned that fall to Hogwarts and threw ourselves in training. Severus expressed his fears over and over that a battle was looming and it would not be long before I might be able to avenge myself and reclaim my life. When he spoke like that, it seemed ridiculous to me. *Reclaim my life?* I thought. *This is my life. He is my life, my shelter, protector, mentor, teacher, husband, and friend. I could never leave him!*

One day when we were in the Forest, unaware, a pair of eyes had stumbled upon us. We dueled and fought fiercely that day, thinking our Protective Charms around us could not be breached. But a very determined person had followed us and cast off our charm to see what was to be invisible to the world. There we were, both in formidable black, dueling and hexing with amazing speed. The spy gasped as I took hits and slashes from Severus without a reaction to pain. Then at times when I was able to block his jinxes, gave as well as I got. We were a spectacular sight of form, agility, grace, and speed.

\*\*\*

Later, that night, a very determined Hermione sat up in the Gryffindor common room waiting patiently for Harry to return from his Detention with Umbridge. Her thoughts were all determined. She had it all figured out. Harry was going to teach whoever wanted to learn Defense against the Dark Arts in a real way! Just like how she had seen Professor Snape teach Mary in the Forest.

\*\*\*

"Wandless Magic?" Severus exclaimed incredulously.

"Yes," I said resolutely. "I think you should consider it. After all, you've said yourself that wandless magic can give you an edge above your opponents. With my age, considering what's ahead, it would be reckless *not* to try."

We were back on our rooms after my dueling lesson. Severus had just finished applying dittany to my wounds, and I was busy repairing the tears on my clothes.

All I got in return was a derisive snort from my husband who stood darkly in front of me with his arms crossed over his chest.

"You do realize," he said condescendingly, "that it takes a considerable amount of effort and time to discipline oneself to that ability?"

I broke out in a confident grin. "Effort? Got it. Time...all I have is time. Why not?"

His dark mood did not change. "You can do extreme harm to yourself or anyone within close proximity if not executed properly. It is an art, not a whim that you think you can challenge yourself to accomplish. You are far too young, and I won't teach it to you."

I stood up to challenge him. "Then what becomes of me if I am disarmed? Disarmed and a wand is pointed at my chest? How do you propose I get out of that predicament?" I yelled at him.

"I would expect that by now, you would not be foolish enough to get yourself into such a dunderheaded situation! I would expect you to make sure your opponent never gained the upper hand!"

*He is very angry, I noticed. No, not angry, I deduced. He's afraid.*

I took the opportunity to manipulate the situation to my advantage. "I see the fear in you, Severus. You are scared that's exactly what will happen to me. Admit it!" I demanded.

I went too far. He grabbed my arm and drew me to him. "You and I need to get some things squared away," he growled. He threw me from him and I fell onto the sofa.

Immediately, as I fell on the sofa, I saw the regret on his face. "I apologize for getting...physical." He began to pace back and forth, as if he were unsure what to say to me. I watched him, tensely, waiting to jump and run out of reach if need be.

"I have reached an impasse. I don't know what to do or how to proceed from here." He refused to meet my eyes. I released my guard. He was acting *disappointed*.

"What's wrong?" I asked. "What has upset you? Is it that I'm still not where you hoped I'd be with my training?"

He smiled slightly.

"You are an innocent. Truly, no matter what has happened to you, you are still a very innocent and *pure* girl." He emphasized the word girl.

Now I was angry. "I'm no girl!" I shouted, using my deep raspy voice to run home my point.

He gave a snort as he walked over to me. He got so close, close as the day he'd kissed me. Slowly, but with force, put his arms around me in a lover's embrace. His one arm wrapped itself around my waist while the other wound its way the back of my neck. He drew me in, crushing my breasts against his chest. My body went rigid and my face turned towards the wall.

He whispered sultrily in my ear, "I have grown to care and deeply respect you, more than I should or ever wanted. You don't look like a girl, nor have your experiences helped me stay in the reality that you are only eighteen. I don't want to lose you. I want you badly. My hope is for one day you to look at me and not be repulsed. Do you think you could ever care for me or desire me in return?"

My throat constricted and he jumped back from me. I retched violently on the floor. I was so humiliated and angry I didn't think. I grabbed my wand and screamed, "*Incarcerous!*" Ropes burst forth from my wand. Snape blocked my hex and the ropes fell to the floor. He muttered, "*Evanescio*"; and the ropes disappeared. He sighed as I collapsed onto the floor, exhausted.

He stood over me and then squatted down to pick up my wand. I was paralyzed, not from any spell, but my own fear.

"Mary, I will not ever touch you like that again, EVER... unless you specifically ask me to. I just needed you to understand, without a doubt, my feelings for you."

"I trusted you," I whispered.

He lifted me up from the floor and cast a Scourgifying Charm to clean up my vomit. He then sat me on the sofa. He sat next to me and clasped his hands together between his legs. His head was bowed in thought.

"I needed to know where I stood with you. I admit my approach may have been wrong. Mary, do you have any feelings for me in a way a wife could have for her husband?"

I shook my head, laughing. "I told Hermione, that one day you would think, 'Hey, what's in it for me?'"

He shook his head as in an emphatic no.

"Whatever, Severus!" I snapped as I got up from him. "Why is it always sex with you men? It's *disgusting*. What I did for you when you came back from being tortured and I cleansed your body and held you and touched you...that was REAL. Now, what? You want to break it down to...climbing on top of me rutting like a pig?"

'STOP!' he hollered. "This conversation is over. I apologize. It will never happen again."

"Severus, I don't want to sleep in this bed with you. Please let's go back to how it was," I said, shaking all over. I glanced up at him and saw the embarrassment, humiliation, and pain etched on his face. But, he acquiesced, without a word. I felt immediate disgust for the words I said. *But, what do I know? Isn't that what sex is: a man dominating you, forcing himself inside you?*

He strode angrily to the bathroom and did not return for quite some time. It was so silent in the room. I thought I heard a strange noise emit from the bathroom. Shortly after, Severus returned in his nightshirt, ready for bed.

I was so confused and scared. I never had the energy to think about anything other than surviving. He brought over my potion, but I wasn't ready to stop my thoughts. It was probably midnight when I called out to him.

"Severus?"

"Yes?" he answered.

"I like dueling with you. I feel more comfortable when we are sparring, when I'm on my guard. It's like we're on equal footing. And, I like it when we laugh. You're my friend, my teacher, and my mentor. I was just getting used to that. Why does it have to change?"

"It doesn't. Don't think that it does."

"But you said you were at an impasse," I reminded him.

"No longer, Mary. I am a man. And it's important for you to understand that a REAL man does not force himself on a woman, in ANY manner. My issues and difficulties, I shall handle privately, do not bother yourself over them. Alright?"

"Okay," I said confidently. "Then you can come back to the bed."

"Not tonight, Mary. Tomorrow. Take your potion."

Then, I slept.

\*\*\*

Christmas time was approaching and I found it extremely depressing. I missed my Mum, and also it marked the anniversary of my marriage to Severus. We had returned to our normal routine after that disastrous conversation, but the easiness and familiarity was gone. I knew that my husband had grown to care for me as a woman, but he felt very conflicted about it since I was so young. I noticed my body was changing again. My breasts grew larger and my hips became rounder and fuller.

Ever since I started developing at sixteen, I had always looked a little older, but now I was positively without a doubt a woman. After all, in April I would be nineteen. I actually was able now to spend time naked in front of the mirror and examine these changes. I was enthralled at the fullness and width of my chest and hips. I had now a true hourglass figure. Hermione had been right, the scars on my body were barely noticeable now. I still applied the salve in hopes one day they would disappear altogether.

I also was having the strangest feelings and physical sensations. Many times after being in close contact with Severus, I would feel tingles over my body and the hair on the back of my neck would prickle. I noticed my knickers became damp after we had been dueling or arguing. I also noticed my clothes were getting smaller, and then came the day my husband noticed it as well!

I had cast Clothing Charms to enlarge the circumference around my bust line, but it would only last so long. I wasn't very good at it. I had noticed wearing my Muggle clothes were no better. Not only did my jeans no longer fit my hips but also my sweaters only accentuated my increased bosom. I had learned that the hard way! I had put it on, and when I had come out of the bathroom to eat breakfast, Severus kept on shifting his eyes and was trying very hard to not look at me. Finally, he had excused himself and went to the bathroom. I had heard a sharp moan. *Oh my God!* I remember thinking. So I had rushed to change my clothes and had applied a quick charm around the bustline before he returned. So, knowing what I knew now, my only recourse was to wear my dresses and charm the bodices. I had thought of taking one of Severus' robes to cover up with, but I had not gotten up the nerve to do so. Besides, he would have asked questions, and I had wanted to avoid the topic at all cost.

One day, as I worked on my Transfiguration lesson, I thought to myself, *Soon I'm going to have to start binding my breasts again if I can't get these Clothing Charms to last longer!*

"Mary," Severus called from the opposite side of the room where he had been sitting, reading.

"Yes?" I muttered, not looking up.

"Mary! Look at me!" he said sharply.

I looked up, cross that he used that tone with me.

"You are exposed!" he said with piercing eyes.

I swiftly looked down, and sure enough, my charm had vanished, and there I was in a bra that was far too small and my breasts shamelessly half-exposed for him to see, due to the bursting of the breasts through the now ripped buttons. I normally would have gone mental with fear and revulsion. Instead, I fought back a giggle that came from the back of my head. A thought passed in my mind that I wished he could have seen all of my breasts! The thought of the look on his face at the sight of my nipples DID cause me to giggle.

"Are you laughing?" he asked in a shocked voice.

I grasped the opening of my bodice and pressed it tight against me. "No," I said calmly, although my face felt so warm, I knew I was blushing.

"We need to talk about another shopping trip," Severus replied as he turned back to his book. I watched him and saw the corners of his mouth twitch. His eyes glanced back swiftly at me and saw I was staring at him.

"Mary," he drawled softly as he lowered his book. "Do you know how you are looking at me?" he asked seductively.

I was shocked. "What?" I asked.

"You were looking at me in a manner that was very blatant in its intent. Is there something you wish to share with me?"

My jaw dropped. How unfair that I should be so transparent! For I had been thinking about straddling his lap without my bodice so I could really show him how big my breasts had gotten.

"Can I put on one of your robes?" I asked.

"Of course," he replied, taking up his book again. "But, tomorrow, we are going back to Diagon Alley for more clothes."

"Pants, too?" I pushed.

"No", he said firmly with one eye glaring at me from the side of his book. "You are eighteen, Mary. It's time to be a woman."

\*\*\*

"You are getting to be too good at this!" he panted.

We were taking advantage of the Christmas holidays for some outdoor sparring lessons. The deep snow gave us a challenge to keep moving quickly as we normally would.

"*Protego*", I shouted, repelling his hex. "*Petrificus Totalus*," I sounded back.

Severus blocked my hex again. He was laughing now.

"*Accio Snape's Wand!*" I screamed in fury at his laughter. His wand soared to me and I caught it deftly in my hand.

Snape stalked over to me menacingly. His eyes were dangerously dark and sultry. I was breathing hard now. He continued to come closer. I pointed my wand at his chest and he pushed into it.

"Now, what do you do, Mary?" he whispered.

"On your knees," I ordered.

"And what if I don't comply?" he dared.

"I will have no choice then to cast either an Imperius or Cruciatus Curse on you," I said coldly.

"You mean you don't already know?" he sounded off. His voice was starting to rise dangerously. "You must ALWAYS know what you need to do to win!"

"Fine, I choose Crucio," I answered decidedly.



Since I could not cast an Unforgivable without the entire Ministry of Magic descending upon me in a heartbeat, I lowered my wand and gave my husband back his. He bowed to me in acknowledgment that I had bested him. I stood rigid and proud as he lowered himself. I never felt so powerful and strong. I don't know what came over me. As he straightened himself, I closed the distance between us and took his hand and put it around my waist firmly.

He appraised my eyes and asked, "Do you know what you are doing?" he breathed.

"I want you to kiss me and then hold me like you did that night," I said huskily.

I was just as eager as he, and he tried to be gentle and easy, but I wanted to control this encounter. I wanted to dominate him, just how I had disarmed him by taking his wand, I wanted to takeover his senses. I bit his lip and he broke from me.

"Sex isn't to be retribution, Mary," he warned as he wiped his swollen lip.

I turned from him. I was angry. Finally, I whirled around and charged him. I was wild, punching his face as hard as I could. He threw me off and we began to battle in earnest. He tried not to hit me, but only defend himself from my assault. But as my wrath grew, he started to punch back in retaliation.

"Stop it!" he hollered.

"I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU!" I screamed.

He tried to grab my arms and I kicked him in the groin. He fell over in pain.

"Why didn't you protect me? Why did you let them do that to me? You should have killed them all! You should have *you were my teacher*...you should have sheltered me THEN, not now!!" I shrieked as I fell on the ground, crying violently.

There I was on my knees, dusted with snow, railing and cursing at him. He came and tried to hold me, but I fought and slapped him until I could no longer fight.

"I'm so sorry," he whispered. "I'm so sorry!" He said it over and over again as I wept. My tears mingled with the blood coming from my face. I thought my rage was over. I thought I could bypass the pain by fixating on caring for my husband's pain and feeding my need for revenge. I was wrong. But those words, coming from his mouth, were shockingly and strangely soothing.

I turned to face him and saw the blood on his face from where I had beaten him. Mixed in were his tears. I kissed him then and this time it was mindless abandon. No agenda, nothing to prove. I just wanted to be with him, like this, without thought, without circumstance. He responded wholeheartedly.

"Let's go home," he murmured. We walked off into the snow back to the castle wrapped around each other.

\*\*\*

There were a lot of tears that night. I knew his body, I had seen him naked so many times, but he did not know mine. He took a long time to carefully worship every inch of my body. When he reached between my legs, I grabbed his wrist.

"I'm scared," I whispered through my tears. "W-what if it's not okay, what if you don't like it? I don't think I could stand it if...," I choked on my words.

"You're beautiful," he whispered. "I've wanted you so long, please let me show you how good it can feel."

He then lowered his head and began to kiss and stroke his tongue there, where before I had only known pain and humiliation, I was overcome with pleasure and sensations I never knew existed. I felt my body shake and a roar in my ears overtook me. From my toes to the top of my head I was liquid. I was crying and calling out my husband's name. Then my head felt so heavy. I was so tired. I fell into a deep sleep.

\*\*\*

I awoke in the middle of the night with Severus holding me. He was awake and looking at me.

"Have you been awake this whole time?" I whispered groggily.

"No, I woke a little while ago."

I started to smile, remembering what had transpired. "Was that...did I?"

He smiled. "What do you think, Mary?" he teased.

"I know I'd like that again!" I answered greedily.

"Absolutely," he said enthusiastically as he held me tighter.

I wanted so badly to ask, but didn't know how. "A-am *Inormal* down there?" I asked shyly.

"You're perfect," he reassured me.

"Yes, I know, you care about me, to you, I'm beautiful. But, I ask not as my husband, but as a man, looking at a woman, compared to women who haven't been, you know...am I?"

"Yes, Mary. You are normal. There are signs that some damage has been done, but think of women after they've had children. They are never the same, especially if the labor was difficult. Mary, you are more than your face, you are more than your vagina. Can you understand?" His eyes searched mine for any hint of understanding.

"I care for you, Mary," he said.

I looked into his eyes. "Do you want me?" I asked directly.

I knew he was shocked, but I didn't know any other way to broach the subject. He lowered his mouth into my neck, and a minute later, I heard him breathe a "yes" into my ear.

He went back down between my legs, and after I came, I felt something foreign slide inside me. He was on my side, whispering in my ear.

"It's only my finger. I'll go slow."

It wasn't a dream come true. It wasn't anything I expected either. I could tell he was afraid to show me his passion. He slowly eased himself inside me, talking me through the process, explaining what was happening and what he was going to do. I cried at the first part of his penetration. As he eased inside me, I winced and tensed up. He was careful to calm me and reminded me gently to relax. Soon though, he started to shake and I felt so badly for him. He was obviously loving how I felt, and wanted desperately to lose control, but he limited himself to slow delicate movements inside me. I was perfectly still, begging him not to stop talking to me. I needed badly to stay in the here and now.

At the end he could no longer speak. He was panting hard and gasping as he buried his face into my neck, his breath hot against my skin, his hands massaging my breasts. I knew he wanted to move faster and thrust deeper, but he knew he shouldn't. I turned my face to the wall, my face cringing; his noises were so like the noises I had heard during the rape. Then it was over, and I felt his release spread inside me. I started to breathe hard. He looked at me, scared and concerned. I wrapped my arms around my head; I wanted to hide my repulsion.

"Get it off me...get it off me!" I started yelling. I felt so dirty and filthy.

He cast a Cleansing Charm and I started to ease up and the tension began to subside.

"I'm sorry," I cried, embarrassed, unable to look at him. "Can you please cover me?"

"Of course." He pulled the duvet up to my neck. I moved away from him.

"I'm sorry, I need my space," I apologized, finally looking at him.

He shook his head. "I understand, I do," he reassured me. Then he said, "You did it."

I jerked my head towards him. I broke out into a timid smile.

"I did, I survived it! I like the other thing better, though."

He threw back his head in laughter. "If any other woman had said that...but I can appreciate that."

"Do you think it'll get better?" I asked hopefully.

"Yes," he said with complete confidence. "You should be very proud of yourself. You did rather well for your first time."

I turned to my side to face him. I pushed his curtain of hair back behind his ear. "Your efforts are to be commended as well, husband. I appreciate your self-control."

To that, he blew out a lung full of breath and sank on his back. "That was so hard...you felt so good."

I scooted back down into my pillow. I felt like a Cheshire cat!

## He Came and Took my Crown of Thorns...

### *Chapter 7 of 10*

Snape and Harry begin their Occulemency sessions with all the angst that follows. Mary realizes she is ready to finally give all of herself over to her husband.

A/N: Thanks to my betas, Augurey27 and ImOnMedication. Warning: Explicit Sexual Content. No worries, they're both happy about it! Please review!

\*\*\*

It was the last day of the holidays when Severus came back from his meeting at Grimmauld Place, livid and in a right foul temper. He burst through the door, ripping off his traveling cloak, and began to pour himself a large glass of firewhisky.

I had been working on my Charms work when he blew in, but I knew him well enough by now not to engage him when he was in a mood.

"Damn Black!" he muttered. "Thinks he is so high and mighty! As if he could have anything to say on the matter!"

I listened while trying to appear I wasn't. I had never met this Sirius Black character, but knew all about him, at least from my husband's point of view. He was a scoundrel of the foulest kind. He had been the bane of Severus' existence while in school, and now, because of the Order, they had to work together for the "Greater Good." Every moment in this man's presence was pure hell for him.

"Mary," he said to me.

"Ummm," I murmured absentmindedly.

"Potter will be coming once a week on Mondays at six to start his Occulemency training. You may recall he is an impossible prat who is as nosy as he is arrogant. I need you to be very careful not to allow yourself to be detected."

"Of course," I agreed. "Does this mean things are finally coming to a head? Will I be able to come out of hiding soon?" I knew I sounded eager, but only to be free of the dungeons...not of him.

"Patience," he murmured.

\*\*\*

Later that night, we tried again to make love. Again, it was not the best experience in the world, but I was less tense. Yet, when the moment came for his release, I still hated it and winced in remembering. He was quick to clean up immediately afterwards and allow me to shrink away from him. I wondered when I would ever not shrink away.

Normal life continued throughout the winter, although the new bane of Severus' existence was the damn Umbridge woman who was demanding more and more Veritaserum from Severus so she could break the code that held the secret meeting place of what was called, "Dumbledore's Army." Severus hated that Potter had his own little following. Although, truth be told, I found his obsession with Potter rather amusing. It should have made me furious, since it mirrored my own obsession with Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, and MacNair, but actually it was comforting. Seeing my mentor, teacher, husband, and now lover show the unstable and irrational side of himself made my little shelter from the outside world less lonely. We were so alike, Severus and I. We were both very volatile and damaged people who had a great capacity for love, but had such a difficult time vocalizing it properly.

\*\*\*

Severus came to me with a copy of the *Daily Prophet* the day after his first Occulemency lesson with Potter. It had not gone well. I had heard the yelling and bickering from inside the bedroom. Mostly, it came from Severus. *Damn him and his stubbornness!* I had thought. But I did not judge him when he came back, seething about how lazy and obnoxiously rude the boy was.

This morning, however, I thought he would be in a better humor, as we had tried making love the night before, after he had calmed down from his tantrum over Potter. This time I had watched his face while he came inside me. It was beautiful how he whispered my name and kissed me. I had actually let him hold me afterwards instead of shrinking away. So, I thought this morning he would be chipper. I was dead wrong!

"Look," he said dangerously as he thrust the paper in my face. I read the front page. My face went numb with disbelief. There had been a mass breakout from Azkaban.

"Can this be true?" I exclaimed as I stood up from our breakfast table.

"Yes, this has been the plan. It won't be long, and I don't yet know how the Dark Lord will orchestrate the infiltration into the Ministry, but dammit...Potter better work harder than ever if we're to have any chance," he growled.

"If there is a battle, I'm going to fight!" I announced.

"NO!" he roared. "You will not engage in this. These are vicious, soulless, evil people! You will remain here until this is all over, and then we can be free to live in the open and... maybe have some sort of life." His voice grew soft at the end.

I, on the other hand, grew more agitated with each word.

"Goddamn it, Severus!" I bellowed as I flung the paper down onto the table. "This whole time I've been working my arse off for nothing? So those bloody rapists can inflict more damage on the Wizarding World? No! I will have my revenge. And don't you dare try and stop me!" I threatened.

He drew in a large breath and his chest puffed out. He was murderously angry with me. He turned on his heel and marched towards the door. He turned sharply towards my direction as he turned the knob to leave.

"There is no use talking to you when you are so hell bent on being irrational. This discussion is closed until you can speak to me in the manner that befits how a wife should converse with her husband. Good day."

*Bastard!* I thought as I crumpled up the paper and threw it at the door.

\*\*\*

Severus came with disturbing news after Valentine's Day. Umbridge had replaced Dumbledore as the Headmistress of Hogwarts. It was a terrible blow and a major setback. Severus seemed to be teetering on the edge. There was nothing I could do to make the situation any easier. The storm was brewing; the fight was coming to a head. Lines were going to have to be drawn. I did not discuss my decision to fight against my rapists. I knew he would become unglued if I broached the subject. So I decided a diversion would be a welcome respite from all his mental frustrations. Besides, his weekly meetings with Potter only left him angry, frustrated, and hopeless. So I decided it was time to help him to forget his woes for a while before he had to go meet with Potter again that evening.

He was trying to relax on the sofa with a drink and a good book. I came and knelt between his legs. His book was quickly tossed aside as I undid his trousers and released his semi-erect penis. I slowly removed my bodice and closed my eyes, stroking my breasts. I became lost in pleasuring myself in front of him. When my eyes re-opened, I saw he was breathing heavily, fixated on the attention I was giving my hardened nipples. He swallowed hard and gripped his thighs painfully. I took the swollen cock in my mouth and began to swirl my tongue around its purple head. He reached down and grabbed me to pull me closer so he could push himself deeper inside my mouth. Barely five seconds passed before he grasped my hair and thrust his hips forward. He came immediately, panting and cursing, "Sweet Merlin, you are fucking brilliant!"

Later that evening, I heard a fantastic crash come from my husband's office and then heard my husband screaming and howling like a banshee. I knew better than to come out while he was busy with his lessons with Potter, so I waited on tenterhooks until his return.

I had never seen him so angry. He was screaming and blowing the room apart with his hexes. I dropped to the floor and crawled my way to the bed and drew my wand *so much for the theory that going down on him would relax his temper...well fuck that!* I thought sarcastically. I was crouched behind his work desk, grasping my wand, waiting for the right moment to overtake him when he finally wound down and sat on the one chair he hadn't blown to bits. He was crying! I had never seen him so emotional in such a manner.

"What the bloody hell..." I began to say.

"Please stop talking," he sobbed. "I hate him so much, how could he do that? Those were my private thoughts...MINE!" he howled. "All the things I've done in my life, that was the worst, and I could never take it back. *Never take it back!*" He started sobbing anew, his arms crossed protectively across his chest, rocking back and forth in pain.

I dropped to my knees in front of him and tried to give him some comfort. "What can I do?" I asked.

"Nothing. Nothing can ever be done. Please, just leave me alone," he mourned. He looked like a wounded animal that needed to lick his wounds in peace. So, I respected his request.

I backed off and began to repair the damage he had done to the room. I wasn't offended. I knew there were just some things that couldn't be fixed with a "swish and a flick"! Hell, I knew that better than anyone. Cursed scars don't heal. While mine could be seen, I had known for a while now that my husband had cursed scars as well, you just couldn't see them with the naked eye.

\*\*\*

Spring came and my desires mounted. I felt electric and started experiencing feelings of sexuality that were so powerful, I didn't know how I was to go on. I knew my body was ready for more. I was ready to explore this new feeling. Just walking out to the woods would send my thighs tingling and my nipples would react to the lace in my bra and harden so badly I wanted to scream. I would lie in bed just going insane with a need for Severus to touch me in places I didn't know where or how to explain! Finally, one evening, I got my nerve up and approached my husband and told him my desires. He took me by the hand and immediately took me to our bed.

As he swiftly undressed me, he suddenly blurted out, "I can't tell you how happy I am this time has finally arrived. I have so much I want to share with you. There are so many joys to experience with a man. I want to teach them to you, if you trust me?"

"Yes," I breathed huskily as I tore at his clothes, furiously working on his buttons. "I want it all...I want you to make me feel good, Severus. I can't bear it anymore."

I was desperate and I couldn't care less. Whatever he wanted to do to me, I was his. I loved him and wanted him to possess my body as he had already possessed my mind.

\*\*\*

"Severus, I have to pee!" I whimpered.

"No, you don't...just stay with the feeling. Lie back and close your eyes and go with the sensation," he whispered. "Trust me."

*What is he doing to me?* I thought. I was getting tense.

"Relax," he breathed in my ear.

His fingers were inside me, touching me in ways I had never felt before. I honestly thought my bladder was going to burst when all of a sudden something snapped inside me. My eyes flew open, and I jerked up from the bed onto my elbows. I was face to face with my husband, breathing deeply and moaning his name. He was smiling broadly, urging me to stay with the feeling. He kissed my neck and breathed in my ear, "Come for me, release yourself to me."

I was mindless. I started moving my hips. I had to move. I couldn't stop. Severus swiftly removed his hand and mounted me, ramming his cock deep inside me. I was completely undone, writhing and arching underneath him, my nails digging into his back and hiking my legs up as far as I could to his shoulders. I screamed for him to fuck me harder and harder. He sank his mouth onto my right breast and sucked greedily on the nipple, grabbing my thighs as he pounded into me. I screamed and screamed in delight and finally sank back onto the bed...exhausted. I watched him orgasm and felt as if I were in heaven. He was so beautiful, lost in me and what my body did to him. He shouted a great shout and fell on top of me. I felt his seed slowly slide out of me, and I smiled. I peered at the spent man on top of me and knew there was no place on earth where I could be happier.

\*\*\*

I woke up and it was morning. Severus was sitting at the breakfast table with his usual tea and toast, completely dressed.

"Good Morning, Mrs. Snape," he said in very serious tone, but with a smirk on his face.

I blushed. He had never called me that before.

"And you, *Mr. Snape*," I replied. "But why? You've never called me that before."

He was busily reading his morning paper, turning the page while he said in a straight face, "You never asked me to...what was it?" He screwed his face into fake concentration. "Fuck me harder?"

I laughed and shook my head. I was also a little embarrassed. I pulled the duvet up to my eyes to hide my face.

He still did not take his eyes off the paper, but was completely aware of me. "Don't you dare hide from me!" he growled. "And don't you ever feel embarrassed to ask me for that again...it was the most intriguing activity I've been able to engage in for years. Now get that beautiful, naked arse out of bed and eat breakfast with me."

I slipped out and went for my robe. The top of the paper flipped down. He spoke in a menacingly voice. "I said *NAKED*, Mrs. Snape. I want to see you in all your glory."

I sauntered over and stood to face him and ripped the paper out of his hands. "And what about *YOUR* naked *glory*?" I teased him.

He laughed and pulled me onto him. I straddled him and played with the buttons on his frock coat as he stroked my hips and raked his eyes shamelessly over my nakedness.

"Well, if you had awoken sooner, I would have been naked," he said silkily.

He drew my head to his with his hand and kissed me chastely on the lips. "Happy Birthday, Mary," he whispered.

## In a World Fighting to be Warm...

### Chapter 8 of 10

Severus and Mary are finally enjoying their martial rights and learning to trust and enjoy their time together immensely. Suddenly, the tide turns and the coming battle arrives.

A/N: Thanks again to my betas, Augury27 and ImONMedication. Hope you enjoy this delicious chapter and see you all soon on the flip side. I can't believe we're almost done! One more chapter and the Epilogue. Please review---it's better than chocolate!!

\*\*\*

May was a beautiful month. I spent my days working hard on my studies during the day while Severus taught and dealt with the ever-relentless Umbridge. Severus worked hard at his fake Veritiserum potion, and I took it upon myself to learn wandless magic. I knew Severus would be furious if he knew what I was up to, but I figured I needed to learn how to fully protect myself, just in case something went wrong.

But after the day's work was over, the nights were for us. Severus and I explored each other and together discovered delights that were more than I believed to exist. I grew more confident in my ardor and was surprised by my husband's eagerness in allowing me to experiment with pleasuring myself as he watched and fulfilled my fantasies of watching him pleasure himself as I watched. I was fascinated with his penis. I loved how such a calm and controlled man, such as he, could become a babbling, mindless mass of raw masculinity each time I kissed and stroked his manhood. The shy, humiliating side of sex was vanishing, and I found sex could be as playful and skilled as dueling. Dueling, after all, had been foreplay for me. My husband's prowess and skill was enough to dissolve me into a puddle of writhing desire. Soon, I realized he felt the same for me. Each time I was able to thwart his hexes, the look on his face was apparent that all he wanted to do was throw me down and have his way with me—much to my delight!

I couldn't wait for all of the secrecy to end, so we could be free to openly declare our marriage. I knew Severus wasn't "in" love with me; there was something I couldn't put my finger on, but he loved me, cared deeply for me, and we understood each other in ways no one else could. We were bound in a kindred way that was so unique; I could honestly say I was not threatened by his lack of being in love with me. I knew that his being older held a past that had nothing to do with me. I didn't feel the need to impose my presence upon it. What was true was that he *LOVED* me, even if he wasn't "in love."

I figured there had been a past tragedy and that was why he never told me he loved me. I deeply respected my husband and was grateful for the sacrifices he had made to be my shelter from those who would surely kill me if they knew where I was. A part of me felt I should not get involved with the coming storm, that out of gratitude I should allow Severus to deal with whatever battle came and continue to let him shelter me, but I couldn't. I still needed to have my revenge. After all, I had a new anger rising in

me: I would never be able to give my husband a child. I wanted to punish those who took life from me. So it was clear: I would take life from them!

\*\*\*

Slowly, I began to move small objects around the room by the wave of my hand. But, I needed to practice actual destructive spells on someone or something to test my mettle.

I looked around the room. *Ah! A glass.* I positioned it on the table a few feet from me and pointed my index finger and, with a “swish and flick” said, *“Wingardium Leviosa.”*

*Okay, start with movement,* I thought. The glass began to levitate and I sent it soaring around the room as I steadied my pressure. *Okay, now this is what separates the women from the girls!* I smirked to myself. I forced my palm out and forcefully bellowed, *“Reducto!”* which blew the glass to bits. I then said, *“Reparo”*, and it flew back into place as if it had never been broken. I squealed with delight at my triumph. After a few covert lessons along this vein, I decided the time had come to work my “magic” on Severus on our next duel.

\*\*\*

We were back in the forest and he immediately drew his wand upon me. *“Expelliarmus!”* he rang out. My wand flew out from my hand, landing a few feet from my side.

He frowned as he walked towards me. I knew he was disappointed. I was far too advanced to fall for such an easy disarming spell. He was halfway to me when I raised my palm and cried, *“STUPEFY!”*

He was blasted a good ten feet from me, completely disoriented as he struggled to rise. I was standing, giddy and quite proud of myself. He came to himself and straightened his robes. He walked over to me and glowered.

“What am I to do with you? Did I not give you my final word that it was far too dangerous for you to be meddling in this type of magic?”

“Well, obviously, I am capable; I was able to disarm you quite easily,” I said, smiling rather smugly as he walked up close to me.

He smiled in spite of himself. “I think my Slytherin is rubbing off on you.”

I wrapped my arms around his neck. “Ohhh! I could do with some of that rubbing right about now!”

His eyes smoldered with the lust I was so familiar with. He threw me down on the grass and cast another protective and silencing charm around us. He grabbed the bottom of my long skirt and pushed up the voluminous material. Up my legs and in between my thighs, until—surprise!

He drew back. “You’re not wearing any knickers!” he gasped.

I sat up and eyed him wantonly. “I knew once I had disarmed you, my success would have turned you on.” I leaned in and kissed him softly and said, “I know what gets you randy.”

To that, he cocked an eyebrow. “That’ll cost you, my wicked Gryffindor,” he growled as he picked me up and pushed me roughly against the nearest tree. Within seconds, he had my skirt up, my naked thighs wrapped around his waist and he was freeing his cock from his trousers. “Do you want this?” he asked me seductively.

“Yes,” I breathed.

I giggled and shrieked with pleasure as he lost himself in me, whispering sweet nothings in his most velvet tone. I closed my eyes and rode on the wave he created. Afterwards, when we had returned to our rooms, we fell onto our bed exhausted from our excursions and the long trek back.

I was awakened by screams and hollers from outside. Severus came back seething with rage.

“That damned Umbridge woman has lost her mind! The Ministry attacked Hagrid, and of course, it failed! And now he’s gone off into the Forbidden Forest. The old bat tried to have him arrested!”

“Whatever for?” I asked indignantly.

“The woman is truly a unique brand of evil. She hates half-breeds, as I’m sure Muggleborns as well. She is a foul, evil creature! McGonagall was stunned when she tried to stop the arrest. I don’t know if she will survive. She was hit by many spells at one time. This is madness—we are right bugged!” He sank down into his chair with his hands massaging his eyes.

My hand flew to my mouth. Dumbledore and McGonagall were gone! Who was going to stop Voldemort and his Death Eaters from coming into Hogwarts now? And what of the Ministry?

He went to the bathroom to clean up. There would be no time to lose. I would need to make sure I knew exactly what was happening and *when I’m sorry, Severus, for using you like this, but I’m going to need to know exactly where the showdown will be. Where Voldemort will be, Death Eaters are near by. And I will be there waiting...*

## It's Doom Alone That Counts...

Chapter 9 of 10

The Battle in the Department of Mysterious takes place. Mary stalks the men who raped her and gets a bit of revenge. That is, until she makes a mistake that gets her face to face with Voldemort.

A/N: It is with a very heavy heart that I present this last chapter. There is an epilogue, so please remember this is not the end. Thanks to my betas, Augurey27 and ImOnMedication (who, by the way, told me she cried when she read the ending). Also, if you want to know what Mary Anders looks like to me, go to the first chapter and you’ll see a picture. Thank you and please review!

\*\*\*

After Severus had calmed down, he went to do his rounds about the castle. I took the time to dress in a clean, black dress and pinned my hair back. I didn't want any impediments. I got my traveling cloak ready and placed my wand inside. I looked into the mirror, studying my scars before buttoning the top buttons that would hide the scar on my neck.

I sat on the sofa, waiting for Severus to return. I decided to have a glass of firewhisky to calm my nerves. I was shaking with anticipation.

He blew in furious and raging. "Damn and blast! That woman is the most stupid, inept..." He stopped talking and glared at me.

"What in the hell are you doing?" he yelled at me.

He finally saw I was drinking. "Nerves." I shrugged.

He took the glass from me and finished it in one gulp. "Have you nothing better to do to occupy your time?"

"Nope," I answered cheekily. I knew he hated cheek.

He glared at me. "I have things to do. I need you to stay in the bedroom until I call for you." He turned from me and began his task. He trusted me so implicitly, he never noticed I cast a Disillusionment Charm upon myself and stayed right in the room.

He knelt by the fireplace and muttered a spell I couldn't make out. I saw a head of a person I did not know come in through the flame.

"Shacklebolt, the bloody woman has Potter, Miss Granger, the two young Weasleys, Longbottom and Miss Lovegood holed up in her office. She tried to force me to give her more Veritaserum for questioning, but I was able to refuse her. But, we have a bigger problem. Potter warned me that the Dark Lord inside the Department of Mysteries is holding Black captive. You need to get the Order rounded up and see if it is true, or if it is all a ruse."

"Why would you think it would be a ruse...after what happened with Arthur? The boy has been right before," Shacklebolt replied.

"Merlin's Beard, man!" Severus spat angrily. "I know the workings of Voldemort's mind better than any of you, and I tell you he is not above infiltrating a weak mind in order to produce a desired effect. Potter has proven himself inept at the discipline of Occumency. Just get there before he goes off half-cocked and does something stupid!"

With that, Severus got up and readied himself to leave.

Still invisible, I grabbed my cloak and recast the spell. I kept my distance from him and followed him out. He was angrier than I had ever seen him. His calm demeanor made it scarier. I would rather he lost it and started hexing things, at least to release the tension. This was a Severus I was unfamiliar with...a determination seemed to drive him.

He went back to Umbridge's office and found her and Potter gone, as well as Hermione, Luna, Ron and Ginny. Draco and the Inquisitorial Squad were disheveled on the floor. Severus wrenched Draco from the floor. Dear God! He was a mess. Ginny Weasley with her Bat-Bogey Hex, no doubt!

"*Finite Incantatem!*" he snapped. The boy's face became normal again.

"Where is Potter?" he demanded.

"Took Granger and Umbridge out to find something." The boy was dazed.

Severus bolted from the room and went running through the corridors. He past Filch and grabbed him. "Have you seen Umbridge?" he demanded.

Filch tried to free himself from Severus' grasp. "Damn you man, answer me!" he threatened.

Filch pointed a yellow finger towards the outside. "She went towards the forest with Potter and Granger," he said in a fearful voice.

Severus released the man and ran out of the castle. I continued to stalk him, but maintained a considerable distance. Thank God he was so focused on his task. Otherwise, he might have been able to sense my presence.

He came to the forest, and I saw him speak with a group of centaurs. He was very careful to speak in cautious and respectful tones. I couldn't hear what they said, but it was a long exchange. After a while, he bolted back towards my direction.

*Oh shite!* I thought as I ran out of his direction. He was headed back to the castle. I ran with all the speed I could muster. I had to get back to the room before he did, otherwise there would be the devil to pay. I needn't have bothered. He went to the Headmaster's office to use the fireplace. I cautiously followed and heard behind the door his conversation with Dumbledore.

"Albus, the boy has gone off to the Department of Mysteries. He's falling for the trap we feared most, I'm positive! What do you want me to do?"

"You can do nothing, Severus. I need you to stay at Hogwarts. There is no one to protect the students if everything comes to the worst. Promise me, Severus, you will stay, no matter what. Let me and the Aurors handle this."

"Please, Albus," he begged. "For Lily."

"I'll protect him, Severus."

I drew my head back from the door. *Lily? Who is that?* I thought jealously. I heard his footsteps towards the door. I flew down the stairs and ran towards the castle doors. I found the first broom I could find and headed for the Ministry of Magic.

\*\*\*

The atrium was echoing from far away noises of screaming and crashing. I cast off my Disillusionment Charm and readied my wand. I walked among the debris obviously caused by Potter's recent clash with the Death Eaters.

I cautiously remained in the shadows, waiting to see any sign of my prey. I stalked the rooms, getting closer to voices. I heard the high cackling of a woman and saw the long, blond hair of Lucius Malfoy. I hissed at the sight of him. He was trying to get Potter to give him something.

Then, they all broke apart; hexes were thrown in all directions. I heard, "Crabbe to go with Rabastan." *There's one*, I thought as I readied my wand. "MacNair go with Avery." *There's two*, I seethed. There was no sign of Goyle. *Ah, well, three out of four won't be bad for a night's work!* I determined.

I knew to keep my distance from the woman. She was Bellatrix Lestrange. She was a right crazy bitch, and I did not want to distract myself from my purpose by having to deal with her. I went for MacNair and Avery. As they stalked and battled against my friends, I, from the shadows, deflected hexes and tried to spare them from being injured too badly without drawing attention to myself. Finally, the two separated and I went for MacNair. All was quiet in the office where we stood. He slowly turned, and his eyes widened at being surprised by my sudden close proximity to his person.

"**STUPEFY!**" I roared.

He crashed into the desk behind him. At my left, the door burst open, and the body of Crabbe came rushing after me, but with the head of a baby. He obviously had met with some wretched fallout. I didn't even blink.

"AVADA KEDAVRA!" I screamed.

He fell lifeless and silent to the floor. MacNair went to reach for his wand. I Summoned it to me.

"No, no," I laughed, shaking my head as I walked over to stand before him.

"W-who are you?" he whispered.

"*Sectumsempra!*" I hissed. Immediately, his neck was slashed open. He gurgled and tried to grasp for breath. I knelt down and straddled him, watching him bugged eyed and fearful. Finally, he gurgled, "Who... are... you?"

"Don't you remember?" I whispered. I then ripped open the top buttons from my bodice. His eyes grew dark in horror as the realization came over his face. He was frozen at the sight of the scar he had given me. I reared back and punched him in the face.

"O! Wake up! I'm next!" I laughed madly. He choked in his death throes. I watched until he was still in death.

I left the room. Now, it was time to find Malfoy and perhaps capture another Death Eater and torture him into telling me where Goyle was.

There was no time. All hell had broken lose. The Aurors arrived, and the battle was in full play. I saw Lucius battle with Potter, and I frantically searched for Goyle. Then, I forgot in my frenzy to watch my back. I was whipped around and faced an unknown, masked Death Eater.

\*\*\*

It was much later. I was chained to a wall. Beaten badly, I winced as I tasted the blood on my lip. My left eye burned badly, and I could barely see out of it.

All around me there was raging voices and screaming. I tried to focus and saw that Voldemort was performing the Cruciatus Curse on someone.

"She's awake, My Lord!" someone called out.

Voldemort snapped his head up and raced over to me, his eyes boring into mine.

"So, you are the whore that killed two of my Death Eaters."

I smiled. He was trying so hard to penetrate my mind, but I knew how to resist him.

He realized his efforts were not going to be fruitful. He backed away and came from another angle.

"You are somewhat of a paradox, my dear," he surmised. "A young Mudblood, thirsty for vengeance and adept at killing, but so very weak-looking and an accomplished Occlumens at that." He came close to my left side, his breath rank on my cheek. "I know of only one man able to train you so thoroughly."

He whipped around to my right side and whispered in my ear. "Tell me, how long have you been Snape's apprentice?"

I was silent. He tried again to peer into my mind. I gave him nothing.

"Very well. Wormtail!" he shrieked.

A scrawny, rotund, little man came to him and offered his arm where the Dark Mark was. Voldemort pressed into it with his wand. I saw my husband materialize before my eyes.

"Severus," Voldemort said, shaking his head. "You do disappoint me. What am I doing here having to busy my time with this whore when I have so much to do already?"

"My Lord," Severus spoke silkily, "this woman is a formidable warrior. True, she is a Mudblood, but I have fashioned her into a powerful fighting tool..."

Voldemort's eyes blazed red. "A formidable tool that slaughtered two of my Death Eaters...both Respectables!"

"My Lord," Severus pressed. "You cannot blame her for wanting her revenge. She only wanted to kill the men who raped her."

"Is that so?" Voldemort whispered. "Wormtail, bring out Goyle. Oh, yes, Severus, don't be shocked. Yaxley has filled me in on the events that transpired that evening. Now that MacNair and Crabbe are dead, all we have to do is give the cunt Goyle and Malfoy, and we'll all be even."

He rushed over to me and pushed his evil face close to mine. "*Even-Steven*. Isn't that what you Muggles call it?" He laughed as he released me from my chains. I walked to the center of the room as a stunned Goyle came in.

"Kill him!" Voldemort ordered as he handed me my wand.

"As you wish," I answered coolly. I pointed my wand at Goyle and screamed, "AVADA KEDAVRA!"

He crashed lifeless to the floor. Immediately, my wand was whipped from my hand.

"Very impressive, my dear," he murmured with approval as he circled me. "Pity, though," he said sadly as he took a finger and traced the scar on my face. "Such a beautiful girl. Would you serve me if I were to give you Malfoy? Would you be mine? Do as I will?" he asked seductively in my ear.

My anger was rising. *Malfoy!* The mention of his name caused my emotions to spill over. I could sense Severus shifting. I pushed my anger down as quickly as I could, but I was not fast enough.

"Your anger betrays you," Voldemort whispered. "You worship a master, and it will never change. Unfortunately, since I doubt your master's loyalty at this point, I can't see how we can proceed further."

"Severus!" he yelled. "This is what we are going to do. You have much to make amends for. It's fortunate for you Lucius will be spending a significant time in Azkaban due to his incompetence. Otherwise, you would be facing my wrath in ways you could never imagine! So, it is simple. This incident does not leave this room. Wormtail, Yaxley...you will never repeat these events again. Severus, your punishment is to watch your *whore* be given to Yaxley as a reward. After all, he is the one who brought her to me. Then, when he's had his fill, *you* will kill her."

My eyes flickered at Severus and then towards Voldemort. *It's going to happen again. This man Yaxley is going to rape me and then order my husband to kill me!* A flash made me jump. There was the bed...the horror of my nightmares. I saw Severus' hand twitch near his wand. *I can't let him do it! His work isn't finished!* I turned my eyes to Severus as Yaxley walked towards me. There was no emotion that betrayed his face, but I saw his hand reach for his wand ever so slowly. I whispered, "I love you." Then, I closed my eyes and swiftly brought my palm to face my chest.

## Epilogue

Chapter 10 of 10

"Come in," **she** said. "I'll give you shelter from the storm."

A/N: I want to thank all of you who have given reviews and encouraged me through the process. A special thanks goes to my betas Augurey27 and ImOnMedication. I must admit, I was very hesitant to post this fic, but I am so glad I did! I hope you like how I ended this story of what I believe is REAL love.

\*\*\*

I watched him walk across the green grass. Confused and disoriented, he walked, looking at the cottage where I was waiting, standing at the doorway.

"Severus," I whispered.

My voice carried along like a song to him. He stood in robes of white and looked to me in a gown of white. I motioned him to come. He saw the door where I stood, open and waiting. He strode quickly towards me and then abruptly stopped short. I was there standing with my long copper hair, no scars, no anger. Just perfect.

"Is this Paradise?" he asked incredulously.

"I think so." I smiled. "Come in," I said as I offered my hand.

I drew him inside where the rooms were exactly like our own back at Hogwarts, but no dungeons, no darkness.

"I dare say, I never expected you here so soon," I said. I was so excited to be with him again.

"I'm so glad it's over," he whispered as he raked his eyes over my perfect face. "Can we stay here like this forever?" he asked as he looked around.

"I think so. I've been here since I died, but it feels I've only been here a couple of days. Tell me, Severus, were you able to finish what you needed to do?"

He looked at me surprised, "What do you know about my mission?"

I pulled him over to the backdoor. We stood at the doorway, the sun kissing our skin as I searched for what I wanted to show him. "Look, there is Lily." I pointed at a nearby riverbank. "They are all here. See, there are Lily, James, Lupin, Tonks, and Black. Fred and Moody are here as well. Fred just arrived too. He's probably checking everything out. Everyone who died for the Cause before the war and those who died in the war are here. I know everything now."

"It's strange," he mused as he watched Lily laugh while embracing her husband. "I don't feel angry anymore. I can finally let her go."

I wrapped my arm around his waist and watched his face, so free of tension and full of peace. "That's how it's supposed to be, Severus. Tell me, did you finish it?"

"I hope so, at least I know I did everything I was to do—gave my all."

"Then it is enough," I said happily.

"How is it that we are like this?" he asked as his eyes took in the sight of the small cottage. Indeed, it all looked so similar, so safe and warm—he and I together.

His eyes finally came to mine. "I missed you," he whispered as he pulled me close, our foreheads meeting. "I thought I was to be your shelter; instead, after you were gone, my shelter was gone. I missed you so! I love you, Mary." He embraced me and kissed me passionately.

"I love you too, Severus," I replied.

We stood at the doorway holding hands. We smiled at each other and then closed our eyes and let our bodies drink in the sun. The sun was so bright. The storm was over.