

Bad Moon Rising

by Saturn

Severus Snape receives a mysterious letter from Unspeakable Hermione Granger, prompting him to meet with her. In hopes of stopping a clever mastermind, he agrees to give her whatever help she needs. Will he lose his heart to her along the way?

debjunk – Meteoroid Beater

Chapter 1 of 7

Severus Snape receives a mysterious letter from Unspeakable Hermione Granger, prompting him to meet with her. In hopes of stopping a clever mastermind, he agrees to give her whatever help she needs. Will he lose his heart to her along the way?





Disclaimer: All J.K.R.'s.

Severus looked up from his desk as the owl tapped on his window. He went over and let the bird in. Relieving it of its burden, he shooed it away. He looked at the plastic cylinder in his hand. It certainly was an odd way to send a message.

Going back to his desk, Severus placed the cylinder on it and pulled out his wand. He began shooting spells at the small gray container. After exhausting every spell he knew to detect evil intent, he finally deemed the package safe to open. Pulling the lid off, he shook the rolled scroll into his hands. Unwrapping it, he furrowed his brow as he saw an empty page.

Why would someone bother to send me a blank letter?

Within seconds, words began to form on the page in what evidently was charmed ink. He watched as the letter revealed itself, then began to read.

Professor Snape,

This letter will only become visible through your touch. I am in dire need of your expertise. Please meet me at Moriarty's Forest Pub at five. Let no one know I've contacted you.

Hermione Granger

Severus arched an eyebrow. To his knowledge, Hermione Granger was an Unspeakable. He couldn't imagine what information he could give to her that she couldn't already have at her fingertips in an instant. He had to admit, he was intrigued.

Severus eyed the seedy pub. For the life of him, he couldn't understand why Granger would choose such a place for a meeting. The pub's letterhead sat at an odd angle, the windows were cracked, and the door looked like it was about to disintegrate any second. He reached out and pushed it open gingerly, careful to avoid the splinters.

The inside of the pub was no better than the run-down outside. Dilapidated tables and chairs were haphazardly placed. The room was quite dark, and Severus had to let his eyes adjust before he moved. He grimaced at the decor. Large trees rimmed the room, hanging over almost every table. The place was an eyesore. Searching the room, he finally spied Granger, hidden away in a booth in the back. He stalked over to her and gave her a reproving look.

"Miss Granger," he said curtly. "I thought you would choose somewhere more voluptuary than this dive that probably can't even make fish and chips correctly!"

Granger eyed him, but instead of the retort he was expecting, she motioned for him to sit down. He was a bit surprised at her. She evidently had learned to control her need to be in charge of every situation.

"Professor Snape," she began once he'd settled into the booth across from her. "I chose this pub for its privacy."

Granger ran her fingers through her hair. Severus noted a bracelet around her wrist. A small, round Sneakoscope was at the center of the bracelet.

"A touch paranoid, Miss Granger?" he mocked as he motioned to the Sneakoscope.

Granger looked crossly down at her bracelet.

"I am here at the risk of being found out. If our meeting were to be discovered, it could have serious repercussions to our world."

"Miss Granger, the Dark Lord has not risen again, has he?" Severus asked sarcastically.

She looked him in the eye. A sudden fear enveloped him, even though he had no idea what she was about to say.

"We haven't counted out that possibility yet," Granger said grimly.

Severus' heart leapt into his throat. It took all he could muster to not show the fear that her statement had caused.

"Would you care to explain?"

"Before I begin, I need to make sure you understand the seriousness of what I'm about to tell you. The Head Unspeakable, Sibelius Croaker, has given me permission to bring you aboard on this investigation. What you hear from me is not to go beyond these walls. Can you agree to that?"

"I believe that you know I am capable of keeping secrets," he retorted dryly.

Severus watched Granger as he mulled her words over in his head. He was curious to know what mystery could be so hard that the Unspeakables would need outside help. Observing Granger's face, he saw that she would not tell him anything until he agreed to her terms. He finally gave a quick nod, motioning for Granger to continue. Before she could speak, the barkeep slammed two mugs down in front of them. Severus eyed his beverage.

"I hope you don't mind, I went ahead and ordered us some butterbeer," Granger explained.

He arched an eyebrow at her. "I would expect you to choose something with a little more kick."

"I don't drink when I'm working, Professor Snape." Granger then leaned forward and began to speak in softer tones. "Are you familiar with lineaments?" she asked.

Severus eyed her darkly. "I can't say that I am."

"I thought you of all people would know," she said with some disappointment. "Lineaments are any linear geological feature that form lines when viewed from above. An example might be a fault line. Many are known for their magical qualities."

Severus frowned at her. "You expect me to recognize such an innocuous term? I did not study Muggle geography, Miss Granger!" he snapped.

"Of course you didn't, but I would think you would be familiar with highly magical landmarks."

Severus looked at her crossly. "Just get on with it. What is so important about these *lineaments*?"

"As I said, they have magical properties. Studies have found that there are larger amounts of magical growth in these areas, and a wizard's magical influence can increase when they are in such locations."

Severus sat back. "I've actually heard of these areas. I was just unaware they were called lineaments."

Granger nodded. "Someone has been taking advantage of the magical properties of one of these areas. The perpetrator repeatedly raids certain objects when they're at the height of their magical peak, always striking at the full moon, which, as you know, increases magical essence."

Severus nodded, his interests piqued. "What do you think this person is trying to do?" he asked.

"We believe the suspect is brewing a potion and harvesting ingredients when their magic is the strongest. This person is aware of our knowledge of them and has been very brazen, casting the equivalent of a Morsmordre whenever raiding the lineament."

Severus inhaled sharply. "The Dark Mark is being cast again?"

"Not exactly. The mark is in the shape of a dragon spitting fire."

Severus furrowed his brow. "You haven't been able to catch this person in the act of raiding?"

Granger shook her head. "No. We know when the suspect will strike because it's always on a full moon. Unfortunately, the lineament is so large that we have been unable to divine exactly where each raid will be. Also, the suspect always seems to be one step ahead of us, raiding just hours before we plan to stake out the area. Unspeakable Croaker thinks there might be a mole somewhere in the Ministry."

"How could that be? The very nature of your organization precludes anyone knowing what you do," Severus mused.

"If the mole has infiltrated the Unspeakables, he or she would be privy to our secrets."

Severus became troubled. He stared at the table for a while as Granger finished her explanation.

"The suspect leaves notes for us, mocking our efforts and claiming willingness to go to any extreme necessary, including killing, to accomplish the intended task. Once this task is accomplished, the letters vow that the most powerful wizard of all time will be restored."

Severus' eyes widened. *Can there be any doubt who this madman wishes to restore?*

"How could anyone do such a thing?" Severus whispered.

Hermione shook her head before continuing. "There are several rare varieties of magical plants in this lineament. The suspect has harvested these, other more common magical plants, soil and rocks, and even living things from the area. On the last raid, the perpetrator left behind a sacrificial altar constructed out of the surrounding rocks. We're not sure whether the sacrifice was that of a human or an animal. The note left stated that the suspect was one step closer to restoring the greatest wizard ever known, telling that there was just one more item to gather at the harvest moon, and then the wizard would come back to life."

Severus frowned while deep in thought. "The next harvest moon happens to coincide with the blue moon."

Granger leaned even further in. "Exactly. Any magic done during this unusual combination is guaranteed to be the most potent possible. We have no doubt that whomever this person is trying to resurrect, the attempt will be successful."

"What can I do to help?" Severus asked gravely.

"We don't know what the suspect is brewing or exactly how it will work. Because of the mole, I cannot seek answers from my colleagues. I need your help in figuring this out. We have little time to discover exactly what is at stake."

Severus sat back, his arms folded. "Where will we perform this investigation?"

"I have set up a secret lab at my flat. We'll start there."

"Where is this lineament located?"

Granger looked to the side. "It is in the UK," she muttered.

Severus scowled. "Where in the UK?"

She looked back at him. "In a mountainous region."

"Must you equivocate, Miss Granger? Why can't you just tell me where this blasted lineament is?"

"I'd rather not at this time, Professor Snape. The less you know about everything, the safer you'll be."

"This is ridiculous. You ask me to help, but you will not tell me everything? I will not do it!"

Granger bit her lip. "I'm sorry, Professor. I've told you what I can." Her voice hardened. "If we need to visit the lineament, I will inform you where it is."

Severus had the feeling that he would not be able to argue the location of the lineament out of her.

"Will you help me or not?" Granger asked finally, her eyebrow arching in mocking of his own signature expression.

Severus frowned. "It seems there is no choice in the matter. If I don't help, we might find ourselves under world domination in a matter of months."

Granger smiled ruefully. "I'm glad you see things my way." She checked her watch. "Perhaps we should adjourn to my lab."

Severus nodded and rose from his seat. Granger followed suit, and they made their way out the door. As soon as they reached the sidewalk, the mini-Sneakoscope on Granger's wrist began to blare.

Everything happened so fast, there was little time to react. Severus saw an orange light heading right for Granger. He threw himself at her and knocked her to the ground, but the hex followed their downward fall and struck him in the back. In an instant darkness enveloped him.

He awoke to the sight of Granger's worried face peering into his. She sat back and ran her wand over him, chanting some healing spells softly. He sat up.

"Are you all right?" Granger asked.

He rubbed his head, but nodded to show he would recover. "Were you hurt?" he asked as his eyes quickly examined her.

"No, but by the time I got out from under you, whoever hexed us had gotten away."

Severus felt relief and a bit of anger surge through him. "Miss Granger, if you want my help, you'd better tell me everything. Obviously, someone wants you stopped. If I am to put my life in harm's way, I will only do it if you tell me everything you know... Now!"

End notes: This is week one of the Intergalactic Quidditch Cup Tournament! We hope you've enjoyed our start. Remember, please help us out by leaving a review, even if it's just to say "Thanks!" or "Update!" please.

The word prompts we were given for this week were:

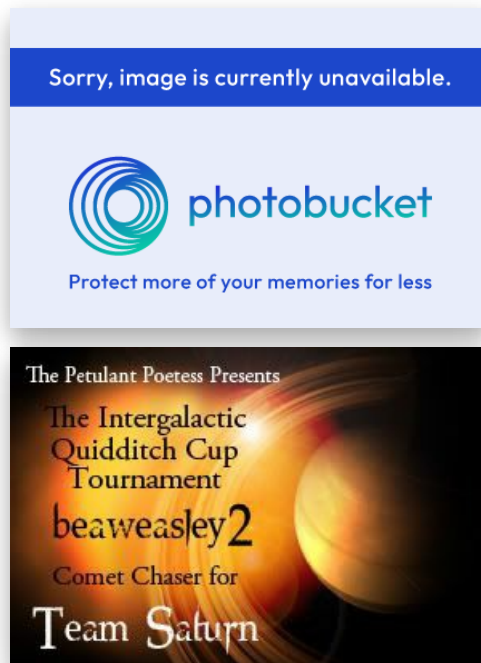
1. voluptuary
2. forest
3. ink
4. fish and chips
5. equivocate
6. lineament
7. sneakoscope

See you next Sunday with a chapter from beaweasley2.

beaweasley2 – Comet Chaser

Chapter 2 of 7

Severus Snape receives a mysterious letter from Unspeakable Hermione Granger, prompting him to meet with her. In hopes of stopping a clever mastermind, he agrees to give her whatever help she needs. Will he lose his heart to her along the way?



Disclaimer: All for JKRI!

Hermione offered Severus a hand up, although she was checking the street at the same time. "We have to get out of here."

He shook it off on principle as he jumped up on his feet and then dusted himself off, quickly making an assessment of the street himself. Not that he expected to see anyone. Whoever it was had obviously left; however, Miss Granger remained antsy. "I realize that," he said a bit curtly. He recognized the well-honed instincts she was displaying now and felt his own fight or flight instincts kick in. He drew his wand discreetly, about to question her about Disapparating when she did the unthinkable.

Hermione raised her wand arm to summon the Knight Bus. "I've no idea if he's gone or lingering," she replied. "I didn't tell anyone where I was going..."

"You have got to be kidding," Severus grumbled as the bus suddenly appeared. As a means of transport, this was his last choice, and thankfully, he'd never set foot on the monstrosity before.

She only smiled and beckoned him with her hand. "Just follow me, will you? I'll tell you what you need to know, but not here on the street," she replied, jumping onboard.

Reluctantly, he followed, letting her pay the fare. She asked for Diagon Alley and led him through the maze of well-worn, mismatched chairs, half of which were surprisingly occupied, to the back of the bus. "End of the workday for Ministry personnel. Do you trust me?" she asked, turning to face him.

"No," he replied disdainfully, still berating himself for having been coerced into being seen on the treacherous magical transport.

"You're going to have to," she said, grasping his hand quickly and then Disapparating, taking him with her just as the bus took off.

They landed in a small entry of a home. "You will unhand me this instant!" Severus snarled as he pulled his hand free.

"I'm sorry!" she replied, blushing apologetically. "But if whoever attacked me was around, I wanted him or her to think we took the bus. It makes quite a racket when it jumps off, and I hoped that would cover the sound of the Apparation."

Her explanation was paranoid, but reasonable. He had a few seconds to take in his surroundings, the soft buttery-cream walls, antique hutch with hand-painted china, and vase of flowers. The room to his right was a comfortable sitting room with ample bookshelves, a comfortable-looking sofa and armchairs, and a small piano. A beige kitten with white feet wandered into the room and rolled onto its back, extending its paws, attacking the hem of her robes. She knelt down and scratched the animal's chin for a second before standing up.

"Sorry, she's new. She showed up one day and adopted me only a few weeks after Crooks died. This way," she said, leading him deeper into the house to a well-appointed Muggle kitchen with a scrubbed wood table, six sturdy oak chairs, an antique sideboard, and dish cupboard.

Her home reflected warmth he'd expected, but some of the furnishings he'd seen so far looked like they might've been family heirlooms.

"Tea?" she asked and smiled at him.

The radiance of her smile shocked him momentarily. Her manner was warm and friendly, as if he'd simply stopped by for a visit.

"No thank you," he replied and shook his head. Her efforts to be as polite as possible amused him.

Hermione opened a drawer of the cupboard and pulled out a thick file. The bothersome kitten jumped up onto her chair, and Granger picked it up, speaking to it softly while scratching behind its ears before setting it on the floor. She sat at the table, and Severus sat across from her as she searched through the folder.

Severus watched her organize the papers in front of her, taking in her relaxed poise and economy of movement. She'd matured from the girl he'd known, and her self-confidence was evident now that she was in a place where she felt comfortable.

Suddenly, Granger became all business. "For now, I have to keep the actual site of the lineament confidential, but I will tell you that it's one of the strongest magical locations we've encountered," she started to explain as she pulled out a notepad and fountain pen.

He smirked at the Muggle device, but she was unfazed by the expression, another sign of her maturity.

"I'll eventually have to show you where it is after we've discussed some of my findings. However, the Ministry of Magic has issued a diktat that all wizards and witches attempting to enter the lineament must report to Magical Law Enforcement prior to entrance, so I'll have to get clearance. Unless they are a registered resident, but there are only a handful that live anywhere near it. That gave us the excuse to place tracking and detection spells on the areas we think he or she will hit and the dissuading enchantments and repelling charms... well, as much as we could considering the size of the area."

"Fortuitous," he admitted. *Which explains her reluctance to say the location.*

"Necessary, I'm afraid." She pulled out a long sheet of parchment next to the notepad, both covered in her precise script. "Here is what I know so far," she started to say.

"You've said *she* twice. You think the mole or culprit may be a witch?" He hadn't meant to interrupt.

She looked up and smiled at him again. Her smile was lovely, if he'd consider admitting it to himself. "I'm not the only female working in the Department of Mysteries," she replied. "Now... so far there has been evidence that he has collected: asphodel, wormwood, valerian roots, sopophorus beans, and moonstone, which are the primary ingredients for the Draught of Living Death. But we found a site where fluxweed had obviously been harvested two months ago, as well as One-flowered Wintergreens and Dark Red Helleborines. We also know Dittany was harvested. Fluxweed is used in common Healing potions and in Polyjuice Potion, but we don't think the perpetrator is using Polyjuice. Although, I'm not ruling it out."

"The ingredients, while expensive, are not hard to come by," he said. "Any apothecary carries them, and they don't need to be of heightened magical efficacy to work. Wintergreen is used in diuretic, anti-inflammatory, anti-rheumatic, antiseptic, and an astringent, and in analgesic potions... but Helleborines, it's a weed and has no value that I know of."

"That's what I thought, but I wanted to be sure," she said, turning the page. "We also found a nest of dead Re'em's, we think for the blood, which gives the drinker immense strength... but harvested on a lineament... would triple its effect. There was a slain unicorn, too. The unicorn and the Re'em's had both been exsanguinated."

"The potion that kept the Dark Lord alive from the time Wormtail returned to him until he could be reborn consisted of unicorn blood and snake venom milked from Nagini," he said, and she wrote that down on her notepad.

"The Potion in the graveyard had the bone of his father, blood of his enemy, and flesh of his servant...Pettigrew. Harry told me," she added when he raised an eyebrow. "We've found evidence that he took soil samples...several holes dug all over. I collected several myself and analyzed them. The soil of the area along the lineament is basically metamorphic rock, rich in black carbon deposits, and has high concentrations of phosphorus. At one of the sites, it seems he found amber. I remember from Potions with you, it draws out negative energy, allowing the body to heal itself. It is also used in memory potions." She took another piece of parchment from her folder and handed it to him. "I made a graph of all the ingredients and tried to match them up with the potions they are used for. I found several that match up most of the ingredients but not all of them."

Severus scanned the graph. The ingredients and minerals were listed across the top, one column for each, and the potions were listed down the sides with check marks for which ingredient was in which potion. It was a quite logical and efficient way to compare them.

She handed him the notepad, meeting his gaze openly with a soft blush on her cheeks. "I made a list of the ingredients' main properties, active elements and compared their interactions. I even tried combining them with disastrous results."

She sat in silence as he read through her notes. He was not at all surprised that she was this thorough, considering what she had been like as his student, but unlike her essays at school, she summarized, hypothesized, and extrapolated her findings, and presented her opinions, theories, or speculations precisely and briefly. It was amazing how her mind worked, and he could see her thought process in her writing. *She really has tried to view this from every angle* he thought with a subtle smile. He was actually quite impressed despite himself.

"On the last raid, the perpetrator left behind a sacrificial altar constructed out of the surrounding rocks. The formation was made from Grossularite, a type of garnet found in the Scottish Highlands. I found several raw topaz crystals. I also found this poem." She handed him a soiled piece of parchment.

The poem was not well versed, nor did the rhyme flow well, but its message was clear.

Amethyst, to aid the soul that journeys, left behind struggling,

Topaz for positive energy, warmth and calming,

I hear you and come running,

Sapphires to returning balance to the body

The Amethyst Sky is coming as the transition from day to night begins

So shall you come to me, your journey renewing?

"I also found this where we discovered the unicorn," she added when he set down the poem.

Severus took the scrap of brown wrapping paper. "This is a common type of paper used in several shops in Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley," he stated, not surprised when she said she'd recognized the paper as well. The writing was only four lines, in the same vertical slant as the poem, only this time small indentations indicated that the quill had been pressed firmly when writing, which indicated an outgoing, self-assertive personality (unless the person used a Dicto-quill to purposely hide their writing). After each line, Granger had added her impression of what the line meant.

A bird that never flies dodo, chick that never hatched, a chick that dies after birth

A tree that never grows seeds, nut, Bonsai tree, stunted tree above the tree line, stump

The bell that never sang metal, silver, bronze, brass, pewter, unfinished, bowled shape, empty

A fish that never swam eggs, unhatched, toy fish, fish kite

She looked at him imploringly. "And that's where I'm at a loss. I have all these ingredients, but I cannot tie them together into a single potion or in two that would do what he claims. I only have one more full moon to catch this guy. After that, well, in less than two months, he'll be ready to bring Voldemort back."

"So we need to act with celerity because the next moon phase is coming," he stated, trying to remember when the next full moon was.

"Twenty-two days, precisely," she stated.

End notes: This is week two of the Intergalactic Quidditch Cup Tournament! We hope you've enjoyed our second chapter. Remember, please help us out by leaving a review, even if it's just to say "Thanks!" or "Update!" please. And a poll has been placed on Potter Place's LJ Community. If you liked the chapter, please vote for us!

Link:

<http://www.livejournal.com/poll/?id=1486306>

The word prompts we were given for this week were:

1. celerity
2. diktat
3. cynosure
4. kitten
5. wand
6. Knight Bus
7. password

See you next Sunday with a chapter from BrenaMarie, our Asteroid Beater!

BrenaMarie – Asteroid Beater

Chapter 3 of 7

Severus Snape receives a mysterious letter from Unspeakable Hermione Granger, prompting him to meet with her. In hopes of stopping a clever mastermind, he agrees to give her whatever help she needs. Will he lose his heart to her along the way?

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The Intergalactic
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Tournament

BrenaMarie
Asteroid Beater for
Team Saturn

Five days had passed since Hermione and Severus had been attacked in London. The Auror department had submitted even more reports of evidence that had been gathered from the lineament. As Hermione shifted through the myriad of papers and charts on her kitchen table, she groaned in frustration.

"We've got seventeen days left, and we're not any closer to tracking this madman!"

I feel like I should be out there, doing something. Sitting here, buried under paperwork, is not getting us any closer to this idiot. Why now, anyway? We've had ten Dark Lord-free years. Isn't it obvious that things are better without him around?

At that moment her new kitten, Tigger, mewled at her from the floor.

"Oh, you are adorable, come here."

She bent over, placed him in her lap, and began to stroke his soft fur.

Tigger decided at that moment that Hermione's case notes would make the perfect toy and began batting at the loose pages. He then put his two front paws up on the table. When she reached over to move her rambunctious kitten from the table, Hermione focused on the page Tigger's paw rested on.

A large section of land had been apparently dedicated to the growing of Mother of Thyme...

"Mother of Thyme... bloody hell!"

Hermione nearly tripped over her cat as she ran to the fireplace.

Severus Snape sat in his office at Hogwarts. Instead of working on the piles of assignments that needed marking, he had Granger's research organized in stacks in front of him. Potion ingredients, charts, Auror reports, he had sifted through all the material meticulously.

He pulled out the parchment that had the poem on it and read through it once again.

"This makes absolutely no sense whatsoever!" he growled as he flung the offending parchment to the side.

Next, he pulled out the chart of ingredients she had created and gave it another good look.

"All together these items create nothing," he muttered aloud.

"But what if some of these ingredients aren't even supposed to be counted?"

He picked up his quill and started scribbling all over Hermione's chart.

"There, now that makes sense," he said as he gazed down at his work.

"SEVERUS!"

Severus looked over to his fireplace to see Hermione's head floating in the flames.

"Damn, woman, I'm right here! You've no need to scream as though you're being murdered."

"Sorry," Hermione said, slightly chastened. "I just noticed something disturbing on one of the latest reports. Can you come through?"

I was finally getting somewhere! This better be good.

He quickly snatched up the ingredient chart and looked over to the fireplace.

"Move. I'm coming through."

"Now, what was so important that you insisted on interrupting me?"

"Honestly, Severus, there's a psychopath on the loose trying to resurrect the Dark Lord, and you're worried about your free time. We should be working on this together anyway!"

"I agree. We probably should be working on this in the same place," Severus said sincerely. He had no desire to continue arguing with the witch.

"Let's sit down. I've actually just found something interesting also," he continued

Once they were seated at the table, Severus reached into his pocket and pulled out the ingredient chart he had been working on.

"Look," he said while pointing at the crossed out items. "I don't think he's using these ingredients at all. There is a possibility that he planted them to mix us up, or he's stocking his ingredient closet." He pointed to several items on the list. "Either way, if we focus on these, I'm sure that they would make an extremely potent base for a resurrection potion."

"Severus, this is great work. Do you think he's missing anything else?"

Severus looked up from the chart and noticed the warm, encouraging smile she was sending his way and felt momentarily distracted.

How does she have the ability to completely hypnotize me like this?

Coming back to himself, he answered, "Belladonna."

"Which would aid in easing the cross-dimensional delirium, of course! Why do you think he hasn't harvested it yet?"

"I haven't gotten that far yet, actually. I'm thinking I might need access to the dark texts kept in your department. Would it be possible to get me in there?"

"We'll have to go see my supervisor; he gave me permission to bring you in on this case in the first place. I don't see why he wouldn't give you the credentials to get in, but we've got to ask. Before we go though, let me show you what I found." She handed him the report from earlier.

"Mother of Thyme? Doesn't St. Mungo's use that in the morgue?"

"Exactly! That's the main ingredient in the stasis potion they use for the bodies."

Hermione watched as Severus paled as he stared at the report.

"Severus?"

"Where's his body, Hermione? What did the Ministry do with it?"

"Last I heard, it was kept in a heavily warded area in the bowels of the Ministry. I've been told only the Minister knows how to get to it."

"We need to go talk to Kingsley then. We've got to make sure this maniac doesn't have the body already!"

Before Hermione could say another word, Severus was already stalking towards her fireplace.

Hermione stormed out of Kingsley's office, leaving Severus to wrap up their visit.

I can't believe him! We're trying to catch a psycho who wants to resurrect the Dark Lord, and he's treating this like we're inspecting cauldron bottoms! We only want to know if the body is still here and safe! He only needs to take a few precious minutes to just go check!

In an attempt to find composure, she leaned against a wall and closed her eyes. Because of this, she didn't see the one person approaching who she least wanted to speak with.

"Hey, Granger, you're looking good, as usual," Michael Corner said in his usual suggestive way.

Damn it, I don't want to deal with this slime-ball right now.

"What do you want, Corner?"

"I noticed you come in earlier with the great bat. How about you ditch him and come have a drink with me?" he said while staring at her chest.

"How many times do I need to tell you, Corner? I wouldn't be caught dead having drinks with you. Now leave me alone."

"Ooooooh, I love it when you get feisty."

Corner reached out to put his hand on her arm, but it was caught in mid-air.

"Mr. Corner, it may have escaped your notice, so allow me to enlighten you. Hermione is obviously not interested in going out with you tonight or any night for that matter. I suggest you stay away from her, if you value your health."

"Oh, yeah, Snape? What would you know about Hermione's interests?"

"Would you like to try me, Corner?"

In that moment Michael Corner's sense of self-preservation kicked in as he realized exactly whom he was dealing with. He promptly snatched his arm back and walked away without another word.

Wow, I can't believe he just did that. I could have handled dunderheaded Corner on my own, but it was lovely to watch him take care of it. It almost looked like he was jealous.

"Hermione, I..."

"Thank you, Severus. You have no idea how long that idiot has been harassing me. Come on; let's go see Head Unspeakable Croaker."

"Thank you for seeing us on such short notice, sir. I know you're very busy right now," Hermione said as she sat in her supervisor's office.

"It's not a problem at all, Hermione. Now, what can I do for you two?"

Hermione glanced over at Severus, and he motioned for her to continue.

"After sorting through the evidence, Severus may have discovered a lead. We were wondering if you might be able to grant him access to the Dark Arts library downstairs."

Hermione watched her supervisor appraise her partner and then turn his attention back to her.

"A lead, you say? And what would be the nature of this lead?"

"Well, sir, Severus believes that the perpetrator might be looking to harvest Belladonna next. We would like to do further research with the dark texts on potions that may use these ingredients as a base."

Hermione pulled the list out of her pocket and handed it to Croaker.

"This is a very interesting discovery, Professor. What I would like to know is, how would finding the text lead us to the perpetrator?"

"If I can get a reasonable facsimile of the recipe being used, I'll be able to create a potion to counteract it. So, even if you arrive to the site too late, the Dark Lord would only need to be doused in it to cancel the process."

"Very well. This evidence is sufficient grounds for me to grant you access. Hermione, you'll need to stay with him though."

Hermione looked over to Severus and smiled. Turning back to her supervisor, she simply said, "That shouldn't be a problem, sir."

Feeling accomplished, Hermione and Severus exited the office. They might not have been in such good spirits if they had known Croaker's office was "bugged."

An incarnadine potion sat bubbling away in a dimly lit laboratory while its creator stood nearby. Pleased with his progress thus far, he began to speak to himself.

"Everything is moving along according to plan. Granger has been as studious as ever, just as I had hoped. I love watching her agonize over every little detail that I've planted. She'll be chasing leads into next year at the rate she's going. Plus having her working this case has given me perfect access to the one I need to complete this potion."

He began to chuckle at his ingenious plan. He then retrieved his blade in order to prepare the valerian roots for addition to the potion. As he sliced, his thoughts drifted to the one its creation was for.

"I can't wait until you return to us. The wizarding world, and the Ministry especially, will return to greatness when your influence is present once again. Those fools, they're trying to stop me, but once they see you, they'll realize it was for the best."

He added the valerian root to the potion and began stirring for the required amount of time. When he completed the requirements of the current stage, he removed the stirring rod and reverently placed it next to the cauldron.

He turned away from the workbench to gaze upon the well-preserved body of his mentor.

"In seventeen days, you will return... and I will be the one standing by your side."

A/N: Prompt words for week 3: Incarnadine, Assiduous, Inure, Sartorial, Laboratory, Mother & Hogwarts. Words used: Incarnadine, Laboratory, Mother & Hogwarts. This chapter is complete at 1,863 words.

I need to give major hugs to debjunk for the beta work & constant cheerleading. Thanks, Honey!

Up next for this team: Elizabeth, Moon Chaser!

If you like the story, remember to check out the poll on the LJ Community Potter Place. You don't have to be a member to vote.

Link:

<http://www.livejournal.com/poll/?id=1489406>

Please let us know what you think! Reviews help us gain points in the challenge.

Elizabeth – Moon Chaser

Chapter 4 of 7

Severus Snape receives a mysterious letter from Unspeakable Hermione Granger, prompting him to meet with her. In hopes of stopping a clever mastermind, he agrees to give her whatever help she needs. Will he lose his heart to her along the way?

Sorry, image is currently unavailable.





The dimly lit library was cool, which Severus didn't mind. What he did mind was the upturned dust in the air. He and Hermione had been in there for hours searching for helpful texts on resurrection potions and how to counter them.

"Severus?" Hermione said, dropping a large tome onto the stack. "The suspect left a note saying he only had one ingredient left to collect on the Harvest Moon. But wouldn't it be better to get the belladonna during the New Moon?"

"Yes," he replied. "I was just thinking that. It must have been another false lead. I suppose he had hoped you would leave the lineament open to him if you thought he wouldn't be back until then. He just has a resurrection *base*; this is a pitiful potion if he thinks these ingredients alone will raise the dead. It would be beneficial for us to visit the site. We could find possible ingredients for our own potion and watch certain areas for the infiltrator."

"I agree." She gave him a warm smile.

For a moment he thought her eyes raked his person, but the lighting was poor, he couldn't be sure.

Hermione said, "I'll have to get you clearance. Remember the diktat?"

Glancing at his pocket watch, Severus noted that it was past eleven. Surely the Ministry was deserted at this hour. They were probably the only two left besides security. "We'll have to wait until morning. Thank goodness tomorrow's a Saturday."

Hermione began making copies of the relevant potions to analyze later. He was about to make his excuses to leave when she spoke.

"I know it's late, but would you like to come over? We could take a break from this case and maybe have a nightcap. I think we've looked at this stuff too long," she said.

Had he just heard her right? This was Hermione Granger, bookworm extraordinaire; she never took breaks. And she had just invited him to socialize. He hid his delight behind his usual mask.

"I was under the impression that you didn't drink," he said.

She organized the books out of habit. "I don't drink while working. This is entirely personal." She gathered her books to return to the shelves. "But if you'd rather not—"

"I'd like that," he answered quietly.

The next morning, it was difficult for Severus to awaken. The two had discussed every possible subject until the wee hours of the morning. It had been so long since he'd had an agreeable conversation. Her images plagued his mind. She had been comfortably curled on her sofa, drinks shared between them. Her smile had only been for him.

But that had been last night. He didn't have time to have a lie in. There was a madman on the loose bringing the Dark Lord back. He met Hermione in the Magical Law Enforcement office, and he got his clearance to visit the lineament. Hermione Apparated them to the site. He felt a jolt of excitement course through his body when she grasped his hand. Her skin was warm and soft.

Autumn was beautiful in Scotland. The weathered rocks were covered in rust-colored shrubs and heather, interspersed with stubby brush. A cool breeze smelling of a nearby loch blew across the landscape. Hermione's hair wafted about her face. She was quite pleasing to the eyes. He was staring but couldn't stop. Hermione's cheeks were tinged pink as she let go of his hand.

Two Aurors approached. They were none other than The-Boy-Who-Never-Died and Pervert Corner. Severus noted their distance from each other—they lacked any sort of friendship.

"Hiya, Hermione," Potter said.

Corner averted his eyes.

"Hello, Harry." She smiled. "How's Ginny?"

Severus tried to focus on their small talk. But he had never cared much for Potter, even after the war. They were talking about the World Quidditch Cup and something about camping after infiltrating the Ministry. How those two topics connected was beyond him.

After a few minutes, Severus gave a well-timed cough. Hermione wrapped up her conversation, and Potter gave them clearance to enter. As they approached the geographic feature, he was impressed with the strength of the exterior wards; the wind didn't even penetrate them.

"How large is this lineament?" he queried once they were alone.

"It's several miles long. We are at the southern end. We've found most of the culprit's activities focused within a few acres of this point. But that doesn't mean we aren't monitoring other sectors of the lineament."

She led him to a grove of ancient yew trees. Her hand brushed his; again he felt a pleasant tingle when their skin touched. The yew trees were aged and gnarled. Their boughs blocked out the sunlight, prohibiting undergrowth. The holes were random, their sizes varied. Mounds of dirt and rock were piled against trees.

Next, she showed him the site of the sacrificial burning. He could see the magical residue coming off of the altar. Something dark had taken place here.

"We aren't sure what was sacrificed here, but we're leaning towards an animal . . . What are those? They weren't there before." Hermione pointed to some delicate pieces of curved silver.

"Those are occamy eggshells!" Severus gasped. "If he's sacrificed an occamy and harvested its undeveloped eggs, then he's much further along on this potion than I suspected. How he got an occamy is beyond me. But we have to find that belladonna now."

They searched all day and into the night, only pausing when the moon rose over the low-lying hills. It was just a sliver now. In two days it would be a new moon, and the perpetrator would come to harvest. They designed to meet earlier tomorrow and search until it was found. Tonight, Hermione didn't ask him over, but she gave his arm a friendly squeeze before leaving.

Severus was determined to find the belladonna. Fortunately, Granger was very sedulous in her application. During the night, she had found several different maps detailing the lineament. When she showed them to him the next morning, he determined the best place for finding belladonna. Three hours later, they arrived in a large meadow full of the stuff.

After staking out the field and preparing for tomorrow night, they went back to Hermione's flat. In case they failed in apprehending the suspect, they wanted to set in place an antidote to the resurrection potion, sort of Plan B.

On Monday evening, Severus Apparated to the lineament after dinner. Hermione hadn't arrived yet, and he was forced to stand with Michael Corner. She appeared shortly, giving their passes to Corner for inspection. They went to their designated hiding spot to wait. As the moonless evening grew chilly, Hermione inched closer, snuggling up against him. Severus was glad for the warmth and glad for her company.

Late in the night, someone breached the wards. Following their plan, he and Hermione split up, circling around the intruder. Suddenly, light burst to life at the far end of the field. It crackled and roared, growing with speed. Smoke assaulted Severus' nose. A fire.

It was hot and rampant. Snakes flickered and chimeras sprang out of it—Fiendfyre. And then she screamed. Hermione. Forgetting the plan, he ran through the belladonna. It slapped against his thighs while he scanned for her figure against the blaze. He called her name, no, yelled it, and she bolted his way. A snake coil weaved through the plants, cutting them off. Pouring all his energy into the fire, he was able to control it long enough to escape through a gap. They struggled through the rocky terrain on the edge of the meadow, the fire hot on their heels. It was melting the earth around them.

A small loch spread out before them. Severus knew it was their only chance as an ear-splitting growl rang out behind them. The cool water was shallow and muddy. Severus' boots were waterproof, but Hermione was struggling in her trainers. She fell over with a splash. With one fluid movement, he swooped her into his arms, carrying her as she coughed.

A minute isle appeared in the inky night. Gently, he put Hermione down on dry ground. "Are you alright?" he asked with concern.

"I inhaled a lot of smoke. I'm a bit dizzy." She staggered. "Hold me a bit," she said quietly.

Severus was willing to hold her for all eternity.

"You saved me, Severus." She ran her hand down his chest. "Thank you," she whispered and stood on tiptoes, inches from his mouth. His heart was in his throat. Her lips were full and parted.

"Granger!" someone yelled in the night air. "Granger, are you out there?" The voice came from the mainland, somewhere amongst the smoldering remains of the meadow and the dead Fiendfyre.

Hermione looked confused, her eyes out of focus. She snatched her hands away. "I'm sorry. What was I doing?" she said apologetically. She was embarrassed, but he wasn't going to taunt her.

Pieces clicked together for Severus. Hermione had inhaled the smoke from the belladonna. And it was commonly used as an aphrodisiac when smoked. Before he could fully process everything, Unspeakable Croaker Apparated next to them.

"What just happened?" Croaker demanded, waving his wand.

Switching into business mode, Hermione said, "We were stalking the culprit, but he conjured the Fiendfyre before we could apprehend him, sir. Professor Snape saved us both. Luckily all the belladonna was burned in the fire. He most likely didn't get any for his potion."

"I hope you're right about the ingredient. Because he got away," Croaker said with distain. "I discovered the mole's identity and came as soon as I could to warn you. Looks like I was too late."

"Who's the mole?" Hermione asked eagerly.

"Auror Michael Corner."

Severus was shocked. He had been expecting a war vet or someone with an important connection to the war. Surely Corner wasn't the mastermind behind all this. Severus remembered his grades in Potions. The boy was an imbecile. "He has to be working for someone else. The boy is not capable of bringing back the Dark Lord. Of that I am sure."

Severus wasn't able to leave the castle for several days. On Saturday, he visited Hermione's flat, and they worked on the anti-resurrection potion. She hadn't tried to kiss him since her little boost with the belladonna. But now Severus knew how she felt. The plant enhanced one's feelings; it didn't create false ones.

In between potion stages, she offered to make a cup of tea. While she clattered about in the kitchen, he perused the many books she had scattered around the house. He paused on a book full of Tennyson. Maybe it was the cover that caught his eye—it just looked odd.

Hermione placed a plate of Cornish pasties and the tea on the table. She saw his book choice. "I got that book at a Tchotchke shop," she said. "I was at Windsor Castle a few years back, and the book just seemed out of place, so I bought it."

He appreciatively flipped through it, and the pages opened onto a small poem.

Old Yew, which graspeth at the stones

That name the under-lying dead,

Thy fibres net the dreamless head,

Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.

The book snapped shut. "His wand! The forest is made of yew," Severus said. "It's the only thing Voldemort has to connect him to this world now. We have to find his yew wand before Corner does. And we only have nine days left."

AN: Hope you enjoyed this week's chapter! Please review and let us know what you think! Also, if you've liked the chapter, please consider voting for Saturn on Potter Place's LiveJournal Poll.

<http://community.livejournal.com/potterplace/139266.html>

phoenix_writing – Gravity Keeper

Chapter 5 of 7

Severus Snape receives a mysterious letter from Unspeakable Hermione Granger, prompting him to meet with her. In hopes of stopping a clever mastermind, he agrees to give her whatever help she needs. Will he lose his heart to her along the way?



"I don't know how I let you talk me into this," Severus grumbled as he crept along the corridor.

He already had no idea where they were, but Hermione was moving with confidence.

"Talk you into this?" Hermione was restrained to a whisper as they were anxious to avoid detection. "You *insisted* upon coming."

He had been concerned for her...but he was hardly going to say that.

"Quite recently, you were nearly consumed by Fiendfyre. I think it unwise for you to go anywhere on your own."

She huffed a breath, and he thought that he was about to be treated to a fine example of her temper, but all she said was, "Then stop complaining. You're worse than Ron and Harry."

Severus grimaced and abandoned the topic.

"Treacle fudge," she said presently.

"What?"

"Hush."

He felt the wards come down and realized that the nonsensical words had been a password.

They walked on; then Hermione reset the wards, adding a complicated-looking flourish with her wand.

"What was that?"

After a moment, she admitted, "A little Unspeakable trick. Ensures no one can tell we went through."

A nice trick he'd like to learn.

She led him deeper into the bowels of the building until she stopped and announced, "Into the storeroom."

"I beg your pardon?"

A shove propelled him into the small room. He ran into a mop and bucket, could vaguely make out various maintenance, cleaning, and office supplies.

He turned back to face her. "Hermione, you can't possibly..."

She pulled the door closed behind herself. It was very dark. Hermione was practically on top of him. He shuffled hurriedly, trying to get all important bits out of too-close contact.

Hermione cleared her throat. "I hadn't planned this for the two of us. The patrols will be out of the area soon."

"This is almost as clichéd as an assignation in the prefect's bathroom," he hissed.

"What was that?"

"Nothing."

He had caught students up to all sorts of inappropriate activities in areas like this back at Hogwarts. He had never believed any of their excuses...and yet here he and Hermione were, waiting out a patrol in a storeroom.

Several very stilted minutes of silence passed. The handle of the mop was pressing most uncomfortably into his back, but he couldn't let himself simply lean more into Hermione.

Did she have any notion how lovely she smelled and how difficult it was not to bury his face in her hair? Wrap his arms around her? He was quite certain that they could fit more tolerably in this space if they arranged themselves in that manner, but he rather doubted that he would be able to convince her of the pure practicality of his suggestion.

His elbow was wedged very uncomfortably against one of the shelves. When he finally succeeded in moving it, he had to scramble to catch what he'd hit before it could make too much noise. He grasped at the items, relieved that they had not hit the floor.

They felt like rolls of spellotape. Who had organized this storeroom? It was hardly logical to put them at the edge of the shelf where they could be so easily knocked off.

"Would you mind moving your hands?"

Hermione's voice was slightly breathless, and Severus realized just what part of her anatomy he had caught the tape against. He shifted immediately.

"I beg your pardon," he said stiffly, appalled by his gaucherie.

He cast about for a topic which would take his mind off the fact that he'd recently had his hands all over Hermione's chest.

"Have you come across any other leads?"

As if she wouldn't have told him right away. Less than a week until the full moon, and they didn't seem to be getting anywhere. Which was, of course, what had led them to this particular gamble.

"Nothing. The Aurors are still investigating Draco Malfoy..."

He scoffed. "Going after every Slytherin you know?"

"That isn't fair, Severus," Hermione said crossly. "Someone cast the equivalent of a dragon Morsmordre in the sky above the crimes. It's a legitimate line of inquiry."

"Yet I don't suppose it occurred to you to investigate Charlie Weasley, someone who has *more* to do with dragons than simply the etymology of a name? Gryffindors are all..."

His words cut off as his foot was stomped on. Rather deliberately, he suspected.

"I led the investigation myself," she said, voice vibrating with emotion. "Ron still isn't speaking to me, but I have no intention of allowing sentimentality or prejudice to cloud my judgement on this matter. As I was trying to say, there is no indication that Draco Malfoy is involved. Nor that Charlie is."

Now the silence wasn't just awkward. He thought it was more than angry, too. He was pretty sure that he had hurt her.

"You have always had a pronounced ability to do what you believe is right; it was rude of me to ascribe motives to you that would better describe someone like Sirius Black."

He heard her swallow in the darkness. "Thank you."

"Obviously you are not unduly prejudiced against Slytherins or you wouldn't be here with me now."

"In the closet, you mean?"

There was a thread of laughter in her voice now, and Severus was relieved.

"Something like that."

Silence fell again, easier this time. He could feel her exhalations fluttering against his cheek.

It was quite intimate, and he blamed this for his speaking again.

"Your research for this case suggests that you have maintained your Potions acumen."

"I find it useful for a variety of cases."

"Your knowledge is formidable."

"Thank you." She sounded pleased.

"I imagine that you are aware, therefore, of the properties of belladonna?"

She grew quite still.

And suddenly, Severus couldn't think of a single other property of the plant which he could mention to turn the subject.

Hermione sighed. "I was wondering how long it would take you to bring that up. I apologize."

"You could hardly help yourself."

"But I know how awkward it is to have someone you're not interested in practically throwing themselves at you."

"I..."

"You were just trying to save me, and I behaved like a complete fool. I should have realized, should have..."

But it seemed that Severus had hit upon a way to effectively silence Hermione Granger.

It also turned out that it was much more comfortable in the storeroom if Hermione's arms were wrapped around his neck and his around her waist. The handle of the mop was still digging into his back, but that didn't seem nearly as annoying as it had done.

She tasted like honey and cinnamon, made little noises in the back of her throat when he moved a hand up to twine in her hair. He realized that he'd wanted to do this ever since she had waltzed back into his life and caused such upheaval.

Only now Hermione was pulling away from him.

"Time," she muttered, voice rough. "We've got to get moving."

In the light of the hallway...positively brilliant compared to the storeroom...he could see that she was flushed and somewhat ruffled, and she straightened her hair and clothing as they continued down the corridor.

Severus was somehow right back at the Dark Lord wreaking havoc on his personal life. He wasn't sure that he had ever been more annoyed.

Which was, of course, why they had to ensure the man stayed dead.

They hadn't made it more than twenty yards before they were suddenly dodging spell-fire. Hermione threw up a shield while Severus sent a Blasting Curse back at their attacker.

"Stop that!" Hermione exclaimed.

Severus hardly thought that would help, only the attack ceased immediately.

"Goddammit, Hermione, you scared the hell out of me!"

Harry Potter.

Severus should have realized that Hermione would be chary about this; though they had been caught, it was by one of Hermione's best friends.

Severus had to wonder about the wisdom of pulling the Man Who Triumphed off the lineament...thanks to Hermione's insistence...only to put him on guard duty here. Perhaps Potter had simply refused to be taken out of the action entirely.

"Are you out of your mind, sneaking around like this?" Potter demanded.

"We have to see if the body's there."

"Did it occur to you to ask?"

"Of course it did." Hermione's glare skewered Potter. "Kingsley told me it was here but wouldn't let me see for myself. Actually said I was causing a foofaraw...as if trying to raise Voldemort from the dead is a *trifle*."

Potter was frowning.

"I'm not sure that I can trust what he's saying."

"We're talking about Kingsley."

"I know," she said softly. "But it wasn't normal behaviour."

Potter stood there for a long moment, irresolute, and then he nodded. "Shift change is in less than an hour."

They started moving again, and Severus wondered how he'd got himself into this. Breaking in to the Ministry to see Voldemort's body with Harry Potter and Hermione Granger. Did this make him part of a warped Golden Trio?

"I still can't believe they put you down here alone," Hermione said.

The Auror shrugged. "After what happened with Corner, everyone's a little leery of nearly everyone else. But they all agree that Harry Potter wouldn't let anyone get at Voldemort."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Still no news about Corner?"

The younger man shook his head. "Not a bloody thing. I've never had much use for him, but.... Yes, he's an Auror; he'd know a fair bit of the information that's been leaked. Everyone's agreed he can't be the mastermind behind all of this, but I honestly can't even see him as a decent lackey or getting laying low right. He's always been loud and obnoxious and..."

"...a miserable excuse for a human being?" Severus suggested.

"Yes," Potter said with a grateful nod. "Now he's eluding all detection, and it just doesn't feel right, you know?"

Hermione nodded.

Severus had already shared his doubts with Hermione; he couldn't help but feel that there was something fishy about the whole thing.

They finally reached their destination. It took Hermione and Harry fourteen minutes to break through the formidable wards, and Severus was reluctantly impressed.

When they stepped inside, he told himself not to be paranoid, but all the hairs on the back of his neck were standing up. The room was small and seemed to be devoted solely to the Dark Lord laid out on a long table and surrounded by more wards.

The body was badly decayed; the two pieces of his snapped wand lay across the remains of his chest next to the skeletal hands.

"I can't believe he's here like this," Severus uttered involuntarily.

"Don't look at us," Potter grumbled. "We've been trying for ten bloody years to get them to burn him and have done."

Severus stepped closer, staring down at the earthly remains of the man who had been his master for almost two decades.

Wordlessly, he uttered the spell, and a deep twinge in his left arm told him everything that he needed to know.

"It's him."

"Can you be sure?" Potter asked.

"The spell identifies the wizard who cast the Dark Mark upon me. There is no doubt."

They stared at the remains.

It was all here. The broken pieces of the wand. The body. No indication of tampering, no indication that it was being preserved.

Hermione and Severus came to the same conclusion at the same time, and she beat him to the question.

"What if it's not Voldemort they're trying to resurrect?"

AN: Hope you enjoyed the chapter! Please review! Each review helps our team gain points!

Also, if you've liked the chapter and would like to vote, there will be a poll up at the Potter Place Live Journal shortly. You can find it here:

<http://community.livejournal.com/potterplace/141066.html>

Word Prompts for this week:

1. Gaucherie
2. Prefect's bathroom
3. Storeroom
4. Spellotape
5. Foofaraw
6. Chary
7. Treacle fudge

Up next: Southern_Witch_69

See you next Sunday!

Southern Witch 69 — Black Hole Chaser

Chapter 6 of 7

Severus Snape receives a mysterious letter from Unspeakable Hermione Granger, prompting him to meet with her. In hopes of stopping a clever mastermind, he agrees to give her whatever help she needs. Will he lose his heart to her along the way?

Sorry, image is currently unavailable.



The Petulant Poetess Presents

The Intergalactic
Quidditch Cup
Tournament

Southern_Witch_69

Black Hole Chaser for

Team Saturn

Thanks go to debjunk for beta reading this!

Severus arched an eyebrow and then widened his eyes in surprise. "Hermione!" he called out triumphantly. "Come quick!" A moment later, the clicking of her shoes against the tile of her kitchen could be heard.

"What is it?" she asked anxiously.

The appreciative smile on his face faltered as he saw Potter follow her into the room. He'd momentarily forgotten the boy was still there briefing her on what he knew of the unfruitful search for Corner. "Glumbumble parts."

Hermione cocked her head to the side. "I don't follow."

Impatiently, Severus gestured to the potion and said, "When they are mixed with the berry of a belladonna plant and the yolk of occamy eggs, a revitalizing agent is produced. Look at the difference in these glumbumbles." He pointed to the dead insects they'd been using as test subjects. "This one was in the same condition as that one, but then..."

"Oh my God," Hermione said, sitting in a nearby chair. "You've done it, Severus! I never thought about belladonna berries."

"I thought the Fiendfyre destroyed the lot?" Potter asked.

"Doesn't mean he didn't procure some before the fire," Severus said rather snidely.

"And these berries are harvested in autumn," Hermione said, nodding. "So, that's what the occamy eggs were used for." She grinned. "How in the world did you figure in the glumbumble parts?"

"It's actually the fluid it secretes." He shrugged. "This one still had some inside...I hadn't collected it all...and when I pushed down on its thorax to add the occamy yolk and berry solution I'd prepared for the experiment, it dripped out. Just as I did so, I had an epiphany and remembered something Slughorn once mentioned. The change began immediately." He snorted. "It's safe to say that the person behind this does not suffer from triskaidekaphobia. The required anti-clockwise stir count? It's thirteen, not twelve as we'd thought."

Hermione beamed brightly, stood up to hug him, and then turned to Potter to do the same. "I've got to inform Croaker!" She set about sending a Patronus when Potter sat down in the chair she'd vacated.

"Thanks for your help on this."

Severus simply nodded.

"I've wanted to be an Auror for a long time."

"Yes, I remember."

"Yeah, you said I'd never become one."

"Is there a point, Potter?"

"No, just trying to think of something to say. And failing." The boy shook his head. "I wish Tonks were still alive. She would have loved this kind of thing. She was excited to think we might work together one day." Potter sighed. "I was just talking to Kingsley earlier, and he said that he would have offered Lupin a job. You know how brilliant that would have been? He could have..." His words trailed away as melancholy filled his expression.

Severus wasn't sure what the boy wanted him to say, so he remained silent, his eyes moving over to Hermione's form as she walked back to them.

"Poor Lupin," she commented. "As far as Tonks, just think what her mentor would have done with all this. He would have been in his element!"

"Moody," Severus said with a sneer.

"Was a good man," Harry interjected.

"Was a man who didn't know his boundaries," Severus said, but then added, "but a good man all the same I suppose."

"Tonks took his death so hard," Hermione said, remembering the night Moody had been killed. She'd shed many shocked tears as well.

"Yeah, I hear Croaker mourned for a long time, too," Harry said.

"Indeed?" Severus asked.

Hermione touched his hand briefly. "Moody trained him, helped him get an education after his family was murdered I believe. There's a portrait of Moody in his office, along with some others...his lost family, if I'm not mistaken."

"I wish I could have buried more than his eye," Harry said softly, looking at his watch. "Ah, anyway, I've got to get ready for tonight. Kingsley wants a word with me before I go. They want as many Aurors as possible at the lineament to help the Unspeakables." He gave them a lopsided grin. "I get to ride on my broom tonight to look down for anything suspicious."

"Ever the broom rider!" Hermione quipped. "I'll see you in a few hours then, all right?"

Thinking of the full moon, which was set to rise shortly, Severus said, "Bad moon rising."

Everyone remained silent for a moment, each lost in thought, before Hermione walked Potter to the door. When she came back, she walked right up to Severus and said, "You've been quiet."

"I've been working...you know how important it was for us to figure out the steps of the potion we were missing. And now only a few drops of this can be added to the antidote... just in case our perpetrator is successful." He proceeded to do just that, looking smug with his success.

"About the other day..."

"In the storeroom?"

"Yes." Her voice had become breathless.

"Do you... Would you like to explore that a little more?" he asked boldly. He'd wanted to broach the subject before now, but no time had seemed quite right.

"I want that, Severus," she admitted softly, stepping forward and lifting her hands to his face before tiptoeing up to brush her lips against his. The kiss was light and

exploring before one of them moaned...Severus?...and then it became quite intense.

Hermione's hands moved of their own volition and buried themselves in Severus' hair as if afraid he might try to escape. The pounding heart in her chest gave way to tingling in her stomach as their tongues tangled and tasted. When Severus ended the kiss, he didn't pull away from her, instead moving his mouth to her neck, nipping and laving until he found the sensitive spot just behind her earlobe.

"Oh, God, yes," she murmured, craning her neck to give him more access. She then realized that they'd moved away from the table he'd been experimenting on and were now pressed against the nearest wall. When she felt his hard erection press against her stomach, heat flooded her veins as if setting her on fire with want. How could a man provoke such feelings by simply using his mouth? What would it be like if he also used his hands or did more than press his glorious hardness against her body?

"Hermione," he whispered suddenly.

She was uncertain what he'd meant to convey, but her name sounded like a lifeline for a drowning man. Or, perhaps, was he asking her a question? Moving her roaming hands back up to his face...they'd found their way down to his back and arse...Hermione looked into the black depths of his eyes, trying to read them. Deciding that if he'd asked a question, he deserved an answer.

"Yes," she said softly, a small smile gracing her lips.

Decision made, he gifted her with a smile in return and lowered his lips back to hers, one of his hands ghosting over a breast before coming to rest on her waist. However, the moment was not meant to last. Croaker's voice filled the room.

"Granger! I've got Corner! He's at the lineament. The base of the second mountain on the northern side has a bloody cave! I've alerted the others! Bring Snape and be careful!"

Hermione's head cleared instantly. What had she been thinking? Stunned, she looked over in the direction of Croaker's Patronus and saw wisps of smoky light vanishing.

"Finally!" she said, pushing Severus back.

"Where is the nearest checkpoint to the mountain he's talking about?" he asked, composing himself and snatching up a phial of the antidote he'd just completed.

"It's right near there. I wonder how we didn't find the cave after all this time searching?" Frustration laced her words.

"It's a huge lineament, for one. Enchantments, for another," he said, stating the obvious and smirking at her.

She swatted at his arm playfully before grasping him firmly. "I'll Side-Along with you." With a loud crack, they Apparated to the checkpoint nearest the mountain that held the cave opening.

"Where's the Auror on duty?" she wondered, looking around.

"He's probably gone to help Croaker. I can't wait to get my hands on Corner and his accomplice. They need to be incinerated!"

"Either you're out for blood or you've a fondness for malapropism. Don't you mean incarcerated?"

"The bastards nearly killed us...you...in that fire!" His expression turned dark as he thought back to that night. Then he pointed behind Hermione. "Look! An unearthed trail. Follow it!" Severus said, sprinting off with his wand drawn.

Hermione did the same, brushing past shrubs, ducking under branches, and jumping over a small stream. Finally, they were at a partially concealed cave. "We probably passed by here at least once," Hermione said in disappointment.

"It's not the easiest terrain to navigate; besides, there's no time for that now," Severus said, blasting the rocks and dried branches out of the way. "Just be glad we've finally found the little prick who's been, up until now, as slippery as the banks of The Serpentine! I shall go first."

"Severus..." Before she could voice her objection, he'd already ducked through the entrance. She did the same, wand at the ready. "It's so dark. Ugh... it stinks. It smells like that maggoty haggis at Nearly Headless Nick's Death Day party... mixed with Doxycide."

"Definitely not pleasant, and I wonder if...blahwoo arfnom! Waagffff!"

"Sorry? What are you saying?" Hermione saw the terror on Snape's face before she could make sense of his tongue-tied words. Her eyes moved to the direction his were set on, and she gasped.

Slowly striding toward them was none other than Albus Dumbledore...sort of. His body seemed to be made of dust. "Murderer," he said, extending a finger towards Severus.

Severus' wand clanked to the ground and ropes appeared from the darkness, binding him and slamming him against the wall. All the while he tried to speak but could only mumble unintelligently.

Hermione pointed her wand at Dumbledore's figure. "Headmaster? What are you...he didn't murder you! How could you say that?" She was breathing heavily and debating on which hex to use when someone said, "*Lumos!*"

The cave lit up as a fire in its center roared to life and several candles flamed brightly.

"Unspeakable Croaker!" she called out happily. "It's Dumbledore Corner's trying to bring back! And Severus! He's been hexed or something. I think..." She looked around, taking in everything. "Where's Michael?" When her boss said nothing, and only glared at Snape, she asked again, "Where's Corner?"

The smirk he gave her sent chills through her body. Something was quite wrong.

The words we used this week are: Triskaidekaphobia, Malapropism, Maggoty Haggis, Doxycide, Glumbumble Parts, The Serpentine, and Stream.

Please let us know what you think about the chapter! Have it all figured out yet?

If you liked the chapter and want to take a moment to vote for us, please go to the following link:

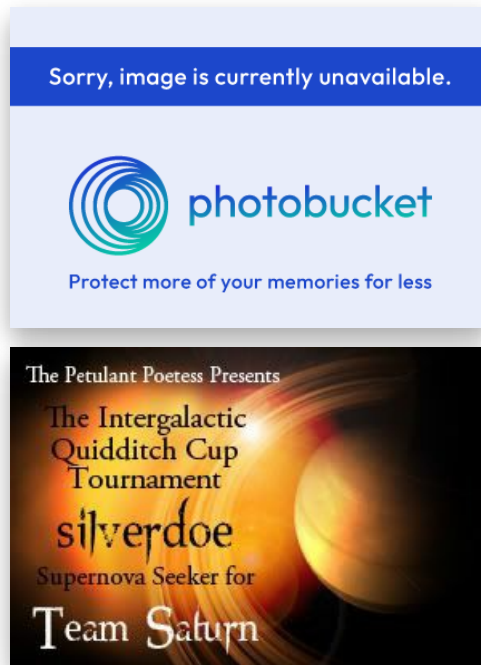
[Week 6 Vote!](#)

Next week, silverdoe, our Seeker, is up with the conclusion to the story. Thanks for making Saturn's experience a wonderful one!

silverdoe — Supernova Seeker

Chapter 7 of 7

Severus Snape receives a mysterious letter from Unspeakable Hermione Granger, prompting him to meet with her. In hopes of stopping a clever mastermind, he agrees to give her whatever help she needs. Will he lose his heart to her along the way?



Harry was bent over, inspecting the ground by an ancient stand of yew trees when Kingsley Shacklebolt appeared next to him.

"Minister Shacklebolt, I didn't expect to see you here tonight," Harry said as he stood up.

"Hello, Harry," Kingsley replied. "Did you lose something?"

"No. I just thought, well, I seem to remember this being the area where I buried Moody's eye. Only I can't find it. I should have done a better job of marking the tree."

The two men were silent for a moment. Kingsley ran a hand down the trunk of the closest tree. "It's a shame we never found the body. It would have been nice to give him a proper burial," he said.

"I was thinking the same thing. Maybe I was wrong. I mean, how likely is it that I buried it here and someone found it?" Harry mused.

"Why did you think it was here?" Kingsley asked.

"It's the yew trees. I remember thinking how he would have liked them. All twisted and gnarled the way they are."

"I'm sure he would have loved it. I think his leg was made of yew."

"I didn't know that," Harry said, looking up at the sky. "I should get going to my post before it gets much later. Is there something I can help you with, Minister?"

"No, I thought I might lend a hand tonight. If this madman is trying to resurrect Voldemort, we need everyone we can spare here to help take him out."

"Oh, didn't you hear. Hermione has ruled out Voldemort," Harry said.

Kingsley looked at him in surprise.

"I should probably tell you, I took her down to verify the body was still there. I know you told her you couldn't grant access to every person who just wanted to see it, but I thought this was important enough to break the rules. We were thinking someone was trying to bring him back. We had to make sure it was still safe."

Harry was worried he might get in trouble for that. But the minister had to understand they had only the best intentions when they did it.

"I would have let her if she had asked, Harry. We had a meeting scheduled, but she never showed."

"She did. She even had Snape with her. You told them not to worry, it was safe and you couldn't allow people to go gawking at it whenever they felt like it."

Croaker flicked his wand in Hermione's direction. She found herself bound, back to front, to Severus. Their wands flew through the air and landed in Croaker's outstretched palm. She could feel Severus breathing, but was not sure if he was conscious.

"Corner is dead. It seemed he was in the belladonna field at the wrong time. He spotted me harvesting the berries. I simply couldn't let him live after that."

"He wasn't helping you?" Hermione asked.

"As if that simpleton would have had anything to do with this. Really, I expected more from you, Miss Granger. His lack of intelligence should have made it obvious he could never accomplish what I am about to do," Croaker boasted.

"But why are you trying to resurrect Dumbledore?" she asked.

"Dumbledore? Who said anything about him?"

"The clues and the ghost. It seemed logical."

Hermione hoped that by keeping Croaker talking, she would give Severus some time to wake up and think of a way of getting them out of there. The lack of response from Severus was making her nervous. She hoped he hadn't been seriously hurt when he was flung to the wall.

"You are mistaken again. Dumbledore was never as good of a wizard as Alastor was."

"Alastor? Alastor Moody? But he was just an Auror."

"Moody was a great wizard. The greatest! He rescued me and killed the men that murdered my parents," Croaker roared.

Hermione flinched. She had never seen her boss this angry or look quite as crazy as he did at the moment.

"Your parents are alive. I meet them at the last Ministry function," she stated.

"Those are my adoptive parents. My real parents raised dragons. One night my father caught some thieves trying to steal the eggs and confronted them. The men killed him and then my mother right in front of me. Moody arrived just as they turned their wands on me. I was eight at the time. He became a mentor to me, and when he was killed, I was the one who found his body. I have been researching ever since then for the potion that will allow him to come back."

Hermione felt the breathing on her neck change, and Severus' body grew tense. 'Keep him talking,' she thought to herself.

"The dragon mark in the sky..."

"Was the same as we used on all of our dragons. If you paid just a bit more attention, you would have noticed my Patronus is similar to it."

"I've seen you Patronus hundreds of times before. It is not a dragon. It's an occamy," Hermione stated.

"Wrong again. It's a baby dragon. Just as I was still very much a baby when my parents were murdered."

She opened her mouth to speak, but was cut off by Croaker.

"Enough dillydallying. I have work to do."

"Yes, Hermione. The man is barely competent to brew the simplest of potions, let alone try and do it while holding a conversation."

"So nice of you to join us finally, Snape. Now if you both could be silent for a moment, we can get back on schedule."

Croaker turned his back towards them and stirred the cauldron that was simmering on the table. It seemed he couldn't help but include them in his plans though. He began talking to them again almost as soon as he finished the ten required stirs before the final ingredient was added.

"I invited you both here tonight to be witnesses to the final step of my plan. It was much fun leading the both of you along. Now all that is needed is the final ingredient. Blood of the enemy. You, Snape, will provide the vital ingredient."

"That is a load of tripe. I am not, nor have I ever been, Moody's enemy. We fought on the same side of the war," Snape said. Hermione was not sure, but she wouldn't be surprised if Severus was glaring at the man, by the tone in his voice.

"True, but in the end, he did consider you his enemy. He died before you were exonerated. In his mind you were his enemy."

He approached Severus with a knife and a vial.

"This might sting a bit." He rolled up the sleeve of Snape's robe and pierced the skin. He filled the vial with more than enough blood. "I am sure once Alastor is restored to his rightful position at the MLE, he will make sure you take your place among your friends in Azkaban. He would never have let Death Eaters walk free, which should prove to you how much he is needed.

"And you, Miss Granger. I have seen the way you look at that piece of scum. You, who jumped at my suggestion to work with him. You shall also be punished. Oh, no. Not to worry. Azkaban is only for murders. I am sure a few years in the quod will have you back on the right path."

"Kingsley will never stand for this."

"Ha, that fool. He is so easy to manipulate. How do you think I have managed to keep this all a secret? The fool may have wards and probity probes surrounding his office to protect him, but once out in public, it was all too easy to get him under my control."

He placed the knife and vial on the table near the cauldron, and then he went to retrieve a body that was wrapped in muslin.

When his back was turned, Hermione silently summoned the knife to her. She felt Severus take the knife from her hands. She could tell he was working on the ropes that bound the two of them.

Croaker came back and placed Moody's body on the far side of the table. He pulled Moody's magical eye from a pocket of his cloak and placed it near the head.

"It took me nearly as long to track down the eye as it did to find where Alastor's father was buried," Croaker said. "As for flesh of the servant, I shall supply that. It will be worth it just to be able to bask in the praise from the great wizard we are about to resurrect."

He made it sound as if Hermione and Severus were there willingly.

"You sound every bit as demented as Voldemort's followers after his rebirth. I always thought you were a bit insane," Severus said.

Harry had been flying in circles over his section of the lineament for almost an hour. He was not really paying too much attention to what was going on below him. His mind kept running over what he had discovered from Kingsley. Harry had checked him for curses and found a few memory gaps and a mild form of the Imperius Curse. He could not figure out who could have gotten close enough to Kingsley to do such a thing, or why.

He was so caught up in his thoughts, he barely registered the tingling in his chest when it started. It was a little charm Hermione had found when they were on the run many years ago. It would alert him if she was ever in trouble.

Turning sharply on his broom, he went in search of his friend, hoping he wasn't too late.

It all happened so fast. The wards at the cave entrance fell, and Harry came flying in. Croaker reached for his wand which was lying on the table, dropping the vial of blood into the cauldron. He sent a spell in Harry's direction, transfiguring the Boy-Who-Lived into the Pillar-Box-Who-Lived. When he turned back to the cauldron, he knew it was too late. The blood drained from his face. He was frozen, too afraid to run or even protect himself.

Severus saw the vial falling towards the cauldron holding the resurrection potion. He knew the additional blood would have disastrous results. He grabbed Hermione and flung her to the ground, covering her with his own body. With a flick of his hand, a shield shimmered into place over the top of them.

The explosion shook the entire mountain.

When the dust settled, Severus jumped to his feet, pulling Hermione behind him. A quick survey of the room showed the total devastation from the blast. He could hear Hermione's strangled cry for Harry. Once he decided there was no immediate danger, he released Hermione. She ran to the battered pillar box.

Moody's remains were surprisingly untouched. The same could not be said for the former head of the Unspeakables. Severus was sure there were bits and pieces of him dripping from the ceiling.

"Oh, Merlin. Severus, what should we do?"

"I'm sure he will be fine once I find my wand and return him to his former self."

"But the blast..."

"Croaker probably saved his life by transforming him into something so sturdy."

Severus pulled her to him. "You, on the other hand... Are you all right?" he asked, bending his head to kiss her gently.

She pulled away, a bit reluctantly. "I'm fine. We should really turn him back."

"If you ask me, I say we let him wait and finish what we started earlier."

This time when he kissed her, she allowed him to deepen the kiss. Harry would never know how long they let him stay a pillar box.

The End

Saturn's Notes:

Thanks go to debjunk for beta reading this chapter.

Week 7 words used: Dillydally, Probity Probe, Quod, Tripe & Pillar box.

We'd also like to thank everyone who has reviewed and voted for this story. We've had so much fun writing it. Thank you for making Saturn's experience a wonderful one!

If you liked the chapter and want to take a moment to vote for us, please go to the following link:

[Week 7 Vote!](#)