

Title: Rita Skeeter's Masterpiece

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Summary: The story of Rita Skeeter's biography of Harry Potter -- in both worlds.

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Audience: General

Category: After Book Seven (before Epilog)

Warnings: none

Length: 16 pages

## Rita Skeeter's Masterpiece

### Chapter 1 -- The Contract

"Well, what does little Miss Perfect want *this* time?" sneered Rita Skeeter as Hermione took a seat at Rita's table in the Leaky Cauldron.

"How nice to see you too, Miss Skeeter," Hermione said pleasantly.

Rita was resplendent. She had on bright emerald green robes of some very fine material. Her short shiny blond hair was done up in neat tight curls. Her lips and long fingernails were painted a bright glossy red. Her eyeglasses were gold and had jeweled frames. She had obviously done very well with her recent biography, *The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore*.

"Your note said you had a proposition I wouldn't be able to resist... Meaning more *arm twisting*, I suppose?" she said sarcastically.

"No," said Hermione. "It's your *own* idea, in fact. But you can decline if you want."

Rita blinked in surprise. "What idea?"

"A biography of Harry Potter," said Hermione.

Rita's eyes went wide.

Hermione continued, "Remember when you mouthed 'bi-og-ra-phy' to Harry at Draco Malfoy's trial last summer?"

"Are you *serious*?" asked Rita suspiciously.

"Aren't you interested?" asked Hermione, knowing full well she was.

"Of course, I'm interested, you silly girl!" Skeeter exclaimed. "But why are you offering it to *me*? I never got the impression your lot particularly liked me." She pouted unconsciously as she said it.

"We don't," said Hermione frankly. "But we understand how your profession works. You have a wide audience." Hermione could see Rita puff up at these words. "But we want you to, uh... fix something... first." And she saw Rita deflate again.

"So now we have *finally* gotten to the point," Rita said sarcastically as she leaned back in her chair and folded her arms.

"Well, yes we have." Hermione paused and took a breath. "Before you write Harry's biography, you will revise your biography of Albus Dumbledore to correct all the... *mistakes*... and have it republished."

"Never!" said Skeeter, obviously insulted.

"Then we have nothing further to discuss." Hermione got up to leave.

Rita said in surprise, "You're not going to threaten to reveal my... *secret*?"

"No. I said you could refuse," Hermione reminded her.

"But that was about *Harry's* biography, not Dumbledore's," said Rita, confused.

"It's a package deal. All or nothing," explained Hermione.

"Sit down," said Rita. "This is blackmail. You *know* I want Harry's biography. In fact, I've already been working on an unauthorized version, but I'm having trouble getting people to talk to me about him."

Hermione sat down again. "It's probably because people who know Harry also knew Dumbledore, and they saw what you did to him... And it *isn't* blackmail; not even extortion -- there is no penalty for you. In fact, I'd say there is *no* downside - a reporter correcting the record would be something extraordinary... to your great credit. I'd say it was a win-win."

"Your logic can be really nasty sometimes, Miss Granger," Rita grumbled.

"Do you want to hear the rest?" asked Hermione.

"There's *more*?" exclaimed Rita.

Hermione smiled and said slowly and clearly, "Harry is to be lead co-author of the revised Dumbledore biography -- 'by Harry Potter and Rita Skeeter' -- ..."

Rita's face was turning red.

"...which will be re-titled, *The True, Life Story of Albus Dumbledore...*"

Rita's head looked ready to explode.

"...and subtitled, *A revised and corrected account of the unauthorized biography by Rita Skeeter.*"

Rita exploded. "This is nothing but an attempt to *humiliate* me!" she yelled, causing every head in the inn to turn their way.

"No," said Hermione calmly, "Humiliation would be if we wrote our own biography and completely discredited you point by point. You know we could do it."

Rita sneered, "You're going to turn Dumbledore into a saint, like Doge's obituary."

"No. Harry assured me he wanted the unvarnished truth about Dumbledore and himself. You can trust him," said Hermione.

"How could you not trust... the *Chosen One*?" Rita said sarcastically.

Hermione sighed. "May I continue?"

"There's more *still*?" asked Rita.

"Yes," said Hermione. "I am to be the editor of both books and have final say on all content. You can toss what you've already written about Harry; it's probably rubbish."

Rita's eyes bulged and her cheeks puffed out, but she kept silent.

"And half of the profits of both books are to go to help the families of those injured and who lost loved ones fighting Voldemort. You and Harry split the other half," Hermione finished.

"How noble. And what do I get out of this besides twenty-five percent?" Rita hissed.

Hermione smiled. "You get unlimited and exclusive access to Harry until he says he's told you everything; his help in getting you interviews of other people; his promise to never authorize another biography and never write an autobiography; and *full* author credit for Harry's biography."

"He'll put this in writing?" asked Rita sounding somewhat mollified.

"I have the contract with me," answered Hermione.

"You seem to have this all planned out, don't you?" said Rita, trying to think of loopholes.

"I think so," said Hermione looking self satisfied.

"Hand it over; I want to read every word," demanded Rita.

"Certainly," said Hermione.

She extracted a roll of parchment from her robes and handed it to Skeeter.

Skeeter unrolled it and began to read. She muttered to herself the whole time. Near the bottom she looked up and said, "What's this about a special quill?"

Hermione was ready for her. She was already holding a Quick Quotes quill in her hand that she had taken from her robes while Rita was reading the contract.

"It's a Quick Quotes Quill that..." Hermione began.

Rita cut her off. "I know that; I already have one."

Hermione resumed, "As I was saying, you are to use this and only this quill when writing the two biographies and anything having to do with the two biographies, including notes, interviews, articles for the Daily Prophet or any other publication, letters to anyone, et cetera, et cetera as specified in the contract. I have placed a permanent white band around the shaft, so you won't mistake it for your own."

Hermione held it out to Rita, who snatched from her angrily.

Rita took her notepad from her robes and spoke, "My name is Rita Skeeter, famous author..."

The quill jumped from Rita's hand to the notebook and began writing: *Aging bleached blond, Margarita Skeeter, fifty seven, controversial former freelance reporter for the Daily Prophet and author of a recent inflammatory biography of Albus Dumble...*

"Enough!" commanded Rita and the quill stopped. "I *can't* use this; it..."

"...Tells the truth," completed Hermione. "It has an unbreakable spell to do so. And I have a way of checking that everything you write has come from this quill."

Rita looked stricken and shook her head.

Hermione nodded her head. "Don't underestimate your abilities, Miss Skeeter. You can write. In fact, I believe you will write two of the greatest magical biographies ever written."

Rita looked suspiciously at Hermione, wondering if Hermione were patronizing her.

"Are you going to sign the contract?" asked Hermione. "It's *now* or never."

Rita looked at Hermione for at least ten seconds. Then she picked up her new quill and signed -- Margarita Skeeter.

“Lovely,” said Hermione. She took her wand, pointed it at the contact and said, “*Geminio*.” A copy of the contract sprang from the original. Hermione picked up the original and stood up.

“Nice doing business with you, Miss Skeeter. We’ll be in touch to set up the schedule.” Hermione turned and walked out of the Leaky Cauldron.

Rita continued to sit at the table with her new quill and her copy of the contact, feeling like she’d just been run over by a fully grown mountain troll.

## Chapter 2 -- The Biography

“You had a piece of Voldemort’s soul *inside* you?” Rita asked incredulously. She scoffed.

Hermione said angrily, “Why don’t you just shut up for now and go do some research on Horcruxes, which I doubt you’d ever heard of before today.”

Rita scowled but did not say anything.

Ron and Hermione sat on the love seat in the small parlor of the Burrow. Harry was standing with his back to the room looking out onto the Weasley’s gnome-ridden garden. Rita Skeeter sat in the chair that had once sat Rufus Scrimgeour when he read them the contents of Dumbledore’s will. Rita had her Quick Quotes Quill, the one Hermione had given her six months before, poised over her notebook.

They had finished the revision of Dumbledore’s biography the month before and sent it to the publisher. Elphias Doge had been asked by the publisher, much to Rita’s consternation, to review it and write an endorsement for the back cover. He had enthusiastically obliged. He called it ‘*the most accurate portrayal of the great man we are ever likely to see.*’ Rita had gagged reading it.

Now they had begun the interview sessions for Harry’s biography. This was, in fact, the first one.

Hermione had advised Harry to give Rita an initial overview of the whole story so Rita would understand the context of everything when Harry eventually told it in full detail and in chronological order. Harry had done so. He had started with

what he knew of Voldemort's story. Rita had been in rapture listening to it. Fortunately, the quill was keeping up.

When Harry got to the part where Voldemort had killed his mother and tried to kill him, Rita's intense focus had been interrupted by her skepticism of Horcruxes.

Harry resumed his overview. Now that Harry was into his part of the story, Rita started regularly asking questions. Hermione had to admit to herself that most of the questions were very good. Rita was particularly interested in the wand angle.

After another two hours, Mrs Weasley brought them lunch. She had tears in her eyes. Ron had asked his mother not to eavesdrop, but they all knew she would.

They continued the rest of the afternoon and only finished right before dinner.

It was obvious to Rita after the overview that the interviews were going to take six months -- including getting Granger's and Weasley's perspective. She also wanted to interview: Harry's Muggle relatives -- she did not believe they could be that bad; some of the Hogwarts' staff -- McGonagall and Hagrid for sure; a number of students -- Draco Malfoy would be particularly delicious; members of the so called 'Dumbledore's Army'; certainly the love interest -- Cho Chang and Ginny Weasley for some spice; perhaps some Ministry officials -- Fudge and Umbridge would be interesting; and finally members of the Order of the Phoenix -- she had never been able to talk to any of them before about their secrets, but Harry had promised to arrange it. Yes, she thought, this was going to be *very* interesting... and very, very *profitable*. It was well worth all the conditions.

Harry concluded the interview with his and Voldemort's now famous final duel in the Great Hall.

Rita snapped her notebook shut and laid the quill on top of it in her lap.

"Well, that's quite a *story*," Rita said, greatly emphasizing the last word. "Oh, clearly a lot of it is true, there are many witnesses, but the business between you and Voldemort, and even Snape and Dumbledore, sound like cock and bull stories to me," she said skeptically.

Hermione and Ron were about to go off, but Harry held up his hand to stop them.

He said calmly, "I know it may seem unbelievable, a lot of it did to me even as I lived it, but I can assure you it is all true. Dumbledore told me Voldemort had extended the bounds of magic more than any other wizard, and my connection with him may never be fully understood."

"It's just *too* fantastic," said Rita skeptically.

No," said Hermione. "This would be a fantastic story in the *Muggle* world, but not in ours. People in *our* world will see the truth of it and must learn from it."

Rita carefully considered what Hermione said, especially the first part.

### Chapter 3 -- Another World

Rita Skeeter had been thinking about what Hermione said for almost a year. She had an idea which intrigued her. The more she thought about it, the more the idea began to develop into a plan. It was wild, perhaps even crazy. But it was potentially so good, she was afraid to share even a hint of it with anyone. So she began to research. She knew very well how to do real research, despite what Hermione thought.

Rita had been born and raised in the magical world and knew very little about the Muggle world. So, she read as much about it as she could in the archives of the Daily Prophet and in books from Flourish and Blotts about Muggles. Hermione would be the best possible source of information, but she was sure to become suspicious if Rita asked too many questions. However, Rita did pick up tips on dressing like a Muggle by observing Hermione.

Finally, when she was ready, Rita went to Gringotts and exchanged some Galleons for Muggle money. Then she walked to Oxford Street not too far from Diagon Alley and observed where wealthy looking Muggle women shopped for clothes. She put herself into the hands of a Muggle saleswoman who could not hide her amusement at the sight of her "witches' robes" and her "wooden stick." The woman had even asked if it were a back scratcher. The notion!

In less than an hour she was indistinguishable from other wealthy Muggle women in the store. She was not comfortable at all. Everything was too constricted. The underwear was just plain silly. But she balked at the shoes with spiky heels.



They were torture. She insisted on flat shoes. She left the shop with her robes, slippers and knickers stuffed into something called a “designer handbag.”

The next stop was Kings Cross. She bought a train ticket for the next train leaving London. She loved riding trains, ever since she first rode the Hogwarts Express as a girl -- really the only thing she ever liked about going to Hogwarts.

She had a first-class ticket, but she did not spend any time in her compartment. Instead, she walked the train slowly from end to end looking for the right person. At last, near the end of the train she spotted someone who might be right, but she did not stop until she had finished looking over everyone.

She returned to the compartment where she had spotted her candidate. She was a slender young blond woman, quite pretty, probably no more than half her age. Rita imagined she looked like her at the same age. However, her hair was long and straight and she used very little makeup. Also, her clothes were a little shabby. But she looked intelligent.

Rita entered the compartment and sat down. Also in the compartment were two others -- a non-descript middle-aged man reading a newspaper and a bizarrely dressed teenage boy, even for a Muggle. He had purple hair arranged in a row of six inch spikes across the top of his head from front to back. He also had black lipstick and eyeliner and multiple silver rings in his nose and ears. He was wearing ripped jeans and a dirty white tee shirt with an extremely crude profanity written in large irregular red letters. He was humming loudly to himself slapping his hands rhythmically on his knees. It was very annoying.

This would not do. Rita wanted to talk to the woman -- alone. She unobtrusively opened her handbag in her lap and withdrew her wand. Holding it against her thigh, she Confunded both the man and the boy. They immediately got up and left the compartment.

Rita looked at the young woman, and said cheerfully, “That was lucky. I hope they don’t come back.”

The young woman smiled and nodded her head.

Rita pressed on, “I love riding trains, don’t you? The clickity-clacking sounds and the swaying of the car... it’s so relaxing... Really lets your mind think.” She smiled.

The woman answered, "Yes." She smiled a little and then looked out the window at the passing countryside.

This was taking too long. Rita decided she had to speed things up a bit; so, she Confunded the woman.

They had a long conversation. The woman's name was Joanne. She lived in London, but was going to Manchester to look for a place to live. She was not married yet but had a boyfriend. But the best part was she *loved* books, and writing was her *hobby*. Rita wondered if some magical force had brought them together.

Rita began her work.

"I'm going to tell you a very interesting story. Would you like that?" she asked Joanne.

Joanne nodded eagerly.

"Just lean back, close your eyes and relax," said Rita soothingly.

It was going to take a long time. She would have about four hours today, but that would not be enough to tell the story. She would have to meet Joanne again.

When the train pulled into Manchester, Joanne believed Rita was a friend of hers from London. She would meet Rita again for the train back to London when she had finished hunting for a flat. They said goodbye on the platform.

Rita went into a public toilet at the station and Disapparated back to London. She was very pleased with herself. This was going very well.

#### Chapter 4 -- The Seed Is Planted

Rita met Joanne on the train platform in Manchester two days later. Like the last time, she made sure they ended up alone in their compartment.

A few minutes after they pulled out of the station, the train slowed to a stop. Rita expected this because she had Confunded the driver into causing a problem on

the train that would delay it for four hours. That would give Rita eight hours to finish her story.

Joanne was extremely receptive. She obviously loved the story. Rita would occasionally ask her questions about it and Joanne would answer correctly every time.

When the train resumed travel, Rita knew she would be able to finish well before they arrived in London. She needed that time to lay out the final part of her plan. A Memory Charm was all she needed. She had thought of everything.

Joanne would forget she had ever met or seen Rita. The story idea would be hers and she had come up with it today on the train. The whole story would emerge slowly over time, she would consider different angles and approaches, but the story would solidify as Rita had told it to her. She was free to use her own writing style and practices so it would emerge naturally. She would not write the whole story at once, but divide it up into multiple volumes of her choosing. She could also use her creative imagination to 'fill in the gaps' but must retain the essential story. She would time-shift the story by ten years forward from when it had actually occurred. And she would focus all her creative efforts into this work alone and aggressively seek its publication.

The last thing and most important was that, when published, she would deposit half of all revenues she received into an account Rita had set up for herself in a Muggle shell bank owned by Gringotts, which would transfer the funds to Rita's Gringotts account and convert them to Galleons. Of course Joanne would always immediately forget about these deposits and the missing money.

Rita loved the Goblins at Gringotts. They never asked questions in matters of gold and treasure.

It was a sweet plan, but Rita recognized it would take a long time to see any results. Even in the magical world, books did not always get published right away, and often not at all. But she could help with that. Creative writing can also take a long time even if it has your full attention. But Rita wanted time to pass in order to provide cover. She did not want this to happen too soon. She was patient.

Time did pass. Rita occasionally checked in on Joanne. She was having some personal problems, but Rita reinforced her drive to work on the story. Rita rode

the train with her when she moved to Edinburgh three years later. Rita was pleased to discover Joanne had finally completed a few chapters of her first volume.

The plan was moving along nicely.

Getting it finished and published took much longer than Rita expected. The first deposit of Galleons did not appear in her Gringotts vault until four years later -- just in time. The royalties from her revised Dumbledore and Harry Potter biographies were rapidly declining after seven years.

Rita had become accustomed to a very rich lifestyle. She had a luxury penthouse in London with a house-elf and lots of expensive jewelry.

If Potter had not insisted on giving half of their profits to Voldemort's supposed victims, she probably would not have needed the backup plan.

No, she thought, she would have done it anyway.

She just loved how clever she was.

## Chapter 5 -- Best Laid Plans

"You wanted to see me, Mrs Weasley," said Rita. "...Another 'revised and corrected' edition perhaps... with one of your nice little contracts all ready to sign... I still have the quill." She smiled coyly and gestured to an elegant glass case on the mantle containing the green Quick Quotes Quill with the white band that Hermione had given her eight years ago.

Rita was reclining on a fine silk covered divan next to the elegant marble fireplace.

Hermione stood in the center of the parlor of Rita's London penthouse. The house-elf had showed her in. Hermione looked angry. She had not looked at the mantle; she kept her eyes focused on Rita.

Rita felt a little uncomfortable. She said, "Why don't you sit down. I'll have Pokey bring us some tea."

Hermione did not sit. Instead she slowly reached into her robes and withdrew something. She held it up with both hands by the edges in front of her chest for Rita to clearly see. It was a book with a colorful cover.

Rita gasped.

At the top in large yellow capital letters on a red background it read, **Harry Potter**, and below in smaller white slanting script, ***and the Philosopher's Stone***. Below that in black lettering on an orange lozenge, it read, **J. K. Rowling**. The rest of the cover was a cartoon-like illustration of a boy with dark hair and round glasses with a surprised expression on his face standing in front of a red train engine with a sign reading "Hogwarts Express". The boy had a lightning shaped mark on his forehead. Above him was a lamppost with a small yellow sign with the number nine and three quarters in black.

"Uh... what's that?" Rita stammered.

"*You know very well what it is!*" yelled Hermione. "You didn't even have the sense to change the *names*."

'*The NAMES!*' Rita thought in total shock, '*How in Merlin's beard could I have overlooked that?*' Her mind reeled. She began to panic.

"I... I... I don't... don't know... what... what you're... talking about..." Rita stammered.

Hermione suddenly threw the book at her and drew her wand. Rita, reacting instinctively, reached out to catch the book.

"*Petrificus Totalus!*" Hermione shouted.

Rita's arms and legs snapped to her sides, and she stiffened like a board which now inclined her on her sumptuous divan. She began to slide, but her heels dug into the thick carpet preventing her from sliding all the way to the floor. Rita's eyes were already frozen wide in a look of astonishment as the book hit her on the nose and came to rest on her chest -- like a name board in a prison photo.

"Just to be sure..." said Hermione. She again pointed her wand at Rita and said, "*Legilimens*."

It took a minute because there was so much, but it was all there in Rita's head just as Hermione had guessed.

Hermione shook her head disapprovingly. "I can't imagine what you were thinking. Even if you *had* changed the names, you couldn't hide the story. You did shift all the dates by ten years but that's trivial. How did you think you were going to get away with this? Unlike you, I'm a Muggle born. Lots of witches and wizards are. Also, *some* of us like to read and sometimes go to *Muggle* bookstores. I'm surprised I didn't see this sooner. It's *everywhere*, you know. It's a *huge* international phenomenon. Muggles are clamoring for *more*."

Hermione walked over to Rita and picked up the book. She hefted it in her hand and then continued speaking.

"When I first saw it I couldn't believe it. I picked it up immediately and scanned through it. Initially, I thought *you* had written it, but as I began to read it thoroughly, I realized you couldn't have. It was too creative and imaginative. It had a sense of wonder a magical person could have never brought to the story."

Hermione tucked the book back into her robes and smiled.

"Well, I had to meet this Rowling person. As it turned out, she wasn't hard to find. I met her at a book signing and... *arranged* to meet her. She was brilliant! I wondered how you managed to find her. I'm even more amazed now to learn it was pure luck."

Hermione looked around the room at the opulent furnishings and appointments.

"I thought your reason for doing this was obvious. It *had* to be for money. But then I had to think of how that would work. It didn't take long to figure out. Only the Goblins could make this work. I went to Bill Weasley and he found out what was going on at Gringotts with your account. It didn't take much to have the whole thing shut down. I just saw Miss Rowling again and modified her memory. As of now, the money has stopped flowing into your account. In addition, all the transactions over the last year have been reversed and put back into her Muggle account. The Goblins are 'cooperating' to minimize the scandal on their part. There is going to be a full investigation at Gringotts."

Hermione was grinning now.

“Just a few more things before I go. You’re just not nearly as clever as you think you are. It almost defies logic that you didn’t realize you’d be found out and how much trouble you’d be in. Unfortunately, it’s completely impossible to correct what you have done in the Muggle world with Memory Charms -- we’d have to *Obliviate* almost the entire world population. The magical world will just have to endure it and hope that Muggles never see the reality of the book in the world around them.”

Hermione turned to leave, then turned back and looked at Rita again.

“If it’s any consolation to you, I must admit I’m rather looking *forward* to reading the rest of the story from Miss Rowling in the coming years. We are not changing her memory in any way,” Hermione said earnestly, nodding her head. “Oh, and the unregistered Animagus thing is out of the bag too. Sorry.”

She turned and left the room.

Rita would have cried except she was still frozen from the Full Body-Bind Curse. She heard the sound of multiple footsteps in the hallway and then two men and a woman in Ministry of Magic robes entered the room.

“Rita Skeeter,” the woman said in an official sounding voice, “You are under arrest for wonton violation of the International Statute of Secrecy and many, many other crimes.” Then she said to her companions, “Take her away.”

## Chapter 6 -- Bright Future

Twenty years was not that long, she thought. Why, she’d only be eighty when she got out. Azkaban was not so bad without the Dementors.

Rita was wringing out prison robes by hand in the steaming prison laundry.

The other prisoners told her there had been many quality-of-life improvements in the last few years. You were now allowed to talk in the cell blocks. Running water and hand washing facilities had been added to the cells, though chamber pots were still used for dealing with other personal needs. She grimaced thinking of the nasty process.

Showers were still only once a week and for just one minute, but there was a petition to extend them for thirty seconds and the rumor mill said it had a good chance of being approved.

The biggest improvement the old timers all agreed, aside from no Dementors, was that prisoners were now allowed to send and receive mail every day -- but no packages, of course. The Daily Prophet remained the most popular periodical in prison, primary for 'personal hygiene' purposes.

Rita had quickly become the 'go to' person for gossip and rumors. She knew everyone and everything going on in Azkaban. Even the Auror guards brought her delicious news, because Rita had begun to write an unofficial prison gossip sheet, *The Azky Tattler*. She published one handwritten copy every week and it circulated throughout the prison population, though it took quite a while to do so.

Most of the prisoners had signed a petition for Rita to be allowed to publish an official prison newspaper. Her favorite guard, who had already become something like a personal assistant, told her the Warden enjoyed her gossip sheet so much, he was almost certain to approve it. Rita made sure she always wrote favorable things about the Warden.

Rita Skeeter was in her element.

The End