

49 and Never Been Kissed

by neelix

Hermione is down on her luck and has to apply for a job with her old Potions tutor.
She gets (and observes) far more than she bargained for.

One

Chapter 1 of 11

Hermione is down on her luck and has to apply for a job with her old Potions tutor. She gets (and observes) far more than she bargained for.

A/N: Hello everyone :) It's good to be back. Here is my submission for the 2012 SSHG_Exchange. This little story was a gift for Hechicera. Her prompts were inspiring and I will post them after the final chapter.

Thanks are due to my Beta, ARo. She keeps me in line.

Now, if you're sitting comfortably, then I'll begin...

ONE

Somewhere in Ottery St. Catchpole, Ronald Weasley's ears were burning. If Hermione Granger had been anywhere near him at that very moment, she would have most likely killed him by hexing small bits off him one wand blast at a time. She hated him. No, she loathed him. He was a shit, a wanker, a cheating scum who wasn't good enough to even talk about Merlin's balls, let alone use them as an expression.

'You really are a total bastard, Ronald Weasley!' With a huff, Hermione finished her verbal tirade towards her ex-husband and dragged her old Hogwarts trunk into the hallway of her new cottage. She closed the door and then cast a Levicorpus. It wasn't a pretty house; it was small and square and had no character. Someone with an eye for colour and soft furnishings could probably make it comfortably stylish, but that was last on Hermione's list of priorities. The main thing she had to worry about was her job interview, which was in...

'Shit! I'm going to be late!' Hermione waved her wand artfully at her hair and her curls wound themselves into a tight bun at the nape of her neck. She transfigured her jeans into a pair of dark blue linen trousers, grabbed her jacket and ran out of the house at full pelt until she found a quiet field from which to Apparate.

Hogwarts had changed since her school days, but not much. Hagrid's hut, burnt down in the final battle, had been replaced by a larger, stone house complete with its own garden, path and gated fence. The Whomping Willow had been given protected status and was now out of bounds to students, and the tunnel to the Shrieking Shack had been filled in years ago. The hospital wing had been rebuilt and expanded, and Lavender Brown had taken over as Medi-witch from Madame Pomfrey on her retirement. Minerva had also retired, much to Hermione's sadness, but they had stayed in regular contact and Hermione still visited her on occasion. Filius Flitwick was Headmaster now, a controversial choice given that Severus Snape still taught at the school. Fortuitous for Hermione, though. She doubted this job would have come up in different circumstances.

Hermione pushed open the large wooden doors and stepped into the main hallway. She didn't stop to look at the House Points but almost jogged around the bottom of the staircase and through the door that lead down to the dungeons. There was a familiar smell as she turned the corner, pungent and aromatic. She took a deep breath, and

her nostrils were filled with the scent of ink, parchment, sandalwood and musk. She snorted down a laugh as she realised that the fifth years had been brewing Amortentia, but she sobered quickly when it dawned on her that none of her Amortentia aromas were Ron. She would probably never solve that conundrum now, thanks to him and his little strumpet.

She paused outside Snape's office, smoothed the front of her shirt and adjusted her jacket sharply. Although Snape had stopped intimidating her a long time ago, she needed to make a good impression. She knocked with confidence and waited. And waited. After five minutes she knocked again, but this time she opened the door herself.

Snape was sitting behind his desk, holding a familiar bit of parchment close to his face as he read it. It looked like her own resume. At her interruption he raised his eyes above the reading glasses perched on the end of his nose and scowled.

'If I had wanted you in my presence Granger, I would have opened the door.'

'We have an appointment, Professor Snape. An interview, remember?' Hermione refused to be fazed by his glare or the acid tone of his voice.

'Which I am still preparing for. Wait outside.'

He looked back down at the parchment in his hands and ignored her, so she did as she was told and went back into the cold hallway, trying hard not to slam the door on the way out. She was irritated with his attitude, but she couldn't afford to get off on the wrong foot. The reality was that she needed Snape more than he needed her, and she had few options left. The wizarding world had made up its mind about Hermione Granger two months ago when she finally walked out of her marriage. The shame and humiliation she had endured throughout said marriage meant nothing. Good witches did not divorce their husbands and that was that. Hermione started to pace, letting the heels of her boots click loudly on the tiled stone floor. On her third pass, the door of the office opened with a click, and taking it as her cue, she walked back into the office hoping that this time she would be given a warmer welcome.

'If you want to work for me, you will learn to follow orders and be patient. I am very busy, Granger, and I am sure you know from experience that my classes can over run. Sit,' he said curtly, waving his hand imperiously at the wooden chair that sat in front of his desk.

Hermione sat and took a good look at her old Professor. She had last seen him two years previously in Flourish & Blotts, but he had merely nodded and swept from the shop before she had chance to greet him. He had aged remarkably well for a man who had almost died. His hair was still lank, but it seemed a bit longer than Hermione remembered it, and his teaching robes, still the same midnight black, seemed sharper and crisper. He probably had more time to attend to them now. The main change was that he looked healthy, and there were no dark shadows below his eyes. Hermione mused on the fact that although his appearance was more appealing, his mood hadn't sweetened any, and it made her sad. She didn't think the Professor was happy at all.

'Right. Let's get this over with,' Snape said, placing her resume slowly down with a sigh. 'What makes you think you are good enough for this job?'

'Well, I achieved an Outstanding in Potions at N.E.W.T. level and I am a hard worker. I spent three years working for the Ministry in the Dark Artefacts department and after the war the workload was huge.' Hermione paused and looked at Snape. He looked bored. 'And I think we could work well together, sir.'

Hermione took a deep breath and tried to relax. This wasn't as easy as she had thought, with Snape staring right at her.

'Any better at doing as instructed, Granger?' Snape sat back in his chair and his eyes narrowed.

'I beg your pardon?' Hermione stared at him. She had never been to an interview like this in her life.

'Come off it, girl. I remember well your behaviour in school and from what I've read recently, you're still as hot-headed as you were then. I won't have that here, Granger. Brewing is too important for you to cock it up with a tantrum or just because you don't feel like doing what I tell you.' Snape sat forward and linked his long, slim fingers together.

'I would thank you to leave my personal life out of this,' Hermione whispered. 'And as for before...' She paused to breathe again. 'I was a child. sir.'

'Very well. The terms are this. Forty galleons a week. I know it's a pittance but it's coming from me and not the school and I have had little time to amass a fortune. You can eat your meals here. There will be times a potion will need attending overnight so you would be expected to sleep in the spare room next to the lab. You will clean the stock room weekly, but all orders and paperwork will be dealt with by me. It will be hard graft, Granger, and I will Evanesco any potion that doesn't meet my standards. Is that acceptable to you?'

'Are you offering me the job, Professor?' Hermione looked at him in shock. She had been sure he didn't want her.

'I don't have time to be choosy. Besides, you are the only applicant,' he said dismissively.

'Well, if you put it like that,' Hermione said with a laugh, to which Snape did not respond. 'Thank you. I accept.'

'Your probation period starts tomorrow. Meet me here at eight a.m.'

Severus Snape stood and walked to the rear door of his office. Hermione knew this led to his private lab and his personal quarters beyond it. He left without saying another word.

Hermione watched as he closed the door, then let out a long breath. If she hadn't needed the money so badly she would have argued for better terms, but she knew that Snape was old school and his opinion of her wasn't high. Divorcing a wizard, even if it was Ronald Weasley, certainly hadn't won her many fans, and it seemed that Snape felt the same.

With a heavy heart, Hermione left Hogwarts for her cold and soulless house, and wondered what the following day would bring.

Two

Chapter 2 of 11

Hermione is down on her luck and has to apply for a job with her old Potions tutor. She gets (and observes) far more than she bargained for.

The following morning Hermione arrived before eight and waited for Snape. After her interview yesterday, when she had to admit she had probably come across as a bit big for her boots, she had resolved to be mindful of talking too much, and to do as she was told. She would have given anything to have Professor Snape's respect and to be treated cordially by him – she knew he could do it because Minerva had told her – but it certainly wasn't going to be any time soon. She had dressed carefully in black trousers and a plain white shirt. Her hair was tied back firmly and she wore no make up just to make doubly sure she wouldn't contaminate the potions. She had also removed her wedding ring and left it sitting on the mantle piece. She would decide later what fate would befall it. If things didn't work out she would have to sell it, but she didn't care. It no longer held any significant emotional value. Hermione was absent-mindedly rubbing her finger where the ring had once been when Snape opened the door and waved her through.

The lab was larger than Hermione had imagined. A long, sturdy preparation desk dominated the centre of the room, and along one wall, floor to ceiling shelves were loaded with equipment, potions ingredients and ancient potions books, some of which Hermione had never even heard of.

'The store room is over there.' He pointed to a small door opposite his office. 'And this room is for your use whenever you have need of it,' Snape said as he continued the tour. He opened the door and Hermione popped her head around to look into the room. A single bed sat along the far wall, a chest of drawers on the other. It was sparse but functional. After all, she wasn't planning on moving in.

As she backed out of the room she collided with her new boss, the buttons on the front of his robes digging into the top of her right arm. She stumbled away from him awkwardly.

'I'm so sorry, Professor,' she said. 'I didn't realise you were standing so close.'

'I sincerely hope your clumsiness doesn't spread to your potion making. There is a list on the desk. I expect it complete by the end of my classes today.' He turned and walked into his office, but paused briefly before leaving her to it. 'The door over there leads to my personal quarters. I have warded the door should curiosity, shall we say, kill the cat.' He looked at Hermione pointedly but she ignored his barbed reference to her disastrous experience with Polyjuice potion and walked over to get her list.

Hermione looked at the list. Skele-Gro, Blood Replenishing Potion, Deflating Draught, bruise and burn healing pastes and Calming Draught. She had a feeling Snape was trying to test her, but she wasn't worried. She could brew most of these concurrently if she had enough cauldrons. She felt a frisson of something as she rolled up her sleeves, and set about impressing Professor Snape.

Severus Snape was a miserable man. He knew, Filius knew it and he was damn sure that now Hermione Granger knew it. There were times, now and then, that he yearned for something more than what seemed to now be his lot in life. There was no excitement, no drama, just the usual day and daily routine of teaching, brewing, eating sleeping, Firewhisky and the occasional liaison with the ladies of Constance Barclay's Pleasure Emporium – *'Discretion is Our Priority, Your Pleasure Our Reward'*. He knew he had no right to feel like this. After all, he survived the war against all odds and now his life was his own to do as he pleased. Trouble was he didn't know what pleased him.

He headed towards the top table, pondering the witch in his lab. He had asked Winky to pop in to her and provide her with lunch and was more than glad he hadn't been there to see that conversation. He had needed to bribe Winky with the promise of extra chores just to persuade her to talk to Granger after the hats debacle. He eased himself into his usual seat, ignoring the twinge in his knee as he sat. He wasn't old by wizarding standards but he was no longer in his prime, which was certain. Even the pleasures of the flesh were palling somewhat and it had been over two weeks since he had been serviced by one of Constance's young and nubile whores. He decided he should rectify that situation soon.

'How is Miss Granger, Severus? You really should have asked her to join us for lunch,' said Filius, who sat beside him and seemed to consider him a friend.

'She is working for me, Filius, not the school. I have arranged lunch to be taken to her so you have no need to worry about her fading away,' Snape said in a bored tone.

'Poor girl. After everything that happened, the Prophet was far too critical of her if you ask me.' Filius stabbed a juicy looking sausage and chewed on the end of it.

'Some witches are not woman enough to keep their wizards in their own beds.' Snape said with a sneer. In reality, the only reason he had given Granger the job was to help her out. He didn't really need an assistant, but he knew from experience how cruel it was to be rejected by the wizarding great and good. Not that he felt sorry for her. It was her own fault for marrying the ginger twat in the first place. Snape could have predicted what would happen.

'Now, now, Severus. I'm sure Miss Granger has ample charms for the right wizard,' Filius said with a dirty chuckle.

Snape rolled his eyes and pushed his plate away. 'I have to check on her progress, Filius, if you would excuse me?' He couldn't wait to get away from where he knew the conversation was inevitably going. He had lost count of how many times Filius and Minerva had tried to set him up, and he didn't need the charms of Miss Hermione Granger pushed down his throat.

He had noticed them already.

Hermione nibbled on the remains of her sandwich in Snape's office. Her anger towards him had dissipated along with the hunger that had been gnawing away at her, and she had to admit that the only way she would have eaten today was if a House Elf had appeared. Winky had made her jump, and the potion she had been stirring had been ruined by one too many clockwise turns of the rod as she had stared at her. Winky had made it clear she wasn't too happy about the arrangement either, particularly when Hermione had initially refused the offer of lunch. She gave in eventually, scared that Winky was about to start throwing things in her direction, and her acquiescence had earned her a toothy grin and a low bow.

The door opened and Professor Snape walked in silently, eyeing her as she swallowed a mouthful of pumpkin juice.

'I thought it best to eat in here and not near the potions, I hope that's okay?' she asked politely.

'Finished already?' he asked, almost smirking.

'I would have been if Winky hadn't scared me half to death. A bit of warning would have been nice. Sir,' she grumbled.

'How was she?' Snape couldn't stop the hint of a smile quirking his lips.

'Fine, once I gave in.' Hermione shrugged and stood, brushing crumbs from her brewing robes. 'It was thoughtful of you to send her to me. I was starving.'

'Potions, Granger. I'm not here to chit chat.' Snape swept into the lab and Hermione stuck her tongue out at him.

She just knew things would get worse before they got better.

Three

Chapter 3 of 11

Hermione is down on her luck and has to apply for a job with her old Potions tutor. She gets (and observes) far more than she bargained for.

THREE

By the time the weekend arrived, Hermione had just about had enough of Severus Snape. He was rude to her all of the time, she could never engage him in conversation about anything but work, and once he had realised just how good she was at brewing more than one potion at a time, he had increased her workload threefold. To say that she was exhausted was an understatement. Add to that her building sense of isolation and loneliness, by the time she took off her brewing robes on Friday evening Hermione was ready to crawl into bed for a damn good cry. But despite the weariness of her body and heart, she was grateful for the job. It stopped her thinking about everything else.

Heading into her room just off the lab, Hermione laid her robes out on the bed for collection by the House Elves and lifted her jacket. In her head, she made a mental list of how she would spend her weekend. Firstly, she needed food because there was little in the house but coffee and chocolate. While she was happy for it to remain that way, she couldn't work without proper sustenance. Then there were a couple of Potions books that Snape had given her to read. There were some obscure potions she had never even heard of that St. Mungo's used for rare or dangerous diseases, and he wanted her to brew them on Monday. Hermione sighed. This was the sum of her weekend, and even she had to admit it was pretty pathetic. Throwing her bag over her shoulder, now weighed down with books that Snape had forbidden her to shrink, she left the room and closed the door behind her, checked that the lab was spotless and walked through into Snape's office. He was sat in his usual chair, marking. Hermione could see his familiar red script, and for a brief moment felt a pang of nostalgia. Everything had been a lot simpler in first year.

'I'm off, Professor,' she said quietly. She knew from bitter experience that he didn't like to be interrupted.

'Monday morning, eight o'clock,' he said without looking up.

Hermione sighed again. He didn't even have the decency to wish her a good weekend. She left without saying another word, because what was the point?

The dungeons were quiet as she walked down the hallway. The school was preparing for the summer break now that O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s were completed and some of the older students had already left for home, only returning the following week for the Leaving Feast. She had received a personal invitation to the feast from Filius Flitwick just that morning, so at least she had that to look forward to.

Trudging down the path to the Apparition point, Hermione glanced over to Hagrid's house. It was in darkness and there was no smoke from the chimney. It made Hermione feel even more depressed. She could have used one of his hugs right now, but she knew he was away to stay with Madame Maxime over the summer.

Ignoring the tears that were pricking her eyes, she continued her journey home.

Hermione found something comforting about a Muggle supermarket. Mainly it was because that here, she was anonymous. There were no sideways glances, no bitchy comments whispered just a bit too loudly, and even better, no Hexes shot at her secretly from under someone's cloak. Hermione felt so safe here that she had left her wand at home in her Muggle house in her very Muggle street. She had chosen the village of Balfron purposely because while it was only a short Apparition from Hogwarts, she was the only witch in the village. It made for a quieter life.

Hermione stood at the checkout and perused her meagre menu for the weekend. A loaf of bread, some bananas, a couple of microwave meals and some cheese. It wasn't much, but she had to make her money stretch until she could get to Gringotts and exchange her weekly earnings to sterling. She paid for her groceries and thanked the spotty teenager at the till, grabbed her bags and started the short walk back to the house. It was when she got to her front door that she knew something was wrong. A shiver of magic washed over her as she opened the door with her key, and she cursed herself for leaving her wand behind.

'I'm unarmed, and I know you're there,' she shouted.

The door was pulled from her grasp and she was immediately pulled into a tight hug.

'Thank God you're alright. Have you any idea how worried I've been?' Harry Potter let her go and grabbed her shopping bags from her hands. In a daze, Hermione followed him through to the small kitchen and watched as he unpacked everything and put it away, then flicked on the switch of the kettle.

'Coffee, milk, and no sugar, right?' he turned and smiled at her, and she couldn't take any more. The tears started to fall and she collapsed into a chair, put her head onto her arms and sobbed. Of all people, it would be Harry who found her and she shouldn't be surprised, but it just brought home to her just how empty her life had become in such a short space of time. Taking a shuddering breath, she wiped the tears and her hair from her face and looked up as Harry placed her steaming coffee in front of her.

'Here. This will help.' Harry patted her shoulder gently and slid himself into the chair opposite.

Hermione sat up straight and took a sip of coffee. Harry was right, it did help, and she smiled at him ruefully. 'Not the best welcome,' she said. 'I'm sorry.'

'I expected something like it, to be honest. Why did you take off without telling me where you were going? I could have helped.' Harry slipped his glasses from his face and rubbed at them on the edge of his jumper.

'Ron's your brother-in-law,' she said with a shrug.

'And you're my sister-in-law by marriage. And my friend,' he added when she went to protest.

'How did you find me, anyway?' she asked.

'Someone let the cat out of the bag,' he said with a smirk.

'Minerva! That interfering old busy body!' Hermione felt a surge of affection nevertheless. Minerva wouldn't betray a confidence to just anyone.

'She was worried about you. We have all been worried about you.' Harry placed emphasis on the 'all' and Hermione grimaced.

'Is that right? I can't imagine Arthur and Molly being too concerned, not when the reputation of their baby boy has been besmirched by his wife, and a Mudblood at that,' Hermione said sadly.

'Arthur's not stupid. He tore strips off Ron when he heard the full story and he knows you wouldn't have walked out without good reason. Ginny is livid too, she's not even talking to him.' Harry explained.

'Do you think she would want to meet, for coffee or something? I could really use a friend right now,' Hermione asked hopefully.

'I'll ask her. Now, you need to eat proper food. I saw pub in the village that serves a better meal than frozen chicken curry and rice, so come on. My treat.'

Hermione couldn't help but grin as he waved two twenty pound notes in her face, and she nodded in agreement. Perhaps her weekend wouldn't be too bad after all.

Back at Hogwarts, Severus Snape also had a visitor. Her name, so she said, was Ruby. She was petite with long, curly brown hair, a button nose and pert breasts. Currently, she was knelt between his legs and unbuttoning his fly. Snape let his hands fall to her hair and threaded his fingers through. He tried not to wince. The curls were not natural but had been styled as per his instructions, and they felt like cardboard. In his other hand, he swirled the remainder of his Firewhisky and downed it in one gulp before placing the glass on the mahogany table beside him. He let out a short huff of breath as Ruby released his erection from its confines, and as he laid his head back, he closed his eyes. He made no sound as Ruby placed her lips over the end of his cock and licked, but as she started to move her mouth up and down his shaft, he jerked forward, filling her with his length. In his minds' eye, this was not Ruby but someone else altogether, and as his imagination played out his fantasy, he came with a shuddering gasp and pulled himself out of Ruby's mouth before she had time to swallow.

Snape pushed himself up from his chair and fastening his fly quickly. 'I have paid Constance directly, but here is something for your trouble.' He handed Ruby a galleon, which she grabbed and slipped between her breasts.

'I hope I was acceptable, sir,' said Ruby as she gathered her coat.

'Tell Constance I shall have use for her service in the future.'

Snape watched as Ruby left and finally pondered the emptiness of the experience. He knew why, of course. His mind had become full of images of Hermione Granger in various compromising situations in the past week, but a look alike was not enough. He wasn't such a fool to think she would be willing to participate in his fantasies, of course. Heaven forbid that their flesh should meld in an ecstasy of passion. But fucking whores who bore a passing resemblance wouldn't do it either.

He would have to think of something else.

Four

Chapter 4 of 11

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FOUR

When Hermione arrived outside Snape's office on Monday morning, she found the door already open. Snape was in the lab and had already assembled three cauldrons and stirring rods. He was chopping what looked like Knotgrass.

'Good morning, Professor,' Hermione said with a nod. She headed straight to her room and put on her fresh robes before heading back into the lab with her arms full of Snape's potion books.

'Granger.' Snape glanced at her briefly. 'I hope you read those.'

Hermione rolled her eyes at Snape's curt tone but she accepted it and put the books back onto the shelf. 'From cover to cover,' she replied lightly. She had spent the whole of Sunday devouring them, and had loved every minute of it, but she wasn't going to tell him that. 'Shall I start brewing the Nerve potion, sir?'

'I have no classes today, thanks to the absence of arrogant seventh years,' he said with a sneer. 'I will brew. You can clean out the store.'

Hermione felt her ire rising. He had no manners, and no appreciation for her skills or the effort she had gone to so far, but fine. Cleaning out the store would be much better than having to brew in his company. Trying to keep a lid on her temper, Hermione walked purposefully to the store room.

'Granger,' Snape said loudly.

'Yes, sir?' Hermione had to grit her teeth. He had almost barked at her.

'Make sure you put everything back in date order. And no magic. Some of the ingredients are volatile.' He stared at her when she didn't move and raised his eyebrow. 'Get on with it,' he said harshly.

Hermione took a deep breath and wrenched open the door of the store with a jerk. 'Bastard,' she whispered under her breath. She entered the store and groaned. There had been a new delivery, and packing crates were stacked high at the end of the room. In addition, she knew that all of the shelves would need to be dusted thoroughly and every bottle and phial taken down. This was going to take her all day. With a huff of frustration, Hermione rolled up her sleeves and started at the end of the room. All of the ingredients were in alphabetical order, so she started with the Acromantula venom and began to lift down the phials.

It was hot work, but she was nothing if not thorough. Her granny had always said to 'give it some elbow-grease,' so that is what she did. By half past ten, her hair had started come loose and the sweat was pouring from her. She had got as far as Flobberworm entrails when she decided she had to take a break or expire from dehydration. She walked back into the lab, pushing her hair away from her damp face, and walked directly to her room without speaking to Snape. She stripped off her robes, which were now filthy, and cast a cooling charm. With a wave of her wand she transfigured her hair clip into a glass, cast Auguamenti and drank gratefully. Then she fixed her hair, cleaned her robes as best she could and headed back for round two. Unfortunately, when she arrived at the store, Snape was in there.

'Are you checking up on me, Professor Snape?' she demanded indignantly.

Snape turned around with a jar of Boomslang skin in his hand, and Hermione glared at him. He didn't reply but walked past her and back to the workbench. Hermione snapped.

'You really are the most rude and ignorant man I have ever met!' she shouted. 'Why can't you at least treat me with courtesy instead of being such a... a... GIT!'

Hermione didn't wait for his answer but headed back into the store room, this time slamming the door behind her, causing several precariously balanced phials to fall from the shelves and break. There was a bang and a flash of light, and after that, everything went blank.

Snape observed from his place by the door as Lavender Longbottom cast a series of diagnostic tests over Hermione Granger. If he felt a little guilty, it was more about the fact he had incensed the witch to violence and ruined half his stock. He was less guilty that he had taken the chance to purloin some of Granger's soft and lovely hair in the midst of all the chaos. His prize was wrapped carefully in his handkerchief and was almost burning a hole in his pocket. Not that he would be able to make use of it for a month yet, but still. It had been fortuitous.

He heard the quick little footsteps of Filius Flitwick and braced himself. The Headmaster was not always charming, and he knew he was in for a hard time. He prepared himself to get his just desserts.

'Severus, I am blaming you totally for this! Hermione Granger managed to survive the war but I doubt she will be able to survive you for much longer!' Filius glared up at him furiously, his hands on his hips.

Snape was suitably abashed. 'I apologise, Headmaster. Miss Granger's temper doesn't appear to be any less quick, and I have perhaps not made things as easy as I could have.'

'I expect you to change that, Severus,' Filius said with a sigh, his anger spent. 'Honestly, it wouldn't do you any harm to just try and be nice to the girl. She is doing you a favour, after all,' Filius pleaded.

'Indeed.' Severus smirked at just how nice he would like to be to Hermione Granger, but he knew that Filius was right. He really wasn't making it easy on her, or himself. It wouldn't hurt to make some form of effort with her.

At least he hoped it wouldn't.

Hermione awoke in the room beside the lab. Her head was banging and her eyes smarted, but apart from that she felt fine. She sat up gingerly on the edge of the bed and was about to stand when there was a soft knocking at the door.

'Yes?' she said.

'Miss Granger, may I enter?' It was Snape. Hermione sighed. She may as well get the lecture over with. She was sure that the store must have been destroyed.

'Come in sir,' she said with as much confidence as she could muster.

Professor Snape entered the room and handed her a headache potion and some drops for her eyes. 'I owe you an apology,' he said quietly. 'There was no excuse for my rudeness. Forgive me.'

Hermione gaped at him. 'I was going to apologise to you. Have I destroyed everything?' she said miserably.

'I have fixed the store. We will have to order in some fresh ingredients but there is no permanent damage. When you have used those you should eat. I shall await you in my office.' With a nod, Snape gracefully left the room, leaving Hermione staring at him in disbelief.

She swallowed the potion and felt her headache lift immediately, and the drops took the sting from her eyes. She felt a rush of gratitude towards Professor Snape but still couldn't get her head around his apology. Perhaps he wasn't that bad after all?

She went into the office feeling much brighter than she had in over a week. 'Thank you for the potion, Professor. I feel much better now.'

Professor Snape looked up from the book he was reading and smiled slightly. 'I thought you might like to come for dinner in the Great Hall. Filius has done nothing but nag me to invite you since you arrived,' he said.

'I would love that,' she replied, smiling back at him. 'Professor, can I ask you a question?'

'I cannot promise to answer, but you may try,' he said

'You were chopping Knotgrass earlier, and then you collected some Boomslang skin from the store before... well, everything.' Hermione shrugged.

'Go on,' he said warily. Had she been able to read him better, she would have known that his heart was pounding hard in his chest as his stress levels started to rise.

'Well, sir, I wondered if you were brewing Polyjuice potion?'

She almost laughed at Snape's shocked expression. 'It seems I have been rumbled,' he said as he rose from his seat. 'Occasionally I do some private work and I have been asked to make a batch of Polyjuice. Of course, you would know all about that.'

Hermione had the grace to blush under his intense stare. 'Yes, well. I apologise for that sir, but it was necessary at the time. But why would anyone want Polyjuice potion now?' She thought out loud.

'I did not ask. It is none of my business and nor is it yours,' he said firmly.

Hermione's thoughts were running in all directions. Why would someone need Polyjuice now that the war was over? And who had ordered it? It seemed like a strange request, but she dared not ask any more questions for fear of spoiling their truce.

'Of course.' Hermione smiled up at him as he held the door open. 'Thank you, Professor, for the job and taking care of me.'

As she stepped through the door she missed the look of shock on the Professor's face.

Five

Chapter 5 of 11

Hermione is down on her luck and has to apply for a job with her old Potions tutor. She gets (and observes) far more than she bargained for.

FIVE

Severus had a feeling he had gone too far. In the weeks since the store incident his relationship with Hermione Granger had changed beyond recognition. She was no longer the schoolgirl he'd had the displeasure to teach, nor was she the stupid chit who had married a Weasley. The Hermione Granger he worked with was witty and intelligent, engaging and observant, and that was just her personality. He couldn't ignore her physical changes either. She was taller than he remembered, and her figure had filled out in all the right places. Her lips were full and recently, more ready to smile or laugh, and her eyes would sparkle when they were engaged in discussion. There was no doubt about it, he thought as he watched her work. Filius was right. Hermione Granger would be a catch for some lucky wizard.

If Dumbledore had still been here he would have been knowingly smug about Snape's current situation. Hermione Granger was very like Lily Evans in some ways. and it was inevitable that her brightness and warmth had called to him. There had always been a part of him that had yearned for fulfilment, which was unsurprising considering his childhood, which had been bleak at best and traumatic at worst. Thanks to Tobias Snape, there had been very little love and laughter in the house. Consequently, any glimmer of happiness had drawn Snape like a moth to a flame, oblivious to the risk of being burned. If he was sure of one thing, Lily had burned him badly and he had been careful not to let anyone get as close again.

But he knew that Hermione had already infiltrated his defences, and he also knew that he stood no chance. Inviting her into his personal rooms was foolish, but it was late and her potions would need tending overnight. And the witch had to eat, something that she often forgot in the midst of her brewing. Eating in his office no longer seemed appropriate and so he had asked her to dine with him tonight. She would be the only other person to have entered his rooms but Dumbledore.

'Are you ready Hermione?' he asked, savouring the sound of her name as he spoke. She looked up with a smile and caught his eye, and another little part of his heart was lost.

'Just let me set my timer.' Hermione cast her charm and then quickly walked to where he was waiting, pulling off her brewing robes as she went. Snape pushed the door a little wider and waved her through in front of him, and as she passed him he couldn't help but inhale the scent of her shampoo. Vanilla and patchouli, but of course he had known it would be. He closed his eyes and let the aroma wash over him, and when he looked up again he couldn't help chuckling to himself.

'This place is amazing!' She exclaimed.

Snape felt ridiculously pleased. He was proud of his rooms, which did not resemble a bat cave as some assumed but were warm and cosy and very spacious. A large fireplace dominated the end wall and a brown, leather sofa sat before it. On either side of the hearth were wing-backed chairs. The one on the left was his and he often sat reading and nursing a glass of Firewhisky, wishing he could look up and still see Dumbledore in the other.

A bookcase sat along the whole length of the side wall, packed floor to ceiling in books. Snape watched, fascinated, as Hermione gravitated towards it, unpinning her hair as she went. He didn't like to think about just how glad he was she was here, or the urge he felt to run his fingers through her loosened curls. He just lived in the moment, because joy like this was usually temporary where he was concerned.

Hermione pushed her plate away and patted her stomach. The meal had been lovely, and as she watched Snape across the table, toying with the stem of his wine glass, she realised she had never seen him quite so relaxed. She hadn't known he would be such good company, but the conversation had flowed from a discussion about work to the latest novel he was reading.

'We should do this more often,' she said softly.

'If we did we would both be as fat as fools,' he said with a chuckle.

'That's true, too. But chicken casserole is one of my favourites. My Mum used to cook it for me.' Hermione reached for her pumpkin juice.

'You have no contact with your parents?' Snape raised his eyes in question and Hermione sighed.

'Not any more. They never fully understood the danger they were in simply being my parents. They were so settled in Australia until I restored their memories, but things have been strained. In fact, they don't even know that I left Ron,' she said. Hermione fought down tears with the sudden realisation that they had grown so far apart.

'You miss him?' Snape asked.

Hermione grimaced. 'Not one bit.'

'Can I ask,' Snape said cautiously. 'What happened, between you?'

Hermione looked at Snape. She had never told anyone the full extent of it, but Severus was becoming a good friend, and he was a very good listener.

'He had affairs. Lots of them, if I'm being honest, and even before we married. I should have called the wedding off, but Molly was so wrapped up in the preparations, and honestly,' she paused as she thought back, 'I thought he would change after we were married.'

'Many a woman has been deluded in such a way, I believe. My own mother said the very same thing to me once.' Snape pursed his lips and frowned.

'I kept forgiving him,' said Hermione thoughtfully. 'I still don't know why.'

'You left eventually,' Snape said quietly.

'He fell in love, I think. There was one girl he kept going back to, and then one night he didn't come home at all. I knew then that it was over, and I thought leaving him would be easy, because he didn't love me, not in the right way. But he didn't help matters.' Hermione frowned and took another sip of juice. Ron Weasley had been quick to protect his reputation and his interests and had sold his story to the Prophet before she had finished packing. It had earned him the sympathy vote, and to every witch and wizard, Hermione was to blame.

'You deserve far better, Hermione,' Snape said bitterly, and Hermione looked at him warmly, glad that she had his support but surprised at his tone. He looked away, seemingly embarrassed.

'Thank you, Severus,' she said.

Her wand started to vibrate beside her, breaking the tension. 'My potion needs attention; I should go.' She stood and fixed her hair, and Severus walked her to the door of the lab.

'Thank you for the meal, and for listening.' She smiled at him as he gave a little bow.

Who would have thought that Snape would turn out to be such a kind man?

Snape decided to turn in for the night. He extinguished the candles in the sitting room and went through to his bedchamber. He untied his boots and stood them beside the

wardrobe, then unbuttoned his robes and removed his trousers, leaving everything on the chair for Winky in the morning. He walked through to his bathroom and used the lavatory, then turned on the shower. He stepped under the steaming water and let his hair hang wet down his back. His entire routine was done unconsciously, because his thoughts were all of Hermione Granger.

His hands drifted to his crotch and he cupped his balls gently, his fingertips playing lightly across the taught skin. His other hand gripped his lengthening shaft, and he pulled the skin over the head of his cock with firm, assured strokes. He closed his eyes and pictured Hermione's mouth as it would look if poised to take him, and what noises she would make if he was pushing himself between her moist, pouting lips. He grunted as his fantasy took hold, and squeezed his cock tighter. His hand began to move quickly as he pictured his mouth on her pussy, his tongue darting between her folds, sweat on her brow as she came apart beneath him, and then his cock at her entrance as he bent her over the potions counter, her skirts around her waist, begging him to fill her and fuck her and...

Snape came with a shout, spurting come over his hand and gasping at the intensity of his orgasm. He caught his breath and allowed the water from the jets above to wash away the evidence of his fantasy. He smirked to himself. This was the last time he would wank over thoughts of Hermione Granger.

His Polyjuice potion would be ready by the weekend.

Six

Chapter 6 of 11

Hermione is down on her luck and has to apply for a job with her old Potions tutor. She gets (and observes) far more than she bargained for.

SIX

It was Friday, and for the first time in a long time Hermione was looking forward to her weekend off. She and Ginny had been meeting for coffee on and off since Harry's visit, and the manipulative Mrs Potter had finally persuaded her friend to come for a girl's night out. She had invited Luna Lovegood and Parvati Patil along too, and Hermione had been reluctant at first, knowing that Parvati was engaged to George Weasley. But Ginny had reassured her that Parvati and George blamed Ron totally for the breakdown of their marriage and that Parvati couldn't wait to see her and tell her so.

Before she could even turn her thoughts to what to wear on her night out, she had the store room to sort out again. All of the potions were up to date, she had no brewing to do, and if she was lucky, Severus might let her leave early. Hermione hung her jacket on the coat rack she had added to the corner of her room beside the lab but decided not to bother with her robes. They only got in the way when dusting and besides, she felt far more comfortable in her jeans and t-shirt. With firm resolve, she tied her hair back and set off towards the store room. Snape was teaching a Master Class and would be absent all day, leaving her free to buckle down to the task.

Hermione methodically lifted all of the phials, bottles and boxes down from the shelves and started to dust. It was cathartic, doing physical work like this and she always felt better afterwards. It also gave her time to think. Today, her thoughts were not only of her impending night out and the inevitable hangover to follow, but of her boss.

They had settled into a comfortable working relationship, but Hermione felt it was becoming more than that. There were times that Severus would stay in the lab just watching her brewing, and his presence was no longer off-putting but reassuring. They would talk about the work, and he had suggested in passing that she may want to extend her education and become a Potions Master herself one day. He hadn't said 'I will teach you,' but Hermione thought that's what he was offering. Still, she couldn't always figure him out. His presence had always been intense, and that hadn't changed. The man exuded something, she couldn't put her finger on what, but there were times she knew he was there without looking, almost as if she sensed him. He was the most masculine man she had ever met, and his aura was sometimes so overwhelming she had to put distance between them. She had found herself staring at him more than once, and she was particularly intrigued by his hair. He always had it tied back when brewing, but like her, he enjoyed letting it fall loose when he wasn't working and it fell between his shoulder blades like a waterfall of black silk. It changed him completely and the first time he had done it, it took her breath away. He wasn't handsome in the conventional sense, but there was most definitely something. She wondered if he had a woman in his life. A man like that wouldn't have to look far if he wanted a bed partner. Hermione flushed at the thought of her old Professor enjoying the pleasures of female flesh and shook her head. She shouldn't think of him like that. He was her boss and now, seemingly her mentor. It wasn't proper and anyway, it wasn't something she would ever know. It was none of her business what the Professor did in private.

Hermione climbed down from the shelf and went to shift two crates from the far wall to sweep behind them. When she reached them, she noticed an odd shimmering above them and frowned. Magic wasn't usually permitted in the store, but it was obvious that something had been disillusioned. Hermione withdrew her wand and gently tapped the object. It sounded just like another crate. She couldn't remove the charm inside the store, so she pulled the crates into the lab firmly and then cast the spell. Nothing happened. Hermione frowned, realising that if the crate was disillusioned, Professor Snape had not wanted her to find it for some reason. But by hiding it, Hermione was all the more intrigued and now she was determined to find out what had been hidden. Hermione was used to solving puzzles but Professor Snape was also good at setting them, and it took her more than an hour to remove the layers of protection he had placed around what was, eventually, just a normal packing crate used for deliveries. She flicked open the clasps and opened the lid to reveal eleven bottles of brown, mud-like Polyjuice potion. There was space for a twelfth bottle, which had obviously already been used. Hermione sat back on her haunches and breathed deeply. She thought the Professor had a special order for the potion, so why hadn't he sent it on? She knew it had been ready for over a week, but one bottle had gone and he hadn't wanted her to find it. Hermione's heart started to beat faster. What did she really know about Professor Snape, anyway? She had always assumed he was on the side of good, but this was based only on the facts presented at the time. What if he really had been loyal to Voldemort? What if the potion was part of a plan to rebuild the Death Eaters and bring Voldemort back in some form or another?

Hermione felt her ire rising. There was no way she was going to let Snape or anyone else away with anything, and she was feeling hurt and disappointed. She had thought she could trust him. With a flick of her wand she placed a tracer charm on each of the remaining bottles. She would soon find out if any of them had been moved and she would be able to follow her charm to the potion and its possible user. She might have to involve Harry later, depending on what she discovered. With a heavy heart, she carefully replaced the protection charms to the crate and disillusioned it again. She was nothing if not thorough, and if Snape really wasn't who he pretended to be, she wouldn't let him get away with it.

Severus Snape was starting to live for the weekends. Hermione had left early the previous day, seemingly preoccupied with whatever plans she had with Potter's wife and her cronies. She had said little as she left, but he didn't know the complicated workings of a woman's brain when she was preparing for a party or some such, so he had let it go. No doubt he would hear all about it the following week. He had his own preparations to make.

He had spent a leisurely day reading and writing a letter to Minerva, who had been most interested to hear how Hermione Granger was getting on. He had eaten early and was now almost ready to welcome his invited guest. He fastened the fly of his trousers carefully having left his underwear off for ease of access. Tonight's scenario had been carefully thought out and he wanted nothing to get in his way. He felt a frisson of desire as he contemplated the next few hours of his life and cursed himself for having never thought of it before.

Fastening the final button, he caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror. He wasn't a catch like Hermione, but he had learned through trial and error how to please a woman. This was why the ladies of Constance Barclay's Pleasure Emporium were always happy to oblige him. They were paid in more ways than one.

'Gorgeous,' purred the mirror in a sultry tone.

'Thank you,' he replied darkly. He had never been able to shut the damn thing up so it was easier to just respond and go. He walked through to the sitting room and poured a large glass of Firewhisky. He stood by the crackling fire and stared into the flames, and was half way through a particularly arousing daydream when his alarm alerted him to his guest. Downing his drink, he walked briskly into the office and opened the door. A tall woman stood before him in a dark, hooded cloak.

'For your pleasure,' she murmured.

At the agreed password Snape bade her come in and the woman removed her hood. She was slim and willowy with stunning blonde hair. Her eyes were wide and blue; her lips pouted prettily and were slicked with pale pink gloss. He could see under her cloak that she had ample breasts and shapely hips, and to any other man he would have fulfilled every fantasy. Damn it, she would have even done for him before now. But Snape had other desires and other needs, and he couldn't wait a moment longer.

'Constance explained the terms of the evening?'

'She did, sir. Although I am sure I could satisfy your baser pleasures in my current form,' she said sexily, running a red, painted fingernail along the buttons of his robes.

'No doubt,' Snape said with a slow smile, looking her up and down. 'But I promised you will be amply rewarded, in more ways than one. Follow me.'

Snape walked purposefully into the lab, locking both the outer and inner doors. The lab was set up for brewing, but the potion was a fake. He couldn't risk injuring the woman for the sake of his fantasy.

'Wait here,' he said as he walked to the store. Lifting the disillusioned crate, he carried it to the potions bench and quickly removed the charms and flipped the lid. He carefully removed a bottle of Polyjuice and placed it on the counter before replacing the crate. He returned and un-stoppered the bottle and then removed a folded handkerchief from his pocket. Lifting a few hairs, he added them to the Polyjuice, which began to bubble and turn a vivid shade of purple.

'You want me to drink that?' The witch asked him warily.

'I'm told by your predecessor that it tastes of blackcurrants, and she certainly wasn't complaining when she departed, have no fear.' Snape's eyes glittered as he poured the Polyjuice into a glass and passed it to the blonde.

She paused for a moment before gulping the contents down in one go. She licked her lips seductively and smiled. 'Delicious, actually,' she said.

Snape flicked his wand and the bottle and glass vanished, and he turned towards the witch just as she began to transform. Snape watched keenly as she shrank slightly, and her cloak pooled at her feet. Her blonde hair started to kink at the roots and turned from its lemony shade to medium chestnut. Her face slimmed down, and her eyes turned from blue to caramel brown. Finally her lips lost their pout and changed to full, plump cushions, and Snape smiled with undisguised delight.

'Perfect,' he whispered. 'I am about to give you instructions and I need you to follow them closely.'

The witch nodded forlornly as she examined the unwelcome changes to her body. Rosie had told her he was good. She had better not have been winding her up.

Hermione had been half-way through her second Cosmopolitan when the tracer alarm had activated. Ginny and the others had looked at her in shock when she suddenly jumped up and announced she had an emergency to deal with, but she would explain later. Right at that moment she had a spell to follow. She dashed from the club through the back door and immediately a blue flame appeared in front of her. She followed it to a clearing and as it started to glow brighter, she knew she needed to concentrate on the flame and Apparate to wherever it would lead. She was very surprised to find herself outside Hogwarts, but the flame lead up to the main door so she continued to trot along behind it. When the flame headed towards the dungeon, Hermione ran down the corridor, not truly knowing what she would find but realising that someone was using the Polyjuice potion and it hadn't travelled very far.

The outer door to Snape's office was locked, which Hermione found strange in itself. He only ever locked it when neither of them was there or after rounds at night, but it was only half past nine. Hermione was able to unlock the door, of course. Snape had given her right of access when he wasn't there. The pale blue light of her charm stopped outside the door of the lab and then flickered out. Whoever was using the potion was behind the door, and she unlocked it silently and pulled the door open just enough so that she could see beyond.

Snape was brewing at the end of the bench, but she couldn't see anyone else. Still, her charm had never let her down before, so she waited and watched. Snape paused in his brewing and seemed to grip the edge of the bench. He looked as if he were in pain and Hermione had to fight the urge to go to him and check he was alright. He closed his eyes and started to sway, and suddenly, with a sweep of his arm he cleared all of the brewing equipment away.

'Get up here, witch,' he growled. Hermione started to flush. Did he know she was there? She was about to back away but what she saw next had her transfixed.

Snape pulled a woman up from the floor in front of him and lifted her bodily onto the bench. His fly was wide open and Hermione gasped as she saw his stiff, erect and glistening cock. With a silent gasp she realised the witch must have been giving oral sex to the Professor, and that what she had seen on his face wasn't pain but pleasure. She felt a slight tingling between her legs and squirmed as she tried to ignore it.

With swift movements, Snape spread the witches' legs wide open and his hand disappeared between them. Hermione heard her moaning as Snape inserted a finger, then with the other hand he found the witch's clitoris and rubbed her firmly. With a cry, she arched her back and screamed her orgasm beneath him, and he watched her face with smug satisfaction.

Hermione felt her crotch dampen as she watched. The witch on the table certainly seemed to enjoy Snape's actions, and she stared as she realised there was something familiar about her. Snape was now stood with his trousers around his ankles and his cock so stiff it was resting against the smattering of hairs above his pubic bone.

'You're been wanting this all day, Granger. Say it, beg me to fuck you,' he said deeply, his voice reverberating around the room.

Hermione stifled a gasp and looked even closer at the witch on the bench. It was her! She was wearing her brewing robes, which Snape was pushing up around her waist with his slim hands, and Hermione watched as he slipped his fingers between the fake Hermione's legs and thrust in preparation. He grabbed her by the waist and pulled her towards him, teasing the lips of her pussy until she couldn't bare it.

'Please, Professor, Fuck me, please, please...'

Hermione couldn't stop herself from sliding her fingers into her own knickers. There was something very wrong about Snape fucking a Polyjuiced version of her, but she just couldn't stop watching. Her fingers found her clit and she started to rub herself in firm circular movements, allowing a finger to slide inside her wetness now and again. On the desk, Snape pushed his length into the fake Hermione, and both Hermione's gasped in pleasure. When he started to thrust, Hermione quickened her movements. Snape was grunting and began to pound into the witch on the bench. His head tipped back and his eyes closed as he fucked her, until with a shout, he pulled out of her and came all over her exposed belly and thighs. From her vantage point, Hermione heard him whisper her name, and she came herself, holding onto the doorframe as her legs shook beneath her.

Hermione watched as Snape pulled the witch up from the desk, and she flushed in embarrassment. With a quick freshening charm, she closed and locked the door of the lab and left before Snape could catch her.

Seven

Chapter 7 of 11

Hermione is down on her luck and has to apply for a job with her old Potions tutor. She gets (and observes) far more than she bargained for.

SEVEN

On Monday morning Hermione arrived early and immediately set to work on the potions orders for the week. She had convinced herself that her best course of action was just to behave normally and pretend she didn't know what Snape had been up to, but as she approached the potions bench she was assaulted by a vivid memory of Snape and 'herself' shagging. Ever since Saturday night she had veered between anger at Snape for using a doppelganger of her to satisfy his baser lusts, to intrigue as to why he had chosen her. Did he use a different hair sample each time, depending on his mood, and if so, who would be next? Whatever it was, she couldn't ignore the fact that her opinion of him had changed. She hadn't really considered him as a sexual being before and now, it was staring her in the face. He oozed masculinity and she couldn't believe that she hadn't noticed it before.

Shaking her head, she forced herself to concentrate on the Pepper Up Potion, and she managed to get to the bottling stage when Snape entered the lab.

'Hermione,' Snape said smoothly. 'You came early.'

Hermione bit her lip and nodded, not looking at him. She made a big show of filling up the phials, and when she had finished she hurried the full crate over to the store, wishing he would go away and leave her to it. Now they were in the same room, all she could think about was how he looked with his trousers around his ankles, and she felt a blush start to rise up her throat. Although she spent a lot longer than she should have done in the store, Snape had waited for her.

'Is everything alright?' he asked her. He wasn't behaving like a man who had fucked his employee over the weekend. In fact he was being considerate, something she had started to appreciate more about him.

'Still recovering from Saturday night,' she said with a slight smirk. It wasn't a lie, after all.

'How was the Girl's Night Out?' He said each word a little harshly and with emphasis. Hermione looked at him properly for the first time. He was leant against the Potions bench with his arms crossed and a frown on his face. He look tired, but Hermione thought it was no wonder, the way he had exerted himself.

'It was fun. Just too many Cosmopolitans,' she said with a laugh.

'Was there dancing?' he said curiously. Hermione flushed. There would have been dancing if she hadn't left early.

'A bit. But Parvati is expecting, so I kept her company most of the time. I'm not that great at dancing.' Hermione smiled, and watched in surprise as Snape visibly relaxed. 'How was your weekend, Severus?' she asked.

It was cruel of her, but he had used her hair to create a look-alike and then done things to her she would never have imagined. For some reason she felt like being cruel.

'My weekend was passable. I completed a project I have been working on,' he said blandly. He didn't look at her but walked towards the store, and when he returned he had the new jar of Boomslang skin in his hand. Hermione had already started on the bruise paste, but she couldn't help but stare at him as he took a marble chopping block from the shelf and placed it a little way from her.

'Are you making more Polyjuice potion?' Her voice sounded shaky even to her, and she smiled, trying to temper the tremor.

'I have received a further order, yes. If it reassures you, Hermione, I can guarantee the user only has good intentions for the potion.'

Hermione's mouth went dry. 'I didn't think anything else.'

'You didn't? You surprise me. I know that Polyjuice potion was used extensively during the war. It's natural that you would be suspicious of my motives.' Severus smirked at her and leaned across the bench slightly. He covered her hand with his own and she jumped, but he moved the pestle in her grip in a circular motion. 'Keep grinding or the paste will set,' he said. 'I know from experience it can be a bugger to clean off.'

Hermione licked her lips and carried on blending the paste, trying not to watch as the professor started to shred the Boomslang skin finely with his knife. His fingers were pale, but Hermione knew now that his hands were warm and precise. She could still feel tingling where he had touched her. She could also feel tingling in her nether regions.

It was going to be a long day.

Snape watched Hermione as she brewed. She seemed distracted and a little distant, and he didn't like to admit quite how much that bothered him. He couldn't begin to think what it was, unless she hadn't been totally truthful about her night out.

After his engagement with Constance Barclay's witch on the Saturday night, Snape had showered and changed and gone for a long walk around the castle until he reached the Astronomy tower. The castle was quiet at night now that the students had left for the summer break, and he could have found a silent space to think anywhere, but the Astronomy tower had always been his retreat. He had felt unsettled and slightly ashamed of his behaviour. Getting another witch to wear Hermione's body for his sexual pleasure had seemed like an excellent plan. He desired her, wanted her, and he found a way to have her. But it wasn't right. Of course he had enjoyed the experience fully, and if he was honest with himself he was planning to do the same again the following Saturday night, but there was no getting away from the fact that these pretenders were no substitute for the real thing and that pleasures of the flesh were actually only a small part of what he really wanted. As he had sat in an alcove that overlooked the lake, he admitted to himself that he was smitten by Hermione Granger and doomed to hell because of it.

Snape hadn't slept a wink after that. His thoughts had strayed to what she was doing on her night out and more importantly, who she was with. Knowing Ginevra Potter and Parvati Patil, they had invited her out with match making in mind, and he wondered if they had been successful in their endeavours. Had Hermione taken a man to her bed and been pleased by him? In his mind's eye Snape pictured the opposite of the Weasley runt, a blond, muscular Adonis with blue eyes and sparkling teeth, someone who would sweep her off her feet and make love to her until she was as limp as a rag doll. The thought of it made his blood boil, but the irony of this wasn't lost on him. He wasn't lily white and he couldn't bear to think what she would do if she found out about his extra-curricular activities.

He had been lost in his thoughts for so long that when he roused himself he realised that Hermione had packed up and was ready to leave for the day.

'Have you any dinner plans, Hermione?' He couldn't let her go just yet, not with this distance between them. She hadn't properly smiled at him all day.

'Not tonight. I was thinking of microwave lasagne and an early night, to be honest.' Hermione shrugged her brewing robes off and headed for her room. Severus followed her.

'I was thinking of heading to the Leaky Cauldron for a change. You are most welcome to join me,' he said hopefully.

'I don't think I could cope with the attention,' she said sadly. Severus chuckled.

'You think they would dare to bother you when you are with me?' He looked at her and caught her eye, and was gratified when they warmed and crinkled at the corner.

'Well, okay then. But I can't cope with a late night and by the look of you, it wouldn't hurt if you caught up on some sleep too, Severus.'

Severus smiled at her. The tension that had hung between them had dissipated and now she was back to herself, fussing over him and saying whatever crossed her mind.

'You are welcome to use my personal bathroom if you want to freshen up,' she said quietly as he watched her untangle her main of curls. He was immediately rewarded with a smile that made his heart swell.

'Thank you, Severus. That's very kind of you.' Hermione ducked past him and quickly headed for his rooms, and he watched in appreciation as her pert, denim clad bottom disappeared behind the solid oak door.

With a snort, he realised he had managed to secure a date with Hermione Granger.

The Leaky Cauldron had smartened up its image since the war. It still held a rustic charm, but the food was much better, and the tables and floors were always clean. The meal had been filling and delicious, and the wine had gone down more than nicely. Hermione swished the dregs of her wine in the bottom of her glass and watched Snape as he stood at the bar. He had changed to go out with her into black trousers and a plain black shirt which was open at the collar, and he let his hair hang loosely. The trousers were a snug fit and it was the first time that she could see the man beneath the robes. She had to admit she really liked what she saw.

He had been great company and very attentive to her needs, and as promised, she hadn't been on the receiving end of any negative comments or insults from the other patrons, only a few side long glances which soon averted when Snape stared in their direction. Hermione smiled dreamily as he came back with another round of drinks.

'You're different to what I remember,' she said.

'Of course I am. I am no longer your teacher, nor am I fighting a bloody war,' he said before taking a deep mouthful of bitter.

'It's more than that. You're really nice, Severus, and you kept it hidden all this time.' She leant over the table to slap his wrist in admonishment, but he grabbed her hand before she got there.

'My reflexes are still sharp, Hermione.' He squeezed her hand and let go quickly, avoiding her gaze.

'Can I ask you something? Seriously?' Hermione took a long sip of red wine, trying to gauge if this was a good idea or not and being a bit too tipsy to really care.

'Go on,' Severus said, rolling his eyes.

'Why didn't you ever settle down? I mean, I know about Harry's mum, but afterwards. There must have been other witches,' she said carefully. She was fishing in shark-infested waters, and the black look Snape gave her told her she really was pushing her luck.

'There has never been anyone else, and that drivel in the Prophet about me and Lily Evans was romantic claptrap. I cared for her once, but it was a childhood crush I grew out of. I don't want you to think I have been pining all of this time, Hermione,' he said softly. He looked directly at her, and Hermione felt her heart beat faster.

'There's never been anyone else, then?' Hermione's curiosity was seriously piqued now.

'A dalliance or two, nothing permanent,' he said.

Hermione took a gulp of wine and realised through the alcoholic haze that she was more than a bit tipsy, she was slightly drunk.

'I should go after this,' she said.

'Are you drunk?' He smiled at her mischievously.

'Only a little bit,' she said, slurring slightly.

'Come on, I'll Apparate you home.'

Hermione stood unsteadily and allowed Severus to wrap his arm around her waist to hold her up. He was so close, she could inhale him, and she took a deep breath.

The aromas of ink, sandalwood, parchment and musk assaulted her senses.

'Of course,' she muttered in realisation.

'What?' said Severus, holding her even tighter.

'Nothing,' she said. But in her head, she knew. She loved him, and probably always had.

Eight

Chapter 8 of 11

Hermione is down on her luck and has to apply for a job with her old Potions tutor. She gets (and observes) far more

than she bargained for.

EIGHT

It had been three weeks since Hermione's meal out with Severus, and there had been a distinct change in their relationship. She found herself spending nights at Hogwarts in her small room beside the lab, because more often than not they would eat together, start talking and then it would be too late to go home. Severus had installed a small wardrobe for her clothes and given her a shelf in his bathroom for her toiletries, and they took turns to shower each morning before starting their respective days work. But being in such close proximity to Severus Snape was becoming almost impossible for Hermione to live with when she knew that each weekend when she went home, he used a doppelganger of herself to satisfy his lusts. Hermione was becoming eaten up with jealousy because Severus was nothing but charming towards her, and even though she was sure now that he desired her, he had never made a single move. Dammit, he never even came close enough for her to feel the brush of his fingertips, and she found herself yearning to feel his body against hers. She had stopped watching him with his witches after the third time because she had wanted so desperately to walk into the lab and interrupt them in the act. It was better if she didn't see, even if she still knew what was happening. She hadn't deactivated the detection spell on the Polyjuice potion.

Right now, her stomach was in knots. Hogwarts was closed to students for the summer, which meant that Severus spent most of his days brewing alongside her. He had become more relaxed with his attire now there was no teaching to be done, and Hermione hadn't been able to tear her eyes from him the first day he had entered the lab wearing his usual black trousers but this time with just a white shirt. The collar was unbuttoned at the neck, revealing a little of the scar left by Nagini, and his sleeves had been rolled up slightly to reveal firm forearms, lightly mapped by veins which pulsed as he chopped and stirred. She had fought an overwhelming desire to lick the soft skin of his wrist and trace the lines of his veins with her tongue, and the image had stayed with her all of that day and then later, when she was alone under the covers. But masturbation to remembered memories and fantasies of Severus wasn't enough any more. He was standing just a few yards from her, and she could sense him without even looking. It made her mouth go dry and her crotch throb. To have him so close and not to be able to touch him was just too much.

'Severus, I have a few personal appointments to attend to this week and I was wondering, would it be okay to take this afternoon off?' She asked brightly.

'Is everything alright? You have seemed a bit distracted this week.' Severus frowned over at her in concern.

'Everything is fine. My parents' house has just been sold and I need to tie up the loose ends, that's all.' Hermione hid her crossed fingers below the potions bench.

'Finish up here then and go. I'll see you first thing in the morning?' He looked up at her and for a moment, Hermione thought he looked like an eager child, but all too quickly his mask was in place again.

'Thanks, Severus. Maybe we could go to the Leaky Cauldron again tomorrow night? I have no plans this weekend. Do you?' Hermione smiled sweetly, knowing full well that Severus did have plans that she was going to gatecrash.

'I have little to do this weekend. A meal would be very welcome.' He smiled at her then, his shy, lop-sided grin that he seemed to save just for her. Her heart melted a little, and she felt a sudden dread. What if her scheming backfired and he rejected her totally? She didn't think she could stand it. But there was no reason it would go wrong. If everything went well, Severus wouldn't even know it was her.

Hermione cleared up her workspace, gathered her belongings from her room and walked quickly out of the lab and into the dungeon corridor.

'Winky!' She whispered loudly. The little House Elf appeared with a pop, and Hermione looked about to make sure no-one had been alerted to their presence in the dark hallway.

'Miss Hermione? You are hiding from Master Severus?' Winky blinked up at Hermione suspiciously. She still didn't quite trust the witch.

'Sort of. Winky, you know that Master Severus has a guest who visits at the weekend?' Hermione said quietly.

'Winky does not share Master's secrets with witches who make hats,' Winky said with a scowl.

'It's not a secret if I already know about it, is it? I wanted to give Master Severus a nice surprise, but I need your help.' Hermione got down on her haunches so that she was eye to eye with the Elf.

'You are wanting to make Master Severus happy or angry?' Winky looked thoughtfully at Hermione, having never seen her at eye level before.

'Happy, I hope. I care for Master Severus very much,' Hermione said with a sigh.

'Winky will help. But if Master Severus is being angry, Winky will be telling him everything.' Winky pulled herself to her full height, such as it was, and her chin stuck out firmly.

'Fine.' Hermione took a deep breath. 'What I need you to do is this...'

Severus had retired to his rooms and was sitting in his favourite chair. He was attempting to read a weighty eighteenth century novel but had only managed to plod through the first chapter when he found himself again drifting off into thoughts of Hermione. He couldn't seem to stop thinking about her, and the depth of his feeling scared him. He had felt something similar with Lily, but he was young then and had no insight into how his heart could be broken. This was different, more risky. He felt that he would never recover from his feelings towards Hermione, and he didn't dare think about how he would cope if she rejected him. But she liked him, she had admitted as much at the Leaky Cauldron. Severus acknowledged she had been under the influence of some particularly good red wine, but didn't people tell the truth when they're drunk? He chose to believe that Hermione did. Whether liking him could develop into something more, he could only hope.

Severus found himself caught between a rock and a hard place. He had a standing arrangement with Constance Barclay for each Saturday night, and ordinarily he looked forward to his little liaisons with great anticipation. He could spend hours thinking up new ways in which his Hermione-shaped whore could pleasure him, but for some reason this week his heart really wasn't in it. The witches always looked perfect, but they didn't respond in the way he had imagined Hermione would respond, and quite often he had to direct their actions. He felt sure that a lustful Hermione Granger would be willing to act on her own desires, taking what she wanted from a willing lover and be quite determined about it. He imagined the full pout of her lips and the sweat dripping between her breasts as she rode him, and shifted in his seat. He had to stop such thoughts. Being in such close quarters with Hermione during the day was quite bad enough, and it took all of his resolve to restrain himself from pushing her against the store room wall and kissing her senseless. The fact was that Severus needed more from his assignations. He needed Hermione.

He resolved that he would cancel the arrangement after this weekend and invest his efforts instead into wooing the real, living, breathing, beautiful and endearing Hermione Granger. He really had no other path available to him, unless he gave her the sack, but he really couldn't bring himself to do that without a good reason, and 'You give me an erection as soon as I see you,' didn't seem like valid grounds for dismissal. He lifted his book again, relieved to have finally decided on a course of action. Flipping to the second chapter, he summoned his Firewhisky and started to read, trying as best he could to concentrate. He had a feeling it would be a waste of effort.

The Leaky Cauldron was more crowded than the last time they had visited, but Hermione managed to push through the crowds to find an empty table in a small corner of the bar. She rolled her eyes as the crowd parted to let Severus through, and laughed at the scowl on his face. It certainly worked, he hadn't had to push through anyone, let alone get too close to the armpits of the clientele. Hermione sometimes wished that she possessed the same aura.

'The drinks,' Hermione exclaimed. 'Now I'll have to fight my way to the bar!'

'I'll do it. Wait here.' Severus turned on his heel and the crowd dispersed again. Hermione shrugged off her cardigan and let the warm air in the bar wash over her bare shoulders. She hadn't gone to a huge effort when dressing for their meal but she hoped she looked better than how she usually looked. She admitted to herself that she wanted Severus to like what he saw.

Severus returned from the bar with a sour look on his face. He placed their drinks on the table before sitting, and leaned in closely. 'You might wish to leave after this drink,' he said quietly.

'Whatever for?' Hermione lifted her glass to her lips and then froze. Walking towards their table was Ronald Weasley. Her stomach seemed to fall away as she watched him. He looked angry, his lips pursed in firmly in a familiar expression, and as she looked closely she could see he looked exhausted.

'Hello, Ron,' she said as he reached the table.

'Didn't take you long, did it?' Ron was glaring at Severus and totally ignored Hermione.

'I beg your pardon?' Severus sat back in the chair and folded his arms.

'Ron, what do you want? Severus and I just came for something to eat, we don't want any trouble.' Hermione laid a hand on Ron's arm, but he shrugged it away forcefully.

'Severus and I? Severus and I? How long has this been going on Hermione?' Ron stepped closer but was stopped by Severus, who had withdrawn his wand and had laid it flat against Ron's chest.

'That's enough.' Severus spoke quietly, but the whole pub went deathly silent and watched. 'Not that it is any of your business but Hermione and I are friends and colleagues, nothing more. I suggest you leave, before you make an even bigger fool of yourself.'

Hermione stared at Severus as he stood up for her, and something inside her snapped.

'Thank you Severus, but I think I can handle this.' She stood and withdrew her own wand and pointed it directly at Ron's face. 'During our marriage you slept with more witches than I could shake my wand at,' she said steadily. 'I ignored it because I thought that deep down, you really loved me. I was wrong, of course. I was a fool, and I believed your lies for far too long. Severus and I are very good friends and I like him, very much.' She took a breath and tried to avoid looking at Severus. 'Even if we decide to be more than friends one day, Ronald, I'll make sure that you are the very last person to know, and then you will know exactly how that feels.'

Hermione pushed past Ron and through the now parted crowds and didn't look back.

Nine

Chapter 9 of 11

Hermione is down on her luck and has to apply for a job with her old Potions tutor. She gets (and observes) far more than she bargained for.

NINE

Hermione didn't want to move from her bed. The covers were pulled up over her head to block out the early morning light that insisted on streaming through the gap in the curtains, and she kept her eyes closed in the hope that sleep would overtake her. It was a futile exercise, because not only did she need to use the toilet with rising urgency, her mouth felt like a ferret had been sleeping in it. Opening that bottle of red wine she had been saving had not been the best idea she had ever had.

With a frustrated sigh, she pushed the covers away and slipped from her bedroom and across the hall to the bathroom. She used the toilet quickly, washed her hands and lifted her toothbrush from the bathroom cabinet. As she closed the mirrored door she caught sigh of herself and groaned.

'Nice move, Hermione. You look as crap as you feel,' she muttered to herself. Her hair was its usual after-bed tangle of curls, but her eyes were red-rimmed and underscored with dark circles from crying. As she thought about the previous night and how she had left Severus in the Leaky Cauldron, the tears threatened to spill again. After running out on him, she wouldn't be surprised if she had totally blown her chances. Her plan of seduction was out of the window now, anyway. Not only had she made an idiot of herself, she had never felt less sexy in her life.

Hermione brushed her teeth thoroughly, despite her miserable mood, and afterwards she trudged back to her room and climbed back under the covers. There was movement in the corner of the room and she let out a scream of surprise.

'Winky is sorry, Miss Hermione. Master is telling me to come here immediately if not sooner.' The House Elf stepped out of the shadow of Hermione's wardrobe warily, wringing her tea towel dress in her small, gnarled hands.

Hermione stared as if not really believing that Winky had Apparated from Hogwarts into her bedroom in her very Muggle house, and she tried to breathe deeply to calm the rapid beating of her heart,

'Its okay, Winky. You just gave me a shock. What did Master Severus want?' Hermione's mind ran through a number of scenarios, most of which ended with her leaving Hogwarts and never going back.

'Master Severus wanted to know if Miss Hermione was feeling better, Miss, and if she needed this.' Winky held out a familiar phial of Hangover potion, and Hermione took it with a giggle.

'I do need it. Thank you very much, Winky.' Hermione swallowed the potion and sighed with relief as it took immediate affect and the banging pain between her ears subsided. 'You can let Master Severus know that I am quite well now.'

'Master Severus tells Winky to give Miss Hermione this letter if she is being better, and to wait for Miss Hermione to say yes.' Winky snapped her fingers and a cream envelope appeared in her hand. She handed it to Hermione with a low bow. Hermione looked at the envelope and recognised Severus' handwriting. It was addressed simply *'To Hermione'*. Her hands shook. Severus had never even written her a note about work, let alone a personal letter. She quickly opened it and unfolded the single sheet of parchment inside.

'Dear Hermione,

I confess to being more than slightly inebriated. The patrons of the Leaky Cauldron had not been so royally entertained in a very long time and I reaped the rewards as you were no longer there to accept. You were magnificent.

You told Weasel Brain that maybe one day we might be more than friends. In the spirit of this I am writing to ask for permission to sha... to court you.

Tell the Elf yes or no.

Yours, if you want me

Severus'

Hermione stared as she read and her eyes widened as she realised what Severus was asking. She re-read the letter twice and then burst out laughing.

'Winky, what time did Master Severus get home? Is he still drunk?' Hermione knew Severus would never send a letter like that unless he was under the influence.

'Master Severus returned to Hogwarts a quarter of an hour since, Miss Hermione. He was finding it hard to walk straight.'

'I imagine so,' Hermione said with a laugh. Her heart felt ten times lighter than it had done, because she knew that the letter was the truth. Her plan was back on.

'Winky, you haven't forgotten our plan for this evening?' Hermione smiled.

'All is arranged, Miss.' Winky nodded.

'Very well. When Master Severus is back to his usual self, tell him my answer is yes. I'll see you tonight.'

Hermione leapt out of bed and back into the bathroom just as Winky left with a small 'pop'. She hummed to herself as she ran her bath.

She had a seduction to plan.

Severus Snape was asleep and snoring on the couch in front of the fire. He was still wearing the clothes from the night before, and his hair was half covering his face. One arm was trapped beneath him, the other flung out and almost touching the hearth rug, and he had managed to take off one boot but not the other before his alcohol-induced coma overtook him. None of these things were worrying him right now, because he was in the middle of the best dream he had ever had.

He was entertaining one of Constance Barclay's regular girls, Rosie, and he stood and watched her as she turned into Hermione. But there was something different about this Hermione. She seemed to vibrate with life, her skin glowed, and her lips were parted with anticipation. This was a Hermione that wanted him, badly. Somewhere in the dream, his pretend Hermione had become his real Hermione, and she was tugging at the shoulders of his robes and trying to get him naked.

'I want you, Severus,' she breathed. 'I've always wanted you.'

In his dream, Severus ran his fingers through her hair, and leant in for a kiss.

A kiss.

He was going to kiss Hermione.

The shock woke him up, and he immediately sat up straight, sending blood to his trapped arm and giving himself pins and needles. His head was spinning from his hangover, and he couldn't see clearly. When he was able to focus, Winky the House Elf was standing before him and looking at him curiously with her huge, glassy eyes.

'Winky came back as Master instructed,' she said quietly. There was a look of concern on her face.

'Did I? Then you are a good elf. What did I tell you to do?' Severus rubbed at his eyes and tried to wake himself up, but there was part of his brain stuck with the image of Hermione's parted lips.

'To see Miss Hermione, sir, and to take her your letter.' Winky stepped forward and peered up into Severus' face. 'Does Master need his special medicine?' she asked in a whisper.

'Medicine, yes. If you don't mind Winky. Bring two,' Severus said. He let his head fall into his hands and groaned. He had sent Winky to see Hermione? He had no memory of that. But hold on a minute! What else did the elf say?

'WINKY!' Severus shouted, immediately regretting it. It was far too loud for this scale of a hangover. Winky returned, shaking slightly.

'Here you is, Master.' Her hands trembled as she held out the Hangover potion, and Severus took them gratefully. Once he was feeling a bit more himself, he realised he had half-scared the elf to death.

'I apologise for shouting, Winky. Tell me, what letter did I give to you?' He spoke more kindly and was relieved when Winky relaxed and half-smiled at him.

'I is not knowing what Master wrote. House Elves is not sneaks.' Winky stood up a bit straighter.

'Of course not,' said Severus. 'I usually make a copy of all my letters, Winky. Did I copy that one?'

'You did not, Master, You said you was in a hurry,' said Winky.

'Of course I bloody was,' Severus sighed. 'What did Miss Hermione say to the letter?'

'Miss Hermione was happy, Master. She said to tell you yes.' Winky bowed after giving him the message, her task complete.

'Yes? Yes to what?' Severus stared in horror. In his inebriated state he could have asked her anything. He felt himself going pale. What if he had proposed? He had absolutely no idea what he had said to her. 'Winky, I have a job for you,' he said resignedly. 'The next time I return home pissed, I want you to charm my parchment and quills so I cannot use them no matter how hard I try.'

'Winky is thinking that is a very good idea, Master Severus.'

Hermione had borrowed Harry's Invisibility cloak. She hadn't told him what it was for and he hadn't asked, but she had told him that it was incredibly important and she would return it tomorrow. The cloak didn't fully cover her because in her post-school years, Hermione had grown taller, so she found a dark alcove in the dungeon corridor, sat on the cold, stone floor and threw it over her. There were butterflies in her stomach, and a frisson of anticipation went through her. She felt that she had thought of

everything, and now all she could do was wait.

She had spent the day pampering herself and had realised with disgust that she didn't pay anywhere near enough attention to her appearance. She couldn't remember the last time she had shaved her legs but in the bath today she had seemed decidedly furry. She had shaved, scrubbed, buffed and moisturised, and she smelled delicious even to her own nose. She had used her favourite vanilla shampoo, and curled her hair slightly to tame the frizziness of her usual style. She had taken care over her underwear, choosing her dark blue satin set that she knew enhanced her breasts and her bottom. She had even painted her toenails. After going to such a lot of effort, she was determined to make sure her plan didn't fail.

Hermione's eyes were becoming a little more used to the darkness, and she had to stifle a scream when she realised that Winky was also in the corridor and was looking right at her.

'Winky just wanted to check that Miss Hermione had arrived,' whispered Winky.

Hermione nodded and shooed Winky away.

'Master Severus is coming,' Winky hissed, and then disappeared with a pop.

Hermione sat as still as she could and then heard the familiar thud, thud, thud of Severus' footfall on the stone floor. He was holding his wand aloft for light, sending his stern face into stark relief. His eyes were bright, and the reflected light shone from the buttons of his jacket, and his firm, muscular thighs strained with each step he took. As he strode past her, his robes billowed and fluttered by her ear. She could smell him, and her heart started to beat a little faster. This was Severus in his Potions Master role, every bit the teacher who had intimidated her as a child. Gods, she was starting to feel damp at the crotch already. He was everything she had ever wanted in a man.

The door to Severus' office closed with a bang, and Hermione jumped. Now he was back from his rounds she knew she wouldn't have long to wait, and she glanced at her watch. Severus had cut it fine. Hermione could hear more footsteps, sharper and lighter this time, so she stood in readiness. A cloaked figure walked down the corridor, and Hermione removed Harry's cloak and stepped out with her wand pointed into the face of Rosie, one of Severus' witches. A surge of jealousy rushed through her, but she fought it and approached the witch.

'Miss!' said Rosie. 'It's YOU!'

'That's right. I know what's been going on, Rosie. But tonight is going to be a bit different. I have plenty of Galleons for you, if you agree to my plan of course.'

'Of course, Miss. It's never us he really wants, you know,' she said with a shy smile.

Hermione felt her stomach flip, and she lowered her wand. 'Really?'

'Yes. He told me one day. We look like you, but we are not you. Today was our last appointment.'

'Oh,' said Hermione. A feeling of joy washed over her, and now she was sure. Severus really did want her. And she wanted him.

'I really need your help Rosie. This is what I want you to do...'

Severus was pacing his office. He was not in a good mood. Peeves had been creating chaos all day, and if Severus had needed to sort him out once it had been fifty times. On top of that, he was behind in his marking thanks to his morning being totally ruined due to his own ridiculous actions. He had resolved to visit Hermione tomorrow and ask her about the letter in person. There was no other course of action he could think of.

Now he was waiting for a different witch who would pretend to look like Hermione, and he really couldn't find the energy for it. He should have just cancelled. He decided to get the witch to give him a blow job and send her on her way, and then he could concentrate on the real object of his affection and desire. Gods, his every waking thought was of Hermione Granger, and she had no idea.

There was the expected knock on the door, and Severus sighed. He may as well get it over with.

'For your pleasure,' murmured the witch. It was Rosie, and Severus relaxed. She was a sweet girl in her own right, and he knew she would make it easy for him.

'Come in, Rosie,' he said.

'Sir seems down today. Rosie can help you with that,' she said as she lowered her hood.

Severus couldn't help but laugh at the well-used line. 'I am sure you can Rosie. Come on then.'

Rosie followed Severus into the lab and immediately drank the already prepared Polyjuice potion. She was practiced at this now, and actually didn't mind it. It made her job more interesting. She felt her skin pucker and change, her hair became bushy and her body shifted and melded into the form of Hermione Granger. She couldn't help but smile. Severus Snape was in for quite a surprise.

'On your knees, witch,' Severus intoned. Rosie complied, kneeling in front of him and reaching for his fly. It was as far as she got.

There was a sharp crack and Winky appeared beside them, her ears shaking and her eyes bulbous. 'Master Severus needs to come quickly! Peeves is in the Potions classroom and is juggling the cauldrons!'

Severus stared disbelievingly at Winky. 'He's doing what?' This was the last straw. He strode out of the classroom in a rush, leaving Winky and Rosie alone together.

'Miss knows what to do,' Winky said to Rosie.

'Yes. Wish the young Miss luck from me. Let's go.' Rosie took hold of Winky's hand and they both disappeared, just as Hermione Granger slipped into the lab through the office door. She stood at the end of the potions bench and waited.

Severus had had enough of Peeves and his stupid pranks, and enough of witches pretending to be the witch he really needed. He walked quickly back to the lab with the intention of asking Rosie to leave. It was no good. He didn't want to pretend any more and he didn't even think he could summon an erection this night. He just really needed a good night's sleep.

The witch was still in the lab, but as he walked towards her with an extra few Galleons in his hand for her trouble, he stopped in his tracks. His nostrils flared, and he stared in disbelief. Her hair was shining and lustrous, and her skin glowed. She looked up at him and her eyes glittered with what looked like a challenge, but more than that, her lips were parted, and he almost gasped as her tongue slipped out to wet them briefly. But most of all, he could smell her. He knew it well, that heady scent of vanilla and patchouli, peppermint and musk. He couldn't believe his eyes, but he had to believe his sense of smell. Every time the fifth years students brewed Amortentia, he could smell her, and he had known, even when she was a student, that she was meant for him. He had known when she was waiting outside his office to be interviewed, from the smell of her resume. It had almost overwhelmed him, and he had to gather his thoughts before letting her into his office. He knew. And so, it seemed, did she. He stepped closer to her, so close that his buttons were crushing the front of her blouse, and looked down into her face. Her lips parted in anticipation, and he

smiled at her in wonder.

'Hermione,' he breathed.

Ten

Chapter 10 of 11

Hermione is down on her luck and has to apply for a job with her old Potions tutor. She gets (and observes) far more than she bargained for.

TEN

Hermione looked up into Severus' face and raised her hand to his cheek. She gently stroked the smooth, warm skin and tried to convey the depth of her feeling in her gaze. He had to know how much she loved him, and how very much she longed for him.

'How did you know it was me? I was just going to take Rosie's place,' she whispered.

He was stood firmly against her, and the edge of the Potions bench was pushing against the cheeks of her bum. He felt warm, and firm and male. She was desperate for more of him.

'That's what you want, is it Hermione? To be treated like a cheap whore?' Severus became stern and started to pull away, but Hermione threaded her fingers through his and pulled him back.

'Of course not. You didn't answer my question,' she said softly, taking his other hand and lifting it to her mouth. She turned his hand palm upwards and licked the pulsing vein at his wrist, and at his sharp intake of breath she looked up and caught his eye. His eyes were burning into her, and she suddenly felt powerful.

'I would be a fool not to recognise you by now. You are vanilla and patchouli, peppermint and musk.' He sighed and wrapped his arms around her, pulling her close. 'You were always meant for me.'

'Amortentia?' she asked, pulling away to look into his face. 'You are musk and sandalwood, parchment and ink. It took me a long time to find you, Severus Snape.' She smiled up at him and was immediately rewarded with a lop-sided smile.

'How did you know? About Rosie and our arrangement?' Severus had to good grace to look embarrassed, but Hermione wasn't about to lose the ground she had already gained.

'I placed a tracking spell on your Polyjuice potion. I didn't mean to spy on you, Severus, but when I saw what you needed the potion for...' Hermione drifted off at the look of shock on Severus' face.

'You saw? Forgive me, Hermione. I would never have used you so if I had thought there was even the slightest chance that you..., that we would...'

Hermione pulled him closer and ran her hands through his hair, distracting him and sending interesting sensations to his nether regions.

'I watched until I realised I was jealous. I wanted to be that Hermione, which is why Winky and I diverted you and Rosie tonight. I just want you to myself, Severus.'

'Be very careful what you wish for, Hermione,' said Severus, his voice rough and deep. 'If we go down this path you have so cleverly crafted, I shall not be as foolish as Weasley. I shall never let you go.' He ran a smooth finger over Hermione lower lip, and she sighed and pressed herself closer against him.

'Will you kiss me, Severus?' she breathed softly.

Severus looked at Hermione curiously and threaded his fingers through her hair. 'My mother always said I should never kiss a girl unless I was sure I loved her and that she loved me back.'

Hermione giggled softly. 'I hope you didn't take her advice.'

Severus paused and lifted an eyebrow.

'Oh, my. You mean you have never... even with all of your Saturday night liaisons? Not one kiss? Ever?'

'I followed my mother's advice. Not one kiss, ever.' Severus looked at her solemnly but there was a hint of amusement in his eye.

'And now?' Hermione bit her lip, unconsciously making it even plumper and more inviting than it had been before.

'Now I am still taking my mother's advice.'

Severus bent his head lower, and she felt a soft huff of breath on her moist lips before his mouth brushed against hers briefly. The merest hint of a kiss broke the dam of pent up emotion and passion that had simmered between them, and Hermione pressed her lips firmly against his with a gentle moan. Her tongue probed against his mouth until he parted his lips, and suddenly they were kissing with abandon.

Severus tasted Hermione's kiss like a thirsty man drinking water, and her answering murmurs of pleasure made him almost shake with the feel of her in his arms. Everything he had ever dreamed was real and happening and even more wonderful and fantastic than he had imagined. She wanted him, loved him, and he was hers, right now in this moment and forever afterwards. He could hardly breathe; his chest felt like he might explode with love and pent up desire for her, and his erection was straining against her thigh uncomfortably. Reluctantly, he slowed their intense kisses, not resisting when she released his moist lips but returned again and again for gentler, exploring kisses and nips with her teeth. Their breathing was laboured, and from the flush on Hermione's cheeks he could see she was feeling the same as he. Her eyes met his and he saw the heat that burned there, and the begging question that she didn't need to ask.

'Not here, witch. Not now.' He pulled away and took her hand in his. 'Come.'

Hermione didn't resist as Severus led her towards his rooms, and she was positively ecstatic when he paused and pushed her up against the wall of the lab to kiss her

again forcefully, pushing her arms above her head and letting his mouth fall to the creamy arch of her throat. He laved her skin with his tongue and kissed his way back up to her mouth, where his kisses left her sodden with lust and her legs like jelly against him.

'Gods, Hermione, what are you doing to me?' his whispered hoarsely, his gaze passionate and determined.

'I love you, Severus,' she said, the words unbidden but needing to be said all the same.

Severus' gaze softened slightly, and he took her hand and squeezed it in response before resuming their journey. This time he didn't stop until he reached his bedchamber, and he didn't give Hermione any time to draw breath. They were in each others' arms in an instant, and Hermione reached for the buttons of his jacket while he pulled her blouse from the confines of her ridiculously impractical denim jeans. His hands flattened against her lower back and he deftly flicked at her bra strap, smiling against her passionate kisses as he lifted both blouse and bra over her head swiftly. Hermione giggled and pushed his jacket over his shoulders, letting it fall heavily as she pulled his shirt over his head. They stopped then and stared at each other, the calm before the storm that was to come. Tentatively Hermione reached for his fly, and together they removed each others' trousers until they were just in their underwear. Severus cupped Hermione's breasts in his hands, running his thumbs firmly over her tightening nipples and kissing her, softly at first and then with more urgency and she stepped closer and slipped her fingers into the waistband of his black silk boxer shorts. She slid her hands down until she found him, and he moaned into her kisses as she released his cock and let his underwear drop to his ankles. Kicking them away, he wrapped his arms around Hermione and lifted her off her feet, carrying her the short distance to his bed where he laid her on top of the covers.

Hermione's hair was splayed onto his pillow like a chestnut halo, and she held her arms open to him as he lay down beside her. Caressing her face, he dropped his mouth to her inviting breasts and pulled her tight bud of a nipple between his lips, sucking slowly and running his tongue around until it was darker and more puckered. She was almost writhing beneath him, trying to caress all of his body with her hands; her kisses peppering his neck and his jaw as he moved his face to her other breast. This time as he sucked, he let his hand trace a slow, teasing path over the soft swell of her belly and let his fingertip tease itself along the silky smooth fabric of her knickers. He felt the dampness between her crotch and slipped his finger under the fabric, teasing her wet folds apart until he stroked tantalisingly against her clit. Hermione moaned and threaded her hands through the lengths of his hair, pulling his face to hers where she kissed him passionately, slipping her tongue firmly and finding his. Severus moved his fingers gently but firmly in sure strokes, knowing by the clenching of her body that it would not take long, and he was soon rewarded as she cried out and arched her back, her orgasm shuddering through her. He slid his finger into her slick wetness and groaned. The witch was tight and hot, and he needed to be inside her. Hermione started to grind against his hand and he nuzzled her neck, whispering into her ear.

'Fuck me, Hermione.'

Hermione needed no encouragement. Her orgasm had been thrilling but not enough. The brief but tantalising glimpse she had seen of his cock had made her shiver with anticipation and she had been so close to coming when he was sucking her breasts she had clenched her inner muscles to delay things for as long as she could. His sure fingers had been the end of her, but now she wanted to feel him fully. She pushed Severus back against the pillows and slid her body over his, allowing her wet knickers to brush the tip of his cock as she moved into position. She took his nipple between her fingers and rubbed gently and bent to kiss him tenderly, letting her tongue run over first his upper then his lower lip. Moving lower, she kissed his jaw and then down his throat, planting soft butterfly light kisses over his scar and then downwards. His chest was firm and lean, pale apart from the smattering of black chest hair. His nipples were pale pink, and she used her tongue to lick and caress them into puckered, darker pink peaks. Spreading her legs, she lifted herself from him and he pushed her knickers down and off with his toe. Hermione giggled until he captured her breasts in his hands and pushed them together so he could pay equal attention to her own still sensitive nipples.

'God, Severus, it's too much,' she gasped.

'You have much to learn, witch,' he said, a hint of promise in his voice.

She slid her wet folds over his cock, eliciting a gasp of surprise and pleasure from him. She teased him a little more, and then reached for his firm shaft, positioning him at her entrance and staring at his face. She paused as he looked up into her face, his eyes burning as he caressed her curves and ran his hands over her buttocks.

'Don't tease, Hermione. I have wanted this for so long,' he whispered. Hermione felt her heart swell, and her pussy throb, and she gave him what they both wanted. Slowly she inched herself onto his cock, and they gasped in unison as he filled her. Hermione felt a frisson of lust and sat back slightly, allowing the head of his cock to rest against the front of her pubis. The sensation was intense, and she began to rock, slowly at first but then, as Severus gripped her hip with one hand and tweaked at her left nipple with the other, she increased her pace, revelling in the feel of him as she pistoned him in and out. Beads of sweat appeared on Severus' brow and Hermione knew he was close to orgasm as he cock started to go even harder inside her. She slipped her hand between them and squeezed the base of his cock, something she had learned to prolong the male orgasm. Severus' eyes widened in surprise and he grinned at her, flipping her over suddenly and thrusting himself back inside her firmly.

'Touch yourself; I want to see you come apart on my cock. You just love it, don't you witch?'

'Gods, yes I fucking do,' she cried as he rammed himself into her over and over. Hermione's fingers found her clit and she started to stroke herself quickly, the feel of his cock spurring her on, the look on his face as he watched himself thrusting in and out of her wetness.

'Fuck, Hermione. Come for me, come for me,' Severus chanted. His eyes closed as he lost himself in sensation, and Hermione had no choice but to do exactly as he said. Her orgasm rippled through her, stronger and longer than the first, and her legs shuddered as she cried out her pleasure. Severus lifted a leg and hooked it onto his shoulder, and moved his hips in a circular motion. Hermione kept her fingers on her clit and he couldn't take his eyes off where their bodies were joined, until with a groan, he lifted both of her legs and held her ankles and thrust deeply.

'Fuck!' He cried, throwing his head back in the ecstasy of his climax. His teeth clenched as he thrust twice more, and then collapsed, spent, on top of her.

There was low candle light dancing over the walls, and the smell of sex in the air. Two pale bodies lay sleeping in the middle of a large, plain bed, bedcovers half covering them, their legs entwined. The woman in the bed moved in her sleep, and the man pulled her back against his chest and cupped her bare breasts, waking her. His hand drifted down under the covers, and the woman began to moan.

Winky nodded in satisfaction and Apparated silently back to the kitchens.

Eleven

Chapter 11 of 11

Hermione is down on her luck and has to apply for a job with her old Potions tutor. She gets (and observes) far more than she bargained for.

ELEVEN

Two Months Later

Severus Snape, Potions Master and recently appointed Deputy Headmaster of Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry was standing at the end of the potions bench in his lab. He was stirring a cauldron of clear liquid, but paused now and again to breathe deeply and bite his lower lip. He appeared to be under some duress, as sweat dripped down his cheek from his hairline. He dropped the stirring rod from his hand and gripped the side of the bench tightly.

From her kneeling position in front of him, Hermione had his hard cock deeply in her mouth, and she ran her tongue over the tip, enjoying finally her most treasured memory and fantasy. It had taken a significant amount of persuading on her part, but withdrawing back to her own house for a few days had finally pushed him over the edge.

'Up, now!' Severus grabbed her by the shoulders, spun her around and pushed her head down towards the bench. He lifted the skirts of her robes and, thanks to forward planning, found that she wore no underwear. He crouched between her parted thighs and licked at her pussy, finding her clit with his finger as he inserted his tongue deeply inside her. Hermione pushed herself back towards his face and was rewarded with a sharp slap on one of her buttocks. It was disconcertingly arousing, so she pushed back again for another slap.

'You are more depraved than I imagined, Hermione Granger,' Severus hissed as he pulled himself up. He positioned the shining head of his cock at her pussy and pulled her backwards by her hips, impaling her onto him and making her scream out in surprise.

'And we all know you have a vivid imagination, Severus Snape,' she panted and he thrust. 'I saw you, remember?'

This earned her a sharper, harder slap that later would turn her buttock bright red, but she almost came when he did it. Maybe she really was depraved? She had certainly never been as horny in her life.

'Fuck, Severus, I'm coming,' she moaned. He lifted her legs from the ground and held her in place as he thrust, and he didn't stop until both of them cried out their orgasms and slid to the floor of the lab in a tangled, contented heap. Hermione shifted until her head was in his lap, and she kissed the now soft head of his cock before making him more presentable.

'Thank you very much,' he said with a chuckle.

'You are more than welcome,' she replied. Severus ran his fingers through her silky curls, and Hermione closed her eyes in contentment.

'I love you, witch,' he said quietly.

Hermione didn't move but a soft smile graced her lips. He had implied as much many times in the last two months but had never been able to say the words until now.

'I know. I love you, too.'

Six Months Later

Hermione closed the top of the last box and waved her wand at it. Once it was small enough, she slipped it inside her trusty beaded bag and handed the bag to Winky.

'That's the last of it, Winky. Thank you for your help.' Hermione couldn't help but smile as Winky gave her a low bow and then disappeared with a slight pop. She had become more and more fond of the House Elf over the past few months, but then she knew it was because Winky now saw her and Severus equally. Winky adored Severus, and Hermione had recently discovered why.

After the war, when Severus was recuperating and finding his feet within the wizarding world again, he had needed a House Elf to assist him each day with domestic and occasionally more personal tasks. Severus had chosen Winky personally, because, he told Hermione, she was as damaged by the war as he was. He had understood Winky, how her loyalty had created her own downfall and how it felt to be rejected by those she loved the most. Best of all, he had insisted that if he was to be her new Master she would give up the Butterbeer. It was that simple order that created the bond between them, and Severus was as devoted to Winky as she was to him.

Severus stepped into the now empty room and slid his arms around her.

'You're sure this is what you want?' He nuzzled her neck and kissed her, sending shivers down her spine.

'Definitely. You?' She hugged him tightly, feeling his heart beating through the fabric of his shirt.

'Hell, yes.' He squeezed her close.

'Let's go.' Hermione took Severus by the hand and left her Muggle house for her new home in the Dungeons.

One Year Later

The bedchamber was in half-darkness. The sconces on the wall sputtered lightly, reflecting off the dark green satin bedcovers. On the bed, Hermione lay on her front and naked from the waist down. Her ankles were tied with black ribbons to the bedposts, and Severus was reddening her buttocks with a black, flat paddle. Hermione moaned as he slapped her again, making her bottom shake. He was naked, sweating from the sight of her spread-eagled on his bed. He cock was hard, but he didn't touch her. Not yet. They had played this game before, and the rules, he had decided, were that she would come first. And she would have to beg him for her orgasm.

Hermione shuddered at the last hit of the paddle on her bare arse, and she couldn't take any more.

'Severus, please,' she cried out. 'I want you, please, please...'

'Are you begging, Hermione?' he asked her, moving his mouth to her ear. He ran his fingertips lightly over the redness of her cheeks, feeling her shiver at his touch.

'Yes! Yes, I'm begging... Gods, Severus, just give it to me...'

Severus slipped his finger between her cheeks and then downwards towards her wetness. She was dripping in readiness, and he felt his cock jerk in anticipation, but he would have to wait. He clicked his fingers and a large dildo appeared in his hand. It was not as thick or as long as his cock, but it was hard as a rock and he knew how to make her scream with it. With frustrating slowness, he unfastened her ribbons and turned her onto her back. She watched him, biting her lip as he moved up her body, teasing her folds with the tip of the dildo but going nowhere near her clit. She arched her body upwards, and he stopped.

'Not yet,' he said sharply. One of the other rules was that she didn't help herself to orgasm. She had to remain still. She found it so hard, he knew. But it was important. She was always so in control, she had to relax and let him take the lead now and then.

'Sorry,' she said quietly. Hermione knew the rules too.

Severus sighed and kissed the tips of her fingers lightly. 'My witch,' he said. 'You will get what you need.' He moved over her and rested the dildo between her folds. The tip touched her clitoris, and Hermione moaned. She desperately wanted to rub herself against it, but she kept still, knowing he would take it away if she moved. Severus unfastened the buttons of her tight corset and allowed her creamy breasts to spill forwards, and he captured a dark, pink nipple in his mouth and sucked. Hermione cried

out in pleasure as he sucked one nipple and tweaked the other between his fingers, and she couldn't stop herself from squirming slightly beneath him.

'Gods, Severus, I can't wait, please, make me come!'

'You only had to ask,' he said with a slow, languid smile. Sliding his hand downwards he gripped the dildo and whispered the magic words. It began to vibrate, and he slid it between Hermione's folds and into her needy pussy. Moving downwards, he licked at her pulsing clit, thrusting in and out with the now vibrating dildo as she began to buck under him. With a scream, she came, and he removed the dildo and replaced it with his tongue, lapping up her orgasm greedily, loving the musky smell and taste of her. This was what he wanted, what he needed. He had been waiting for her all of his life, and he was never letting her go,

Hermione fell back against the bed, her orgasm still pulsing through her slightly as Severus drank from her, his tongue flicking lightly at her clit now and then. She felt so exhausted she couldn't summon any energy to move, but she knew she wasn't done yet. He would allow her a minute or so respite but then...

'On your knees, witch' he growled at her.

Hermione did as she was told, flipping over and pushing herself up onto her knees, presenting her still smarting buttocks to him. He slapped her with his hand, warming the flesh as it trembled beneath his sure touch, and parted her cheeks. She moaned as he slipped his finger into her pussy, then withdrew and placed it at her anus. He massaged gently, then inserted his fingertip and slid his finger into her. Hermione groaned with newfound pleasure and pushed back slightly. He whispered another spell, and she felt a frisson of pleasure ripple through her as he lubricated her sphincter in readiness for him. She could feel his thighs against hers and she knew he was ready for it by the way he was shaking. His orgasm would be fierce, it always was when they did it like this, but Hermione loved it and relished how she made him feel. He had never been this animalistic with the other witches, never this creative or intense. She groaned as he removed his finger and replaced it with the tip of his cock. He felt hot and heavy against her and he splayed open her buttocks with his firm fingers, digging in to her flesh tightly. He thrust himself slowly into her, and Hermione relaxed around him, welcoming his taut girth within her with a gasp of pleasure and pain. He filled her and made her whole, and she had never felt so complete.

'Fuck, witch. Fuck,' he hissed, and with a grunt of pleasure he started to thrust, slowly as first but then with more urgency. Hermione moved her hand and found the still vibrating dildo beside her. She slid it into to her already aching pussy, letting its length slide hard against Severus, and she heard him shout out at the feel of it. She was totally immersed in sensation, but she whispered a spell to hold the dildo in place and moved her deft fingers to her engorged clit. Severus started to move faster, and Hermione couldn't contain herself. She came with a low moan, pushed her body hard to meet his pounding thrusts, and she felt Severus slap her arse cheeks hard. He shouted out incoherently, his body twisting and bucking against her, and he came, gripping her buttocks still and digging his hands deeply into her flesh to hold her still as he emptied himself within her clenched walls. He shuddered against her and the both fell forward onto the bed, spent.

At some point they fell asleep, knowing that next time their lovemaking would be gentle and tender and something completely different.

Two Years Later

Ron Weasley sat in his usual booth of the Leaky Cauldron with a large Firewhisky in his hand. The *Daily Prophet* lay before open, a double-paged spread glaring out at him. He tried not to look, but he had already read it three times and he couldn't tear his eyes away from a picture of the new Mr and Mrs Severus Snape smiling up at him. It was the first time he had seen Snape smiling, but he figured it was because he was caressing Hermione's arse in the picture. His hand moved possessively over and over her satin-clad curves, and Ron, who had looked closely to confirm what he thought, knew that she wasn't wearing any knickers.

'Bastard,' he said for the umpteenth time.

'Fucking bastard.'

In a small hut on a beach in Thailand, Hermione Granger was on her honeymoon. Her husband was currently kissing her inner thighs.

She didn't once think about Ron Weasley.

The End

A/N: Many Thanks to Hechicera for her wonderful prompt:

'Snape, in his mid-forties to early fifties, brews Polyjuice with Hermione's clandestinely acquired hair snippets (or whatever), and pays an escort agency to send call girls dosed with this potion to act out his secret fantasies. Unbeknownst to him, she herself shows up one day in place of one of the prostitutes. Feel free to make this as filthy as you like.'

Thanks for reading x