

Those Who Hunt Death Eaters

"Let me make sure I understand you."

It was a tense atmosphere in the headmaster's office.

Professor Albus Dumbledore was sitting behind his desk, hands steepled in front of him and a grave expression on his face. To his left stood the school's potions master; Professor Severus Snape. To his right was his Deputy Headmistress; Professor Minerva McGonagall and next to her; Remus Lupin. None of the four adults looked particularly pleased with the situation.

Opposite them, on the other side of Dumbledore's desk, stood four very chagrined students.

Well, three students and a rather large dog.

In the front was Harry Potter, who was standing resplendent in bright red dress robes, with a black cloak thrown over one shoulder and his Firebolt in hand. Next to him was Ron Weasley, who was dressed in crisp white battle robes that had armoured shoulders which seemed several sizes too large. On Harry's other side was Ginny Weasley, who was wearing a standard school uniform, only without the robes.

Sitting at Harry's feet was a large dog, which looked somewhat similar to a Labrador. Its coat was a creamy, off-white which could almost be mistaken for tan under the right light. A large black spot surrounded its left eye and its upper lip had what looked like a thin and curly, black moustache.

The dog also seemed to be alternating between seething with anger and moping in a resigned fashion. Harry and Ron looked more embarrassed than anything else, while Ginny appeared somewhat confused by all that was happening.

"Let me make sure I understand you," repeated Dumbledore.

"Uh, okay," allowed Ron.

"You two," Dumbledore pointed at Harry and Ron, "along with Miss Granger," he glanced at the dog, "discovered a spell book while browsing through the Restricted Section of the school library."

"Um, yes," agreed Harry.

"In this spell book," Dumbledore paused to glance at the shredded remains of an ancient tome that lay spread before him on his desk, "you found a spell of summoning. A spell of, shall we say, a rather dubious nature?"

"Er, yes," said Harry.

"This spell was apparently capable of returning Sirius Black from beyond the Veil," at this point Dumbledore glanced at Harry's Firebolt. "Not only that, but it could also be used to destroy any dark presence in the vicinity, correct?"

"Uh, yes."

"Neither of you, nor Miss Granger," another glance at the currently embarrassed looking Labrador, "saw fit to tell any of the professors about this."

"Well," said Ron helpfully, "Hermione tried to, but we talked her out of it."

"Ah," Dumbledore nodded. "You then, quite naturally, decided to perform the ritual required to cast the spell."

"That was the idea," admitted Harry ruefully.

"At which point you kidnapped Professor Snape."

All eyes turned briefly to the potions master, who had his arms crossed defensively across his chest. Snape's already fierce scowl turned murderous and he directed a glare of death at those brave (or foolish) enough to meet his gaze.

"Apparently," Dumbledore continued, "you had developed the theory that it might be possible to channel the spell's magic through Professor Snape's Dark Mark, thus bringing it into contact with Voldemort, whereupon it would hopefully destroy him."

"That was Hermione's idea," remarked Ron, wanting to make sure that the blame was assigned to the right quarter.

This did not endear him to the dog, who promptly jumped up and tried to bite his ankles. Fortunately Harry and Ginny were able to hold back the enraged canine, which settled for screaming invectives instead.

"You idiot!" yelled the dog in a familiar, female voice. "You brain dead oaf! This is all your fault, d'you hear me? All your fault, Ronald Bilius Weasley! If you'd just kept your mind on the bloody spell, none of this would be happening!"

"My fault?" protested Ron. "I didn't do nothing wrong, so don't go blaming me!"

"Of course it's your fault, ruff," insisted the dog, still being held back by Harry, while Ginny had moved to tug her brother away from the her. "You can't even speak your own language properly, let alone perform magic properly!"

"Ron! Hermione!" shouted Harry over the arguing voices. "Quiet! This isn't the time!"

"Quite," noted Dumbledore, once the arguing pair calmed down. He placed both palms on his desk, to either side of the ruined spell book. "You then proceeded to sneak into the Great Hall tonight, where you planned to cast the spell."

"We needed someplace big to draw the casting circle," explained Harry.

Dumbledore slowly rose to his feet, keeping his hands flat on his desk. "You began to cast the spell at precisely midnight, placing Professor Snape in the centre of your casting circle, so that he could act as your conduit to Voldemort."

"He's the only Death Eater in the school," explained Harry.

"Besides," said Ron, "he's an evil git - we were kind of hoping the spell would destroy him too."

"WEASLEY!!" roared Snape, his face turning purple as he almost climbed over headmaster's desk in an attempt to reach the now cowering Ron. Fortunately he was restrained by a hand on the shoulder from Dumbledore.

"You began the spell," said Dumbledore, "and everything appeared to be going as planned."

"Yes," said Harry. He sighed dejectedly. "I should've known it was too good to be true."

"Indeed," agreed Dumbledore. He brushed a hand over the tattered remains of the spell book the three students had been using to initiate the spell. He sighed, much like Harry, and sank back down into his seat. "All this I can understand and believe without trouble." He paused. "Everything that happened next, however..."

"It's true!" exclaimed Ron, affronted by the old wizard's doubt.

"So," asked Professor McGonagall, "the spell was interrupted by Miss Weasley?"

"Yes!" insisted Ron.

"Who just happened to be out, in the dead of night, practicing Quidditch with Mister Potter's broom, but without her Quidditch robes?"

"Yes!"

"Her interruption distracted you," Professor McGonagall went on. "This caused Miss Granger to lose her own concentration, as she was too busy yelling at you to focus on the spell and thereby disrupting the casting."

"That's right!" Ron nodded vigorously. "See? It's all Hermione's fault!"

Once again the dog leapt at Ron, this time managing to slip past Harry's arms. With a furious growl she latched onto the red-haired wizard's left ankle, biting down hard and refusing to let go, regardless of how much Ron struggled.

It took some doing, but eventually some order was restored to the office. Ron was looking a bit the worse for wear, while Hermione had as smug an expression as possible for canine.

"Now," said Dumbledore, "perhaps I should list the results of this... incident?"

"Uh, do we have to?" asked Harry.

"Yes, I think we do," insisted the headmaster.

"This is going to be so embarrassing," muttered Hermione.

Clearing his throat, Dumbledore began. "As it was interrupted in mid casting, the spell failed in spectacular fashion, releasing a burst of magical energy that blew a hole clear through the roof of the Great Hall. This magical surge was the essence of the spell which, upon escaping the confines of the school, exploded - scattering fragments of itself across the land."

"Er, that's right," agreed Harry uncertainly.

"We think," qualified Ron.

"With the spell disrupted, there was a feedback along the force lines of the casting circle. You, Mister Potter, and you, Mister Weasley," Dumbledore looked at each young wizard in turn, "were able to jump clear before the surge hit." His gaze turned down to a decidedly depressed-looking Labrador. "Miss Granger, however, was not so fortunately."

"I'm a dog!" howled Hermione, throwing back her head and bawling in dismay.

"Personally," grumbled Ron, "I think it's an improvement."

"You - you - AAAARRRGH!!" Hermione screamed, jumping at Ron once again.

Having become somewhat resigned to the near perpetual arguments between the couple, the rest of the room more or less ignored them, continuing to speak over their shouts.

"As I was saying," continued Dumbledore, "Miss Granger was caught in the magical backlash and was, summarily, transformed into a dog."

"A bitch!" yelled Ron, who was flat on his back wrestling with Hermione.

Closing his eyes for a moment, so that he could count to ten (as his mother had taught him), Dumbledore went on. "Because of the nature of the spell, Miss Granger's transformation is effectively permanent. She will only be able to return to her human form once the fragments of the spell have been collected and the spell properly completed."

"That's what we'd guessed," said Harry, taking a step to the side as Ron and Hermione almost rolled into his feet.

"With regards the return of Sirius, well, that aspect of the spell failed when the spell itself did." Dumbledore paused to glance at the Firebolt, which was hovering in the air next to Harry. It seemed to be watching the struggling couple on the floor with some amusement, rather than listening to the headmaster's conclusions.

"On the other hand," said Dumbledore, "the spell *did* progress enough to bring Sirius' spirit back into this world, rather than the shadow realm beyond the Veil. However, left without a physical body to reside within, Sirius found himself possessing the nearest available form."

"I can't believe it," stated Remus, shaking his head. "It can't be."

In response the Firebolt flew over to where the werewolf was standing. In a blur of motion it slapped its tail across Remus' face, once, twice, three, four times, before flipping end over end to slam down on the stunned man's head. It then growled, despite not having a mouth, sounding very much like a displeased hound.

"Yes," finished Dumbledore. "The nearest available form - Mister Potter's broomstick."

"Padfoot?" asked Remus, who had fallen to the floor. He held one hand to his bruised head and stared up at the broomstick hovering over him. "You're in Harry's Firebolt?"

"Rowf!" barked the Firebolt in reply.

"Gods, this is absurd," muttered Snape.

"Rowf!" the broom barked again, now turning to Snape and starting to drift menacingly towards him.

"Please, Sirius," pleaded Dumbledore.

"Rowf!" protested Padfoot, but eventually relented and flew to where Harry was standing.

"Thank you, Sirius," said Dumbledore gratefully. He was no doubt also relieved by the fact that Ron and Hermione had finished their wrestling match. Both were lying prone on the office floor, looking like something that had been dragged through the Forbidden Forest by a malicious Hippogriff.

"Lastly," he continued, "because of the link to Professor Snape's Dark Mark, which had been centred at the focus of the casting circle, you believe that the various spell fragments would have sought out similar magical signatures. In other words - Death Eaters."

"It has to be," insisted Hermione, who had managed to pull herself upright. "The Dark Marks are all synchronised, ruff, through their link to Voldemort. The only people the fragments would be drawn to would be someone with a Dark Mark."

"I'm sure the Dark Lord's minions will be delighted," remarked Snape.

Dumbledore leaned back in his chair and steepled his fingers. "So, in conclusion, the only way to complete the spell will be to locate those possessing the missing spell fragments, now imprinted upon their bodies, somehow collect those fragments and then finish the casting."

"Yes," agreed Hermione. "Once that's done, Voldemort will be destroyed, Sirius will get his body back and I'll be turned into a human being again!"

"You do realize," asked Professor McGonagall, "how difficult that will be?"

"The Dark Lord has dozens of servants throughout Britain, as well as the continent," Snape brutally supplied. "Most of which have managed to keep their identities secret."

"We'll find out who they are," said Harry.

"Even those you do know the names of are well hidden," continued Snape, "in safe houses scattered about the country. Inside hidden rooms in the homes of pro-dark families. In the secret fortress of the Dark Lord himself!"

"We'll find out where they're hiding," insisted Harry adamantly.

"And when you do?" asked Snape with a sneer.

"There's only one course of action," Harry declared, standing tall.

"That being?" asked a curious Professor McGonagall.

"Ruff, we just have to hunt down every single Death Eater," said Hermione.

"Strip off their clothes," continued Ron.

"And scrutinise them in the buff," concluded Harry.

"WHAT!?" bellowed Snape, his eyes bulging to the point that it seemed as if they might almost pop out of their sockets. "Strip every single Death Eater?! Are you insane?! You can't do that!"

"It's not like we want to," countered Hermione with a huff. "We *have* to do it!"

"Good luck, you'll need it," murmured Ginny.

Hermione, aided by her enhanced canine hearing, turned to the red-haired witch and arched an eyebrow. A remarkable feat, considering she was a dog. "You mean, *we*'ll need it, right, Ginny?"

Ginny looked flustered for a moment before protesting, "What? Me too? No way!"

"Fraid so, Gin," said Harry, clapping her on the shoulder in commiseration.

"But why?" she pleaded.

"Because you were there," explained Hermione.

"Does that mean Snape has to come as well?" asked Ginny.

Snape looked about to protest this, but Hermione answered before he could. "No, he was unconscious at the time - from Harry's Stunner. Because of that, the spell's magic considered him to be an inanimate object and bypassed him, ruff. Since the four of us were the only living people present, as far as the spell was concerned, it bound itself to us as the anchor point for the casting. Ruff."

"So Snape doesn't have to come," asked Ron, looking for clarification. The moment Hermione got into what he (and half the students in the school) considered to be her lecturing mode, he had tuned out most of what she said.

"No," Hermione answered with a resigned sigh.

"Thank God," muttered Ron, glancing up at the heavens. "Who'd want that greasy git helping them?"

"Weasley," hissed Snape, drawing his wand and beginning to advance towards Ron.

"Severus!" snapped Dumbledore. "Control yourself!"

With an unhappy grumble, Snape pocketed his wand before turning his back to the group and proceeding to sulk. Dumbledore refrained from rolling his eyes at the other wizard's immaturity.

"What do you plan to do?" asked Remus, who had by now recovered from Padfoot's assault and pulled himself back onto his feet, those his face was glowing from the slaps he had received.

"Fortunately Harry has a link with Voldemort through his scar," explained Hermione. "It will be difficult, and dangerous, but he should be able to weasel the locations of--"

"HEY!" shouted Ron, taking offence to Hermione's choice of words. "YOU TAKE THAT BACK!"

Grabbing Hermione by the scruff of her neck, he hoisted her into the air and began shouting at her, saying that she had just insulted his family for the last time. Hermione, quite naturally, protested this - both the rough treatment with which she was being handled, and the implication that she had been insulting his family.

"With luck I'll be able to find out where most of the hidden Death Eaters are," said Harry, finishing Hermione's explanation now that she was otherwise occupied with the task of trying to bite Ron's head off. She had thus far managed to wriggle her way out of his grip and had clamped her teeth down over the top of her target.

"That is a very dangerous plan, Harry," observed Dumbledore.

"Dangerous? It's bloody insane!" insisted Remus, who was quietly backed up by Professor McGonagall.

"It's the best we have," explained Harry.

"What about the Order?" asked Ginny. "Shouldn't they be able to help? They must know the names of most of Voldemort's Death Eaters, thanks to Professor Snape. Even if you don't know where they are, that will be a start."

"A very good point, Miss Weasley," said Dumbledore, breaking out into a small smile. "I shall make a note of turning some of the Order's resources to that very task."

"So, where should we start?" asked Ron, who had just pried a growling Hermione off his head.

Harry thoughtfully trapped his chin as he pondered this. Finally he sent a pointed look in Snape's direction and then turned to his friend. "We can start with Snape," he said. "He's right here, after all, so we really shouldn't waste the opportunity."

"Professor Snape?" asked Ron, turning to the sulking potions master.

"What?"

"Take off your clothes."

"WHAT!?"

"TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES!"

"Are you completely out of your mind?" demanded Snape in scathing tones. His voice took on an edge of panic when he noticed that Harry, Hermione, Ginny and even Padfoot the Broom, had moved to cut off any avenue of escape. "Don't you think that if there was a spell fragment on my body then I would have already told you about it?"

"This really isn't open for discussion, Snape," noted Harry.

"We're really, really, *really* sorry, Professor," apologised Hermione, stalking forward on all fours.

"But we need to make sure," finished Ginny.

Snape turned to Dumbledore, looking for his intervention. "Dumbledore--"

"I TOLD YOU TO TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES!!!" bellowed Ron, springing across the short span between himself and the panicking potions master, whom he tackled around the middle.

"Gah! Get off me! Let go!"

"Mister Weasley! Stop that at once!"

"Get him!"

"Rowf!"

"Oh, we're going to be in so much trouble when this is over! Ruff ruff!"

"Not you as well, Miss Granger!"

"Stop that! Let go of me!"

"I've got his robes, Harry! You take his trousers!"

"Bugger that, I'll get his shirt, Ginny and Hermione can take his trousers off!"

"What?! Ruff! Harry!"

"No way am I going anywhere near Snape's bits!"

"Dammit, let go before I start--"

"Let go of him! Potter! Weasley! Remus, help me get them off him!"

"Ha ha ha ha ha! Go Harry!"

"Rowf!"

"Remus! Stopped laughing and help!"

"He's wiggling too much!"

"Come on, Ron, put your back into it and pull!"

"I got them! I've got his robes off! Come on Harry!"

"I'm trying!"

"I'm going to kill you! All of you! Starting with you, Weasley!"

"Gah! I touched Snape's underwear!"

"Miss Granger! Miss Weasley! That's indecent!"

"Rowf!"

"Oh no, ruff! Stop pulling, they're slipping down!"

"Kill you all! Kill!"

"Pull them back up! Pull them back up! I don't want to see Snape's bits!"

"Ew! Ruff! Gross!"

"AAAAHH! He's biting me! He's biting me! Ron, help!"

"Mhri! Mhri! yuf ur!!!"

"Rowf!"

"Snivellus? With a 'wand' that small, we should've called him Shrivellus!"

Dropping his head onto his desk, Dumbledore groaned. In the many, many years he had been alive, he had seen just about everything the world had to offer. This however, was something new. Something he would much rather have never been witness to.

"This is a nightmare," he muttered. "No, it's worse!"

Fin.

Author's Note: It came to me, in the dead of the night, and I couldn't resist. As you might have guessed, this fic was inspired by the marvelously funny *Those Who Hunt Elves*. No Death Eaters (aside from Snape) were stripped in the writing of this story. Another bowl, please!