

THE TUTORING SESSION: A Virgin's Primer

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Even know-it-alls don't know it all. **Note: This story is **on hiatus**. It isn't abandoned; I simply have no idea when it will be continued.

Lesson One

Chapter 1 of 7

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Lesson One

"No, Dennis. You can't add the rat spleen before the skinned Shrivelfig. It would...oh, never mind. You just can't."

Hermione sighed and pinched the bridge of her nose. The tutoring sessions with Dennis Creevey were exasperating. He just never quite seemed to ~~get~~ it. Oddly enough, he seemed to pass his exams just fine; though he always accredited it to her excellent teaching abilities.

"Dennis, I really don't have the energy for this tonight. Maybe we should skive off early, and you can tell Colin he doesn't owe me anything for this session."

She cringed inwardly as the words left her mouth. She needed the Galleons; she was saving up for Christmas. But she was beginning to think it wasn't worth the aggravation.

"Oh, *please*, Hermione," Dennis whinged. "Let's give it one more go. I promise to try harder. Really!"

His exuberance nearly made her change her mind. Still, this was a dance they performed each and every lesson: Dennis would mix things up and not quite understand what she was trying to show him...honestly, he was worse than Ron sometimes...then, she would suggest an early evening and he would beg her to give him another chance, and she would ultimately give in. This would go on until it was nearly curfew. Good thing she was paid by the hour. Still, the throbbing in her temples left her with no patience to spare for him this evening.

"Not tonight, Dennis. I feel a raging headache coming on, and I just want to climb into bed with a hot cup of tea. We can pick this up on Thursday. Okay?"

Dennis looked crestfallen. "But Hermione, the quiz is on Wednesday. Look, we can go back to the common room, and I'll order some tea and..."

"That's sweet, Dennis," she interrupted, "but it's not necessary. As for the quiz, you always seem to do well; I'm sure this quiz will not be any different. Just go over chapters six and seven, and you should have it covered."

"Explain it to me just one more time, Hermione. Please?" If there was one thing Dennis was good at, it was whinging.

"I'm sorry, Dennis. No," she said resolutely.

"I'll walk with you back to the dorm then," he nodded, as though it were already decided.

She laughed at his persistence. "I still need to check out a few books and write a foot-long essay for Advanced Potions. You go on ahead. I promise I'll be all right."

Dejectedly, Dennis gathered up his books and notes and got ready to leave. He gave Hermione one last forlorn glance.

"Are you sure..."

"I'm sure, Dennis! Now go!" She pointed in the direction of the door.

As soon as Dennis exited the library, Hermione let her head drop onto her arms, exhausted. That boy took a lot out of her. If she was going to continue with these tutoring sessions, she was going to have to ask for more money, perhaps another Galleon a week. She had no idea what she was getting herself into when Colin had approached her just over a month ago. She was beginning to regret it.

Believing she had been alone, save for Madam Pince who was still sitting at the front desk, she jumped at a rustling sound behind her. Twisting around in her seat, she was relieved to see it was only Professor Snape perusing the bookshelves. If it had been Harry or Ron, she would certainly never get her work done.

"Oh! Professor Snape! I didn't notice you there. I thought I was alone."

Being startled always had the unfortunate effect of making words tumble out of her mouth unchecked. Professor Snape stopped her with a slight gesture of the hand and a nod in the librarian's direction as Hermione paused to inhale.

"No matter, Miss Granger." He kept his voice low so as not to disturb the annoyingly sensitive ears of his colleague.

Professor Snape hesitated, gazing at the flustered witch a moment. He had actually been present for most of the dialogue between Hermione and Dennis Creevey, unbeknownst to the pair. Leaving without saying something was unthinkable.

"You are aware, are you not, Miss Granger, that Dennis Creevey gets top marks in Potions and is in no need of tutoring?" he said through gritted teeth at her obliviousness.

She went slightly slack jawed at his words. "What? But then why... I mean, Colin said that..."

He interrupted, "Miss Granger, did it ever occur to you that the boy may be fond of you and that he may have elicited the aid of his brother in order to spend some time with you? Surely, the possibility did not elude a mind as brilliant as yours?"

He spoke softly, yet the words ricocheted loudly in the recesses of her brain. How could she have been so blind? She shook her head, trying to eradicate the thoughts and images his words had unwittingly produced. Her and Dennis Creevey? Not only had the thought never occurred to her, it made her shudder at the ridiculousness of it all.

"Come now," he mocked. "Surely a know-it-all such as yourself knows when a boy is vying for your attention."

"Actually no, Professor, I suppose I don't," she answered, mimicking his tone.

She was pleased that he looked slightly surprised at the admission; he undoubtedly believed her to be more experienced than she actually was. Embarrassment quickly followed that realization. She knew she was inexperienced compared with the other girls in her year...and possibly even the year or two behind her...but that wasn't necessarily a *bad* thing. Was it?

"Erm, Professor?" she asked a little timidly, unsure of what his response would be but figuring she would try nonetheless. "How exactly ~~does~~ one tell if a boy is, um, vying for your...I mean for *my* attention?"

She braced herself for the acidic retort that normally followed one of her questions. Instead, her professor looked thoughtfully at her for a moment and came closer. The mix of herbs that permeated his robes wafted over her. He bent slowly so that his mouth was but a finger's width from her ear, his breath tickling the outer shell and sending a shiver down her spine, which were so unlike the shivers of fear his presence normally elicited.

"A boy," he began in a deliberately hushed tone, "who was vying for your attention would try to be around you as often as possible. He would take whatever time you were willing to give him and make the most of it, stretching it until the very last possible second. He may even... offer to make you tea or walk you to your dorm."

Shocked that he knew the particulars of the conversation between her and Dennis, she turned abruptly in her chair to find herself nose-to-nose with the man whispering in her ear. He was so close she could see the fine lines around his eyes and his mouth. His breath smelled faintly of freshly picked mint.

"A boy who was vying for your attention," he continued, looking straight into her eyes, "would look forward to every meeting with you, would dream of the taste of your lips on his. It would drive him to distraction until the dream became a reality."

Her breathing had become shallower as his eyes bored deeper into hers. She stammered, "And...and what should I do if I do not wish the attention of the boy?"

Nothing in his expression changed. He merely breathed, "You should not encourage him. Don't put yourself in a situation where you are alone with him. If he does not voice his intentions, he will eventually become discouraged."

The next question almost remained lodged in her throat, but she had to ask. She whispered, "And if ~~to~~ wish for his attention, what then?"

Her pupils dilated as the words left her lips. His closeness was having a profound effect upon her. She could scarcely breathe. It seemed to her that his goal was to produce such an effect. The fact that he did not move away at the last question was proof positive in her mind.

With a smirk that lacked his usual rancor, he continued, "Then, open yourself to his suggestions and follow his lead. Understand that even the most subtle of comments can be laced with deeper meaning. Above all, let him know that you are interested."

Her eyes fixed on the tongue that darted out to moisten his lips. Lips that suddenly didn't seem so firmly set but softer somehow, perhaps even fuller.

"And how...how would I let him know I was interested?"

Her voice was barely audible, but he had no trouble hearing her from such a close proximity. He remained stoic and emotionless, save for a slight darkening of his eyes; a darkness that she picked up on almost instantly, causing her heart to beat just a tiny bit faster.

"Speak with him about subjects not related to your studies. Sit close to him. Allow him to get close to you without pulling away. Show that you are interested in what he has to say. Let your body speak to him instead of your words with the way you sit, the way you tilt your head in his direction, even the way you breathe."

The last was spoken so softly, she almost didn't hear it. It was then that she became aware that his hand was resting on the table next to her own, and his body nearly enveloped her in the warmth of his presence. She, too, was leaning forward, perched on the edge of her seat, listening to every word that fell off his tongue. Her breath constricted in her chest as she waited for the next syllable that he afforded her.

Then, the realization hit her full force: *he* was vying for her attention. But what was even *more* shocking was that the idea actually appealed to her. She felt the blood begin to rise in her cheeks.

"And after all that? What happens next?" she asked breathlessly, a little nervous as to what he would say.

But he said nothing. Instead, he tilted his head the scant centimeter that still separated them and touched his lips to hers.

For a split second, the earth spun beneath her, and she felt as though she were about to lose her balance. His lips were soft and held hers captive with their feather-light touch. He kissed her once, briefly yet lingering slightly, then again and again until she moved her lips with his. A slight nip of her lower lip caused her to part her mouth slightly in response. Her eyes fluttered closed as the tip of his tongue ran along her bottom lip and slipped fleetingly between. He hesitated a moment and then planted another small kiss on her mouth before she felt the rush of material slide past her.

Opening her eyes, she found he had gone. And she was left with her excitement piqued and her attention taken by a man who had never before drawn her attention. She smiled as she breathlessly touched her fingers to her lips.

~ End Lesson One ~

Lesson Two

Chapter 2 of 7

A lesson on flirtation...

Lesson Two

"Oi, Hermione! Wait up!"

Hermione winced at the annoying high-pitched whinge of Colin Creevey's voice and started walking a little faster. Besides the fact that she really didn't want to talk to Colin right now...he hadn't really taken the news well that she would no longer tutor Dennis in Potions...she was late for a meeting with a second-year who had asked to be tutored in Charms. The flip-flap of Colin's trainers slowed as he reached her side and met her pace.

"At least slow down a little. I need to talk to you," Colin wheezed, red-faced.

Looking at the boy sideways, Hermione guiltily relented. "What do you want, Colin? I'm late for a tutoring session."

"What a coincidence! That's exactly what I wanted to talk to you about," Colin replied a little too exuberantly for Hermione's taste and temper.

She stopped in her tracks, making Colin stumble. "Oh, really? I suppose you're going to give me a sob story about how Dennis is about to fail Potions, and only I can help him?"

"Well, I..."

"Please." She put her hand up to stop any excuse the boy could possibly come up with. "I happen to know that Dennis is in no danger whatsoever of failing Potions. In fact, he aced the last examination. So, as much as I am going to miss the extra money, he doesn't need my services any longer, and that is my final say on the matter."

Hermione turned to walk away, but Colin stopped her with a hand on her arm. "Wait, Hermione. I wasn't going to mention Potions."

"You weren't?" she asked skeptically, hesitating slightly.

"No, I wasn't. Transfiguration is your best subject, isn't it?" Colin nodded. It was a rhetorical question, really.

"Well, yes, it is, but..."

"Dennis has to learn how to transfigure a frog into a tea bag by Friday's class. He got reprimanded yesterday by McGonagall when his tea bag burst open, ran under one of the closets and wouldn't come out. I don't think she's found it yet."

"Humph." She really had nothing to say to that. Frogs were expensive, and Professor McGonagall was loath to purchase too many extras, figuring that mistakes were generally reversible.

"You can ask McGonagall, if you don't believe me."

"No, I don't need to. Half of my class never got that transfiguration down right. It's a difficult one, especially for that year," she conceded.

"Anyway, if he doesn't learn, she is going to give him detention on Saturday, and Saturday is a Hogsmeade weekend. We were planning to buy a Christmas present for our Mum on Saturday. I'll pay you double if you can tutor him again, say tonight after dinner?" Colin's eyebrows shot up and his bangs flopped up and down, seeming to agree in Hermione's stead.

"Tonight? Well, I was going to study for an Arithmancy midterm, and Professor Binns asked for a foot on how Hengist of Woodcroft helped defeat the rebels..." She looked at Colin's slowly falling face. "Oh, all right, Colin. If it will make you stop looking like someone plucked all the feathers off your owl, I'll do it."

"Brilliant! I mean, thank you! I mean, Dennis thanks you!" He pumped her hand vigorously. "I better go and tell Dennis!"

"You do that." Hermione laughed and shook her head as Colin sprinted down the corridor in search of his brother. Then, she turned toward the library and sighed. Why did she agree to this? Why was Colin so exasperatingly convincing? She should have said no. Still, the money she'd earn would give her enough to finish her own Christmas shopping on Saturday. At least that was something.

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Hermione squealed and tucked her legs beneath her as a slimy tea bag on legs jumped around her ankles, littering the floor with tea leaves.

"I'm so sorry, Hermione!" Dennis apologized as he chased after the abomination and brushed up the leaves before Madam Pince would notice. "I just don't know what I'm doing wrong. I listen in class. I'm following Professor McGonagall's instructions to the wand flick. I can't afford to miss this Hogsmeade weekend!" he whinged.

"Calm down, Dennis." She uncurled her legs and straightened her robes. "How about you show me...slowly and without the frog...the wand motions, and we'll start from there."

Dennis took out his wand, carefully pointed it away from her, and mimicked the motions he'd learned: a half-arc followed by an upstroke, a spiral with a stop halfway through, a stroke backwards half an arc, and then a follow-through.

"What exactly was that? Professor McGonagall couldn't have possibly told you to *do that*," Hermione said.

"What do you mean? It's exactly what she showed us." Dennis looked confused.

"You hesitated and flicked backwards before the follow-through."

"That's not supposed to happen?" he asked.

"No."

"Darn. Maybe I should have watched her do it the second time. She sort of, well, sneezed the first time. I just began practicing, and I guess I got too caught up and didn't pay attention. How could I be so stupid? Now I'm going to miss going to Hogsmeade and..."

"Dennis? Dennis, stop!" Hermione raised her voice only slightly so as not to irritate Madam Pince. "Just calm down, and I think we can manage to fix this together."

An hour and twenty tries later, Hermione sat watching Dennis' tea bag bounce across the table and split open.

"At least it doesn't have legs?" he said hopefully.

"Yeah, there's that," Hermione answered halfheartedly while stretching and rubbing her neck.

"Here, let me get that," Dennis said as he came around the table.

"Get wha..." Suddenly, hands were on her shoulders. "Oh!" she exclaimed in surprise. "Dennis, what are you doing?"

"I'm loosening the crick in your neck. It's the least I can do for showing me what I was doing wrong." His hot, clammy hands gripped the loose skin between her shoulders and neck and kneaded it like dough.

"Ow! Dennis, you don't have to do this. I'm okay." She tried to move away, but he was very insistent and wouldn't let her go.

"No, you're not okay. You are really tense. See? The muscles are cracking like twigs." He ground the muscle roughly to prove his point. "Just relax, Hermione. It'll feel better in no time."

Hermione sat in absolute discomfort, both physically and emotionally. She almost felt nauseous at the feel of his hands upon her neck. It just seemed a little too close, too intimate for what she perceived their relationship to be. Professor Snape's words from a few nights earlier echoed in her head: *Did it ever occur to you that the boy may be fond of you?*

Trying to hide her nausea with a smile she could only hope was kind, Hermione lied, "Thank you, Dennis. I feel much better. You really do have a talent giving neck massages."

"You really think so?" he asked eagerly.

Suddenly, she worried that maybe she had laid it on too thick; he sounded almost encouraged, and she didn't want that. Quickly, she tried to put a damper on it.

"Yes, Dennis, I do. Now, I think our lesson is over. You need to practice some more on your own, and I need to study for my Arithmancy midterm. I'll see you around the common room later, perhaps." She spoke matter-of-factly, hoping that Dennis would get the hint and leave without asking her to walk back with him.

"All right, Hermione. Thanks. Maybe if you get back early, I could show you how my practice session went?" Dennis bounced up and down much like his brother. She almost laughed, but she didn't want to encourage him any further.

"If I get back early, why not?" she replied. "Now, go before Madam Pince scolds us for talking."

"Right! Okay, Hermione! See you later, then... Bye!"

She watched Dennis leave. Only when she was sure that he was out the door and most definitely not coming back did she let her head fall on top of her folded arms in combined exhaustion, exasperation and... pain.

"Ow," she whinged to no one but herself.

"Unless my mind is playing tricks on me, I believe I warned you about that boy," a voice admonished from above.

Hermione sat up in surprise and instantly regretted it. Her hand flew to the damaged muscles in her neck, and she grimaced in pain. "You most certainly did, sir."

"I must say, from your expression, you weren't enjoying Mr. Creevey's advances, which leaves me confused as to why you would lead him on by tutoring him again." Although Professor Snape looked down his nose at her, there was something less severe in his manner, something less formal.

"Advances?" Hermione asked incredulously. "You must be joking. All he was doing was massaging my sore neck, and rather badly at that."

"Anyone who witnessed Mr. Creevey massaging your sore neck would have to say that you looked extremely uncomfortable... and I doubt it was entirely from the pain. But, what is completely baffling is that you told him...what was it again...that he had *talent* giving neck massages."

"Well, I didn't want to hurt his feelings..."

"Do you think I would have much success keeping control of my classroom if I worried about the students' *feelings*?" he asked.

"No, sir, probably not."

"The boy was flirting with you...something you obviously didn't welcome nor reciprocate...and you decided not to hurt his feelings. I am wondering, what do you think that accomplished?"

While she was enjoying the professor's guidance on the matter, she was beginning to feel a little ridiculous. "He was not flirting with me. All he did was..."

"Massage your neck. I know," he finished for her.

"Well, yes. Aside from him touching me, I do not see how that *was flirting*, necessarily. It certainly was *not* enjoyable." Logically, she realized that he probably knew what he was talking about. Still, it seemed a little illogical that a clumsy neck rub...especially one that made her feel worse...was a come on of any kind.

Sighing, Professor Snape walked around the table and stood behind Hermione's chair. "When a man...or boy as the case may be...gives a girl a massage, he most certainly is flirting, whether it feels good to the girl or not. Might I add, a *boy* is generally too inexperienced to know what feels good to the girl."

Gently, the professor tilted her head to lie back upon her arms, gathered the mass of hair that hung down her back and swept it to the side. Resting his hands on either shoulder, he rubbed small circles with his thumb over the exposed flesh. "How good it feels usually depends upon the level of experience. Boys," he said the word with a hint of distaste, "usually are clumsy at best in their inexperience. If you are lucky, you will occasionally be blessed with a fast learner."

His hands were cool upon her inflamed muscle and, though hardly moving, seemed to work magic. His fingers miraculously found each aching tendon as they worked around the base of her neck and up the sore nodules of her spine. It felt so good that she nearly forgot to reply. When she did, she almost wished she had kept her mouth shut.

"Were you a fast learner as a boy, sir?"

Something that sounded suspiciously like a chuckle...though she knew better...came from his vicinity. Afraid that she had offended him, her shoulders tensed up again. Suddenly, his breath was hot upon her ear, making her blood pump quicker. "Learning is a never-ending process, Miss Granger, something that probably appeals to your sensibilities. But, to answer your question, yes, I sort of prided myself on being a fast learner... as a boy."

She was glad her face was still buried in her arms. The blood seemed to be pumping straight to her face, causing her cheeks to heat. His skilful hands not only melted the knots in her neck, but seemed to burn her skin at the same time. Although, it happened to be extraordinarily pleasant, almost like his touch held a certain awareness...or perhaps it caused a certain awareness in her.

And then, he was guiding her back to a sitting position and adjusting her hair to hang down her back once again. She looked up at him and smiled. "That felt brilliant." She laughed lightly. "Sorry. That sounds so... childish."

His eyes crinkled as his mouth creased into an almost indiscernible smile. "No, not childish, Miss Granger. You are not a child. Inexperienced, yes, but not a child."

That simple statement made her glow from within, especially coming from him. "I just...I feel so naïve, so... so stupid because I don't see things the way others see them. I don't want to lead Dennis on, but I guess...well, if I could read minds, everything would be much simpler, wouldn't it?"

This time, she actually witnessed him chuckle and saw how it softened the sharp angles of his face for a brief second. Hermione felt as though she were seeing the person within, behind the mask. That made her blush once again, and she looked down to prevent him from noticing.

Professor Snape grasped her chin gently and tilted her face upward to look her straight in the eyes. "Never be embarrassed of your inexperience," he said softly. His thumb burned a path across her jawline. "Your only fault is that you don't think you are worthy of the attentions of a boy...or a man. If you truly believed it, you would know instantly when a man is flirting with you."

Hermione felt her eyes beginning to glaze over at the intensity of his gaze. There was something there, not his usual classroom harshness but something she couldn't quite discern. "I suppose you're right. I just don't understand why anyone would be interested beyond a little help to get a passing grade."

For a second, she didn't realize what was happening. In the blink of an eye, he let go of her chin and knelt before her, the hush of his robes forming a pool at her feet. She refocused on him, but her attention was taken by the coolness of the air upon her skin where his fingers had just been.

"And *never* think that is all anyone would be interested in," he whispered, though his voice sounded loud to her ears as the declaration branded itself upon her brain.

The kiss they had shared only a few days ago had never left her. She found herself daydreaming about it as she sat through classes...especially his. Now all she could think about was his hands on her skin, soothing her, healing her... touching her. She felt an almost irrational desire to feel his touch again. Could this be what he meant by flirting? That something as simple as a massage could feel good, experience notwithstanding, if the advance was welcomed?

"Hermione?" He reached out to move a curl that had fallen across her cheek.

"Yes?" she whispered, uncertain she could speak with her heart in her throat.

They were so close, she could see the veins in the irises of his eyes. The pulse at the base of her neck throbbed, and she knew it was probably very obvious to him as well. Her mind swam with the sudden intense desire to feel his lips once again upon hers. Her heart was clamoring for it. She felt lightheaded at the possibility of it happening again.

Without thinking...for all thought had abandoned her...she closed the short distance that remained between them and pressed her lips against his, hoping beyond hope that he wouldn't be offended, that he would return the kiss, that he would need it as much as she did. The sharp intake of breath he took through his nose as their lips met almost discouraged her, but then he sighed and relaxed into her touch, his lips softening. The kiss was sweet, as though she were biting into a perfectly ripe fruit, and his lips parted to share it with her.

He pulled back slowly, almost reluctantly, though still gazing at her with the same intensity as before. She fell into the pools of his eyes and knew, without him having to say a word, that he felt the need as powerfully as she had. He wasn't offended in the least.

"You are aware, Miss Granger," she never knew her formal name could sound so sensual coming from anyone's lips, not to mention his, "that this is not the appropriate place for such behavior?" The words admonished, but the voice did not. It was merely a suggestion.

"No, you're right, sir. It is not the appropriate place. Perhaps..." She hesitated, unsure of whether she should be the one suggesting anything. "Perhaps you know of a more suitable place?"

"Normally, I would give a detention for such a suggestion." His lips tightened into a half-smile, and his tone betrayed his amusement.

"Well, then, perhaps you should give me a detention," she said shyly, but with a fair attempt at being playful. Professor Snape's eyes sharpened, and she realized that she had just flirted with her professor.

He smiled fully. "Yes, I think you are right. Perhaps a detention is in order... Let's say, oh, Friday night at seven o'clock?"

As she nodded her assent wordlessly...feeling quite odd at actually consenting to a detention...Professor Snape stood and silently strode out of the library. She watched as he walked out the door and fervently wished that he would turn around and come back. Giving up, she sighed and let her head drop back onto her folded arms, dreaming about what Friday night would bring.

~ End Lesson Two ~

# Lesson Three

Chapter 3 of 7

A lesson on patience ...

## Lesson Three

It was amazing how a single kiss, a kiss that would have been insignificant to someone a little more experienced perhaps, became an obsession. It was all Hermione could do to keep her mind on her Potions homework. It had taken an hour to write half a foot on the various antidotes using black beetles; she found her attention wandering and her eyes glazing over as images of Professor Snape plagued her mind. Images of him standing at the front of the class, images of him lecturing, of him stalking the classroom, of long fingers chopping ingredients... stirring a cauldron...

"Oi, Hermione." Ron's whisper broke her reverie. "Do you feel all right? I can't believe I actually finished my essay before you."

Sitting up straight, she stared at Ron blankly for a moment while reality slowly infiltrated her muddled brain. The lights in the library seemed to burn garishly for a moment, and the sight of students studying at the tables around her felt just a little off, a little surreal for some reason.

"Mm, yeah. I'm all right, thanks," she muttered, trying to clear her head of the visions that clung like stubborn cobwebs in the corners. She sighed. She was never going to finish this essay at this rate.

"You don't look all right. You wanna copy off me for a change?" Ron handed her a slightly wrinkled and smudged piece of parchment.

Laughing a little at the irony of the situation, she said, "No, Ron. It's all right. I can finish it before class tomorrow." She started to place her books back into her satchel and looked around to make sure she wasn't forgetting anything, double-checking for good measure. "I think I'm going to go up to my room. I just can't concentrate on this right now."

"Well, if you change your mind, I'll be in the common room later," Ron added, bowing his head as Madame Pince reproached him silently from a few tables away.

Hermione nodded in answer, tucked her bag up onto her shoulder, and left the library. The walk back to the dormitory did nothing at all to clear her mind like she had hoped. The air was warm and slightly humid, clinging to her skin, fogging her head, making her yawn. She tried to stifle one behind the back of her hand when she heard voices up ahead.

"You would do well to remember that, Mr. McGroarty." It was unmistakably Professor Snape's voice, and she slowed her pace unconsciously, wanting to hang on every word, even if the words were not meant for her. "I doubt you wish to spend your Friday night in detention."

That made her stop short. Tomorrow was Friday. Tomorrow she was supposed to spend detention in the Potions classroom for inappropriately kissing her teacher. Her stomach fell somewhere below her knees at the thought of his lips upon hers, softly encouraging her to yield to him, tenderly caressing her own.

Euan McGroarty nearly ran into her as he fled around the corner, forcing her to focus on her surroundings.

"Sorry," he squeaked and rushed down the hallway in an attempt to make it to Hufflepuff territory before Professor Snape could follow.

Hermione murmured something unintelligible in response, turning back only to run into the source of the boy's chagrin: the professor himself. It was a good thing Professor Snape was more aware of his surroundings than she, for he arrested the forward motion of her body with ease. The weight and heat of his palms seemed to burn her flesh as they rested upon her shoulders.

"You should watch where you are going, Miss Granger." His voice dropped to a less intimidating timbre. "I would hate for you to get hurt... or worse, for you to earn yet *another* detention."

She wished his hands were holding her up instead of keeping her at bay. Her knees had suddenly lost their firmness and were in danger of giving out at any moment. She thought momentarily of collapsing against him, forcing him to accept her weight... anything to find herself in his arms.

Instead, she answered, "I'll keep that in mind, sir."

"Of course," he continued at a near whisper, "I'm sure I could think of myriad things for you to do."

The intensity of his gaze washed like a wave over and through her. Not only was it difficult to stand any longer, she could hardly see. Want had never been so palpable; it had clouded her vision. He left her standing in the open hallway to stalk his next unwitting victim, and she found herself leaning against the wall for support.

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Warm hands and delicate kisses caressed her body. She had never felt anything like this before. The intensity was all-consuming. Desire lay upon her like a heavy blanket, covering every inch of her body. No one had ever kissed her so thoroughly, so simply, yet so exquisitely. Each touch of his skin against hers sent quick electric jolts down to her center, making her flesh swell in anticipation.

"Tell me what you want," he coaxed from somewhere in the darkness. She couldn't see him; all she heard was bittersweet dark chocolate as it melted over her senses. "Tell me what you need."

His voice was like an appendage, stroking her, building her up, bringing her closer to the edge. All the while, his lips nipped and teased the line of her jaw up to her ear, nibbling the edges, making her shiver. At the same time, all ten of his fingers seemed to spread out over her body, never quite where she would have liked but teasingly close, as he massaged her shoulders, creating an unbearable tension that screamed for release.

His heated breath tickled the inside of her ear. His tongue traveled delicately in its wake, and vaguely, out of the haze of desire he was brewing inside of her, she heard him murmur, "Tell me, Miss Granger. Do you want me?"

Tiny pinpoints of light burst into a golden display of fireworks behind her closed lids. Her back arched off the bed with the force of her need collapsing in on itself in silent convulsions, her tortured flesh succumbing to the touch of his voice. Her nipples ached. Her skin seemed to beg for more. Her loins throbbed in uneven time with her heart, wishing for more, for something more substantial than a whisper, than an ethereal touch.

She tried to slow her breathing, which came in harsh bursts, moist against her lips, heavy in the already heavy humidity of the room. Relaxing, she realized her nightclothes now stuck to her uncomfortably, and even her hair was a little damp from the exertions of her dream. It was only a dream.

But, what a dream it was. She had gone to bed thinking of him and had willed herself to dream of her professor, of meeting him in the hallway, of perhaps stealing a kiss in a darkened alcove away from prying eyes. Instead, she had fallen into an abstract vision of hands and lips that never left her body, yet frustratingly refused to roam beyond the boundaries they had already visited. Still, what little her dream professor had afforded her had ignited a fire so strong that her body was consumed by it. She expelled the last of her dream with a final, shaky breath.

It was a little unsettling to realize that she wanted her professor in such an inappropriate way. Looking at the clock next to her bed, she counted down the hours until detention.

~~~o o~~~

Thankfully, morning found her a little more coherent than the night before. She finished her essay quickly before breakfast, before she had a chance to lose her mind to the realm of fantasy once again. Once she finished her work, she would allow herself the luxury of a little daydream, but not until then. She hoped so, anyway.

Her bag packed, she jogged down the stairs to meet the boys for breakfast. Fridays were always a little more active than usual, and this one was no different. Girls hung about the doorways and traveled between the bathroom and their dorm rooms, readying themselves for the day. They always put a little more into their appearances on Friday mornings, hoping for that last minute date, not wanting to be left out of the goings-on of the weekend.

Hermione smiled at a couple of first-years as they timidly moved out of her way. Remembering how intimidating the seventh-years had seemed to her when she first began Hogwarts always made her give the younger students an extra smile or a word of encouragement. She skipped down the last three steps into the burgundy tapestried room to find Harry and Ron casually lounging about the far wall, talking to Ginny and one of her friends.

Ron waved, noticing her approach. "Oi, Hermione! You ready?"

"More than ready. I'm famished!" she replied, smiling, and they pushed their way through the portrait hole along with the majority of their house.

For some reason, that morning Hermione felt different. She felt more alert than usual, more aware of her surroundings, and her senses were heightened. The students milled about as usual, but she saw them from a different perspective. She watched as they laughed, talked, nudged, and joked with each other, almost as if she were not being jostled between Harry and Ron. Almost as if she were an outsider.

What had changed between yesterday and this morning, she wondered? She knew that it had something to do with her newfound interest. She highly suspected it was because her newfound interest was a professor and not a student. All the other girls, she noticed, were whispering and giggling over this boy in Ravenclaw or that one in Hufflepuff. Doesn't he look smashing in his Quidditch uniform? How would he react if I just grabbed him by his tie and snogged him to death? Isn't he just the perfect height to do it up against the wall? The girls giggled. Hermione had to shake her head at the last one, trying to clear the image of some fourth-year and Colin Creevey shagging in, hopefully, some very dark corner.

Suddenly, Hermione knew that the problem wasn't that hers was a more worthy love interest, but that she didn't have anything in common with those of her fellow students. How many girls had crushes on professors that had ever come to fruition? Not many, she wagered. She felt decidedly different, more so than usual. She just couldn't imagine walking with a gaggle of girls, giggling over pulling Professor Snape down by the lapels of his teaching robes and snogging him to death... or shagging on top of a Potions table. It made a nice image, but it wasn't something to converse about.

Harry nudged her sharply in the ribs, making her look up and scold him crossly. "What was that for?" she asked, rubbing her side.

"Where are you this morning, Hermione? We've been talking to you, and you don't even hear us. Has someone bewitched your mind or something?"

It was then she noticed that Ginny had her arm laced through Harry's, albeit inconspicuously. She glanced back up at Harry briefly, avoiding his gaze. She had totally missed the fact that her friends' relationship had advanced another step.

She sniffed, a little annoyed with herself. "I don't know. I guess my attention is wandering a little."

"A little?" Ron exclaimed. "Only we've been saying how you've got this dreamy look in your eyes like Luny Lovegood and thought that maybe visions of Wrackspurts were dancing through your head."

"Thanks a lot, Ron." She half-scowled in his direction, although more so at herself than at his comment. She knew she was behaving oddly...for herself, anyway. Still, if people were going to start comparing her to Luna Lovegood, she had better snap out of this half-conscious state quickly.

The Great Hall seemed louder than usual. On second glance, however, the amount of activity was not unusual for the last day of classes before the weekend. She sighed, edged her way onto the bench next to Ginny, and reached for some toast and pomegranate jelly.

She ate in silence while everyone chattered around her, trying to keep her mind on what was going on. Finally deciding to ignore the din, she gently steeped her tea and let her mind wander. Ron had really hit home with that remark about Luna and Wrackspurts, so she determined to stay firmly rooted in reality for the rest of the day. Then, for some odd reason, her gaze passed over the head table, and she noticed that Professor Snape was also dipping a tea bag into a steaming cup of hot water.

He didn't notice her right away, so she gave in to the temptation and watched as his long fingers plucked the tea bag from the mug and gingerly squeezed out the last drops of liquid before discarding it. The motion of his hands, quick and decisive yet never rushed, reminded her of the deftness of his hand at chopping herbs and roots, his adeptness at knowing just when a cauldron needed to be adjusted to a low simmer. A low simmer... It was an appropriate analogy to how her body was reacting.

"...be late for Potions. Hermione!!" Harry grabbed her book bag from beneath the bench, effectively knocking her out of another daydream. Eyes finally coming into focus, they met Professor Snape's steady gaze from beneath a raised brow.

She grabbed her bag and followed her friends quickly to their first class of the day.

~~~o o~~~

"I don't think I did that badly," Hermione retorted hotly. "So what if I mixed wormwood with monkshood? It's an honest mistake. They're used in almost nearly the same potions."

"Sure, it's an honest mistake for a first-year," Ron argued. "Even I knew the answer."

"Well, then, why didn't you raise your hand, Ronald Weasley, if you knew the answer? I mean, you could have saved me the embarrassment."

"Why should I raise my hand when you always raise yours? I can just sit back and settle neatly into the background, never having to answer a single question with you there to do it for me."

Ron grinned. She knew he was teasing her, baiting her into an argument, but she wasn't about to fall for it. Not tonight, at any rate. She had detention in 15 minutes.

"Sorry, Ron, but if you're looking for a little excitement, why don't you have a go at Harry? He seems to be getting quite excited."

Hermione waved her hand in Harry's direction, drawing Ron's attention away from her and onto his little sister who was sitting squarely on the lap of his best friend. They were in the middle of a tickling match, and Ginny was writhing and squealing on Harry's lap.

"I'll see you later, Hermione," Ron said brusquely, walking over to break up what little action his best friend was getting.

She had to chuckle at that. She could draw Ron's attention so easily in different directions, freeing herself up for things she would rather be doing or thinking about. He was predictable, like an old pair of shoes. When she was with him, she knew exactly how he would act to a given situation.

He was so unlike her professor, whom she had thought she had figured out a couple years ago, but whom she now knew could be so... so... what was the word she was looking for? Sexy didn't do it justice. He wasn't a sexy man. Although, she supposed that wasn't a fair assessment since she had always seen him in layers of clothing. How could one discern sexiness properly without a decent view of the other's body?

No. Sexy wasn't the word, but perhaps passionate was. The man had an underlying passion that he hid beneath all those robes, yet she could sense it in the tone of his voice and the touch of his hand....

Blast! Where did the time go? She had less than five minutes to reach the Potions classroom. She was going to be late.

~~~o o~~~

She reached the Potions classroom a little more disheveled than she would have liked and entered it nearly two minutes past seven o'clock. She winced as she opened the heavy oak door and entered. There were two other students already at work, one scrubbing cauldrons with his sleeves rolled up past the elbows and the other chopping something with extraordinary care. They both grimaced at her in sympathy as she entered and took a seat in the middle of the room.

"You're late, Miss Granger," the professor's voice drawled from the storage cupboard. "I would take points from Gryffindor, but I have a much more satisfying way to punish you for your indiscretion."

She stood and walked toward the cupboard to find him standing on a tall ladder, peering down at her. "I am so sorry for being late, Professor. It's inexcusable."

"Mm," he replied noncommittally, lowering his voice below the scrubbing and the chopping of the students beyond the door.

He slowly stepped down the ladder and off the last rung to stand in front of her. She craned her neck to meet his eyes, noticing how dark his irises had become, how his eyes looked like vast oily pools when his pupils were dilated to such a degree. One of his hands reached out to trace the line of her jaw, ending at her chin, holding it in place.

"Umm... what would you have me do, sir? For...for my punishment, that is," she stuttered slightly, a little nervous at his close proximity.

"Well, let's see. I have Mr. Greene scrubbing cauldrons as a punishment for melting yet another one of mine today in class. Then, I have Miss O'Neal chopping Mandrake root as a punishment for forgetting half of her Potions kit this afternoon, of which her knife was one of the forgotten items. As for you," he breathed, his volume lowering even more and the distance between the two of them closing, "I was tempted to have you brew the Draught of Living Death to teach you the importance of time, but I haven't enough soporiferous beans. I suppose the importance of timing can be taught in a different way."

His hands had dropped to her hands, and he slowly drew his fingers up the length of her arms, pausing briefly at her elbows and retreating back to her hands. She felt as though she were about to faint from lack of oxygen when his fingers began playing amongst her own, lacing through them and slipping around them, yet never quite grasping her hands in his.

Drawing in a sharp breath, she asked, "H...how would you sug...suggest I learn that, sir?"

She only wished she didn't sound so nervous. One of his hands lifted and brushed back a lock of hair that had come out of place in her hurry. He carefully tucked the lock amidst the others that she had pulled back into a loose braid earlier that day. Feeling his fingers perform such a personal act as fixing her hair eroded her self-control nearly to the breaking point. She grasped tightly onto what little she had left.

"Understand, Miss Granger, that timing is everything. Just like brewing a potion, one's actions should also be carefully timed. If one does not pay attention, time can slip away, and one can react too late to a given situation, thereby negating the reaction. On the other hand, if one is too eager and reacts too quickly, the result is less than... satisfactory, even to the point of being displeasing."

The sound of his voice gently stroked her nerves much like his hands were doing to her body. They teased the edges of her awareness just enough to titillate all of her senses without overloading them. The combination of his voice traveling up her spine and his hands caressing her shoulders in light circles was infinitely better than the grab-and-grope approach many boys her age adopted.

"How..." She cleared her throat to find her voice. "How does one know what the proper timing is?"

It was too difficult to speak with his hands touching her, moving around her neck, nestling in her hair, unfastening her braid, and letting her hair fall loosely about her shoulders. It was so difficult to keep her eyes from falling shut, from losing herself in this sensual embrace. Unable to prevent her body from reacting any longer, she placed one of her hands on his waist.

"Mmm... Very good, Miss Granger," he murmured into her hair as she circled her thumb over his hipbone.

Even over the robe, frock coat and shirt, she could feel the bone of his hip through the flesh. Suddenly, she wanted to know him further, to find out what all of him felt like under the overly conservative clothing he always wore. Both hands moved around his body and up toward his collar. The professor's eyes closed momentarily as she passed over the buttons on his chest and smoothed across his lapels. However, when her fingers eagerly reached the top button of his coat and began to work it free, they snapped open and he stayed her touch.

"Remember what I said: Do not react too quickly."

She didn't understand why he was stopping her. Any red-blooded male would appreciate a woman's hands all over his body... and more. She wanted to feel him, to know him, and she was tired of waiting, tired of the tension she had been feeling almost continuously these past few days. She felt as though she were about to explode.

"But I want to feel you. *I need* to know what you feel like beneath my fingers. I..."

He stopped her frantic whispering with a single finger on her lips and carefully pushed her against the shelves. The length of his body pressed against hers, and he looked down into her eyes, expecting her to understand how her quickly roaming hands could lead to much, much more. He smirked as her eyes widened slightly.

His body did not press up against hers with any pressure. In fact, she could have slipped under his arm and walked away quite easily. His body touched hers through the layers of her clothing very lightly, much like his fingers had caressed her shoulders and face, much like his mouth had softly teased her own, much like his voice had traveled up and down her spine. Yet, beneath all those layers, his hardness was very present and pressed against her stomach just enough that she knew without a doubt that it was there.

At that moment, through the haze of the passion and the desire that boiled feverishly in her brain and made her skin flush with heat, she knew that if she let her hands go unchecked, she would get more than she bargained for. She wanted this feeling to last. She didn't want to culminate their interaction too quickly. She wanted to find out more about him, but not in a way that would negate everything else. She wanted to know his mind as well as his body.

"That's right," he said. "If I would have allowed you to continue, we would have reached an end, but perhaps not exactly the end you were looking for."

She nodded and he stepped back. "I understand. I see what you mean, but I don't understand how you can remain so calm." Her hands trembled as she fixed her hair back once again into a braid.



He looked at her thoughtfully for a second and smiled almost imperceptibly. "I think you've learned your lesson tonight," he said. "You are excused."

Hesitating, wanting to reach out to him but not sure if she should, she said, "Good night, sir."

"Good night, Hermione," he replied as she turned to leave the classroom.

~ End Lesson Three ~

## Lesson Four

*Chapter 4 of 7*

The professor's literary prowess.

### **Lesson Four**

Hermione walked blindly back to the Gryffindor dormitories. Never before had she felt this wound up, this dissatisfied. He did say that improper timing could lead to a very dissatisfactory result. He was wrong! *This* was dissatisfactory.

Still, she knew in a way...way back in the deep recesses of her brain...that he was right. Instinctively, she knew that if they were to go farther at this point, she would know nothing of the man himself other than the feel of his skin under her fingers. The gods only knew where it would have gone from there. It would have been disappointing...or rather, she would have been disappointed in herself.

How was she supposed to get to know the man beneath the robes? That was the dilemma. If he were one of her classmates, things would have been simpler. She could ask him to accompany her to Hogsmeade, study with him, eat lunch with him, go up to the Astronomy Tower with him...but she couldn't do that with Professor Snape. She needed to speak with him. He always seemed to have the right answers.

"Candied Gillyweed," she said at the empty portrait.

The Fat Lady had found a boyfriend and set the password on automatic on Friday and Saturday nights. Hermione shook her head, still incredulous that an oil painting could have a boyfriend. She had never thought of it before, but there was a good chance one could find the occupants of a painting in a compromising position. It was a scary thought.

Going up to her room, Hermione had an idea. Taking up her bottle of green ink, a quill, and a neat, blank piece of parchment, she began to write:

*Dear Sir,*

*Your tutoring sessions, I must admit, have been most informative. Even this last was helpful, if not a little frustrating. I was wondering what your plans were for our next lesson ... and if, perhaps, you could impart a little advice as to how to alleviate the frustration?*

*The lesson in timing has taught me that I want to get to know the man who has shown such interest in me. Which brings to mind another question: How do I get to know this man better?*

*Always,*

*Your Pupil*

Satisfied that the letter was personal enough, but not so personal as to give away either of their identities should it be intercepted, she walked over to the fireplace, threw in a touch of Floo powder, and sent it the note flying directly into Professor Snape's office.

~~~o o~~~

Professor Snape collapsed into the chair behind his desk with a sigh. The last student had left detention, and now, all he had to occupy his mind were thoughts about his increasing interest in one Hermione Granger. He had the burden of being the adult in this burgeoning relationship...if it could be titled as such...which meant that it was his responsibility to make sure what happened was not inappropriate in any way.

Suddenly, the Floo sprang to life, and a neatly folded piece of parchment came flying through, landing in front of him. Picking it up, he read it. Then, he read through it again. Perhaps just a *touch* inappropriate would be okay, as long as things didn't get too out of hand.

Taking quill in hand, he poised it above a fresh piece of parchment.

My Most Eager Pupil,

It pleases me that you have absorbed the message I tried to impart at our last meeting and wish to get to know the man better before taking the relationship to the next level.

As for the frustration, I must admit that I feel it too. From our past encounters, I must assume that your experience in such matters is lacking, or you would not be asking for my advice.

Let me begin by saying that you, my dear pupil, have blossomed into quite a beautiful young woman. From afar, I have noticed how the curves of your body have most recently filled out your uniform and robes. Often, I have wondered how you would feel beneath my fingers as I parted the fabric, exposing your skin to my touch. Ah, the thought has plagued my dreams on more than one occasion.

I imagine your skin to be soft and pliable, utterly delectable. I long to run my fingers down your throat and part your clothing, to place my lips upon the sensitive skin at the base of your throat and taste the sweet-saltiness of one of the most sensual places on your body. I yearn to breathe in your scent and let it intoxicate me into continuing further. I wish to rid you of the silky lace I occasionally see peeking over the opening of your blouse with a not-so-gentle grasp of my teeth. I ache to devour the flesh that

lies beneath, winding my tongue around the bud of each peak, pulling each into the waiting warmth of my mouth.

Would you welcome such advances, dear pupil? Would your body form itself into my embrace, arch into my longing, loving touch? Can you feel my mouth upon your bosom, silently searching for answers, beseeching for more?

The sweetness of your skin is nothing compared to the heat in my loins at the thought of having you at my mercy.

Your Beloved Tutor

It was daring, but it was how he felt. She wanted to learn more about the man, and she was going to learn more about him by learning more about herself first. With a faint smirk, he folded up the parchment, Summoned a house-elf, and asked...under extreme secrecy...that it be placed on top of her pillow.

~~~o o~~~

Hermione sat at her desk a few minutes longer until all hope of receiving a reply drained away. Perhaps it was a little too much to hope for. Perhaps he hadn't been in his office, or perhaps her note had gotten lost amidst the piles of parchment that usually graced his desk.

With a deep sigh, she pulled out her hairclips and wandered over to her bed while undressing. Her mind wandered ... remembered his fingers briefly in her hair, his body briefly against hers. She nearly growled in frustration as she finished unbuttoning her blouse and fell backwards upon the bed. What was she going to do?

It was then that the edge of the parchment lying upon the pillow caught her eye. Her head turned sharply, knowing it had not been there before. Snatching it up, heart pounding in her throat, she unfolded it and began to read.

Her fingers traced the path his lips longed to travel, and her breath hitched as he yearned to breathe in her scent. It felt as though an odd form of magic resided in this note, making her feel every word he had written. Unconsciously, her fingers followed his mouth as it tore the bra from her breasts, and she could swear she could feel the suction of his lips against her nipple....

With great difficulty, she tore her hands away and sat up. The mirror that stood next to her bed portrayed a girl with flushed cheeks, disheveled hair, and a wild, wanton look in her eyes. Her nipples were painfully hard, her hips tipped forward as if to ... invite further attentions from her beloved tutor.

Suddenly conscious of the lesson she was about to learn, she fished for the spare quill and parchment she kept at her bedside.

*My Beloved Tutor,*

*I sit before you, skin flushed, shirt undone, wishing that I could feel your hands upon my body. Never before have I been affected in such a way by mere words upon parchment. I am undone at your literary advances.*

*Is your body as affected as mine, I wonder? I imagine you beside me, ready to devour me in my dishabille, while quite overly dressed yourself. What would you do if I undid each of the buttons upon your coat, slowly, achingly, as you kept me at your mercy?*

*What would you do if I did not stop when I reached the button at the top of your trousers? Would you stop me as I released you from the confines of the fabric that closed you off from the rest of the world? Would you stop me if I lowered my lips to the hardened flesh that lies beneath, flesh that I felt only briefly at our last encounter?*

*Does the heat in your loins match the heat in my own, I wonder?*

*Your Eager Pupil*

The fire that her professor had kindled with his passionate reply to her quickly-penned note burned even hotter with this response. She had no idea something so simple, so detached, could be so intimate. After a brief struggle with her conscience, and after refastening her blouse, she Summoned the same house-elf that had left this note for her. When it appeared at her side, the house-elf assured her that the secrecy of their correspondence had been requested by Professor Snape, and she need only to Summon him if she wished to send anything else.

Blushing, she handed the note to the house-elf and watched him disappear.

~~~o o~~~

"Professor Snape, sir," the tiny voice squeaked from the doorway.

The professor looked up and inverted the book he had been reading while waiting for Hermione's response. "Thank you," he said as he took the note from the house-elf. "I may need you later. I'll call when I do."

"As you wish." The house-elf bowed and disappeared with a pop.

He stared at the note for a moment, wondering how she might have taken this attempt at seduction. She had wanted to get to know him, and he thought how better to do so than to share a bit of his literary prowess. Sitting on the sofa in his sitting room, he took a deep breath and unfolded the note.

He groaned as he read the last line. Miss Hermione Granger really was a fast learner. The heat in his loins had been raised to nearly the boiling point. He covered his firmness with his free hand and closed his eyes, caressing himself slowly through the fabric.

Would he stop her if she took the liberty of disrobing him? Would he stop her eager mouth as it engulfed his length, consuming him? It was all too apparent that she was indeed as eager to consume him as he was to devour her. No, he wouldn't stop her at all.

Reaching for the quill and parchment he had placed on the side table just moments before the house-elf had reappeared, he began to etch out his response.

My Most Eager Pupil,

The heat in my loins has become an unquenchable fire, which I am certain only you can appease. What shall I do, my pupil, when all I want to do is uncover each mystery your body has to offer, one at a time?

I know now that my advances shall not be shunned. I look forward to the day when your body shall be displayed before mine eyes, glorious in its freshness, untouched by any other. May I rest my mouth here upon your bosom and trail my way lower to the slight curve of your belly? May I touch you and twine my fingers in the curls that hide that which I long to taste? May I part your desire-weakened knees and devour you below as I did above?

Be assured, dear pupil, that I feel for you as much as...nay, even more than you feel for me, for in my experience, I know what can be ...and what will be when the time is right.

Your Beloved Tutor

He composed himself enough to Summon the house-elf and send off the note...a much shorter note than he had originally planned. Unable to resist any longer, he leaned

back and stroked himself through his trousers to await her response.

~~~o o~~~

When the house-elf delivered the next installment of their correspondence, Hermione could scarcely breathe. Never before had she imagined a man wishing to devour her...there. Her hand slipped down her stomach to rest on that which he promised to touch, to kiss, to devour. Her skirts only got in the way momentarily as she reached beneath her knickers to feel the dampness that his latest note had elicited.

She moaned. How she wanted to be displayed before him, to allow his eyes to roam over her naked body. How she wanted his mouth upon her breasts, her belly, her aching center.... Still, she needed to quickly write a response before she succumbed to this fantasy and let it take her over the edge.

*My Beloved Tutor,*

*How I long to feel your hands upon my body and your kisses upon my flesh. My nipples ache with need...with the desire of feeling your touch. I long for the day this will happen...and I dare not ask when this will be. In the meantime, I can only hope my words will suffice.*

*How will it be when your lips meet mine in a kiss more passionate than any we have yet shared? How will it be when our bodies join as one and partake in a dance even older than time? How will it be when we quake in each other's arms as we succumb to the pleasures we have slowly cultivated?*

*Until then, we can only dream of what it will be like when we finally meet, mouth to mouth, body to body, soul to soul.*

*Your Eager Pupil*

Without hesitation, she Summoned the house-elf so it would quickly remove the note from her possession before she decided to change a thing. And then, she finished what had been begun with quill and ink, with fingers as heated and lust-driven as he claimed he was....

~~~o o~~~

He had been holding back until the house-elf delivered her answer ... holding back from opening his trousers and releasing the ache in his loins. He dismissed the house-elf as quickly as it appeared and nearly tore the parchment as he opened it to read her reply.

Less than a minute later, his fingers were fumbling at the fastenings to his trousers, desperate to free himself, desperate to relieve the pressure that threatened to numb his mind. A few strokes, a few thrusts of his hips, and a few shuddering breaths later, he found his release, moaning her name ... wishing that he were moaning it into her heated skin instead of the cool air.

It took some time for him to be able to pen the final note of the evening, but he wouldn't have her thinking he had abandoned her.

My Eager Pupil,

I have dreamt of what it would be like when we finally are able to be together. I am enraptured at the possibilities that lie before us.

So many questions could be asked between now and then, and I am eager to ask...and answer...every single one. When all is said and done, what I long for most is that at the end of the day we are satisfied with each other ... and in each other. I long to one day be able to hold you, skin against skin, as we fall asleep in each other's arms.

Your Beloved Tutor

~ End Lesson Four ~

Lesson Five

Chapter 5 of 7

Getting to know you ...

Lesson Five

"Hey, H'mione, y' wanna come to Honeydukes wiff us?" Ron spoke around a mouthful of Chocolate Frog.

"We've already been to Honeydukes," Hermione replied, "and if you eat any more sweets, you are going to give yourself a stomachache."

"So?" Ron answered defensively, swallowing. "Harry gave me a gift card to Honeydukes as an early Christmas present, and I mean to spend every single Knut of it." Ron procured the gaudy, flashing, multicolored piece of paper in front of her nose, as if she needed proof that he actually had one.

"Why do boys love to eat until they become ill?" she asked rhetorically. "Actually, Ron, I need to go to the post office and send an owl. I'll meet up with you later."

"Suit y'seff," Ron mumbled around another mouthful before turning and walking off to meet up with Harry and Ginny. Not wanting to witness the results of all that sweet-binging, Hermione vowed to stay as far away from her friends for the rest of the outing. Let them deal with the repercussions; Ron would undoubtedly live through it, just like he had several times before..

Sighing to herself, Hermione fished through her bag as she walked, searching for the list of books she wanted to order from Flourish and Blotts. She bemoaned the fact that Hogsmeade didn't have a proper bookshop. She daydreamed of one day opening a bookshop here, somewhere where the more studious students could relax on Hogsmeade outings, someplace cozy and inviting ... maybe someday.

List in hand, she entered the post office and took a piece of parchment from the bin labeled 'Economy White' and grabbed a quill.

She had nothing of importance to order today; she simply felt the need to add to her already overflowing library. Hogwarts didn't allow students enough bookshelf space in her opinion. Most of her library had already been shrunk to the size perhaps a small house-elf would appreciate. She wondered if house-elves liked books ... It was certainly a thought for another day.

She began scribbling her order:

To: Flourish and Blotts

Diagon Alley, London

Please send the following to Hermione Granger at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry:

Persnickety Potions by Alice LeBerger, P.M.

Algorithms and Arithmancy by Drusilla Atwater

Lady Chatterly's Lover by D.H. Lawrence (Muggle Literature)

Please charge Gringotts account, as per usual. H. Granger

She blushed as she quickly printed the last title. Usually, she allowed herself to purchase one book for pleasure after all the serious books were bought...and this book certainly was for pleasure, if word about the dormitory could be believed. She had seen this title on the shelves of the Muggle Literature section of Flourish and Blotts, so she knew that they stocked it, but she would be entirely too shy to buy it in person...and what if her parents were along? No, it had to be done this way. It seemed the timing couldn't be better as well, what with the professor's literary correspondence of the previous evening ... and all the feelings it stirred within her, all the feelings *he* stirred within her.

She jumped as the wards rang at the entrance to the post office, and the door burst open to admit another patron. Entirely too engrossed in her thoughts over the book order in her hand, she wasn't aware nor prepared for the patrons the door had admitted.

"Hermione! What a surprise seeing you here!" Dennis Creevey's voice had this way of needling its way up her spine...and not in a pleasant way.

Her shoulders knotted up with instant tension; a quick remembrance of Dennis painfully kneading her shoulders made her force them back into a more neutral position. Then she realized she was still holding her list ... and what exactly was on that list. Quickly...perhaps a little guiltily...she folded her order to Flourish and Blotts and turned to greet the brothers.

"Hi, Colin, Dennis. I see you were able to transfigure your frog properly." She gave them a faint smile and directed the post office clerk with a nod of her head to an owl on a red shelf.

"Yes, thanks to you, Hermione," Dennis said. "If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be here." She never noticed before how Dennis's eyes didn't move when his head bobbed up and down, much like an old-fashioned bobble-headed doll.

Ridding her head of that disturbing image, she replied, "Oh, well, you were the one who did the transfiguration, Dennis. Don't sell yourself short."

Hermione quickly handed the folded parchment and a Galleon over to the clerk, muttering, "Keep the change." She wanted to get away from the Creevey brothers as soon as possible, before they asked her to...

"You know, I was wondering, Hermione ... would you be able to tutor me in Charms? I'm barely making an Acceptable in that class. My O.W.L.s are next year, you know."

Too late.

Hermione scrutinized Dennis for a moment, wondering if he truly was being serious about studying early for his O.W.L.s...she had done so herself, after all...or if this was just another ploy to get her alone. She decided it was more likely the latter since Dennis had never been very bookish. Not to mention, what red-blooded boy would want to hole himself up with a pile of books, reviewing charms, when he could be out on the Quidditch pitch or hanging with his friends? Unless...

Hermione made a show of taking Dennis's request under serious consideration and then tried to let him down easy by saying, "I'm rather swamped with studying for the N.E.W.T.s myself. You know, Lisa Turpin is tutoring as well. How about I tell her you're interested, and you can talk to her and make arrangements?"

The smiles fell from both Colin's and Dennis's faces simultaneously, which made Hermione feel positively terrible. She almost gave in and said she would tutor Dennis in Charms, but then she thought of what Professor Snape had said, and what he would say if she did in fact give in, and held firm.

"Oh, okay," Dennis said halfheartedly. "I suppose Lisa would be all right. I heard she's getting straight O's." Colin nodded his head in agreement, though neither of them were smiling any longer.

"Yes, she is. She's second in my class, actually. I'll talk to her this weekend for you." Hermione turned to go, eager to flee the scene. "I'll see you boys around, then!" she shouted over her shoulder and left so quickly that the wards at the door didn't even register her presence.

Her heart was pounding painfully in her chest. Ever since Professor Snape had told her that Dennis was interested in her, she felt panicked every time Colin or Dennis approached her. It was physically uncomfortable to have a conversation with either one of them. All she could think of was how to let whichever brother it was down without hurting his feelings and getting away as quickly as possible. Having someone interested in you when you were not interested in him was absolutely horrible, and she hated it. She wished there was some way to get rid of Dennis's attention once and for all without actually having to tell him to bugger off...though she most vehemently would have loved to do so, if not for her nagging conscience.

She walked for a few minutes, settling herself down, not yet ready to meet back up with her friends. She was not in the mood for the boys' childishness today for some reason. Finally, she found herself in front of Schrivenshaft's Quill Shop and decided to go inside for some new quill tips and a few reams of parchment. And the best remedy for rattled nerves was, of course, a small treat: Schrivenshaft's Holiday Scented Ink. She gingerly sniffed a few samples and decided on a peppermint-scented and a pine-scented one. It was green, and it made her think of Professor Snape. She imagined writing Potions essays in green ink, the parchment smelling faintly of The Forbidden Forest after it rained.... A smile spread across her face as she added it to her purchase, and all thoughts of the unwanted attentions of Dennis Creevey fled her mind.

In her aimless wandering, she walked into the Three Broomsticks, thinking that perhaps Harry, Ron, and Ginny were there, but failed to see them. She did, however, see Lisa Turpin at a table with a group of her friends, and she remembered that she needed to warn her about Dennis Creevey. That out of the way, Hermione headed out into the street. Her friends were still nowhere in sight.

There was still an hour before they were expected to return to the castle, but she no longer needed to be there, all necessary purchases and errands having been made. She was at a loss. Sighing, she decided to head back to the castle early. It was a balmy day, almost spring-like, which was strange for this time of year. There was snow on the ground, but it was soft and slushy. Testing the slush with a toe of her boot, she figured she should probably renew the charm she had placed on them before she left, which protected the leather from getting wet.

The air was cool and fresh, invigorating. She walked along the path briskly, enjoying how the coolness of the air crisped in her lungs. The walk was turning out to be more enjoyable than she had expected. And she definitely didn't want to waste such a glorious day by going inside an old, stuffy castle. A walk by the lake seemed to be in order, and so she took a little detour on her way to the main entrance. Once there, her attention was taken by the antics of the Giant Squid as it undulated across the surface, its long tentacles reaching and grasping at nothing, or so it always seemed.

"Back so soon, Miss Granger?" Professor Snape's voice interrupted the slap-splashes of the squid-infested waters.

Hermione turned her head to see him standing stoically next to her and nodded her head. "Yes. I made all my purchases and lost track of my friends. There didn't seem to be anything else I wanted to do. I just ... oh, I don't know..." Her voice trailed off.

"Let me guess," the professor said. "You don't know why things that used to interest you don't interest you anymore?"

Her head turned sharply, and she met his eyes. "Yes. Exactly!" she exclaimed. But in her excitement over being understood, she briefly forgot that it was in fact a little upsetting to feel alienated from her friends. "In the past few days, I've been listening to conversations, but I don't feel like I have anything to say. Not that I feel like better than any of them, mind you. I feel ... well, older suddenly, and I just ... well, I guess I never really have, but I don't feel like I fit in anymore."

"Hmm," Professor Snape commented and then fell silent for a moment. "In my seventh year, I felt like that often. And I didn't exactly fit in either."

She watched as his eyes crinkled just a bit at the corners and a ghost of a smile passed across his lips ... just for a second. Yet his posture never faltered. While it was okay for Hermione to see him out of character, it wouldn't do for a passing student to see him that way. She understood, though she would have preferred seeing a little bit more of his true demeanor, especially while he was imparting such intimate details of his life.

Hermione turned back and looked across the lake, noticing that the squid had captured a fish and was tossing it back and forth among its many arms.

"How did you deal with it? You know, with not fitting in?" she asked, wanting to prolong their conversation as long as she could.

"Well, I stayed pretty much to myself," he responded. "There was one boy, a year younger, that I suppose could have been called a friend. We studied together often, and I tutored him before he took his O.W.L.s, but other than that, we didn't do much together. I envy you in a way because at least you have friends."

Hearing him admit that was a little shocking. "I nearly didn't have any friends. The only reason Harry and Ron are my friends is because..."

"Because they saved you from the troll. I know," he answered and gave her a wry grin. "Never think that professors are so daft to believe a first-year who is so eager to admit to wanting to confront a troll. We noticed that you were having difficulty fitting in and let the minor fabrication slide."

Hermione discovered her jaw had fallen open, and she shut it with a snap. "I...well, I...I guess I should thank you then."

"Yes, well, don't thank me too much. It was Minerva's idea. If it were up to me...nothing against you, but letting Mister Potter get away with anything is sort of ... irksome."

She laughed and saw the caustic expression on his face. Any passing student at that moment would have thought he was berating her for her audacity to laugh rather than having a simple get-to-know-you conversation. And in fact, some students were already returning from Hogsmeade, she saw with a brief glance down the path. Sadly, she needed to get to the castle to check in, and he needed to go tend to Slytherin House.

"I really enjoyed talking with you, sir," she said.

"And I, you. Perhaps we can continue to get to know each other better soon," he responded, a tell-tale twinkle in one of his eyes.

Hermione blushed. "I would like that ... very much."

"Good. That's settled then," he said and turned on one heel to take his leave.

Hermione continued to watch him until he had passed the turn on the path and was out of sight.

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The Great Hall bustled with pre-holiday excitement. With only three more weeks left to go before Christmas, Professor Dumbledore had the castle decorated while the students were in Hogsmeade. What a wonderful surprise it was to return from holiday shopping to such a festive atmosphere. It breathed new life into the student body, and it had the fortunate effect of making the last remaining days of the term a little easier to bear for both the students and the professors.

Hermione didn't notice any of it, however. She tortured the food on her plate with a fork, poking at it and shuffling it around, unable to eat. All she could think about was the conversation she had had with Professor Snape that afternoon.

As far as conversations went, it wasn't much of one on the grand scale of things. But if one took into account that Professor Snape was a willing participant of said conversation, it made the mind spin. Hermione was literally floating on cloud nine over the fact that Professor Snape had shared so much of himself, a side that no one else...especially a student...rarely saw, if ever.

She was lost amid the din and seemingly forgotten. Harry and Ron were quibbling over their favorite topic...Quidditch, of course. Lavender and Parvati had ambushed Ginny and were sharing their extensive knowledge of *Witch Weekly*-acquired beauty tips. Dean and Seamus had begun a food fight, complete with minor hexes, and a few of the third-years were joining in. Hermione threw up a Shield Charm and warned the boys to stop, but her voice went unheeded, what with all the cheering and jeering.

Sighing, she gave up and went back to poking at her dinner. It was then that her gaze inadvertently traveled past the head table and caught Professor Snape's for just a moment. He must have been waiting for her to look in his direction, for in that moment, she felt a sensation she had only read about up 'til now.

Smooth as silk, he brushed against the barest edge of her mind ... then slipped out, leaving her feeling slightly off-balance.

The edge of the table against her ribcage was the only thing keeping her equilibrium from spinning off into the charmed ceiling above. That was Legilimency? She'd never before felt someone in her mind; certainly, if it felt like that, she would have remembered. Questioningly, she looked up again at the head table, this time deliberately, and made eye contact.

In all of his stoic expression, one eyebrow rose, and she knew that it was a request. A request for him to enter her mind...a melding of minds. What would she find in his? What would *he* find in hers? Slightly nervous, she nodded her head ever so slightly in response.

He slid inside, and it was even more intense than before. His fleeting first touch had been like catching a scent on a breeze and being enticed by its flavor. This was like being immersed in the flow of a rushing river and drinking of its essence. She closed her eyes, inviting him in. The fingers of his consciousness reached out to her and caressed the recesses of her mind intimately, drawing out the images of her and him, her with him, her thinking about him.

She saw their first kiss, not too long ago, as he lectured her on how to let a man know she was interested in him:

*Show that you are interested in what he has to say. Let your body speak to him instead of your words with the way you sit, the way you tilt your head in his direction, even the way you breathe.*

With the image of him bent over her, at a table in the library, his lips gently exploring her own, came the overwhelming feelings that had accompanied that kiss: little thrills of excitement that had found their way into her stomach; a mild perplexity at his advances; eagerness to learn more. But mixed within her own feelings were others, and she realized that his memory of the evening was mixing with her own: slight surprise that she accepted his kiss instead of pushing him away; thrills of excitement that began in his stomach and ended up somewhere down below; an overall, albeit low-key, pervading feeling of ... lust.

It only took a little prodding after the memory of their first kiss to have the images of the night before come spilling forth. They came one right after the other, like a torrent of

water no dam could hold. She could see his words upon the parchment and her replies. They were seared forever in her mind. Their effect upon her body she could feel once more. But more than that, she could also feel the effect her words had had upon him.

She could see images of herself...her remembrances...as she accepted the parchments from the house-elf, as she penned quick and impassioned replies. But, just the same, there were images in her mind that were not her own. Suddenly, she realized that she was looking through Professor Snape's eyes as he sat before a fireplace, nursing a drink, reading something ...

*How will it be when your lips meet mine in a kiss more passionate than any we have yet shared? How will it be when our bodies join as one and partake in a dance even older than time? How will it be when we quake in each other's arms as we succumb to the pleasures we have slowly cultivated?*

The urgency she felt coursing through her veins at that moment was almost unbearable. His urgency was hers. His body was hers. She could feel the hardness, see the hands as they fumbled in their eagerness to release that which ached with need. He needed her. She needed him. Grasping, reaching, thrusting, moaning. *Hermione*. She felt his release. She knew the pleasure she had given him with only a few words....

He left her mind as easily and as swiftly as he had entered it. The void he left was palpable, an emptiness where once it had been full. She felt an intense need to fill the emptiness with something ... but she knew not what. She nearly cried out for him to return, but refrained with the sudden awareness of her surroundings and that there were others who might hear.

With him, she had felt whole, complete somehow. A convergence of memories, of feelings. She possessed half, as did he, and when they were together, they were complete. Without him there, inside of her, she felt bereft. Her eyes frantically sought his, searching the head table, the Great Hall ... but he had left. And he had left her wanting, needing, aching.

The tension in her body was too much to bear. Definitely too much to keep her sitting, staring at a mangled plate of food. She looked around at her peers and felt alienated, wrong, set apart somehow. What she felt, she was sure none of these boys or girls had felt to such an intensity. Tendrils of want curled their way around inside of her, twisting in her stomach, reaching lower, stretching, pulling.... Putting down her fork, she stood up and dazedly made her way out of the Great Hall.

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The sound of his determined footfalls ricocheted up and down corridors, lingering. His thoughts mimicked the echoing of his steps, repeating, turning, stumbling over each other. It had been a long time since he had felt so befuddled. He wondered if he should have attempted such a puerile act, performing Legilimency in the Great Hall with all students and professors as witnesses! He must be losing his mind.

But faced with this young woman, who hadn't yet turned away one of these advances, he felt as though every bit of his sanity was abandoning him. Ever since that first kiss, she had occupied his thoughts every waking minute of every hour. All he could think of was where to discreetly meet her next. All he could do was watch her surreptitiously throughout class, look for a glimpse of her in between classes, feast his eyes upon her in the Great Hall....

He had become hopelessly smitten. Every nerve ending was vibrating with their mind-to-mind contact. Every brain cell was thrilling at the discovery that she was as smitten with him as he was with her. His equilibrium was faltering, but he squared his shoulders and pushed on, walking with feverish step, trying to find someplace, anyplace, where he could bring his emotions under control.

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She walked, and her mind sought; for what she did not know. It reached out in the echoing halls of Hogwarts as her feet climbed stairways, passed under archways, turned corners. Doorways, passageways, portraits, classrooms went by unseen. Her goal: to dispel the physical tension born from the melding of their minds.

Perhaps it was Fate who finally took pity upon her as she passed a certain alcove in a certain dark hallway, far away from any students, any professors, any thought of anything that resembled reality. The desire that filled her mind reached out and pulled her into the darkness, and suddenly, her body was pressed up against something hard, yet yielding; something as dark as the blackness that surrounded her; something that gripped her with a need mirroring her own.

"Shhh...." It was a breath against her hair. Lips pressed against her forehead, her temple, the crest of her ear, just barely ... and hesitated.

This felt real. This was real.

"Hermione." A whisper in the darkness. A request. A request very much like the one that inspired her quest to quench this thirst, that which possessed her feet to bring her here.

And all she could do...all she wanted to do...was press herself against the body, soft yet yielding, hoping beyond hope that he would bring her into the darkness. She tilted her face in the direction she knew those lips would next descend. An invitation. A plea. Desperation.

Her invitation accepted, his lips descended. At first, a soft kiss, designed to tease, to bring her closer. Then his mouth hungrily devoured, lips molding to lips, a perfect fit. Seeking, encouraging, needing more. They desperately sought what the other readily gave. Breath hot against the other's lips, jaw, ear, neck. More.

Chaste, his hands roamed. Robes smoothed over her curves. Feeling those curves. His hands hot, wanting to feel the softness of her skin. His desire burned to delve beneath the folds of her clothing, but yet he held back.

That didn't stop her from exploring. From the silk at the nape of his neck, past the starch of his collar, down the plethora of black pearl buttons, playing under her fingers like the keys of a piano. She could almost hear the glissando as her fingers traveled down, down, down the front of his frock coat, ending at the top of ...

She couldn't help herself. Her fingers splayed over his rigidity, over the rough cloth of his trousers, pushing down just as roughly with the heel of her palm as he feasted upon her neck, nibbling his way to her ear.

"Yesssss."

He urged her on, placing his own hand over hers, guiding her palm down, then up, encouraging her fingers to grasp as much as she could through the thick material. Thrusting. He kissed her fiercely, and she responded breathlessly. Her body literally throbbed with the intensity of her desire, with pure wonder at what was happening between them.

His breath came in shorter bursts against her lips, and her instincts led her on ... leading her to the inevitable. She pushed harder, more urgently, against him. He kissed her harder, frantically: hard, fierce, teeth nipping, breath staccatoing, hips thrusting.

The excitement of it drew her upward. Her body coiled tighter underneath his lips, his hands, his entire body. A whimper escaped her lips as she felt his impending climax draw near. She could almost swear he was in her mind once more, the connection between their bodies was so great. Swiftly, the tension she had been feeling focused into a single knot. She could feel the pressure building ... *Oh, gods.*

The moment he found his release, she could feel the pulsations against her palm, the warmth, the ease with which cloth moved between their flesh. At that moment...that sweet moment...she felt her body emulate his, the tension finally breaking, her body throbbing in time with his spent desire.

Their kisses slowed, their breathing calmed, and finally they relaxed in each other's arms, standing in a small alcove in a remote, dark hallway of the castle. Far away from prying eyes. Far away from students, from professors, from reality....

# Lesson Six

## Chapter 6 of 7

The thrills of intimacy.

### Lesson Six

Hermione woke with a start, greeting the first wisps of morning haze that stole across the lake, fogging and frosting the beveled, leaden windows of her dorm room. Silently, so as not to arouse her dormmates, she gathered her toiletries and headed for the shower. Everyone remained fast asleep, exhausted from their trip into Hogsmeade the day before and from several illicit parties that always broke out on Saturday nights. Many of the sixth- and seventh-years had somehow procured the Weasley twins' latest experiment...still not released for public consumption...which prevented hangovers, provided the nougat was eaten before falling asleep. They had volunteered to be the twins' guinea pigs, and nougats were passed all around before curfew.

Hermione, however, hadn't been partying with her classmates. She had wandered back to her rooms some time after dinner, late enough that Ron had asked where she had gone off to...a question to which she had had no sane answer to give. She had mumbled something about feeling a little knackered, and amidst odd stares, she had stumbled up the stairs to collapse on her bed. No doubt, Ron and a few others had probably suspected that she had already partaken of another House's refreshments, but she couldn't be arsed to care.

She had lain on her bed, palm tingling, remembering his shape through the rough fabric of his frock coat and trousers, remembering his hardness, remembering his length. Her lips had still been throbbing, burning from his feverish kisses and hungry bites as he had thrust against her hand. She had stolen a hand to her swollen lips and inhaled slowly, gathering hints of damp wool and male musk from the hand that only moments ago had so intimately touched him. A whimper had fallen involuntarily from her lips as she savoured his scent, grateful that her dormmates were not here to witness her loss of control.

She had fallen asleep after repeated attempts to satisfy the craving he had bequeathed her. Alas, there had been no satisfaction by her deft, knowledgeable hand. Each attempt had been a mere twinkle of light, the feeblest of stars in a universe full of massive stars, nebulae and galaxies. The universe had been spread before her, and she yearned to explore it. He was the vessel that would bring her closer to the stars.

Hot water pelted her body, working away at her sore muscles...for which she was solely to blame...and slowly brought with it the awareness of the day. She took her time. It was Sunday, and no one was ever up this early. She had studying to do, having fallen a little behind due to her recent inability to concentrate and constant daydreaming. The faucet twisted shut beneath her fingers, and with a sigh, she stepped out to take a towel and dry herself off.

The plan was to go to the library as soon as she was ready. Madam Pince opened the library at six, even on Sundays, and this morning she was going to take advantage of it. Looking at herself in the steam-edged mirror, she felt a little disappointed. The way she had been made to feel in Professor Snape's arms spurred her imagination into believing her appearance was more romantic, less ... bookish. Not even a drying spell improved the wild curls of hair, and with exasperation, she twisted the bulk of it out of the way, the shorter strands falling forward to frame her face. With a wry grin, she decided that at least it was a good hair day ... for her.

A little rouge blushed her lips and heightened her cheeks. A little coal delicately lined the corners of her eyes. She decided finally that she looked the picture of a virgin out of a romance novel, fresh, innocent, and blushing. With a sudden dose of reality and a small chuckle at herself, she wondered who she was trying to impress this early in the morning. And then ... she realized that she would be seeing Professor Snape this morning in the Great Hall and suddenly felt extremely nervous.

She padded silently across her room to put away her soaps and towels, picked up her bookbag, and left the room, determined to quell her nervousness with a healthy bout of studying.

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Hermione was well into the twentieth inch of a ten-inch essay when she realized she wasn't the only one in the library. Stomach muscles clenched and she felt vaguely nauseous as she both hoped and dreaded it was Professor Snape. With more than a little inner turmoil, she finally forced her head upward to greet whomever it was.

Almost simultaneously, a bag landed with a *thunk* on the table across from her, and a grin, too cheerful for this early in the morning, bore down upon her, almost ominously if it were not for the youthfulness of the face which held it.

"Hi, Hermione!"

She could have groaned out loud. Dennis Creevey was the last person she wanted to see this morning, yet here he was. With great difficulty, she forced a smile on her face, though certainly not matching the cheerfulness of his, and schooled her expression into one she hoped would come across as being kind.

"Good morning, Dennis. What brings you to the library so early this morning?" She didn't really care; she wanted him to bugger off.

"Oh, it seems I've got a bit behind in my studying. I saw you leaving the common room earlier. Thought you'd like a study partner," he replied, head bobbing up and down Creevishly.

She hesitated, so the words she really, most definitely wanted to say would remain unsaid, and then hedged. "Dennis, we don't have any classes together."

"Yeah ... well, I know, but it never hurts to have company when you're studying. You never know when you might need someone to bounce an idea off..." He glanced over at what she was writing. "What's that for? Potions? I could look over it for you, make sure you have all the commas in the right place. Make sure you didn't say anything too stupid...not that you'd ever say anything stupid, mind you...because I know how Professor Snape is when he corrects essays. He's positively brutal."

Hermione snatched her essay back from his prying eyes and performed a quick drying charm before rolling it up. Studying was obviously no longer possible unless Dennis Creevey decided to make himself scarce, and she just didn't have it in her this morning to tell the boy to find another ... pursuit. Damn. And she only had seven more inches to go...she was pretty sure anyway. She would have to finish it later this morning, and since the library and the Gryffindor common room were both places Dennis frequented, it would have to be done in the safety of her dorm room.

"No, that's all right, Dennis. I mean, I'm sure you're brilliant at punctuation, but I just realized how late it's getting, and Harry and Ron must be wondering where I've gone off to. Isn't it almost time for breakfast?"

"Um, yeah, I suppose," Dennis mumbled as Hermione crammed parchment, quills, and textbooks into her bookbag.

"I'm dying for a cuppa, and I need to go freshen up a bit before breakfast. See you later?"

Hermione smiled widely, shouldered her bag, and rushed out of the library as gaily as she could. She didn't stop until she was sure Dennis hadn't followed her and then finally let the bloody jolly smile fall from her face. Then she slumped against the wall. She really could do with a spot of tea, come to think of it, and...she looked at her watch...breakfast started in 15 minutes. She'd just go down to the Great Hall and read until the plates appeared.

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The post owls came early that morning; at least they beat Ron and Harry to breakfast, which was a good thing because the parcel that dropped into her lap was from Flourish and Blotts. Looking to either side to assure no one was looking, she unwrapped the small stack of books. The smallest book fell into her lap and bore a pencil sketch of a young woman, posed with a tilted head, staring at the folded hands in her lap. Very demure, she thought, especially for the title which flowered across the top of the page: *Lady Chatterly's Lover*.

Quickly, she wiped her hands on the festive, burgundy, cloth serviette that accompanied her plate that morning. Oooh, this was going to be good. She had been wanting to get her hands on this book for quite some time, but had always been afraid her mother would find it on her bookshelf or in a drawer when putting away the washing or, gods forbid, under her pillow while tidying up the bed. She was of age now, which meant she could do magic at home, and she could easily Transfigure the book into something less ... tawdry.

She jumped as Harry and Ron blustered in like a cold, December wind, plopping down beside her and effectively reducing the heat that had begun to simmer as she anticipated reading this book later on. She had already decided the Potions essay could wait.

"I'll never understand why you waste a perfectly good lie in by studying," Ron grouched as he sat down, hair a-rumple, looking as though he was not happy one whit with being awake.

Hermione looked at the two boys and noticed they both wore the same haggard looks. Ron reached for the bangers and mash, had second thoughts, and instead grabbed some biscuits and pumpkin juice. Harry seemed fine with toast and tea and didn't look as bad off as Ron did. Harry leant over and refilled her teacup for her and just happened to glance down in her lap as he moved to place the teapot back on the table.

"More books? Don't you have enough?" Harry teased.

She moved to tuck the books and her legs further under the table, but before she could, Harry reached out to grab the topmost book from the pile.

"Oi, I've heard of this book. My aunt has it in her bookcase behind the World Encyclopaedia. It's all about this young girl and all the blokes she has it off with," Harry said, aghast, more to Ron than to Hermione.

"Wha'?" Ron exclaimed through a mouth full of biscuit, eyes bugging out of his head. "You're having a laugh. No way. Gimme tha'."

He reached over to take it from Harry, but Hermione snatched it back and tried to keep their prying hands away without damaging the novel. Both boys tried their best to breach her defenses, of course, and most of the Gryffindors and some of the Hufflepuffs started looking in their direction.

"Boys, I...urgh! Will you *please* leave me alone. People are starting to look. I don't want everyone to know..."

"Know *what*, Miss Granger?"

As if Old Man Winter himself had breezed through the room, the voice had rendered all three frozen to the spot.

"Mr. Potter, Mr. Weasley, unhand Miss Granger ... this instant," Professor Snape drawled, spurring the boys into letting go.

Hermione cringed. This was not how she imagined greeting Professor Snape this morning, her two best...male...friends with their hands all over her, and she, having a row over a book. She wasn't even sure this book was allowable reading material at Hogwarts; it hadn't occurred to her until now. Slowly, she turned and glanced at the professor sheepishly.

He stood behind her, dark trousers and frock coat perfectly pressed, standing at attention with hands clasped behind his back, obviously enjoying the discomfort he was causing. Professor Snape glared at the two boys, who were suddenly very interested in piling all sorts of food onto their plates, and was about to leave when his eyes fell on the book she had been fighting over. His eyebrow raised a fraction, and then his eyes rose to meet hers. She blushed ferociously. For a moment, she was worried that she'd be soundly reprimanded in front of the entire student body for having such a book. Instead, he nodded almost imperceptibly at her, and she knew the fire in his eyes had nothing to do with the recently dealt reprimand.

Suddenly, she had the feeling that she had better be quick about reading this book. She wouldn't put it past him to quiz her on it.

~

She finished the book by late afternoon and took her time revisiting the areas she had marked. If Harry or Ron had been around, they would have been disappointed at some of the passages she found most interesting, as they would have rather read scenes where the characters were "having it off." Well, some of those, admittedly, were rather ... titillating to say the least, and she felt rather warm and restless because of it, but the book had actually been rather enlightening in a few areas.

She had laughed when the author wrote, *"And however one might sentimentalize it, this sex business was one of the most ancient, sordid connexions and subjections. Poets who glorified it were mostly men. Women had always known there was something better, something higher. And now they knew it more definitely than ever. The beautiful pure freedom of a woman was infinitely more wonderful than any sexual love. The only unfortunate thing was that men lagged so far behind women in the matter. They insisted on the sex thing like dogs."*

And then she stopped laughing and started worrying a little. This made sex sound like something primitive and carnal, not really something a woman enjoyed as much as a man. But she *had* enjoyed the little interlude she had had with Professor Snape the night before, even though he hadn't touched her as intimately as she had him. But his kisses in chorus with his rising passion brought about by her hand had been enough to drive her own passion higher than her self-ministrations ever had.

And then...and then...the section she kept reading over and over, because it rang so true to the way she ultimately felt, even in her blatant inexperience, was this:

*"Both sisters had had their love experience by the time the war came, and they were hurried home. Neither was ever in love with a young man unless he and she were verbally very near: that is unless they were profoundly interested, TALKING to one another. The amazing, the profound, the unbelievable thrill there was in passionately talking to some really clever young man by the hour, resuming day after day for months ... this they had never realized till it happened! The paradisal promise: Thou shalt have men to talk to! had never been uttered. It was fulfilled before they knew what a promise it was."*

*"And if after the roused intimacy of these vivid and soul-enlightened discussions the sex thing became more or less inevitable, then let it. It marked the end of a chapter. It had a thrill of its own too: a queer vibrating thrill inside the body, a final spasm of self-assertion, like the last word, exciting, and very like the row of asterisks that can be put to show the end of a paragraph, and a break in the theme."*



Yes, yes, yes! She knew something like this could be possible. All she had seen of relationships between the girls and boys in her own House never took any of this into account. It was merely physical attraction. This girl finds that boy fit, and the next thing you know, they're snogging in the corridors, hot and heavy, with their hands all over each other, exploring unfamiliar territory and discovering what it was like to be turned on by the opposite sex. Invariably, the following day the same girl would be sobbing in a corner of the common room, being comforted by a friend or two, because that same boy ignored her at breakfast. It made relationships between boys and girls look rather unattractive, in Hermione's opinion.

The book had been an interesting read overall. She had experienced through Connie's eyes what it was like to mature as a woman, though Hermione hoped that she would be smart enough to make better decisions in her life. It was educational in a lot of ways, eye-opening in others. The character was caught in a loveless marriage and knew not what love was or what it was like to experience reciprocal love. The character struggled to learn and in the end found herself embroiled in a scandalous relationship and pregnant with another man's child. Connie's search for love made Hermione wonder if intimacy happened because of love or if love could develop out of intimacy. In that, the book remained rather vague.

Touching was definitely a form of intimacy, whether it was a stroke of a finger on a cheek, a kiss, or a more involved form of touching ... such as what had transpired the night before between her and the professor in that darkened alcove. The physical contact she had had so far with Professor Snape had certainly been stimulating, yet it was minimal and brief and left her longing for more. She wanted to further explore the sensations brought about by their conversation and heated touches. She couldn't help but fantasize what it would be like if she were to pursue intimacy to its fullest with him.

The professor hadn't pushed her into any minor intimacies she hadn't wanted. In fact, she was ready to do so much more, if only he would ask. She was tired of being young and naïve. She wanted to explore the seemingly limitless capability for pleasure her body offered. So many times, especially these past few nights as she replayed in her mind the encounters with the professor, she had positively ached in her endeavour to feel fulfilled...to be *filled*. There was an emptiness, a hollowness, that prolonged her suffering, and she longed for fullness.

And she wondered if the act itself were as poetic as the author had written when Connie had finally succumbed to love and discovered pleasure in the act of sex, the act of love itself. She had read this passage over and over, her desire to experience the same thing so strong, she felt as though she would die if she didn't experience it soon.

But then she worried, as was her habit. Was it wise to pursue intimacy when there wasn't love? Shouldn't there be love first? She knew from reading the book that love didn't always follow physical intimacy. And same was true of the opposite. Connie hadn't found love until she had found a man who had awakened the sexual spirit within her. And then, the question of whether he loved her or not was always a point of conversation. The nagging bothered Hermione a bit. She'd rather know if a man loved her or not before succumbing to pleasure ... and wasn't pleasure heightened with love?

True, the desires within Hermione's body called out to Professor Snape like a siren. If it were a tangible thing, she imagined it would be rather like Devil's Snare, reaching out and encompassing the man, swallowing him whole. Was there a possibility of love with this man? The thought simmered for a while as she thought about how she had always admired his passion in the classroom, had secretly admired the way he held himself with such aplomb and determination even under the blatant scrutiny of others.

When he had paid her attention that first evening in the library, she had been receptive. She had been surprised that he had noticed her and had been grateful of his aid in the situation with Dennis. When the topic grew more intimate than just professorly guidance, however, she had felt something stir deep within her; a dragon aroused from its eternal slumber had breathed fire into her veins. Admiration had transformed into attraction.

And she was definitely attracted. Their snippets of conversation had not only been stimulating, but revealing. The man behind the professor was coming to the forefront, and she found that she liked the man and could still admire the professor as a separate entity.

Sighing, she closed the book. A look at her watch told her she was nearly late for dinner. Lunch had been lost somewhere between the pages, and to say she was peckish was an understatement. She quickly stuffed *Lady Chatterly's Lover* beneath her pillow where Lavender and Parvati wouldn't find it. She didn't want to add another item to the long list of things the two girls loved to tease her about.

Harry and Ron nearly tackled her as she reached the bottom of the staircase. A half-played chessboard sat in the corner and was almost upended as they bolted toward the staircase to the girls' dorm; she wondered if they hadn't sat there all afternoon, planning to pounce upon her the minute she re-surfaced from her lazy afternoon of reading.

"Alright there, Hermione?" Ron asked, jostling her and drawing her arm to loop through his.

"So, how was the book?" Harry teased with a knowing smile that gave Hermione the impression he had done more than just notice the book in his aunt's bookcase.

"Yeah, anything ... *interesting*? You were up there a really long time," Ron cajoled as he nudged Harry and pulled Hermione toward the portrait hole.

"Right. Uh, learn anything new?" Harry added. He was not as easygoing with the ribbing as Ron was. Hermione could tell Harry was a little shy about his sexuality than Ron.

"Okay. Look," she began and stopped them in the corridor outside Gryffindor tower, removing her arm from Ron's. "The book was actually quite good...and *know* what you're thinking, so don't even say it!" she added quickly as the boys' mouths opened to speak. "And I *did* learn a lot, though not what you'd two expect."

They looked briefly disappointed, no doubt having expected to hear some juicy details of what she had read. The excited blush diminished in Ron's face, and he looked almost deflated. Harry quietly accepted what she had said, but no doubt wanted to get his hands on that book regardless. The boys looked at each other and then rounded on her again, inhaling simultaneously to begin pelting her with more pleas. She cut them off before they could even begin.

"And, no, you may *not* borrow the book," she said emphatically, marching on ahead to the Great Hall.

"Aw, but Hermione!" Ron bawled, inspired by a challenge, and went after her. "Harry said..."

"Oh, and that's another thing," Hermione interrupted. She looked over her shoulder at the two hormonal boys. "Obviously you've already read the book, Harry...you know, the one on your aunt's bookshelf...at least the pertinent bits." She smirked as her friend had the decency to look abashed. "I know you skipped over all the meaningful parts to read the sex bits But the story was about much more than just sex. And that's all I'm going to say about it because both your minds are travelling down one track, and I know there's no hope of a detour."

Her glare made them cower, which gave her the opportunity to continue down the corridor unimpeded. She knew they were just boys, and even the mention of sex reduced their minds to unthinking, unreasoning, blood-deprived blobs of white matter. She hadn't the patience to waste explaining to them what the book was really about.

"But..." the boys chorused from behind her, wanting to prolong the argument in the hope that she'd change her mind about loaning them the book.

"No!" She shouted back. "And that's final!"

The haughty, determined manner she held as she entered the Great Hall...thanks to her exasperating discussion with Harry and Ron...drew the attention of a few Gryffindors as she sat down. She found a seat quite easily, no doubt because her fellow housemates knew not to approach her when she was in one of her moods, and proceeded to pile meat, potatoes, and sweet corn onto her plate. She didn't have to look to notice Harry and Ron entering a short while later, and her senses heightened as they flanked her at the table. They remained silent as they also filled their plates.

After finishing her meal with not a single word out of the two boys, though the cacophony of surrounding conversation rebounded off the walls of the hall, she decided to relax a bit in her stance and felt rather regretful that she had rebuked them as she had.

"Listen, I'm sorry I was such a cow. This is all my fault. I shouldn't have allowed you to see the book in the first place. And actually, I don't mind if you borrow the book," their eyes brightened a bit, "but *only* if you read the entire thing. Perhaps you'll learn a thing or two."

Their eyes extinguished and depression was upon them once more. To boys, sex was all about feeling good, not about learning. Hermione sighed and looked toward the star-studded ceiling and suddenly felt the need for a walk, to be able to breathe without the smothering sensation of teenage hormones that blanketed the room, to collect her thoughts and decide what she wanted right now in her life.

So she gathered her robes, stepped over the bench she had been sitting on, and left the Great Hall, less haughtily than she had entered. She felt an odd tightness, a sort of burning in the back of her head and neck, the sort of feeling one gets when being stared at intently by another person. She knew it wasn't the boys. They never looked at her with such intensity. No one else had reason to look at her, save perhaps Dennis Creevey, but that look would have been one maybe of teenage angst, of longing. No, this feeling was so piercing, so consuming, it could only be one person. It took every ounce of strength she had not to look back at the head table where the owner of those eyes sat. She was afraid that the longing she would betray in looking back at him would be adolescent, rather similar to the look of longing Dennis sported for her. She didn't want to come across as being naïve, as being inexperienced. Though she may be both of those things, the fire that burned in her belly was so much more.

She went up to her dorm to grab her winter cloak and left via the front hall to have a walk about the rose garden. Roses which grew even amongst the winter chill and occasional drifts of snow due to the magic which permeated the very grounds. The headmaster loved beauty even amidst the starkness of the season, and she was grateful, for the glorious blossoms and unfurled buds brought to mind the innocence of youth cradled and caressed by the weathered hands of the more seasoned. It gave her hope that the two...the inexperienced and the experienced...could exist together and find comfort as one.

She sat on a bench toward the outer boundary of the garden, as far away from the castle as she could get, trying to remove herself as much as possible from the rampant adolescent hormones that somehow seemed to diminish her own. And in quiet speculation she sat, watching the sparse descent of snowflakes fall upon the blood-red petals of the roses, settling carefully, melting, being absorbed by the innocent blooms, and it almost seemed as though the flowers thrived from the connection and looked brighter somehow, more vibrant ... more alive.

She hadn't noticed his approach, not until she felt a movement beside her, and her eyes stole to the left to come to rest on the now-occupied span of bench to see black, cloak-clad legs and contrastingly white hands resting comfortably upon them. There was still perhaps an inch or two of space between them in which she could still glimpse the hard stone of the bench, but she favoured to rest her eyes upon something softer, whether it be the wool of cloak or skin of hands, it didn't matter.

Shyly, her eyes stole up the front of his cloak, buttoned against the chill of winter, and finally to the sheen of black hair that hung in front of his face. It was the posture of the man, not the professor, and she felt the intimacy between them even though they were not at the moment touching. It was that feeling of intimacy, the remembrance of where her hand had wandered the night before, that brought her hand upward to brush back the curtain of hair, which blocked his face. She wanted to see him, the man who had accepted her touch, had welcomed it and been satisfied, if only temporarily, by it.

He turned his head toward her at the simple gesture, and her hand moved to his face, seemingly of its own accord. His cheek was soft and warmed still by the heat of the castle. Her eyes slowly travelled up from the curved angle of his chin to the fleshed out line of his lips...lips that she suddenly wanted to taste, but refrained from doing so...to the sharper angle of his cheeks and prominent peak, which was his nose, standing out proudly in stark contrast to the rest of his face, and finally to his eyes, which bore into hers instantly with a heat she was still not used to.

"You missed lunch this afternoon," he spoke, his voice soft to match their surroundings, the voice of the man, not the professor.

"I was reading," she confessed, aware that he'd seen the book in her lap and would assume that's what had entertained her all afternoon.

"And ... did you learn anything from what you've read?" he prodded gently so as not to frighten her away from the subject, but encourage her into conversation.

"Yes, actually," she said and looked down into her own lap, unable to meet his eyes and speak of these things simultaneously. "I learned that intimacy is not the same thing as love, that love may either precede or follow intimacy, though love does not always lead to intimacy and intimacy does not always lead to love. I learned that love can be difficult to find, and mistakes are often made in the pursuit of love."

She paused, but he didn't let the silence settle. "And from all this, what have you discovered in yourself ... What do you desire? What do you need?"

The professor guided the man, she discovered. Sometimes the professor concealed the man he was, and sometimes he released him, allowed him to follow more manly pursuits, but the professor was always there. She smiled and decided she rather liked that, that it made him more intriguing, more challenging ... or was it that he challenged her?

"I know that I'm naïve," she began, a little hesitantly. "More than anything, I am tired of being an inexperienced little girl. I want to experience life, learn everything I can, including the desires of my body ... a body that is no longer that of a little girl." She looked up at him then, suddenly bolder with her admission.

"I fear I am too young to know what love is beyond platonic or familial love. But I am not averse to striving for it. I do, though, want to explore every facet of intimacy I can, whether it be intellectual or emotional ... or sexual. I hope that through this I can possibly learn what love is."

She stopped speaking, only because it looked as though the fire in his eyes had been stoked and was now burning higher and brighter. His whole body tensed on an inhale, and she feared he would never exhale and this moment would be frozen in time forever. Would he never touch her? Would she never feel the softness of his lips against hers? Parts of her felt attracted to him as though he were a giant magnet, and the pull was too great for her to resist.

Without conscious thought, their lips crushed together hard and desperate, as though each were trying to draw in the other, filling all the empty places and fulfilling their desires. Their lips parted only to fill their heaving lungs and satisfy the all-consuming need to drink the other in. Between gasping breaths of chilled winter air...the only reminder of their surroundings...their tongues met with hard presses and shared thrusts. She felt every spear of his tongue deep within her body, where she longed to be filled by the hardness she had felt in her hand the night before. She wanted to spread her legs and welcome him into her, damn propriety and consequences, and feel the supreme satisfaction it would bring. She'd welcome the pain along with the pleasure, make the pain her pleasure as it made her womanhood complete....

And suddenly, he drew back, only slightly in order to rest his forehead against hers, but enough to put an end to their heated kisses. They panted heavily, their breath forming white clouds that dissipated into the rose-scented winter air. It was difficult to be separated even this much when she felt the pull of his body so close to hers. Every inch of her skin longed to be pressed against his. Every fibre of her being was perched on a precarious pinnacle of desire, needing...nay, yearning...for that little nudge that would push her off the edge. She nearly screamed with the frustration of it all.

"We need to slow down," he managed to say between heaving breaths. "I won't have you rushing through this as though it were merely something to get through, to learn, as though it were a book you could read in one afternoon."

He was right, she realized suddenly. She had been thinking of the ultimate act of sexual intimacy when they had yet so far to go and hadn't explored the territory. There were things about him she did not yet know, and things about her he didn't know. She'd rather explore the surrounding fauna first before conquering the mountain. Sighing in agreement, albeit reluctantly, she allowed him to fold her within his arms.

"Need we go slower than last night?" she asked, hoping he'd concede a little bit. The pressure inside of her was at dangerous levels.

"Last night was..." he hesitated, and she held her breath in anticipation of the coming words, "...was mind-blowingly brilliant," he finally said, "and I'm not sure I could retreat from that level of intimacy. I am confident we'll cover anything we may have missed while we deepen our knowledge of each other.... But we shouldn't let our passion and desire guide us past that point until we both are ready."

Her body felt more than ready, and no doubt his did as well, but emotionally, she knew she wasn't ready for that level of intimacy. She burrowed against him and placed a hand on his chest, feeling the buttons of his frock coat through the fabric of his outer cloak. There it rested until it felt the need to be reminded of what else may be felt over

his outer cloak. She was certain of what she would find. But he placed his hand over hers before it could give in to temptation.

"Professor, I..."

"Shhh...." The soft hush brushed the outer rim of her ear, sending thrills down her spine. "I want to give it to you. I want to give it all to you. I..."

She couldn't resist. The student in her broke loose for a moment with the need for questions. "But why?" she asked. "Why do you want to ... to share these intimacies with me? I know almost nothing about all this. I'm nothing special. You could have so much more."

He put a finger on her lips to hush her once again before she could list any more of her supposed inadequacies. He turned her more fully to face him, releasing his hold upon her. With affection, he brushed a curl from her forehead and tucked a few strands behind her ear with a finger that gently trailed across the angle of her jawbone until it reached the point of her chin. There, his hand fell into her lap where it grasped her own. He took both her hands in his, almost imploringly, making her want to understand something, though to put voice to it would not be easy.

"Hermione, I..." the man before her blushed but continued resolutely, "...I don't remember what initially drew my attention to you. Perhaps it was your fierce determination to learn, which impressed me but at the same time was frustrating because no one else seemed to have that sort of drive to learn, to achieve, to excel. I'm not sure when it began. I think I was in denial at first. I saw you in the library one night, tutoring some hapless boy, and I could see the frustration through the kindness you managed to maintain at the boy's ineptness for the subject. I found myself going to the library more often, hoping to see you there, and when I would find you, I'd position myself somewhere no student would find me ... and just watch.

"Something like this had never happened to me before. I'd noticed relationships in the past between colleagues of mine and students...all of age, mind you...and I always felt disgusted, and it resulted in my seeing those colleagues in a different light. When it happened to me ... at first, I was disgusted with myself. But then, I couldn't get you out of my mind, and I ... I needed ..." He stopped for a moment to gather his scattered thoughts, and she remained silent, holding onto his hands for support, knowing that if she broke the silence now with more questions, he would never finish what she knew he had to say.

"I was finally presented with an opportunity that night when you were tutoring Dennis in the library and he was awkwardly trying to show you his interest, though you had not realized it. I was propelled by my desire that night, a desire for you to recognize that I was interested in you. And I suppose in some way I wanted to show you that a man was what you needed, not some ... boy." He said the word disdainfully, and she could tell he had refrained from using perhaps a more derogatory word.

"Professor?" she dared to speak even though he may want to say more.

"Wait." He looked like he was struggling with something. "You can't imagine how many times I've imagined you in my arms, Hermione. It feels so right. Yet, because you're my student, it feels wrong."

"I'm interested in the *man*, not the professor," she said quietly. "Though the combination is stunningly attractive."

If it was a time for confessions, she had just given hers. He looked into her eyes boldly, searching for something, she knew not what. She had spoken the truth as she knew it. She had nothing to hide and boldly displayed what she owned like a true Gryffindor. She took the opportunity to continue while they were still confessing.

"As a professor, you have always impressed me. I've always had the deepest respect for you since the very beginning and have understood the frustration you always displayed so openly at the ... less apt of students." If he was going to hold back on the more derogatory of words, then so would she. "Your knowledge is formidable, and I've always admired it. On the other hand, I recently have begun to admire the man as well as the professor.

"I don't know. I think it began gradually, noticing the way you walked, the way you stood amongst your colleagues, the way you demonstrated little things in class...not the teaching aspect of it, but the way you'd take a knife deftly in your hand to show a student the proper way of chopping ingredients. The gracefulness of your movements, the sureness of them, I couldn't draw my attention away, and I'd have to forcefully refocus myself upon the more studious aspects of what was going on.

"I will even admit to having a wayward fantasy or two, and even once a pretty vivid dream ... " The blush rose forcefully in her cheeks, but she forced herself to go on. "When you kissed me in the library, it ... it woke something inside of me I didn't know was there. You know what it is, and I cannot imagine anyone else teaching me what it is or how to appease it."

"But not as your professor," he said quietly.

"No," she agreed firmly. "I don't want you to teach me as Professor Snape. I want you to teach me as ~~a~~Severus Snape."

She knew confession time had come to an end when he carefully closed the space between their bodies and brushed his lips against hers. So different from his previously frenzied kiss, this one was soft, affectionate, yet it still held within it all the desire he felt for her. She returned it with equal affection, and they held hands and quietly expressed their newfound affection until they heard voices coming down the path.

Both were abruptly reintroduced to their respective roles of professor and student as the owners of the voices grew closer.

"I know she's out here somewhere. Lavender said her cloak is gone," Ron said none-too-quietly.

"But can't you just leave her be?" persisted Harry. It was an ongoing back-and-forth the two always had when she had disappeared and they endeavored to find where she might be.

Hermione looked at Severus sharply. The boys were only halfway down the path, but would find them soon enough. "Let's get out of here. Do you have somewhere we could go?"

With a curt nod of his head, he helped her off the bench and silently led her past the boundary of the rose garden into the gathering darkness outside the glow of the castle windows. The boys' voices grew dimmer until they couldn't hear them any longer. They came eventually upon a series of huts, built much in the same style as Hagrid's, but farther away from the castle and much smaller. She knew what they were, and she had seen them before at a distance. They had been built hundreds of years ago and were meant to be extra quarters for groundskeepers and livery boys when the castle housed many more people than it did now. She had no idea the huts had been kept up, but was eager to see.

He performed a few spells as they approached, ensuring that no one else about. Nodding to her silently, he led her to the farthest hut, obviously with the reasoning that if anyone came by with a similar purpose, they would be less likely to be found. He led her inside, and as he warded the door and pronounced a Silencing Charm, she looked around at the sparse furnishings. A bed, a small kitchen, complete with teapot and mugs on the sideboard and a rickety table and two chairs was really all such a small hut could hold, but everything was clean, she noticed thankfully.

He let go of her hand to loosen the fastenings of his cloak, which he draped on one of the small chairs, and then proceeded to undo her cloak, which he placed in similar fashion over his. She stood there, unable to do anything, overwhelmed with being alone with him, away from prying eyes, portraits, or professors. She hardly knew if she should stand or sit, let alone anything else.

But that was all right; he knew what to do. He waited until her eyes were firmly upon him again, instead of roaming the small quarters, and then began to undo the buttons of his frock coat. She could have swooned at such a simple gesture. She had never seen him outside the confines of his frock coat, no student ever had, and it had been the speculation of a number of girls as to what actually lay beneath all those buttons. She was about to find out. She could see from the amusement in his eyes that he knew it too. He had never done this before in front of a student, or so he had confessed earlier, which made this a "first" for him as well.

With the last button undone, the coat fell open to reveal a crisp white shirt, done up in black pearl buttons. The removed frock coat fell on top of their cloaks like something

discarded which no longer mattered to him. Then he took the few steps that separated them and began unfastening the student robe she had worn to dinner.

"I don't want to be professor and student tonight, Hermione," he stated simply as the student robe fell away, revealing the casual attire she usually wore on weekends. He placed her robe on top of everything else, then led her to the bed and guided her to sit beside him without a word.

He took in her face first, cupping her cheek in his palm. He spent a moment smoothing unruly spirals of hair behind her ears and then slowly leaned in to kiss her lips. Just one kiss. She was mesmerized by the gentleness of his touch, the way he doted on her, and so she let him take the lead.

He kissed her lips once again and then traced kisses along her jawline up to her ear, where she could hear and feel his breath coming in short bursts, proving to her that while he may be taking this leisurely, his desire was definitely stronger than he was letting on.

He teased her ear with the tip of his tongue, and she shifted slightly, squirming under the delicate sensations it caused. She hadn't noticed where his hands were until she felt one of his fingers gently circle a hardened nipple, and then she realized the edge of her jumper had been hiked upwards, exposing her bra. He had not yet unfastened it, but was satisfied with teasing her through the sheer barrier of fabric.

He stopped kissing her and sat back, holding the hem of her jumper, silently asking if it would be all right to remove it. She had nothing to say against it, and off it went, tossed on the foot of the bed. Now he looked at her hungrily, and she squealed as he pulled her over to straddle his lap so her breasts were more level with his face. No doubt, he saw them straining with desire against the fabric of her brassiere, for he had the clasp open in a trice and the contraption off and thrown over her discarded jumper.

Now he was able to service her better. Those two heavy globes of flesh men were born dreaming of suckling upon found their way to his mouth, whereupon he began his litany of kisses, nibbles, sucks and love bites. Her nipples grew taut and tender, even as he sucked his way around the underside of her right breast, his hand gently kneading the other. She couldn't believe how good it felt, much better than fondling them herself.

With his hands, he grabbed her buttocks and pulled her in closer on his lap so she could feel how his body responded to her. The contact between her cleft and his hardness, though both were still clad, sent a shockwave through her, and her core melted instantly. She ground herself against him, awkward in her movements, only knowing that she wanted to feel all of him against her, every inch of him sliding along every inch of her. And she wanted to feel the hard tip of him pushing against that small bundle of nerves at the very edge of her pubic bone over ... and over ... and over.

The kisses upon her breasts were no longer gentle, and she arched her back, trying to get him to take more of her into his mouth, and he greedily complied, sucking and swallowing around her flesh, holding them up so that he could pay them better attention. The harder she ground her lower body against his, the harder he sucked and the harder he swept his tongue across the tender skin. He growled as her hips became more persistent, as she consistently caught the tip of his hardness against the edge of her cleft, where he knew the center of her pleasure lay. His hands flew to her hips, and he helped to grind her against him, and finally, it became too much, and he fell backwards upon the bed.

Grateful of the position change, she settled herself more fully over him, her knees on either side of his hips now, her spread womanhood firmly against him. The heat between them burned her skin, though in a way so pleasurable she could not complain. She leant over and let her hair fall to either side of his face as she tilted her hips forward and back and slid up his length and back down, wanting to feel all of him, even though it was to remain hidden beneath his trousers for now.

She kissed him then, not with that frenzied passion of earlier, nor with the gentle affection he had displayed, but with confidence and eagerness, wanting to somehow show him everything she was feeling, though she couldn't express it in words even if she had wanted to speak at that moment. He returned the kisses, following her lead, but the kisses soon grew in fervour as their hips moved in counterpoint against each other, signalling their mutual need for the height and eventual end to the madness.

He held her hips down close, so there was no chance of separation, and ground against her forcefully. He growled in time with the thrusts, and she could tell he was holding something back. She pulled back, abandoning his kisses, encouraging him to give voice to his passion.

At first he just growled and moaned, mouth closed, not allowing his voice to be free. She wanted to hear his voice, that sweet mahogany timbre, tell her what he was thinking this very moment as he thrust his body so intimately against hers.

"Tell me," she said, her voice forced against the pleasure that wanted to stifle it.

Just those two words had a miraculous affect upon him, and he let loose everything he wanted to say to her in that moment as they surged against each other, striving for the completion that was bound to happen sooner or later.

"Mmm ... Hermione." Her name, a spell upon his lips, more beautiful than she had ever heard it before. "Gods, I want to rip away your clothing, have you naked before me." He paused as her hips sharpened their angle and her cleft ground against and around him with a different intensity.

"All I dream of is having you soft and warm around me ... oh, yes!" he exclaimed as she angled downward suddenly on the hard, damp ridge that was giving her so much pleasure. And surged upward again. "To be inside of you, surrounded by you ... being loved by you."

That did it. Those words brought her down, flush up against him, a final time, and then everything beyond that was erratic movements and incoherent whimperings as she climaxed hard, muscles clamping, pushing up against him so he could feel what he had done to her, still moving against him frantically, trying to prolong this glorious feeling, and him gasping under her and pushing up against her, trying to get inside her and saying her name over and over as his passion built to a peak and then crying out as he lost control of the rhythm and jerked against her still shuddering muscles, still trying to bury himself within her and groaning when he realized he couldn't....

She slowed the movement of her hips until finally her muscles stopped clenching and he no longer felt hard against her. Though she preferred to stay right where she was at the moment, still connected with him...however connected they could be with their clothes still in place. Then she realized that not all her clothes were in place and remembered her jumper had been lost somewhere in the process, as had her bra, but she oddly didn't feel self-conscious.

Leaning over, her breasts first grazed his shirt, then pressed up against him, and she rested upon him, taking solace from his less passionate but no less desired kisses upon her lips. A glorious feeling of restfulness, of satisfaction, stole over her. She had no idea that she could feel metaphorically "full" without him being inside her. It was wonderful, and she was glad to have had this chance without bypassing it altogether.

After a while of kissing and quietly musing, they were dangerously close to falling asleep. Hermione kept dozing off in between kisses, though didn't want to stop. It was too lovely being together, being able to touch like this, and she didn't want it to ever end. But it had to at some point. She had curfew to make, classes in the morning. The stark reality of the real world began filtering into her consciousness.

She forced herself to speak. "Professor, I..."

"Shhh," he implored, begging her not to say more. "If I were your professor right now, I'd have given you detention for snogging and ... well, indecent behaviour becoming a student of your caliber."

That amused her, and she gave into the temptation. "Well, you could always give me a detention anyway," she retorted lightly.

He nipped her lips harshly and, with a sudden move, rolled them both over so he was the one on top, though he was still between her legs and still flush up against her womanhood. She showed her indignation by clenching her Kegel muscles as hard as she could, which made both his eyebrows rise in surprise and his softened manhood begin to harden once more.

He groaned. "Oh, Hermione. What are you doing to me?" he ground out in a voice barely able to speak, low, gruff, filled with need.

So she clenched her muscles again. And again. And he thrust against her, hard once more. He was in control now, not her, and he thrust with experience under his belt,

knowing just where the sensitive points were, and even a few times aimed to penetrate her through her clothing, which proved to her that she hadn't yet been filled when her body nearly exploded with need.

"Oh, gods!" she cried out, unable to control the emotions he was forcing out of her with every single-minded thrust against her now-dampened jeans. "I want you, I need you, I want you inside me, please ... oh, gods, I can't take it anymore!"

And her hands tried in vain to reach between their bodies so she could unfasten his trousers, unbutton her jeans, anything. He wouldn't let her. He pressed their bodies together tighter and increased the pace of his thrusts instead.

"You want me inside of you?" he growled into her ear as he rubbed himself crazily against her.

"Yes, yes, oh gods, yes, please!" she ranted through the mind-numbing passion he was building up inside of her once more. She was close, she wanted to feel him, wanted him inside her, wanted his skin against hers, needed him, why couldn't he spell their clothes away, gods she hadn't wanted anything more in her life than she wanted him right now.

His hips suddenly stroked long and hard against her, once, twice, thrice...oh, a fourth time, yes!...and she could feel the hard muscle between them pulse out its pleasure for the second time that evening, and that pushed her over the edge, and she came, grasping and clutching the shirt on his back and screaming his name: "Severus!"

He shuddered against her and held her close so that his face was buried in her hair. She could feel him breathing deeply, trying to control the raggedness of his breath and the erraticness of his heart. She felt complete underneath him, even though he was crushing her almost unbearably, and felt abandoned when he finally rolled off to one side.

She reached out to hold his hand so that the contact wouldn't end. It was bad enough they'd have to go back up to the school soon and would have to fall back into their professor-student roles once more. It felt like she was going to lose him, and she didn't want to let go just yet.

Sighing, he sat up and pulled her to a sitting position. Hesitating, he looked into her eyes and caressed her cheek, holding it for a moment in his palm. The tenderness in his gaze was like nothing she had ever seen before. He leaned in for a brief kiss, and his lips held such affection, caring, and something she couldn't quite name. It didn't last, but all his emotions had been in that one kiss, and after everything they had just experienced together, it was a fitting end to the evening.

Quietly, he helped her get dressed, and he held her winter cloak open as a final gesture of tenderness towards her. Tenderness which he could not display once back at the school. But they would find a way, she was sure. There would be more times like this. She would make sure of it.

He held her hand as they left the hut, and she burrowed into his side as they walked down the path back up to the school, not wanting to let him go. As they began to emerge out of the darkness and into the light that spilled from the windows of the castle, they let go of each other. And once they reached the front entrance, he held the door open for her, let her pass, and murmured a gentle, "Good night, Miss Granger," as he walked off to his own tower and his duties as a professor.

~ End Lesson Six

A/N: All quotes were taken from *Lady Chatterly's Lover* by D.H.Lawrence, Copyright 2003 by Renaissance E Books.

If I didn't thank Southern\_Witch\_69, I would be remiss. I write best when I'm in the fog of 'the zone', and I couldn't pull myself out long enough to catch all my typos. That, and *someone* turned off the spell check in Word (yeah, I'm the only one who uses my laptop). So without SW, this would have read like a parody of some really fancy smut. \*lol\* Thanks, SW, for putting up with this unusually long chapter.

## Lesson Seven

*Chapter 7 of 7*

Satisfying Hermione.

### ***Lesson Seven***

Monday morning introduced itself rudely with Lavender nudging the mattress repeatedly with her knee.

"Wake up, sleepyhead. You're ... going ... to ... be ... late!" Lavender's knee punctuated each word, which had Hermione searching unsuccessfully for her wand with her hand, for the proper hex with her still sleep fogged brain. The wand hovered, pinched between two precisely manicured fingers, over Hermione's head; the hex was never found.

"I'll give you your wand when you get out of bed," Lavender said sweetly and then backed away from her swiftly rising roommate, tossing the wand gingerly in Hermione's direction.

"What time is it...? What *day* is it?" Hermione asked groggily.

"It's Monday. Breakfast starts in fifteen minutes. Good news is the shower's free." Lavender grinned, grabbed her bag, and disappeared quickly out the door, happy to leave Hermione alone in her state of panic.

Fresh underwear, clean shirt, skirt, newly pressed robes: all found themselves tossed onto her unmade bed, and toiletries jostled their way into her arms, a few attempting escape and resisting recapture. Halfway to the bath, she remembered her wand was still on her bed where Lavender had left it, and she turned in a sleep-tousled whirl of curls and a huff of exasperation to retrieve it, figuring she had five minutes to shower, another five to get dressed and spell-dry her hair, and about five minutes to make it to breakfast on time, but would have to forgo that extra studying she had wanted to do for Arithmancy.

Toiletries, clothes, and wand were dumped unceremoniously on the floor, and knickers and nightgown were stripped off and thrown on top. The water hadn't even had a chance to heat before she stepped beneath the spray to wet her hair. Conditioner was setting and her body half-lathered before she came to the full realization that today was *Monday*.

Monday. That meant her first class of the day was *Advanced Potions*. She hesitated a full thirty seconds, soapy flannel paused over her now butterfly-filled stomach, before her nerves jumpstarted and resumed her body's previously frantic pace.

She was spell-dried and dressed a full two-and-a-half minutes sooner than she had estimated. Stopping in her room only to exchange her toiletries for her book bag, she ran down the staircase and out the portrait hole.

Back on schedule, her mind switched gears and she was finally able to think. However, soon enough it was obvious that neither schoolwork nor her classes were very much on her mind this morning. No, her mind had reserved itself for one thought only: Severus Snape. *Professor* Snape, she reminded herself, as it was only appropriate to think of him as such while on the school grounds. Still, the title 'professor' did nothing to quell the needy ache in her loins at the mere thought of him. In fact, she was afraid that it did quite the opposite.

The nervousness she had felt earlier in the shower at seeing him this morning had ebbed away, and a rather predatory creature had taken its place. Her pace eased and her shoulders straightened as she adjusted her bag and pulled a lock of her hair from underneath the strap. Unlike last week when she had only the memory of his kiss, this morning her skin thrummed with the ghost of his hands on her body, on her breasts, of his hardness between her legs. Whether or not he desired her was no longer a question. That had been answered quite satisfactorily last night.

Confidence cloaked her as she walked into the Great Hall and took her perfunctory place between Harry and Ron. They parted automatically and seemed to subconsciously sense the change in her.

Ron looked at her askance as she poured herself some tea, grabbed a couple slices of toast, and asked Neville to pass her a banana from the bowl that was closer to him than it was her. She caught his glance as she reached for it, but Ron looked away quickly and blushed as though he had violated some rule by looking at her.

Hermione turned to look at Ron fully and felt rather than saw a sudden movement in Harry's direction. Her head swept back and forth between the two boys, neither of whom were looking at her, and said, "All right. What are you two up to?"

Harry coughed into his napkin, muttering, "Nothing," while Ron remained mute, face trying to match the color of his hair.

"Nothing, my arse," she said, lowering her voice so no one would hear her swear. "Something is going on, and one of you is going to tell me what it is."

Harry sighed heavily. "All right. We went looking for you last night after dinner and, uh ... saw someone who looked an awful lot like you walking with Professor Snape."

"They were too far away, mate. I told you it wasn't her," Ron added, sounding like this argument had already been hashed over ad nauseam. "Right, Hermione? Tell him it wasn't you."

"You were following me?" Hermione said incredulously before she had a chance to think that perhaps denial was a better way to go. "How dare you follow me!"

"It was you?" Ron squeaked as Harry murmured, "I told you so."

It was too late to deny the fact that she was with Professor Snape last night, but there were any number of plausible explanations they would believe. She just didn't know how far they had followed her. Had the boys seen them entering the hut? Then she recalled that Professor Snape had cast a spell to make sure they hadn't been followed and even remembered a Silencing Charm. Thank the gods.

"Professor Snape saw me sitting outside after dinner," she began, "and asked if I was interested in harvesting some potion ingredients with him. Of course I went," she said flippantly as though it were the most natural thing for her to do. Uncertainty still marked both the boys' faces, which made her feel a little nervous. "What? Am I *not* supposed to be learning anything outside of class, is that it?"

Ron piped up cautiously, "Er ... well, no. It's just that it looked like you were ... holding hands."

A nervous laugh escaped her lips. She hoped it sounded more like she was shocked that he would say such a thing than the alternative. "Holding hands? Ronald Weasley, now you are talking complete bollocks, and I will not stand for it."

She stood up, gathered her belongings, and looked at her friends, who had suddenly found a spot on the table more interesting than her. Her heart was racing a mile a minute. She had no desire for this...whatever it was between her and Professor Snape...to be discovered by her friends. Not yet. And it had come too bloody close. They'd have to be more careful in the future.

"I'm going to class. I suppose I'll see you both there, yeah?" The queasy feeling of disaster averted had her walking a bit faster than she would have liked. If she weren't careful, her false denial would become all too apparent. For now, she just wanted whatever was happening with Professor Snape to continue and to enjoy it without her two best friends ruining it for her.

Too early for Advanced Potions, she strode down random hallways to burn off some of the nervousness, both at nearly being caught out by her friends and at having to attend class with Professor Snape first thing. How was she going to sit through class listening to him teach when the mere sound of his voice sent little shocks of pleasure straight to her core ... when the mere sight of his body would bring back recent memories of him pressed up against her, grinding them both into ecstasy?

She shuddered as a frisson of pleasure shimmered down her spine and pooled between her legs. Her steps became more determined as she tried to harness her overactive imagination and regain control of her mind and body. The traitorous body that would rather be splayed out beneath her professor as he did unspeakably wanton things to her....

*Shite!* She stopped mid-hall to gather her wits about her before turning and heading down to the dungeons. If she couldn't get control, it was going to be impossible to get through Advanced Potions.

Hermione was the last to enter the classroom, and she took her accustomed seat next to Harry. Ron poked her from behind and whispered loudly, "Where did you go?" She just shook her head to dismiss his question. Why did these boys always feel it was necessary to know her exact whereabouts every bloody moment? It was like going to school with her father, times two.

Professor Snape strode into the room, his brisk pace causing pieces of loose parchment to worship the wake of his robes, falling silently behind him. Hermione caught herself watching in similar adoration and averted her eyes, reminding herself that she needed to keep control. The professor flippantly waved his wand at the chalk board, and writing appeared.

"Your assignment for the hour is on the board. The brewing should take you half the hour, the essay the other half. Both should be on my desk by the end of class today." Groans sprouted from various areas around in the room, and he glared. "Need I remind you this is not first-year Potions? 'Advanced' implies there will be work involved. If any of you have a problem with that, perhaps you are in the wrong class." He stared hard at the guilty students, who now sat up a little straighter at their desks.

"Get to work," he bit out between clenched teeth, and the students scrambled to prepare their cauldrons and collect the needed ingredients from the storeroom.

Hermione breathed a sigh of relief. Class was as it had always been. She didn't know why she had thought it would be any different. She could do this. The potion was relatively easy to brew, and it would take her mind off how much she'd rather be in Professor Snape's arms, feeling his lips trail from her mouth down her neck to her aching breasts, longing for him to bathe them with his tongue, to suckle and pull at them.... She cursed at her treacherous mind and forced herself to get to work.

Halfway between adding the shredded bezoar and stirring in the crisped faerie wings, Ron poked her shoulder again. "Hermione, about earlier..."

She shrugged him off and tried to ignore him. She didn't want to talk about earlier, didn't want to think about it either. She just wanted to finish her potion and her essay and get out of class without her mind scattering across the floor in the wake of Professor Snape's robes.

But no, it wasn't to be. Harry, trying to smooth over everything as always, had to whisper in her ear, "Don't be cross at him, Hermione. It was an honest mistake. It's just ... it looked like you were holding hands with Snape, but..."

"We were *not* holding hands!" Hermione shouted at Harry, momentarily forgetting where she was in her frustration.

Then she bit her tongue and looked up to see Professor Snape scowling at the two of them from the other side of the room. He drew himself up to his full height, and his eyes lacked all emotion as he looked between Harry and Hermione.

"I'm sure everyone would be intensely interested to hear about your love life, *Miss Granger*, but this is neither the time nor the place. Ten points from Gryffindor, Mr. Potter, for undoubtedly provoking Miss Granger. And *twenty* points from Gryffindor, Miss Granger, for your outburst," he said by rote; after all, point-taking was an integral part of the day. Then his demeanor hardened. "Oh, and detention, Miss Granger, for your obvious lack of concentration. To be served today, after your last class. Perhaps you'll *learn to concentrate* if I make you scrub out a few cauldrons."

*So much for getting out of Advanced Potions in one piece.* She looked down at her forgotten potion, murmured, "Yes, sir," and resumed mincing ingredients.

~

The rest of the day went by quickly, though not very pleasantly. She had been more than happy to escape Potions class, and in her shame, her imagination left her relatively alone. She couldn't bring herself to think for too long about Professor Snape. She was worried about what he might be thinking after her outburst. Surely he had heard her loud and clear. There was no doubt in her mind that their...what the hell was it? Oh, bugger all...relationship would be coming to an end as soon as he realized others had discovered that something was going on. Her stomach roiled every time she thought about it. She couldn't even eat lunch.

Morosely, she gathered her things after her last class and made her way down to the dungeons. Thankfully, the boys had left her well enough alone for the rest of the day. She was quite upset at Harry, even though it was she who had ultimately lost them points. Still, if he and Ron had just kept their bloody mouths shut in class like they were supposed to, her relationship with Severus wouldn't be in jeopardy.

When she reached the Potions classroom, the last students were filtering out, and she waited until they had disappeared down the hallway before entering the room. She looked around for other students who might be serving detention, but the classroom was empty save for Professor Snape, who sat behind his enormous desk at the front of the room, and herself.

"Close the door, Miss Granger," he said quietly. Disappointedly, she thought. Dejectedly, she was certain. She tried to steel herself for what she knew was coming.

Turning around to close the door, a whisper of a spell ghosted over her shoulder. A locking charm: she knew the signature of that spell quite well. It would be their last private conversation together. She dammed the tears behind a wall in her heart and vowed she would not let him see her cry. She would be strong. She would accept whatever he said; he was the older, more experienced between them and knew what was best.

Slowly, she made her way to the front of the room, not looking up to meet his gaze, and deposited her bag on the floor next to the frontmost work table. When she looked up, he was standing before her...when had he gotten up from his desk? The scowl that had been burnt upon her memory since that morning had melted, and she now looked upon a face that regarded her with a soft questioning look. Against her will, her resolve shattered, and the sobs that broke forth could not be helped.

Professor Snape stepped forward and gathered her into his arms, letting her cry against his chest. She could feel his light kisses on top of her head, hear his whispers of "Shhh, it's all right" in her ear. She quieted after a minute, but her breathing was still ragged with the built up emotion of the day.

He pulled back slightly and looked down into her face. One of his hands cupped the side of her face and he implored her to "Breathe." It took a few moments for her to comply, to realize that everything she had been worrying about all day had been needless.

He waited, willing her to be calm, and searching her eyes, he asked, "All right now?" When she nodded, he continued, "Potter and Weasley have found out about us, haven't they?"

"No," she said a bit shakily. "Well, not really. They saw us walking off last night and thought they saw us holding hands, but we were too far away for them to be sure. I told them you saw me outside and asked me to help gather potion ingredients."

"Brilliant," he answered, pushing a lock of her hair away from her eyes and tucking it behind her ear. His hand paused, growing lighter as the moment grew heavier, but just as she expected him to remove his hand completely, she instead felt it trace the edge of her jaw...ever so lightly...until his thumb hovered, trembling slightly, above her bottom lip.

Oh, how she wanted to feel his lips on hers in that moment. She *burned* with the need, and her eyes fell shut at the combined sensation of his soft touch and her intense desire. Without opening her eyes, she could sense he had drawn closer, very close. She felt the magnetic pull, the force that wanted them to complete the connection, that repelled resistance. But he did resist, or maybe it was she, or perhaps it was both, waiting for the moment when resistance was no longer an option.

His breath mingled with hers, pulsing against her lips. He was so near, so painfully near, she only had to lean in a breath's width and take his mouth with her own, but she held herself back, waiting for him to make the first move. Anticipation coiled tightly in her chest, her stomach, her core, each shouting out silently, fervently, urgently needing to be touched.

Time dilated tortuously as the impression of his lips traveled along her jaw line and stopped at the outer edge of her ear, where she could now not only feel the irregularity of his breath but hear it as well.

"What have I done to deserve this..." he said so quietly a simple movement would have rendered his voice inaudible. "I can no longer look upon you without wanting you ... in every way."

His breath moved along the shell of her ear, as though planning where a kiss would be best placed. But no kiss fell from his lips, only weak, wavering exhalations as he tried desperately to control himself.

"Do you have any idea ... how you affect me?" he asked, voice struggling with need, fueling her desire for him until her legs trembled beneath her, threatening to give way. In a moment of lust-filled weakness, his forehead rested against hers as he gathered strength, and his breath struggled in even more erratic gasps now.

"Gods, I need..." His voice shook, betraying his emotions. "So beautiful, Hermione. I wake to thoughts of you ... I go to sleep with thoughts of you..." His breath was upon her ear once more. "I dream *only* of you."

She whimpered. Every inch of her body longed to be touched by more than just sweet words and faltering breath. Every nerve ending stood at attention, dying for the simplest contact. She was on fire, electrified. A single touch, a caress, a kiss: it was all she needed. Just one.

"You..." his breath slipped down to the angle of her jaw, and for a fleeting moment, she felt a ghost of a kiss, "are..." and slid slowly to the corner of her mouth, "mine."

The space between them burst like a bubble, and lips exploded together as her body simultaneously exploded with the contact, and he swallowed her screams as the force of their need continued to wash over her. He tried to devour her, every kiss a desperate plea for more, more, more. He couldn't get enough, and he made her body sing with the ferocity of his touch. Hands had a mind of their own as they stroked his face, her shoulders, his chest, her back, his hips, her hair, anything they could reach, over and over as though it could never be enough.

His mouth left hers, and she arched her neck to welcome him as he attacked her neck, groaning and growling ferally as he feasted upon her flesh. Fingers deftly opened her robes and unfastened shirt buttons, and his mouth delved lower toward more sensitive areas. She felt more than heard him mutter something, and in a second her breasts were freed from their confines and became victims of a new assault, one that she would not protest.

His mouth tugged and ignited the strings to her core as he suckled and rolled her nipples between his teeth, and her legs completed the transformation to jelly. She could no longer stand. Professor Snape caught her before she sank to the floor in a mindless heap and lifted her atop the nearest table, where he gently guided her to lie back with her legs hanging off the edge.

He stood between her legs, eyes smoldering with the possibilities before him. He ran his hands along her body, outlining her breasts, which were gloriously spread to each side, obeying the laws of gravity. But there was so much more than just her breasts to explore, and with her laid out before him, as his hands stroked the length of her torso, her arms, feeling the curves of her body, he realized that he hadn't yet had a chance to explore her body as much as she had his. His pupils grew and darkened at the thought, and Hermione quirked a questioning brow in her lust-filled haze, unaware of what he had next in mind.

His fingers played across the delicate flesh of her stomach and traced the waistband of her skirt. He hesitated a moment as if contemplating something, and then, decision made, he grabbed the hem of the skirt and lifted it to reveal a pair of modest silk knickers. Knickers that covered way too much.

He leaned forward, lowered the upended skirt to kiss her belly, then replaced it and worked his way lower, trailing kisses over her hips and abdomen to her silk-covered mound. Her gasps and moans encouraged him, as well as her quick breaths and arching hips, and he inhaled her heady scent and added his groan to hers. Sweet, intoxicating, he wanted to drink her all in, her scent, her juices as he drew them from her body. He longed to make her quake beneath his fingers, his mouth. The scant piece of fabric that still covered her most intimate span of flesh no longer looked so modest, as soaked as it was from her arousal.

Cupping his hands beneath her bottom, his long fingers reached for the edge of her knickers, pulling it lower, exposing the curls that stood sentry to her femininity. A bit lower and lower yet, and he exposed her completely. Though her legs were still constricted by her knickers, his impatience had him leaning over to explore what he could. His nose nudged the sensitive skin at the junction of her thighs, and he inhaled deeply, her scent luring him down the path to mental oblivion.

Her moans of "Oh yes" and her thrashing and begging for more had him ripping away the flimsy silk garment without another thought. Without further ado, he spread her legs and bent her knees until her hips raised slightly from the table, exposing her swollen lips and everything between.

With a moan that was halfway between a whimper and a cry, he swiped his tongue deliberately from her entrance up to the tip of her clitoris, making her hips buck and desperate pleas fall from her lips, which in turn ignited his entire body on fire with desire for the woman at his mercy. He circled and lapped at her overly sensitive bundle of nerves, taking in her pleasure as his own, absorbing every moan, every cry, every arch of her back, every clench of her thighs as his own, and then he enveloped the entire thing in his mouth and sucked on it ferociously while stroking his tongue back and forth across the now hardening bit of flesh.

She thrashed on the table beneath his hands and cried out, "Yes! Mmm... don't you dare stop!"

He couldn't have even if he had wanted to. Her pleasure had intertwined with his own, entangling his entire body in the process. Every stroke of his tongue upon her body was like a stroke upon his own. Each time he suckled her, he felt his body respond in kind. Stopping would most certainly kill him.

His mouth abandoned her clitoris, and his tongue swept lower, slipping tightly into her entrance, which clenched as her hips flexed and invited him to explore its depths. He thrust his tongue in as far as her body would allow, and other parts of him thrilled vicariously at the wondrous experience. When his nose bumped against the sensitive flesh he had recently abandoned for this new pleasure, she became nearly incoherent, chanting, "Yes, yes, yes, more, oh gods, more." So he ground his nose into her clit, hard and insistent, as he thrust and swept his tongue roughly in and out and around, keeping a tight rein on his control lest he forget himself and bury another wanting appendage within her instead.

He had to hold her hips down now with force else continuing would have been impossible, and the restriction heightened her screams and intensified the pleasure tenfold. Her thighs were tensing beneath his hands, and she quivered with the tension building up beneath his tongue. *He* wanted to cry out, the pleasure she was giving him simply by being able to give her pleasure was too much, but all he could do was whimper at the back of his throat, adding slight vibrations through his mouth and nose.

She exploded in an instant, wet with need, convulsing in waves around his tongue. She cried and panted as he laved the result of her passion from her and continued to push his nose against her nub, increasing the pressure slightly. When her body had calmed somewhat, he moved quickly to suck her clitoris into his mouth and pulsated his tongue across its head, feeling his own member responding equally to the stimulation. His hips thrust involuntarily, futilely, as the feeling overcame him.

The pressure grew mindlessly inside of her, making her incoherent save for one thought: "Ah... ah... ohGod, Severus, make me come, make me come, make me come!"

A single finger pushed her over the edge, and as he felt the contractions squeeze vice-like around his slender digit, the part of him that longed to be inside of her convulsed and spent its desire bereft of her body. She was glorious. The finger moved of its own accord, its master lost to feelings of his own lust, inside her tight channel. A second finger tried to add itself to the first, but discovered it was near impossible. He came to himself, realized what this meant and that he didn't want to hurt her...

The realization that this girl...no, woman!...had yet to be taken by a man sobered him. This would go no further today. He had to slow down. Even if it meant waiting to feel her tight warmth surrounding him, he would stop ... for now. This was neither the time nor the place to take her virginity. He had no doubt it would be in the near future, but he wanted it to be special, and that would take some planning.

So he calmed himself down by helping her to calm down. Uncurling himself from his position bent over her body, he caressed small circles over her thighs, working his way to her abdomen, and then to her stomach after replacing her skirt to restore some semblance of modesty. Once her breathing had slowed, she opened her eyes, smiled up at him lazily, and accepted his hand in order to sit up.

She looked into his eyes and sighed. "Wow."

He chuckled. "Yes, that pretty much sums it up," he agreed and kissed her lightly on her lips.

She kissed him hesitantly at first, then more boldly, nibbling on his lips as he offered her taste and scent back to her. She took it eagerly, discovering that it wasn't unpleasant, though definitely new and different. She could go on kissing him forever, but all good things unfortunately had to come to an end.

With a reluctant sigh, he pulled back and offered his hand once more, helping her onto unsteady feet. When she had properly gained her balance, he bent and picked up the discarded piece of torn silk from the floor. Smiling wickedly, he held them up for her to see and muttered, "*Reparo*," then "*Scourgify*." Mended and clean, her feet were guided into the openings, and the silk was slid up her thighs and repositioned appropriately.

She was silent all the while he was dressing her, and he noticed the silence. It wasn't uncomfortable or even worrisome, but he could sense the pervading sense of melancholy in the air. When he finished, his finger tilted her chin upward so she could look him in the eyes. Sure enough, moisture glistened in her eyes.

He didn't know what was wrong exactly, but he didn't want the afterglow of such a beautiful moment ruined. So he swiped at a lone descending tear with his thumb and whispered, "Don't cry, Hermione."

She sniffed and wiped her eyes, but still looked up at him sadly, though smiling. "I'm sorry. It's just that ... it's just that I don't want to leave."

Something inside his chest seemed to melt, and he drew her into his arms, curling a piece of her hair between his fingers. "Oh, gods, Hermione, I wish you could stay. You have no idea..."

She laughed lightly and extricated herself from his arms, knowing that if she didn't leave now, things would begin to look a little unseemly. She had been in detention for a little over an hour, and if she didn't return soon, Harry and Ron would begin looking for her. And she didn't want that.



She shouldered her bag and straightened to look at him one last time before she left.

"Thank you," she said shyly.

He looked at her, confused momentarily, wondering if she was thanking him for giving her such brilliant orgasms. "For what?" he decided to clarify.

"For giving me detention, of course!" she replied with a wicked glint in her eye.

He laughed. He had forgotten that this was supposed to be a detention, and he had to admit that it was certainly the best detention he had ever had to supervise. But just to discourage her from making this a habit, he added, "You're welcome. But ... there are better ways of getting my attention."

He stood watching her as she turned and walked from the classroom. And he realized, quite painfully, how much he was going to miss her.

~ End Lesson Seven

A/N: Thank you to Southern\_Witch\_69, my second set of eyes, who searched for my mistakes and encouraged me to change a couple things that had her scratching her head. When her head itches, so does mine. \*smirk\*