

SEN L I N Y U

MANACLED



AVENDELL



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Senlinyu

Manacled

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Preface

Warning: This work is dark. Rape and non-consensual sex are a significant and ongoing aspect of the plot. There are also character deaths, psychological trauma, descriptions of battlefield violence, and references to torture. Reader discretion is advised.

Author's Note: The characters in this story are not mine: they belong to JK Rowling, whom I happen to not be. The initial inspiration of this plot occurred when watching the first episode of *The Handmaid's Tale*. In homage there are elements of it maintained throughout the story. The title High Reeve was drawn from Lady_of_Clunn's use in her story *Uncoffined*.

This story diverges from canon following the conclusion of Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix.

Manacled illustrations were created and gifted by *Avendell*

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Chapter 1

ermione had long given up hope of seeing in the darkness.

For a time, she thought maybe if she just let her eyes adjust, eventually some faint outline would become visible.

HThere were no glimmers of moonlight slipping through so deep in the dungeons. No torches in the hallways outside the cell. Just more and more darkness, until she wondered sometimes if she might be blind.

She had explored every inch of the cell with her fingertips. The door, sealed with magic, had no lock to pick, even if she had anything but straw and a chamber pot. She smelled the air in the hopes it might indicate something; the season, the distant scent of food or potions. The air was stale, wet, cold. Lifeless.

She had hoped if she just checked carefully enough, she'd find a loose slab-stone in the wall; some secret compartment hiding a nail, or a spoon, or even a bit of rope. Apparently the cell had never held an audacious prisoner. No scratches to mark time. No loose stones. Nothing.

Nothing but darkness.

She couldn't even talk aloud to relieve the unending silence. It had been Umbridge's parting gift after they had dragged her into the cell and checked her manacles one last time.

They had been about to leave when Umbridge paused and whispered, "Silencio."

Prodding Hermione's chin up with her wand so that their eyes met, she said, "You'll understand soon enough."

Umbridge giggled, and her cloying, sugary breath ghosted over Hermione's face.

Hermione had been left in darkness and silence.

Had she been forgotten? No one ever came. No torture. No interrogations. Just dark, silent solitude.

Meals appeared. Randomised so she couldn't even keep track of time.

She recited potion recipes in her head. Transfiguration technique. Reviewed runes. Nursery rhymes. Her fingers flicked as she mimicked wand techniques, mouthing the spell inflection. She counted backwards from a thousand by subtracting prime numbers.

She started working out. It had apparently not occurred to anyone to restrict her physically, and the cell was spacious enough that she could cartwheel diagonally across it. She learned how to do handstands. Spent what felt like hours doing push-ups and things called burpees that her cousin had been obsessed with one summer. She found that she could slot her feet through the bars of the cell door and do crunches while hanging upside down.

It helped turn her mind off. Counting. Pushing herself to new physical limits. When her arms and legs turned to jelly, she'd slump down into a corner and fall into a dreamless sleep.

It was the only way to make the end of the war stop playing in front of her eyes.

Sometimes she wondered if she was dead. Maybe it was hell. Darkness and loneliness and nothing but her worst memories hanging before her eyes for forever.

When there finally was a noise, it felt deafening. The screech in the distance as a long abandoned door swung open. Then light. Blinding, blinding light.

It was like being stabbed.

She stumbled back into the corner and covered her eyes.

"She's still alive," she heard Umbridge say, sounding surprised. "Get her up, let's see if she's still lucid."

Rough hands dragged Hermione from the corner and tried to pull her hands away from her eyes. Even with her eyelids squeezed tightly shut, the pain from the sudden brightness felt like knives driving into her corneas. She wrenched her hands back to press them over her eyes again, ripping her arms from her captors' grasp.

"Oh, Merlin's sake," Umbridge said in a sharp, impatient voice. "Overpowered by a wandless Mudblood. Petrificus Totalus."

Hermione's body stiffened. Mercifully her eyes remained closed.

"You should have been smart enough to die. Crucio."

The curse ripped through Hermione's immobilised body. Umbridge wasn't the strongest caster Hermione had been cursed by, but she meant it. The pain tore through

Hermione like fire. Unable to move, she felt like her insides were twisting into knots, trying to escape the pain. Her head throbbed as the pain built and built without any release.

After an eternity, the pain stopped, and yet didn't. The curse was ended, but the agony remained coiled inside, as though her nerves were flayed.

Hermione could feel her brain scrabbling to escape; to break free of the suspended agony. Just break. Just break. But she couldn't.

"Take her up for appraisal. Let me know promptly what the healer says."

She was levitated, but the world remained a blur of sound and agony. So much sound. It felt as though the vibrations were grating across her skin. She must have been kept inside a barrier ward because suddenly the air exploded with noise and light.

She tried to hold on by focusing only on the tap of footsteps. Straight for ten paces. A right. Thirty paces. A left. Fifteen paces. Stop. One of the guards levitating her rapped on a door.

"Come in," said a muffled voice.

The door grated open.

"Put her over there."

Hermione felt her body drop onto an examination table.

She felt a wand prod her.

"Recent spell work?"

"Immobilisation and the cruciatus," answered a new voice. Hermione thought she recognised it, but her mind was too awl with agony to place it.

"While immobilised?" The healer sounded peeved. "How long?"

"A minute. Maybe more."

A hiss of irritation. "We hardly have enough as it is. Is Umbridge trying to ruin them? Strap her down. She'll injure herself otherwise when I take the spells off."

Hermione felt leather straps bind her wrists and ankles, and something was forced between her teeth. There was a wand tap on her temple.

"Yoo-hoo. Little witch, if your mind isn't already mush. This is going to hurt—a lot. But," he continued cheerily, "you will feel better afterwards. Finite Incantatem! "

Hermione's world exploded. It was like being hit with the cruciatus all over again. Finally mobile, her body recoiled, and she screamed and thrashed. The straps holding

her down barely stopped her from arching backward as she writhed, and rocked, and wailed in agony. It seemed like an eternity before she could stop thrashing. Long after her voice had given out. Her muscles still twitched violently, and her chest heaved with sobs.

“Alright. You can go now,” the healer said as he prodded Hermione again with his wand. “But tell Umbridge if another one arrives like this, I will report her for sabotage.”

Hermione cracked an eye open and watched the guards leave. Her vision blurred. Everything was so agonisingly bright, but she could make out vague shapes and the light hurt less. Or rather, other things hurt more than her eyes did.

The healer returned to her. He was a large man. She didn’t recognise him. She squinted, trying to see him clearly.

“Oh good, you’re tracking movement.” He turned her wrist to get the prison number from the manacle. “Number 273...”

He pulled a narrow file off a shelf and furrowed his brow as he skimmed it.

“Mudblood, obviously. Hogwarts student. Oh, very good marks. Hmmm. Unknown curse to the abdomen in fifth year. Not a very good sign. Well, we’ll see what we have to work with.”

He performed a complex diagnostic spell over her. She watched her magical signature float overhead and various orbs of color arrange themselves along her body.

The healer prodded them and scribbled notes. He was particularly interested in her abdomen, especially an orb tinged with purple.

“What—,” she rasped around the gag still between her teeth, “—what are you looking at?”

“Hmm? Oh, a variety of things; your physical health, mostly. You’re in remarkably good condition. Where have they been keeping you? Although none of that matters if I can’t figure out this old curse you’re still carrying.”

He worked in silence for several more minutes before chuckling. With a complicated flip of his wand and an incantation Hermione couldn’t make out, she watched a dark stream of purple flame shoot into her stomach. Her insides suddenly started bubbling, and she felt something writhing alive among her organs. Something crawling inside her.

Before she could scream, the healer sent a red spell streaking into her. The writhing stopped, and it felt like something had dissolved inside her.

“A miscast spell,” the healer explained. “Someone wanted you eaten alive, but fortunately for you their curse was incomplete. I fixed it and then cancelled it. You’re welcome.”

Hermione said nothing. She doubted any of it was for her benefit.

“Well. You’re cleared. Eligible too. I think we’ll get quite a bit of use out of you. Although that cruciatus will probably require some therapy before you’ll recover from it. I’ll put in a note.”

With a flick of his wand, the straps around her wrists and ankles released. Hermione sat up slowly. Her muscles were still twitching involuntarily.

Opening the door, the healer called out, “She passed. You can process her.”

He walked over to his desk.

Everything was weirdly luminous. She squinted. So bright she could hardly see past the light to make out the shapes around her.

Reaching up with a shaky hand, she pulled the gag from between her teeth. They immediately started chattering. She realised that she was terribly, terribly cold. Too cold.

The guard was approaching her, reaching for her arm to lead her away. She slid off the table and tried to stand.

She wobbled.

“Siiiiir...”

Was that her voice? She didn’t remember what her voice sounded like.

The words came out slurred, and all the luminous objects in the room seemed to stretch and distort before her eyes as if she’d been dropped into a goldfish bowl. The healer turned back toward her quizzically.

“I thinnn’ k mmmmm going ‘nto sshhh—“ The words couldn’t seem to come out through her chattering teeth. She tried again “shhhh-shhhhh-shhhhhhoooooock...”

Darkness suddenly started seeping into the edges of her vision. All the luminous things faded until all she could see was the healer’s concerned face swimming before her. Her eyes rolled back and she fell.

No one caught her.

Her head hit the corner of the table. Hard.

“Fuck!” swore the guard. Even sound seemed wobbly and distorted.

The last thing Hermione remembered was that she thought he might be Marcus Flint.

Regaining consciousness felt like drowning in oatmeal. Hermione wasn’t sure why it was the first comparison that came to mind. She fought to drag herself to the surface, moving toward muffled voices, trying to make sense of them.

“Sixteen months in solitary confinement with light and sound deprivation! By all counts she should be entirely insane, if not dead. There aren’t even any records on her! As if you dropped her into a bottomless pit! Look at this file. Prisoner 187 in the bed next door! Do you see how many pages there are? Checkups! Blood reports! Mental health sessions! Prescribed potions! I even have pictures of her to see how she looked before you maimed her. This one here—nothing! She was recorded as being assigned to this prison, and then she vanished! No one has seen her! There isn’t even any record of her eating anything! For sixteen months! Explain how this happened!”

There was a pause, and then Hermione heard, “Ahem-hem.”

Umbridge’s simpering voice began wheedling, “There are so many prisoners here. It can hardly be surprising if one or two manage to fall through the cracks as Miss Granger did.”

“Miss—Granger—,” the other voice was suddenly horrified and stuttering. “As in THE Granger? You knew it was her! You tried to kill her.”

“What? No! I would never—It is for the Dark Lord to decide their fates. I am merely a servant.”

“Did you really think our Lord would forget about a prisoner like Hermione Granger? Do you think he will be forgiving if he learns what you did?”

“I didn’t mean for it to go on so long! It was meant simply as a temporary situation. You don’t know her. You don’t know what she’s capable of. I had to be sure she couldn’t escape or reach out. The castle was still being re-warded. Then—then by the time all the preparations had been made—She—she had slipped from my mind. I would never defy our Lord!”

“The success of the enterprise our Lord has assigned rests upon your head and mine. If I discover so much as a hint that you have done anything else to undermine his

agenda, I will report you immediately to him. As it is, Granger is now entirely under my jurisdiction. You are not to go near her without my permission. If anything else happens to her, by anyone else, I will assume you were responsible for it.”

“But—but she has many enemies.” Umbridge’s voice wavered.

“Then I suggest you oversee your prison carefully. The Dark Lord named her specifically in his plans. I will throw you before him today if that’s what it takes to succeed. I have worked longer and harder to get where I am than you have, Warden. I will not let anyone get in my way. Go process the rest of them. The Dark Lord expects a report on eligibility numbers tonight, and I’ve wasted half my day fixing your mistake.”

A pair of footsteps faded. Umbridge’s, Hermione thought and hoped. She cracked an eye open, trying to take in her surroundings surreptitiously.

“You’re awake.”

Not surreptitiously enough. She opened her eyes fully and looked up at the blurry outline of a healer standing over her. The healer leaned closer to study Hermione, and Hermione could make her out somewhat against the brightness. An older woman, severe, with robes denoting medical seniority.

“So, you’re Hermione Granger.”

Hermione wasn’t sure how to respond to the comment. The overheard conversation hadn’t shed light on what was wanted with her. She was important to some dreadful machination of Voldemort. She wasn’t supposed to be dead or insane, and they wanted her healthy. They probably weren’t supposed to torture her horribly again.

She stayed quiet, hoping the healer was the sort who kept talking when people failed to respond. She was disappointed.

“I’ll have to ask you, since no one else seems to know. How are you still alive? How did you manage to stay sane?”

“I...d-don’t—know...” Hermione answered after waiting for several moments. Her voice sounded deeper and wobblier than she remembered. Her vocal chords felt atrophied. It was difficult to pace words; the consonants slurred together and then paused as though it required effort to push them out. “I did—mental arithmancy... I... recited potions. I did my best... to keep from—slipping.”

“Remarkable,” the healer murmured, scribbling notes into a file. “But how did you survive? There’s no record of anyone feeding you, and yet you’ve been perfectly maintained nutritionally.”

“I—don’t...know. Food appeared. There was never a set time. I thought—it was intentional.”

“What was intentional?”

“The irregularity...I thought it”—her throat felt exhausted as she kept speaking —“was part of the...sensory deprivation. To keep—me... from knowing...how much time—had passed.”

Her voice got thinner and thinner with every word.

“Oh. Yes. That would have been creative. And your physical condition? You were never removed from that room. Yet you have better muscle tone than half my healers. How on earth is that possible?”

“When...I couldn’t—bear to think, I’d exercise—until I couldn’t anymore.”

“What kind of exercises?”

“Anything. Jumping. Pushups. Crunches. Anything—that tired me... So I wouldn’t dream.”

More scribbling.

“What kind of dreams were you trying to avoid?”

Hermione’s breath caught slightly. The other questions had been easy. That—that went too close to something real.

“Dreams of before.”

“Before?”

“Before I came here.” Hermione’s voice was quiet. Furious. She closed her eyes; the light was giving her a severe migraine.

“Of course.” More scribbling. The sound made Hermione’s muscles flinch reactively. “You’ll be here in the infirmary until the side effects from your torture sessions are fully relieved. I will also be bringing in a specialist to figure out what happened to your brain.”

Hermione’s eyes snapped open.

“Is there—,” she hesitated. “Is there something—wrong with me?”

The healer stared at her contemplatively before waving her wand over Hermione's head.

"You were kept in sensory-deprived isolation for sixteen months. The fact you're lucid at all is a miracle. The effects of such an experience can hardly be avoided, especially given the circumstances prior to your arrival. I imagine you studied some healing during the war?"

"Yes," Hermione said, looking down at the blanket on her lap. It was threadbare and smelled so strongly of antiseptic she wanted to gag from the olfactory assault.

"Then you know what a normal, healthy magical brain looks like. This is yours."

A simple wand manipulation drew the magically projected image of Hermione's brain into view.

Hermione's eyes narrowed. Scattered across the projection were little glowing lights; some clustered, some sporadic. All over her brain. She'd never seen such a thing before.

"What are those?"

"My best guess is that they're magically created fugue states."

"What?"

"At some point during your isolation, your magic began trying to protect you. Since you couldn't express any magic externally, it internalised itself. You worked hard to keep yourself from, as you said, slipping. However, the mind is hardly equipped to handle such a thing. Your magic has walled off parts of your mind. As a result, it fragmented you somewhat. Normally a fugue is general, but these appear almost surgically precise. Although mind healing isn't my specialty."

Hermione stared in horror.

"Do you mean I—I disassociated?"

"Something like that. I've never actually seen anything like this before. This might be a new magical malady."

"Do—I have multiple personalities?" Hermione felt suddenly faint.

"No. You've simply isolated parts of your mind. I think your magic intended to protect them from mental attacks, but by extension it prevented you from accessing them."

Hermione was reeling internally.

“What—don’t I remember?”

“Well, we aren’t entirely sure. You’ll have to be the one to discover what you’ve forgotten. What are your parents’ names?”

Hermione paused a moment, trying to calculate if the question was based on seeking a diagnosis or potentially to extract information. Blood drained from her face.

“I don’t know,” she said, suddenly feeling as though she couldn’t breathe. “I remember I had parents. They were—Muggles. But—I can’t remember anything about them.”

Struggling to tamp down on the panic rising inside of her, she stared imploringly at the healer.

“Do you know anything?”

“I’m afraid not. Let’s try another question. Do you remember the school you went to? Who were your best friends there?”

“Hogwarts. Harry and Ron,” Hermione said, looking down as her throat tightened. Her fingers twitched uncontrollably.

“Good.”

“Do you remember the headmaster?”

“Dumbledore.”

“Do you remember what happened to him?”

“He died,” Hermione said, squeezing her eyes shut. Although the details felt fuzzy, she was sure.

“Yes. Do you remember the circumstances of his death?”

“No. I remember—he was reinstated as headmaster after it was confirmed that Vold-Vold—You-Know-Who had returned.”

“Interesting.” There was more scribbling. “What is it that you remember of the war?”

“I was a healer. I was in the hospital ward. So many people I couldn’t save—I remember losing. Something—something didn’t work. Harry died. They—they hung him up off the Astronomy Tower, and we watched him rot. They—they hung Ron and his family next to him. And Tonks and Lupin. They tortured them until they died. Then they put me in that cell and left me there.”

Hermione was shaking as she spoke. The hospital bed shook and made an angry creaking noise.

The healer didn't appear to notice and scribbled more notes.

"This is very unusual and interesting. I've never heard of a fugue state like this before. I'm anxious to hear what a specialist thinks."

"Glad to be so interesting," Hermione said, her lip curling as she opened her eyes to glare at the healer.

"Now now, dear. I'm not entirely callous. Look at it from a medical perspective. If there was anything in your past that would be logical for your mind to protect itself from, it would be the aftermath of the war—which you are clearly traumatised by. Instead, what did you subconsciously decide to protect? The identities of your parents, and the Order's war strategy. Your magic didn't choose to protect your psyche, it chose to protect everyone else. That is very interesting."

Hermione supposed it was, but it just all felt like too much.

Just being able to see again was overwhelming. Being able to speak. Being out of her cell. Everything felt like it was too much. Too raw. Too bright.

She didn't say anything else. After a few minutes of scribbling, the healer looked up again.

"Unless the specialist has an objection, you'll stay in the infirmary for a week for recovery before we process you. That will give you time to acclimate to light and sound again and undergo the therapy you'll need for your torture recovery and that concussion you got during your check up."

The healer started to walk away but then paused.

"I hope my saying this is unnecessary, but I suppose given your house and history I should say it nonetheless. You are at a crossroads currently, Miss Granger. What will happen to you next is inevitable, but you have a choice in how unpleasant you force it to be."

With that parting—advice? A threat? A warning? Hermione wasn't entirely sure. The healer disappeared behind the dividing curtain.

Hermione glanced around at her surroundings carefully. She was still in Hogwarts. She had been changed out of her prison clothes into a set of hospital pajamas. Pulling

up the sleeves, she noted with disappointment that no one had made the mistake of taking off the manacles locked around each wrist.

She held a wrist up in front of her face to inspect them. They had been snapped onto her immediately before she had been imprisoned in her cell, and she had never gotten a chance to really see what they looked like.

In the light, they simply appeared to be a pair of bracelets around each wrist. They shone like a new penny. They were copper-plated, as she had guessed.

In the darkness of her cell, she had spent an untold amount of time trying to ascertain exactly what they were. The simple answer was that they suppressed her magic. How exactly they did so, and how she might get around them while blind and mute had taken much thought.

When she finally admitted to herself that it was impossible to get around them, she began to figure out how they worked.

She both hated and admired whoever had developed them. She was positive by the way the copper conducted her magic that they had a dragon heartstring core in each of them, possibly even taken from her own wand.

The manacles felt specifically attuned to her.

In her cell during all her attempts to wield wandless magic, the magic slipped down her arms toward her hands to be cast and then just—dissolved when it reached the manacles. Confirming for herself now that they were copper-plated, she understood immediately how it worked.

Copper sucked the magic into itself. She remembered Binns lecturing in History of Magic about the attempts to use materials other than wood for wands. Copper had been one of the obvious choices due to its natural magic conductivity. Unfortunately, it was too conductive. It sucked up any flicker of magic that it detected, whether it was meant to or not. Spells exploded out of copper wands before a wizard could finish casting. They could barely touch the wands without having them go off. Two blown up wand labs and the loss of four toes convinced wand makers to try something other than copper.

The core of the manacles, Hermione felt positive, was iron. The copper paired with dragon heartstring snatched up her magic and then deposited it into the iron core where it was effectively neutralised.