

# You Win

*by Pearle*

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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Disclaimer: The characters, settings, etc. of the Harry Potter series are not mine; they belong to J.K. Rowling and Co. I promise to return them when I am through. Well, most of them anyway.

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Hermione unceremoniously plopped into the overstuffed chair next to the fire. "You win."

Severus eyed Professor Granger, the newly installed Charms instructor, levels one through four, of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. "And what is it I have supposedly won?"

"I have no intentions of trying anymore."

"You, Madam, are always trying. What is it that you have failed, so spectacularly, that you feel the need to tell me about it?" The sarcasm dripped heavily from his comment, Severus glaring at the young witch. "What does this "windfall" on my part include, pray tell?"

Hermione waved a vague hand in his direction. "You. I'm done trying to be nice to you. I'm done trying to be friends. You won't have to endure my presence unless absolutely necessary for scholastic reasons. I won't attempt to talk to you before or after staff meetings unless the situation absolutely warrants it. No more sitting next to you and trying to start conversations at mealtime, or in the corridors, or outside the classrooms, or during patrols of the school, or at Hogsmeade. No more mention of books or articles I've read that you might be interested in. It's obvious you would rather play martyr and continue on with your solitary existence than join the rest of world. So be it. Far be it for me to try and be nice to you ever again."

"Martyr. Has your mind gone soft? Need I remind you who I am or what I've done?" Severus's eyes blazed, his tone menacing.

"We all know what you did and, more importantly, *why* you did it. There is no need to rehash the war or your actions again, Professor. Albus's Pensieve cleared you. The Wizengamot cleared you. To the Wizarding world, you are a hero. Hell, you even made the cover of *Witch Weekly* after the award ceremony. So if you wish to continue playing the part of social pariah, be my guest. I'm finished."

"And to what do I owe this good fortune?"

"You're impossible. I could be tied naked to your bed, begging you to take me; I doubt you'd even notice. Most likely you'd be annoyed that I wrinkled your bed sheets. Honestly, I don't know why I even tried to be friends with you in the first place."

He highly doubted he'd fail to notice a naked witch tied up in his bed. The event occurred so infrequently that it would most definitely stand out in his memory were it to ever happen. Certain parts of his anatomy were taking notice of her comment right now as a matter of fact. The image of a naked Professor Granger, her skin oiled and gleaming in the firelight, begging him to take her, rose unbidden in his mind, having a decided effect on his body.

Hermione glared at the dark man before turning silently on her heel and leaving the staff room, the door slamming shut behind her.

Severus shoved the image of a naked Hermione to the back of his mind. He was well rid of her and her *Gryffindor* intentions, if nothing else. "Good riddance, and not a moment too soon, if you ask me," he grumbled. It had occurred to him that *Professor* Granger always seemed to be where he was lately. The library, the High Table, in the halls; he had put it down to the gods having a laugh at his expense rather than any plan on her part. Without warning, the image of a naked Hermione, in a variety of poses, invaded his thoughts. "As if that will ever occur."

Viciously, Severus snapped open his potions journal and settled back to read. He had double Potions with Slytherin and Gryffindor in half an hour, his third double class of the day. 'Just one more chance for the universe to have a laugh at my expense,' he thought.

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He was just helping himself to the steak and kidney pudding when her laughter floated through the closed door. Severus tensed, noting the empty chair to his left. Did the witch have the courage of her convictions? Within seconds, a laughing Hermione and a smiling Bill Weasley burst through the staff door, the breeze from the pair's passing ruffling his robes. True to her word, Hermione sat at the far end of the table, not even sparing a glance in his direction. Every so often, the sound of her laugh or a word or two of conversation would drift down to his end of the table.

He sat back, thinking his food digested better when he was not forced to endure the constant flow of conversation from the witch. A quick peek through the curtain of his hair at the other end of the table almost caught the witch glancing at him. He made a show of finishing his pumpkin juice before turning to offer a mock salute in her direction, only to find Granger gone. He barely caught sight of her as she disappeared through the main entrance.

"Something wrong, Severus?" McGonagall peered questioningly at her colleague. He had been a tremendous help to her, as well as a shoulder to lean on, when Hogwarts reopened after the war. "Don't forget. You have Hogsmeade duty tomorrow after breakfast."

Severus scowled at the Headmistress. "Perhaps I will get lucky and die in my sleep tonight, Minerva."

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Severus raised his wand, one silent spell later, and the tapestry covering the third floor East Tower alcove pulled to the side and secured itself there. "Really, Mr Craddock, Miss Vaughan, one would think you could have been a bit more creative in attempting to hide your tryst from prying eyes. Twenty points from Ravenclaw each and detention with Filch tomorrow night."

The young man fearfully attempted to defend himself. "Professor Snape, sir. I... we..."

"It would be wise to return to your common room before I am forced to deduct points from your children and your children's children." Severus crossed his arms, his robes billowing around him with the movement. He was well aware of the image he presented to the students. He towered over most of them, even without the advantage of height; his countenance was one of strict disciplinarian.

Craddock's mouth snapped shut, the two wayward Ravenclaws hurried away as fast they could.

He completed his rounds without further incident, finishing swiftly without the interruption of Professor Granger. On two separate occasions earlier this week, the witch had stopped him during the course of his patrol. The first time was to ask about a particularly difficult potion that might be used in conjunction with a charm to help victims of the Cruciatus Curse regain their memories. The second time the infuriating witch accosted him was to "join" him as she walked to the library.

Tonight he'd completed his evening patrol in record time, leaving more 'evening' for him to enjoy. He settled in with a glass of Ogden's finest and the potions journal he'd been attempting to read in the staff lounge before the witch had interrupted his repast this afternoon. His quarters were silent, the ticking of the clock seeming louder than before.

Distractedly, he glanced at his bedroom door, his mind conjuring images of a naked Hermione spread out upon his bed.

"Blast the witch!" Even in her absence, she was disturbing his evening.

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Once again the seat to his left was empty. Severus growled into his coffee mug. He knew what she was doing, and it wasn't going to work. He had no desire to be Hermione Granger's latest project. It surprised him when the young woman in question didn't show up for breakfast. It was not like her to miss a chance to annoy him.

"Severus, I'll meet you at the front entrance in ten minutes," Minerva's voice cut through his musings.

Absentmindedly, Severus nodded in Minerva's direction. He'd always treasured the quiet moments of his day, but since yesterday's declaration, the quiet had become... deafening.

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"Is something wrong? You seem more annoyed than usual. Are the students or your classes a problem?" Minerva sipped her butterbeer, one eye on Severus, the other on their charges as they sat in the Three Broomsticks, enjoying a moment of calm before rounding up the students and returning to the castle.

"I can't believe you have time to chaperon a Hogsmeade weekend." One brow rose questioningly. "Headmistress duties not enough for you?"

"I have more work than I can handle, but with Hermione being called away so suddenly, there was no one that could fill in at the last minute."

"Granger called away?" Perhaps that was the reason for the sudden quiet. Unconsciously, he ground his teeth together, imagining the witch still annoying him when she returned.

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But at Monday morning's staff meeting, Severus noted Hermione sitting across the room, her nose buried in a book. He couldn't say why, but a flash of anger tore through him as she greeted the new Muggle Studies teacher. At least she wasn't bothering him.

Nor did she bother him at lunch or dinner, choosing to sit at the other end of the table and converse with other members of the staff. He nearly tore off Flitwick's head when the little professor asked him a question.

The week continued to drift by slowly. True to her word, the only conversation between the two had been just prior to lunch on Thursday when Hermione had stopped, standing by the empty chair, to ask if he had any Colour Changing Potion. She wanted to show her class the difference in colours that resulted from using the potion rather than the proper charm.

"I can have a batch ready for you tomorrow at lunch time."

"Thank you, Professor. If you'll excuse me..." In seconds she was off to the other end of the table, taking her now customary seat next to Weasley. Idly, Severus wondered what would happen to their camaraderie when Weasley's wife and child returned to the castle.

The rest of the week passed much the same. The silence seemed to loom out at him from every corner; where he once found the quiet soothing to his nerves, it now seemed to amplify how alone he'd become.

One week turned into the next, and still the witch remained true to her vow, never more than a polite nod or gesture in his direction before quickly and quietly moving on.

It'd been almost three weeks now, and she was all he could think about.

He was loath to admit it, but he missed her company. Where he had berated her for her inane chatter about books and articles in the staff room, he now found the silence oppressive, the quiet stifling. He'd almost bookmarked an unusual article on the combined use of charms and potions, thinking Hermione might be interested in it. It was the type of article she used to share with him.

He stopped himself before marking the page. Silently, he cursed his existence and the world around him. How had it come to this? Was this her plan all along? Seeds of doubt, the barest hint of a suggestion, tended to grow once they were planted. He had only to replay her comment in his mind, accompanied by the images he'd conjured to fit various scenarios, to know he was becoming obsessed with the witch. Now that she was no longer around, she was all he thought of.

*I could be tied naked to your bed, begging you to take me; I doubt you'd even notice me.*

He was absolutely positive he'd notice her. He would fuck her within an inch of her life before demanding she release him from this... spell, this geas, this whatever she had him under. Then he could be done with her once and for all.

Thursday night's rounds found him in rare form. He'd deducted eighty-five points total, four from his own house, during the course of the evening. He'd seen Granger duck into the library in an effort to avoid him. *She* was avoiding *him*! He would have followed, if only to give her a piece of his mind, but he was blindsided by Peeves, the idiotic poltergeist toppling the suit of armour to his right while cackling loudly before zooming off in the opposite direction. By the time he'd righted the armour, Hermione was nowhere to be seen.

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Severus barely glanced at the house hourglasses as he made his way to the Great Hall for breakfast. It was a sure bet the other Heads of House would be annoyed with the amount of points he'd deducted last night. A quick glance, followed by a slower look, showed something was not right. The totals were still the same as they had been at dinner last night. None of the points he'd deducted were reflected by the totals.

"Would you care to tell me what the problem is?" McGonagall's thick Scottish brogue accosted him from behind.

"You restored the points."

"What is going on? For almost a month now, you've been betwixt and between. Eighty-five points? Really, Severus, what is the matter?"

"Headmistress." Severus bowed stiffly to his friend and colleague before heading into the Great Hall, choosing not to answer the angry witch. Not even sure if he could explain the reasons for his current behavior to himself, let alone her.

Minerva shook her head, watching the 'tail' of Severus's robes disappear through the open doorway. "What has gotten into him?"

A familiar chuckle rang out from the painting to her right. "I'm sure he will be just fine, Minerva. Give the boy time."

Minerva snorted. "Boy? He's over forty, Albus, not exactly a child."

"He'll be fine, trust me. He just needs to forgive himself before he can join the living."

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The return of Weasley's wife, Fleur, and their infant child, back from an extended visit to her parents, did little to dampen Hermione's spirits. The two could be seen at the High Table cooing and aching over the insufferable infant.

McGonagall tapped her goblet, the sound amplified to attract the students' attention. "Quiet, please. As you know, tomorrow is the last Hogsmeade weekend before the Christmas holidays. I know many of you will be shopping for gifts for your families. Please refrain from purchasing items from Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes as gifts. Most of the products in their store are on the forbidden list and will be confiscated by Mr Filch should he find them. Once confiscated, the items will be disposed of. The forbidden list is located in Mr Filch's office for those wishing to read it. You can be sure Professor Snape and Professor Weasley will keep a sharp eye on those entering the joke store."

Severus groaned. He was stuck with Weasley. Was he forever destined to be the butt of some cosmic joke? The bell sounded, signaling ten minutes until classes began. Reluctantly, he rose to his feet; to make matters worse, he had double potions with fourth year Ravensclaws and Hufflepuffs to teach this morning.

Without warning, he was knocked back into his chair, the air knocked out of him as Hermione landed unceremoniously in his lap, the sound of ripping cloth the only noise breaking the sudden quiet.

"L'Oh mon! 'Re you all right, 'Ermionee?"

"Yes, I'm fine. I'm sorry, Professor Snape; my heel must have caught on the hem of my robe. Are you all right?"

He could feel the soft curve of her buttocks, *his* own body responding as she wriggled in his lap. She had momentarily fallen back, a warm weight against his chest, her hair riotously hitting him in the face. The smell of her shampoo, Herbal, gently teasing his nostrils. Reflexively, Severus's hands closed around Hermione's waist as Bill tried to pull her from his lap. It only lasted for a few seconds, a gentle tug of war between the two, before Severus realized what he was doing and reluctantly helped the witch to her feet.

"Professor Snape?"

"It's... I'm fine." His voice was gruff, even to his own ears. Severus watched, spellbound, as Hermione drew the hem of her robe up to inspect the tear. He was treated to a shapely leg disappearing under her knee-high skirt. His blood pounded in his veins as he added this new image to the current catalog of pictures he had of Hermione in his head. Other parts of his anatomy chimed in, lest he forget the feel of a 'lapful of wriggling Hermione'.

"Hasty? You were happy to see the back of me!"

Pearle