

Schrödinger's Snake

by Heisenberg

Hermione Granger, new Hogwarts librarian, has inherited the unenviable task of archiving parts of Hogwarts' neglected archives. There, she uncovers a manuscript by Salazar Slytherin and finds that his injunctions against Muggles aren't exactly what everyone has always assumed them to be. Unable to quite believe it herself, no one else believes her until, in a bizarre set of circumstances, the author himself appears and begins to meddle in Hermione's life.

The Hidden Chambers

Chapter 1 of 4

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This story is a collaboration between ... and ... (No, we're not going to put our names there yet!) It is written for prompt #75 of the Anything Goes challenge: Salazar Slytherin's personal papers were horribly misinterpreted/mistranslated. A new translation has come to light. What does it say? Who discovers it? What do they do with this information?

All will be revealed...

"And I always thought Irma did such a wonderful job!" Hermione muttered to herself a little scornfully as she wiped the dust off her hands onto her robes. Not that she wanted to speak ill of the dead, but it had been *months* since she'd taken this job, and whilst she had been busy with other duties, she hadn't been *that* busy, and cleaning and re-archiving seemed to be taking forever.

During her first week, Professor Snape had come to the library to announce, with faux-obsequiousness, that there were several concealed chambers containing older manuscripts and texts that Irma Pince had collected, organised a small amount, and then abandoned. *Apparently*.

Hermione had been dealing with said chambers ever since. On her own, of course. Severus Snape's generosity extended only as far as the tip, and he had offered no help in moving, cleaning, reading or archiving the new-found texts. Still, he had once or twice offered helpful comments over the breakfast or dinner table, if she caught him in the right mood, and he had indirectly helped with several of the identifications. There were an awful lot of manuscripts by a great number of obscure scholars, mostly professors from throughout the ages, and Hermione had eventually given up trying to read them all. She now read just enough to identify the correct section of the library it belonged in and the author, and then she put them away.

She was now getting down to the final section of old manuscripts in the third chamber, the one with a decidedly Slytherin tendency. Several of the old books on Darker topics had been trapped or cursed, and she had narrowly escaped a prolonged stay in the hospital wing on three occasions. There had been no way to prevent the dust that made her sneeze every two minutes, however, and she simply suffered through that in the same way she suffered through her hay fever in the summer. The dust irritated her hands, too, but working without gloves right now was the only way she could guarantee that she was separating the manuscripts completely, not leaving one

stuck beneath another. Hermione Granger could not bear the thought of some poor little manuscript being lost and lonely and forgotten due to her carelessness!

Carefully, she doggedly returned to the pile of manuscripts before her. In this chamber she had two large tables, one for the pile of manuscripts that had been left here, the other for her to sit at and read one manuscript at a time.

The pile before her was still quite dauntingly high; the manuscripts piled up looked like old, yellowed broadsheets, and were similarly covered in faded, scrawled letters that seemed like a foreign language (and sometimes were). Still, not one to be daunted by a mountain of reading material, Hermione quite resolutely reached down and fingered the edges of the parchments carefully with the tips of her middle fingers once, then twice, then a third time, ever the meticulous Miss Granger, until she was satisfied she had identified the edge of a single manuscript.

Lifting the manuscript carefully by hand, for she had found that levitation, for some unusual reason, did more damage than manual handling, she laid it face down on the second table behind her. She was not quite done, however. The manuscripts, although they seemed to have congealed into a single continuous stack, were of varying sizes, and it was easy for one to stick to the bottom of another and get completely lost. She still needed to check that there were no smaller pieces trapped beneath this one.

She squatted down now next to the table, putting a hand out to grip its rim and steady herself, and she carefully scanned the edge of the manuscript and its top, or bottom, as the case may be. Nothing, it seemed, was stuck to the bottom. She moved around the table and looked at it for a different edge. Still nothing. She rose to her feet again, her leg muscles a little angry from all the squatting, and then ran a single finger gently, oh, so gently, along the surface, which was a little worn and ragged, and then, suddenly, there it was. A lip. So minute a ridge that she wouldn't have noticed it by eye. Merlin, some of these manuscripts really *were* stuck together.

She turned back to the other table to retrieve her wand and then cast the one spell that had yet to give her any trouble with any manuscript *Divorcere Moderare*. There was a small ripple across the surface of the parchment, and then she reached down and gently lifted the newly revealed edges of the top-most manuscript.

It was about four foot by three foot in size, only slightly smaller than the other still on the table...and flipped it over, and she was about to lay it down on the original pile of parchments with its length perpendicular to theirs, just so it would be easier to pick up when she came back to it, when something of interest suddenly caught her eye: 'Sal ... Z ...'

She had only caught the faintest glimpse of what looked like 'Salazar' as she had been moving the manuscript, so now she leant over the pile and fervently scanned the somewhat faded, occasionally smudged and scratched-out text for the word. She hated knowing she'd seen something but not being able to find it. It took her three passes, squinting and getting progressively closer to the surface of the manuscript, before she found it: in the margin next to the right-hand side of the page, which from her cursory examination seemed to be written in fairly neat columns, albeit with the diagonal scrawls of several later commentators around the original text. There was no denying that that final signature, although the second word was obscured by a small tear in the parchment, seemed to be that of Salazar Slytherin, and the idea filled Hermione with two emotions: excitement and dread. The former because she had yet to find a single manuscript or book by one of the Founders, only having so far found books by their disciples and colleagues, and the latter because, well, this was *Salazar Slytherin*. It might be dangerous for her to be in the same room as the parchment!

She took a few steps away from it, edging her way toward the door of the chamber, and considered her options. She *could* call someone. But whom would she call? Severus Snape was the obvious option that sprang to mind, simply because, in her mind, at least, he was the by-proxy inheritor of all things Slytherin. Still, she was wary to take that course of action, and as she stared at the manuscript with some trepidation, she mentally worked through the options of *why*.

1) *He has hardly shown much interest in this project thus far. Counter-argument: This is by Slytherin. But still, there is no guarantee he will be interested.*

2) *What can he do that I can't? He doesn't have pure blood either, so if there's any curse attached to it to trap those with impure blood who try to perform the cleaning or transcribing charms on it, he will hardly be of any use. Counter-argument: He might happen to know more about the curse attached to it, if any, than I do.*

3) *I want to be the first to read this! Counter-argument: Pride comes before a fall.*

Hermione considered these points, and then she realised one very important fact. She had already handled the manuscript and stood in the same room as it for hours on end. They were hardly dangerous things to do. She could simply refrain from casting any more spells upon it until she had consulted with Severus; there was no real urgency.

Pleased with her logic and feeling a little foolish for her earlier panic, she stepped back into the centre of the chamber and approached the manuscript. Realising that she ought to transfer it to the other table where it would be easier to read, she turned back to the original manuscript she had intended to deal with this evening and lifted it carefully. Then she turned back to the pile and realised that she now required a third resting place while she switched them over.

Exasperated and impatient, she muttered a wandless incantation to conjure a large table, which promptly popped into existence, although it almost landed on her foot. She quickly shifted the manuscripts around until she had them all precisely where she wanted them...she understood now a little more why Irma might have simply wanted to avoid doing anything with these bits of parchment at all...and then she was finally ready to begin her reading. Pulling up the chair that had been pushed into one corner of the room while she worked, she settled herself at the table and cast a soft Lumos with her wand, which gave additional light for her to see by, but wasn't bright enough to do any damage to the manuscript before her.

Leaning over it, she began the painstaking process of translating the Latin of the text. She supposed, in a way, that she was glad that it wasn't written in the Anglo-Saxon of other manuscripts written a century or so after this one, which was almost impossible for her to make out much of the time.

Still, at first, she could decipher only a word at a time; his handwriting...it still made her shiver a little that this was the handwriting of such an evil and twisted man and that her nose and finger as she read were in the same positions that his hand and quill had once been...was spindly and probably difficult to read even when freshly written. Gradually, however, her proficiency improved, and she began to read more quickly. She even had a chance to scan some of the annotations at the side, which in some cases cited support, some cited contrary sources, and others posed questions or offered elaborations. She found it increasingly interesting to read the extolment of the 'true source of magic' within the magical community, and she was increasingly shocked to find that some of his points still seemed reasonable to her, although she couldn't make out all of his argument and didn't recognise all of his sources.

Then, about half way down the parchment's left-most column, she found something that intrigued her. At first, she didn't notice it, and she hurried on to other parts of the text, but then something jarred, a pronoun use here, a verb tense there, and she found herself skipping back and rereading earlier parts to find what she had missed.

Then, it sprung out at her so obviously that she wondered at how she had missed it.

The passage read thus:

sagarum genus maxima fons est potestatis magicae; ne attenuetur experientia hominum

Hermione read it aloud to herself several times, and then tried out a few translations:

"The posterity of witches is the maximal source of magical potential; it should not be diminished by the knowledge of Muggles? Hmm. Against Muggle *knowledge*? Like farming? Or knowing that they exist? Let's try and make it simpler... The... the children of witches...okay, matrilineage, that sounds about right for an older pagan society...the children of witches are...well, it says 'is', but if I want to use 'children'...are the greatest source of magical power; they should not be diminished...how precisely does he mean that word? Disadvantaged? Actually lessened?...by the knowledge of... men, perhaps? It doesn't *have* to be 'Muggles', and if this is about matrilineage..."

Hermione trailed off and sighed to herself. "But Salazar Slytherin wasn't a misandrist. He was a racist! *It must* be 'Muggles'. That's how I read it initially, though, and it didn't quite make sense later on."

Hermione now leant down as close as she could to the manuscript without actually touching it with her nose and scrutinised it closely for any smudge, slip of the pen, or alteration that might have changed the words. Was that... Hmm, no. But, well, maybe. That *could* be just a bit of the parchment damaged above the 'genus', but then, what if it was *deliberate* damage? What would that make the word then? She ran through a whole host of nonsense words before, suddenly, it hit her, making her nerves jangle with both shock and excitement. *Genius. Talent.*

"The *talent* of witches is the greatest source of magical potential; it should not be diminished by the knowledge of Muggles. Hmm... what would that mean? That just says the same thing, surely, except only little girls should be kept away from Muggles. Yes, because women are so weak and mentally incapable they can't possibly cope with such things as *people different from them!*" she muttered to herself sarcastically and angrily. But then, although she could fully believe Salazar Slytherin a misogynist as well as a racist...after all, who hadn't been misogynist in those days...she couldn't quite reconcile that reading with the initial phrase.

"So what if it's..." Again, she thought out loud, finding that the sound of her voice helped her think, helped her sense when something was wrong. "What if it's 'men', not 'Muggles'? The talent of witches is the greatest source of magical potential; it should not be diminished by the knowledge of *men*. And, well, if you think about 'knowledge' in the same sort of way as in my original translation..." Hermione broke off, suddenly finding words she didn't want to say out loud.

Suddenly fitting quite well the stereotype of the blushing virgin, Hermione rose quickly from her chair and hurried from the chamber, closing the door swiftly behind her and resetting the charms that concealed it and maintained its atmosphere in a stasis-like way. Shaking her head, still blushing, but luckily for her, not aware of it, or she would have blushed even further still, she hurried out of the library too.

"Honestly, it's well past my bedtime," she muttered to herself as she closed the doors of the library and warded them shut. "What on earth was I doing, staying up so late to read *that*? No wonder I couldn't fathom it!"

Divorcere Moderare was invented via abysmal use of the Old French verb 'divorcer' (to divorce) and the Latin verb 'moderare' (to reduce/control).

If you find Hermione's fairly laissez-faire treatment of the old parchments a bit alarming, don't worry, so would the people at my uni's rare books library, but luckily for Hermione, she has magic! And no other librarian around to shout. :-)

Misandrist = a man-hater, based on the same construction as 'misogynist'.

The title of this story will be explained in due course, however, for those curious, the following articles may give you some clues as to where this story may be going:

Schrödinger = <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schrodinger>

Heisenberg = <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heisenberg>

Both fascinating, and rather dashing, men.

Now, for a little geekiness: I, mystery author #1, placed Salazar Slytherin's contemporaries as writing and speaking Anglo-Saxon because Slytherin is given as living ca. 1000 A.D., which is hardly very helpful in determining what he would have spoken, as Middle English (think Chaucer) and French were spoken after the Norman Invasion in 1066, and Anglo-Saxon (think Beowulf) before that, which differs significantly from both Middle and Modern English. I've given the language as just 'Anglo-Saxon' so that it's roughly historically accurate (based on JKR's vagueness). Luckily (for us and Hermione), Salazar was a 'good old scholar' still just writing in Latin. The actual quotation was written by my wonderful co-author, mystery author #2, and actually sparked this entire story off, so you have her to thank (when anonymity is eventually lifted!).

And, further geekiness in the form of a Ghostbusters reference: 'In the Biblical sense'. Yeah. We all can probably see *wherethat* fits in! ;-)

Words, Words, Words

Chapter 2 of 4

Hermione shows the manuscript to Snape.

Hermione deliberated for several days over whether or not to tell Professor Snape about the manuscript she had found. On the one hand, she was certain he would be fascinated by her discovery and might even offer his assistance with the remaining documents in the hope of finding other intellectually and historically valuable texts. She certainly wasn't going to get help from him by any other method; he clearly considered her work beneath him. On the other hand, if Slytherin's manuscript turned out to contain anything truly momentous, she didn't want Snape to usurp the glory of publicising its contents to the wizarding world. She might be merely the Hogwarts librarian now, she reflected, but she hoped one day to make a name for herself in the field of research and, perhaps, acquire a more prestigious appointment. Her current position, in her view, was best considered a stepping-stone.

After a while, however, this objection struck her as being somewhat petty. She hoped that if their roles were reversed, and Snape had discovered something of Gryffindor's, he would share it with her; could she really allow her ambition to deny him access to something that would surely bring him so much pleasure? In the end, she decided to tell him about the manuscript. She could live with shared glory.

She broached the matter with him at breakfast on Saturday morning. The timing was a calculated decision on her part: had she raised the matter during the week, he would have insisted that she hand over the document for him to peruse at his leisure. On Saturday mornings, however, she knew he had no commitments and would be forced to agree to viewing the manuscript on her terms. Sharing the discovery was all very well, but she'd rather not share custody of the document itself if she could help it.

It took her a little while, however, to work up the nerve to speak; throughout the meal, she kept glancing over at Snape, wondering whether it would be a good time to address him. By the time she finished her eggs, he was staring back at her with narrowed black eyes.

"Is there something I can help you with, Miss Granger?" he asked, his tone laced with irritation, as she poured herself another cup of tea.

She was proud of herself; the teapot didn't so much as quiver in her suddenly unsteady hand. "Yes, actually," she replied. "There's something I'd like to show you in the library." She stood, smoothing down her robes, and picked up her mug.

"Oh, very well." His long-legged stride carried him away from the high table and out of the door of the Great Hall before Hermione had even descended the dais; once into the corridor, she trotted after him to catch up, feeling stupid and trying not to spill her tea.

Snape preceded her into the library, letting the door swing shut practically in her face, and watched impassively as she struggled to open it again with her one free hand. When she finally succeeded, she stalked past him, infuriated, already regretting her generous nature and sense of fair play. "Come on, then," she snapped.

He followed her docilely enough to the chamber where she had found the manuscript. She had cleared away some of the stacks of parchment, leaving Slytherin's text alone on the desk. Stooping slightly to fit through the door of the chamber, Snape approached the desk and gazed down at the parchment there. "Well?"

Hermione explained how she had come across the manuscript and pointed at the tiny signature. "I assume you recognise the name," she said dryly.

Snape bent forward and inspected the handwriting curiously. "Yes... I assume *you* realise that this could easily be a copy."

"I don't think it is," she contradicted him. "I've spent the last few days researching medieval hands. The script is from the correct location and time period. That information, combined with the signature, suggests to me that this is an original. Of course," she mused, "without carbon dating, we can't really know for certain."

"Carbon dating?" Snape regarded her doubtfully.

"It's when you examine the..."

"I know what it is," he interrupted her scathingly. "Carbon dating is next to useless in dating parchment. For one thing, it's not precise enough, and for another, a particular piece of parchment could be used many times. Even if it were possible to determine a reasonable date, it could be hundreds of years earlier than the actual text."

"The ink could be dated," she said stubbornly. He sneered at her. "Anyway, that's not really the point," she continued. "What's interesting is the content itself. Look at this section." She leaned over the piece of parchment and indicated the sentence she had spent so much time puzzling over. "Right here, it looks as if someone has made an amendment. Do you see?"

"I *could* see it, if it weren't obscured by that rat's nest you call hair."

Flushing with anger, Hermione swept her hair behind her shoulders and glared at him. "Better?"

Ignoring her, he bent low toward the table and followed her pointing finger while she resisted the urge to make a rude remark about grease stains on the parchment. When long moments had passed without a reaction from Snape, she began to tap her finger on the parchment impatiently. Really, she had deciphered the sentence a lot more quickly! She stared around the room, feeling slightly bored now, and was thus startled when his fingers closed over hers, stifling the tapping.

Uncomfortable, she snatched her hand away, and he straightened. "You may be right," he commented grudgingly, "but I don't see what relevance this has."

She gaped at him. "What?"

Snape leaned casually against the desk and crossed his arms over his chest patronisingly. "You obviously came to the conclusion that the word *genius*, talent, was changed to *genus*, race...but it makes no difference. The implication remains the same: wizarding culture is tainted by association with Muggles." He smirked, clearly under the impression that he had punctured her theory.

Then Hermione, smiling triumphantly, dealt her trump card. "Actually, he's not referring to Muggles. You spent long enough reading...didn't you notice his choice of words?"

"What are you talking about?"

Her finger flew over the parchment, directing his eyes to a fact she had noticed only the day before. "Throughout the text, Slytherin refers to wizards always *as nagi*. Pretty standard, that. When he refers to Muggles, he uses *virii*. But here, we have the word *hominum*. He's not talking about Muggles, or even Muggle men. He's talking about *all* men."

Snape turned abruptly and picked up the parchment, causing Hermione to gasp in outrage, and angled it toward the light. "You'll have to forgive me," he said sourly. "My vision isn't what it once was." After another lengthy pause, he returned the manuscript to the desk, looking at Hermione thoughtfully. "That certainly puts a different spin on the 'knowledge' he mentions."

Hermione blushed. "How can we confirm it, though?" she asked, changing the subject. "Confirm that it was amended, I mean. Is there some sort of spell we could use to reveal what the text originally said?"

Snape rolled his eyes, a gesture Hermione found remarkably infantile. "You've been writing on parchment for years," he said. "What do you do when you make a mistake? That is, assuming know-it-alls make mistakes," he added mockingly.

Affronted, Hermione said, "I correct it with my wand."

For the barest hint of a second, she saw a tiny light of respect in his eyes. Then he responded, "Well, that isn't what's been done here. In the Middle Ages, mistakes on parchment would be corrected by scraping away the ink and rubbing the cleared section smooth to be written on again. While it would be childishly easy to go through your student file"... here his lips twitched into a taunting smirk..."and reveal all of the errors you made, I know of no spell that will restore parchment that has been scraped clean and rewritten."

"Oh," Hermione murmured, slightly defeated. "What can we do, then?"

"What *real* scholars do, as you would know if you were one. We look for independent corroboration."

"What if there isn't any?"

Snape shrugged. "We can't always get what we want, Miss Granger."

Much later that day, alone in his rooms in the dungeons, Severus Snape found his thoughts returning irresistibly to Salazar Slytherin's manuscript. Despite his professed doubt, he secretly agreed with his former student that it was probably an autograph text. While she had assumed that he was a slow reader, he had actually translated the sentence she had pointed out in seconds and spent the remaining time skimming the rest of the text. He had recognised the material instantly; it had been copied countless times and was included in every published volume of Slytherin's work that Snape had ever seen. The text was one of Slytherin's shorter pieces, written early in his career not long after the founding of Hogwarts. It was generally assumed to represent his early exploration of the topic of pureblood supremacy. Most of what he had written later in life consisted of in-depth analysis of and justification for that doctrine.

Hermione's keen eye, however, had spotted that tiny amendment...and Slytherin's unusual word choice...and now Snape was beginning to wonder if her belief in its relevance was really so mistaken after all. Knowing that his attempts to concentrate on anything else would result in utter failure, Snape gave in to his preoccupation with the manuscript. He poured himself a fortifying drink and wandered into his office where he took a seat behind his desk and pulled out a fresh piece of parchment and a quill.

First, he copied out the sentence from the text as he remembered it:

sagarum genus maxima fons est potestatis magicae; ne attenuetur experientia hominum

Then he wrote the sentence again with the substitution Hermione had supplied:

sagarum genius maxima fons est potestatis magicae; ne attenuetur experientia hominum

Underneath *hominum*, he added the words *magi* and *vir*. Then he settled back and surveyed the parchment critically.

The change in meaning was really quite significant, he admitted to himself. His mind, quicker at analysis, perhaps, than Hermione's, raced along the implications of that change. Scholars had always assumed that *sagarum genus* referred to the race of wizards and witches in general; the wizarding world having been largely matrilineal in the Middle Ages, presumably wizards had tried to ensure that their offspring would be magical by marrying witches. This interpretation was by no means certain; for one thing, this practice had undoubtedly still resulted in the occasional Squib. Other scholars had opted for a less specific interpretation: Slytherin had written "the race of witches" because, well, witches were the ones who bore the children.

But when one changed *genus* to *genius*, suddenly "the magical race, generally" became "the talent of witches, specifically." Snape's gaze coasted along the sentence and focussed on the last two words.

While he could easily believe that Slytherin was concerned about an influx of Muggle culture polluting the wizarding world, he could not quite fathom why this should affect witches but not wizards. His remark to Hermione in the library about "knowledge" had, in truth, been joking...it had been worth it to see her blush like that...but now he suspected it had been all too correct. If *hominum* truly referred to all men, not just Muggles...

Snape settled back in his chair, steepling his fingers and gazing blindly at the ceiling. It positively *irked* him that she had spotted that little discrepancy and he had not. She had, however, had days to look at it, while he had had less than five minutes. It also bothered him slightly that she had waited so long to tell him about the manuscript, although he understood perfectly why that was. He would not have wanted to share it either. Hermione Granger was, in Snape's estimation, an officious, grasping girl with too high an opinion of herself. The fact that she remained unaware, despite her cleverness, of the impression she made on people never failed to amaze him. She had achieved her academic success through graft rather than innate intelligence. She had no flair. She was, quite possibly, the most boring individual he had ever encountered. And yet she had immediately picked up on the implications of Slytherin's manuscript. The apparent contradiction boggled his mind.

He glanced down at his notes again. The "knowledge of men" that witches were supposed to avoid seemed obvious to him now. After all, many societies throughout history had subscribed to the belief that virgins retained a kind of power or purity that more "experienced" woman had lost; one only had to call to mind the cult of Artemis and the virgin martyrs of Christianity to make that connection.

Why, Snape wondered, perplexed, would Slytherin have urged witches to remain virgins? How were magical communities supposed to reproduce under such a system? Wizards would have needed to marry Muggle women, which certainly would have put paid to any ambitions to keep the wizarding race "pure." The very idea was completely incompatible with everything else Slytherin had ever written! There was no possibility whatsoever for "pureblood supremacy" if none of the witches were supposed to have children.

Witches, virgins, pureblood supremacy... Suddenly he sat up straight in his chair. *Have we been wrong about this all along?*

A Curious Turn of Time

Chapter 3 of 4

A little angry after an argument with Godric, Salazar tries to clear his mind and engages in an experiment that he hopes could literally change the world: the first Time-Turner.

A Curious Turn of Time

Salazar Slytherin started at the heavy wood and iron door of his dungeon laboratory banging closed behind Godric and cursed, for once, their decision to close off the school to the relatively new-fangled technique, Apparition. Usually one for the old ways, brooms and Locomotor and the like, Salazar had to admit that Apparition was, at least, quieter. And that ridiculous popping sound would have made Godric look like a bit of a twit. Always an added bonus.

Why the fool protested against this research was quite beyond Salazar. He had gotten sick of Helga complaining about 'if things had been different' and Rowena muttering about 'if I'd had more time to look for that book'. But, of course, the second one mentioned the possibility of testing out *actual* time travel, Godric and his sense of righteousness protested. He began to pontificate, in his typical holier-than-thou way, about *the inviolability of the golden thread that gives meaning to our lives*

Salazar snorted just thinking about hearing Godric say that. Their argument had only lasted ten minutes...a last ditch attempt by Godric to dissuade him from going ahead with this experiment as planned...but Godric had probably recited that phrase at least five times. For some reason, he hadn't been able to get it through to the dense, stubborn man that he, Salazar, was not about to sever, tangle, or otherwise damage that thread. Merely... tinker. Embroider. Knot, perhaps, if he was very unlucky.

After all, Salazar wasn't talking about senseless time-hopping, not knowing where you were going or how you were going to get back. The idea of controlling the travel was really more exciting than the idea of simply travelling. No, a reliable, logical method that gave you allotted, discrete little jumps: that was the key. *That* was interesting. He was fairly sure he could do it, too...

"Why do we have to do *it* here?" Hermione protested in annoyance as her arms began to ache from being stretched out to carry the manuscript, which *of course* he couldn't carry because *he* needed his wand...yes, the man so opposed to foolish wand-waving...to *unward* his private laboratory. *Soshe* had been carrying it all the way from the library down to the very root of the castle.

"Because I have more space than that poky little chamber you were keeping this in."

"There are classrooms closer to the library." *And that don't belong to you.*

"Oh, yes, a classroom where our main competitors for space will be crass, silly, hormonal teenagers," he muttered sarcastically.

"I thought you loved interrupting those crass, silly, hormonal teenagers."

"I would prefer to remain undistracted," he replied, not countering her accusation in the slightest.

Miserable bastard. He could almost hear her think it. As long as she did not say it, though, as long as she had more respect for him than for herself not to say it aloud... well, she would continue carrying the manuscript.

He was not by nature misogynistic. That had been the first question to spring to his mind last night, but he had quickly dismissed it. No, he did not imagine there was anything much that *made* women consent to subservience...Narcissa, Bella, *Lily*...before their men. It was not a function of being a woman. It seemed to him that it was an individual choice, for it was not true of all women...Minerva would make a classic example here...only of some. Why was an interesting question that he had not considered before last night. Well, had not considered any more than he had considered why Wormtail had so subjugated himself before Voldemort.

The possibility that it was *love*, love of the men...or perhaps merely the men themselves, somehow, in charge...that could be responsible for their choices... it struck him as uncanny and disquieting.

With his knife, Salazar pulled towards him a small line of the powdered stone and looked warily at it for a moment. It glinted a little in the dim, flickering light of the torches that were pinned along the walls, but he barely noticed what it looked like. All he could think of was that he didn't want to waste it...digging all three components, aquamarine, moss agate and labradorite, up from their mines and getting them all to him safely was an uncertain and lengthy process, and Godric would just *gloat* if he were to run out without achieving any success...and he certainly didn't want to over-do it and find himself stranded in some far-off time. Still, using not enough would also be a waste, as the powder would remain completely inert, but contaminated, within the receptacle. His expert eye judged that, for now, this was a conservative estimate.

He turned now to lift the rounded glass receptacle he had had blown expressly for this purpose. About four inches in diameter, the rounded globe had two cylindrical pipes that protruded like an axis from the globe's surface, one slightly wider than the other.

Salazar hesitated now and thought about Godric's warning once again in a slightly different light. This would, of course, be unpredictable. If it worked, it would be difficult for him to know immediately what time he had moved to. His *aim* was to move only a few hours. He had a firm hypothesis about the quantities required to move certain distances. A hypothesis that Godric had spent the past forty minutes or so poking holes in.

But what does Godric know? he huffed to himself. He lifted his knife to the wider pipe now, the little heap of powdered stone atop it, and he slowly inclined the blade just a fraction to ease every single speck into the glass sphere without any falling out the other side.

Once that was done, he laid the sphere down again. He lifted the shallow, earthenware dish that was beside it and breathed in the scent of the oil and herb mixture: crushed comfrey leaves immersed in pine oil. With a mutter of a spell, he lit a small, contained flame in a second earthenware dish and set an iron tripod above it. This would have to be done quickly. He needed to set the oil above the flame and quickly be prepared to capture the first wafts of the heated fumes by sucking them carefully into the receptacle, which he could then seal with small balls of clay to allow the powdered stone and air to bind.

Closing his eyes for a second, he envisaged all the movements necessary, all the careful adjustments, how he would tell through the cloudy gas that the receptacle was ready to seal. Then, moving swiftly and surely, he placed the oil above the flame and raised the sphere to his lips.

A few moments passed by, and he stared carefully at the oil's surface, waiting for that little shimmer that would tell him it was time. It was taking much longer than he had expected; the flame might not be hot enough. Still, he held the receptacle up for another moment, then another, with every shallow breath thinking that he would put it down soon, start over, but then worrying that he would *just miss that moment*.

Then, just as he was promising himself that the next moment he would lay the receptacle down, a slight waft, a mere shifting of the light told him that the oil was warming, and he breathed carefully, measuredly in through the thinner pipe, feeling a sudden sense of warmth creeping through the glass as the warm air was pulled inwards.

And then he almost choked.

Squeezing his watering eyes shut, he groped futilely for the clay balls for a moment before laying his hands on them. Still effectively blind, he fumbled and managed to plug...or at least he thought from the feel of things that he was managing it...both ends of the glass piping so that at least the experiment didn't *have* to be ruined. Fumbling, he almost dropped the sphere, but he managed to grip it tightly once again and set it down on the tabletop before pushing his hands against the table and rising to his feet.

He only now allowed himself to cough, trying to get the burning, tingling sensation from the back of his throat. Raising a hand to his watering eyes, he rubbed away the moisture and pinched the bridge of his nose, taking a moment to compose himself, swallowing to rid himself of the last of the sting, before he opened his eyes.

To find the tabletop bare. Immediately, shocked and infuriated, sure that he would find Godric behind him playing a *trick* where he wasn't wanted, Salazar spun around, snatching his wand from the table as he did so. Only it was not Godric behind him, but two strange and unfamiliar people, wands half-raised.

"How dare you?" he immediately exploded. "How dare you enter my lab without permission and *threaten* me! If you're the new aides Helga's been speaking of, you should consider yourselves dismissed *immediately*."

The two people looked at him in alarm, the young woman with loose hair, which he was sure Helga would object to as thoroughly improper for the current company she was keeping, taking a small step back behind the dark-haired man.

"Well? What do you have to say for yourselves? Put down that wand immediately, man! Before I hex you into oblivion," he added with large, swirling gestures of his wand for emphasis. The people were clearly fools, but that was no excuse.

The man and woman exchanged looks, and contrary to Salazar's very explicit instructions, the man now waved his wand and muttered something completely unintelligible.

"Don't you dare cast spells on me, you impudent interloper!" Salazar raged, advancing towards the other man. The woman shrank back, but the man did nothing.

"I merely cast a charm to allow us to more readily understand each other," the dark man replied quite snootily to him. Some stranger, in his castle, being snooty *tbim*. There had better be a good explanation for this!

"Well, it is hardly my fault if you only speak the *vulgar* languages," Salazar snapped back, drawing himself to his full height and letting his wand hand, his right, fall slightly. It did not behave a sophisticated wizard to keep his wand raised threateningly.

"Vulgar?" the woman asked now, seeming more confident as she took a few steps around

"What is it that you two are speaking to me now? Your charm must be exceedingly good; your language sounds quite acceptable.

"Well, English. We're speaking English, of course," the woman replied. She was standing at the other man's left now, although the top of her head barely reached above the slant of his shoulder.

Salazar pondered this for a moment. They were obviously lying to him. He would have been able to understand English. What sort of game were they trying to play? Were they here simply to steal, or with some more sinister purpose towards him? Had Godric paid them to come and interrupt him and his work?

"You will tell me your names now, please," he commanded after a short pause. That would be a start toward acquiring all the rest of the information he wanted to know.

"I ought to ask you the same question," the other man replied warily. "And how did you come to be in my laboratory?"

"Your..." Salazar was just about to bellow when, quite unexpectedly, the woman leaned forward and impudently plucked his wand from his hand before scuttling back a few steps behind the man. "A Muggle thief, in Hogwarts?" Salazar exclaimed, looking at Hermione with horror evident on his face. So they had come to steal from him, perhaps also to harm him, then? He couldn't imagine Godric would be involved in *that*. Somehow, these strangers had penetrated their castle.

"Not at all," the man replied to him rather disdainfully. "A clever witch. Now, please, identify yourself before I am forced to call for someone."

"You speak as if it were your castle!" Salazar snapped back. Why should *he* identify himself first? Why should he identify himself at all to this intruder?

"More mine than yours. What is your name?" the dark man snapped now, clearly beginning to lose his temper. Well, Salazar would be more than a match for him if he did so!

Salazar glared at him for a long moment, eyes narrowed dangerously, and he contemplated performing a little instinctive magic to teach this new man a lesson, but then he thought better of it. Drawing himself to his full height, he instead said, in the coldest, most imperious tone he could muster, "I am Salazar Slytherin. Now, please show some civility and identify yourselves!"

The effect was palpable and very gratifying: the dark man immediately stiffened, his eyes narrowed, his hand gripping his wand more tightly; the woman immediately took a few startled steps back and almost tumbled to the floor when she put her hand on the tabletop only for the parchment beneath her palm to slip a little.

"I'm afraid I'll need to see something to prove that..." the man told him very stiffly.

"*Prove* it? You have yet to even provide me with names, but you expect me to *prove* who I am? Here. Listen, I'll show you who I am," Salazar began to rant. "Sssshheessss!" he hissed suddenly.

The dark man merely raised his eyebrow and said, "Parseltongue, while rare, does not an identity prove."

"Severus!" the young woman behind him now snapped fearfully, and she was going to say more, Salazar could tell, but then her companion half-turned to her with a chilling glare, and she hushed.

"Ssssseveruss," he half-hissed, half-muttered, giving the man a wily look now. "What a perfect name."

"Very well," Severus returned tightly, clearly disquieted by hearing his name in that half-Parseltongue slur. "Tell us, Salazar Slytherin, how you came to be here."

The man was still conducting himself with rigid authority, wary yet confident poise, and it infuriated Salazar. *That* is not the question! The question is how did *you* come to be here?"

"We walked," the man retorted somewhat facetiously. "This is my private laboratory."

Salazar had to work to prevent his face from taking on an instinctive, bug-eyed look of shock *at* his grandiose declaration. "It most certainly is not! It is *mine*! Was it you who meddled with my experiment?" he demanded incautiously, his mind racing quickly through all the possible explanations for his current predicament, none of which included this being anything other than *his* private laboratory.

"What experiment?" the two before him questioned in unison, the girl's slightly nervous near-shriek in stark contrast to the cool, wily question from the man *Severus*. A name Salazar quite deliberately made a mental note of now, in case he ever ran into this man again. He looked... devious. He looked very much like he was not a man to be played, conned, or otherwise wormed around. He was a man to engage head on. Head on in webs of deception, that was.

"Nothing," was Salazar's response after a pause, not giving in to the instinct to say it sharply and quickly, arousing suspicion.

"How... how are you here?" the woman stammered now, repeating that most annoying question.

"I repeat, young girl, that it is *you* who are *here*." Salazar gave her a disdainful look. She seemed to be one of those stuttering ninny types, who although possessed of magical ability, were never capable of doing anything much with it because they were always seeking the approval and permission of the men about them. He wondered, now, what the relation between these two was and whether he could somehow use their relationship, whatever it was, to his advantage in what was rapidly becoming a stalemate.

At that moment, as both Severus and his young lady seemed about to protest, there came a knock at the door, startling them all.

"Come in," he and Severus both called in unison before glaring at the other.

At that moment, to Salazar's horror, an older woman with a few curls evident beneath the white fabric covering her head, functional but undistinguished robes swaying just a little around her ankles, entered the room.

"Severus, Hermione, Minerva said...oh, I'm sorry. You have a guest!" The woman flushed upon making eye contact with Salazar, who was looking at her in total horror. Who was this woman? He had never met this woman before. How were there suddenly so many unidentified people in the castle? How had they all gotten in? Were they playing an awful trick on him? Perhaps Godric *had* planned this to try and teach him a lesson about his experiments? Or perhaps...and suddenly he felt foolish for not having thought of this first, although there had been no real reason for him to expect other people in the past or future to be using this room at the precise moment he arrived...he had actually succeeded. Was this another time? When? What was Hogwarts now? Still a school? What?

The woman took a step towards him now while looking chastisingly at Severus.

Awkwardly, almost begrudgingly, Severus said, "Poppy Pomfrey, this is my... cousin..." He turned to Salazar suddenly with a warning, fierce look. "This is Poppy Pomfrey. The school's Healer."

Salazar nodded once, then a second time, slowly, and turned to face the older woman, who was looking at him kindly, although she was still a little pink.

"Well, very nice to meet you, Mr... Snape, is it?" she said hesitatingly.

"Sal," Severus interjected tersely before Salazar could respond. "Just call him *Sal*," he added with a malicious twist of his lips at Salazar.

Feeling thoroughly wrong-footed, but sure that he would get some sort of revenge against this man later, once he had gotten to grips with where he was, Salazar smiled gently at the older woman, Poppy, *he* had said, and replied, "Enchanted," taking her hand and lifting it to his lips and enjoying the second flush of colour that suffused her cheeks.

AN:

So, I wanted to think here about the invention of magic. We see all the time in fanfic that Hermione or Severus have invented something new and groundbreaking, curing lycanthropy, etc., but what of the magic they all now take for granted? In writing Salazar's invention of the Time-Turner (at least in a primitive form), I used the following

information about gemstones, herbs, etc.:

Aquamarine: Used in deep meditations, aquamarine is associated with unfinished business, order, and with foresight. It is also a powerful stone to meditate upon, bringing peace and serenity. Some more advanced meditators use aquamarine to receive the wisdom to see truth. It was a well-used stone in Roman times, and so would probably have been just within Salazar's reach.

Moss agate: Moss agate is simply agate that takes on various hues of green, particularly darker pine and emerald shades. Moss agate is said to be the most powerful agate, and it is used to help balance emotions because it enhances concentration and persistence. This sort of stone would come from the rocks around a volcano, and there are plenty of these in Europe to choose from.

Labradorite: Labradorite allows the meditator to see through illusions and see the true form of their dreams, so it is excellent for strengthening intuition and developing new ideas. It can help you 'think outside the box', so to speak! This stone would probably, at least for Salazar, be the most difficult to get hold of and would come from Norway. As it's a less common stone, there's a picture here to help you imagine it: <http://www.geocities.jp/senribb/jewels/Labradorite.jpg>

Comfrey leaves: this herb is a protective one, particularly effective against negativity while travelling and for protection in the astral realm.

Pine oil: this oil would have been easily accessible to Salazar Slytherin in Scotland, and would be useful for binding, particularly in a protection spell.

And all those who are a little older and remember chemistry class: pipetting by mouth, the dangers! Or, as my co-author suggested, Salazar puffing on his crack pipe. It's supposed to be a little silly.

A Slippery Situation

Chapter 4 of 4

Hermione Granger, new Hogwarts librarian, has inherited the unenviable task of archiving parts of Hogwarts' neglected archives. There, she uncovers a manuscript by Salazar Sytherin and finds that his injunctions against Muggles aren't exactly what everyone has always assumed them to be. Unable to quite believe it herself, no one else believes her until, in a bizarre set of circumstances, the author himself appears and begins to meddle in Hermione's life.

A Slippery Situation

Once Madam Pomfrey had gone, Professor Snape ushered Hermione and "Sal" into his office, carefully locking and warding the door to the laboratory behind him. Hermione approved: it would be madness indeed to allow Slytherin...*if that's really who he is*...access to some of the materials Snape kept in his stores. Concerned about her manuscript, she made her way carefully to Snape's desk and guided the parchment gently to the flat surface. Then she cast a handful of protective spells over it and turned her attention to the two men.

Slytherin...*supposedly*...was wandering around with room, inspecting Snape's shelves with what appeared to be great interest. He paused to run his fingers lightly along the spines of a few of the books and peered curiously into one or two of the jars at eye-level. Snape, wearing an expression of bemusement, stood in the centre of the room and kept his steely black eyes trained on the man now nosing around the filing cabinets in the corner.

Hermione had seen the portraits of Slytherin, of course, and she could discern that this man resembled him greatly, but there were a number of differences. For one thing, *this* Slytherin was much younger: his hair was black, not grey, and his face was scored by fewer lines and ridges. No long, wicked-looking beard hung down his chest; his cheeks and chin were clean-shaven like Snape's. If anyone had asked, Hermione would have said that his sharp features only added to his air of cunning and deviousness...but to herself, she admitted that Slytherin, if he truly was Slytherin, was not unattractive. His grey eyes sparkled with something akin to mischief, and his body filled out his old-fashioned robes nicely.

"You intimated that you could prove your identity," Professor Snape said suddenly, breaking into Hermione's thoughts. "I'd be quite grateful," he went on with a hint of sarcasm, "if you got on with it. Otherwise, I shall have to inform the Headmaster of the presence of an intruder in the school."

Slytherin's eyebrows shot up his forehead at this demand; highly affronted, he snapped, "I never intimated any such thing, despite your impolite interrogation. If my ability to speak Parseltongue does not satisfy you, you're at perfect liberty to think whatever you will. Your threats do not concern me in the slightest." He slid his wand from the sleeve of his robes and pointed it calmly at Snape.

Hermione's eyes widened. Slytherin, in his haste to confront Snape, seemed to have forgotten about her, so she angled her own wand surreptitiously and hoped she wouldn't have to use it.

"Put your wand away," Snape said lazily, not even bothering to defend himself from what appeared to be an impending attack. "It makes no difference to me who you are, so if you say you are Salazar Slytherin, I believe you. However," he added, eyes narrowing dangerously, "I do expect an explanation for your presence in my laboratory."

Slytherin considered this thoughtfully for a moment; then, with an absent flick of his wand that disarmed Hermione silently and neatly, he grinned. "Very well. Is there somewhere we could go to speak more comfortably?"

Busy fetching her wand from underneath the desk, Hermione missed Snape's grimace of indecision. "My quarters," she heard him say stiffly. Fuming at having been disarmed so easily, she followed the two men out of the office and along the damp dungeon corridor.

Hermione had never had the privilege of being invited into Snape's quarters, so the look of his sitting room came as something of a shock to her. Unconsciously expecting décor like that in his office...stark, dark, and intimidating...she was astonished to see instead a warm and cosy room furnished with leather armchairs, mahogany tables, and a beautiful thick woven carpet. She didn't know what to make of it, except to wonder if perhaps Snape were not as stern and ascetic as she had always assumed.

A swish of Snape's wand started a fire roaring in the grate. Nodding appreciatively, Slytherin tucked up his robes and took a seat in the armchair nearest the flickering flames, stretching his feet out to warm them. Hermione joined Snape by the cabinet on the other side of the room where he had conjured three goblets and was filling them with elven wine.

"Are you certain this is wise?" she hissed at him under her breath. "He could be anybody. We shouldn't just let him..."

"Miss Granger," Snape interrupted her irritably, "do you doubt my ability to handle this situation?"

"Well, yes," she answered honestly. "Especially if he's Slytherin. Don't you think it's strange that the appearance of someone claiming to be Slytherin should happen to coincide with my discovery of his manuscript?"

Snape's lip curled disdainfully. "Not at all," he responded smoothly. "What, exactly, do you think the word *coincidence* means?" Swishing his wand, he levitated the wine goblets and turned his back on her to cross the room and join Slytherin near the fire.

Furious at his dismissal, Hermione stalked to the nearest armchair and took her seat, glaring coldly at the two men. One of the goblets floated toward her.

"Now," said Snape, businesslike, "I believe you were going to tell us how you happened to be in my locked and warded Potions laboratory."

Slytherin settled himself more comfortably in his chair and answered, "Such a foolish accident, really. I was tinkering with a device for long-distance travel and, most unfortunately, inhaled a bit of the mineral mixture I was using. Imagine my surprise to find myself in an alternate reality!" He gave a light-hearted laugh. "I never assumed the device would carry me over as long a distance as all that!"

Hermione snorted into her wine. *He's lying...he must be!* She glanced at Snape, only to discover to her dismay that he was sipping his wine thoughtfully, as though he believed every word of the preposterous story. *Oh, Merlin, I hope he's not really falling for this!*

"An alternate reality," Snape mused. He shook his head. "I'm afraid you have made a mistake, Salazar...if I may call you that."

Slytherin inclined his head graciously. "What mistake is this?" he enquired politely.

"You have not, in fact, been transported to an alternate reality," said Snape in a tone that sounded suspiciously apologetic to Hermione. "Rather, you have travelled into the future."

"Into the future, you say?" repeated Slytherin. He twirled his empty goblet in his long-fingered hands. "How far into the future?"

Snape paused for a long moment before answering. Finally, he said, "It's difficult to be precise about these things, of course."

"Of course," Slytherin agreed. "But what is your estimate?"

"I would say," Snape said slowly, "that you have travelled approximately one thousand years."

The twirling goblet crashed onto the hearth. Hermione jumped, startled by the sound, and looked sharply at Slytherin. His face had lost all colour; for all his prevarication, it was clear he had not expected this answer. He blinked a few times, then gave a slight shake of his head and began to breathe naturally again.

"I see," he said, his voice tight but calm. "This is... unfortunate."

"Naturally," Snape nodded. "You will, of course, wish for a bit of time and privacy to consider these things. Allow me to offer you the use of my study."

Slytherin nodded slowly. "I am very grateful. Thank you." He stood and smoothed down his robes. "If you permit, I will retire there now. I find myself... weary."

Hermione remained in her chair as Snape led Slytherin through a concealed doorway. He was gone for several minutes, during which time Hermione sipped distractedly at her wine and played their conversation back in her head. She had not noticed at the time, but the attitude of both men reminded her of diplomats she had seen in films. Neither man had openly doubted the other, but equally, neither man had been entirely truthful or sincere. This, she supposed, was what formal courtesy comprised: reading the truth beneath the polite, carefully constructed lies.

Slytherin's story was obviously a lie...or, at the very least, a misrepresentation, designed to fish for information without revealing too much about his own activities. His assumption that he had arrived in an alternate reality was obviously nonsense; Hermione doubted he had truly believed such a thing. On the other hand, she reflected, Snape's admission had certainly surprised Slytherin. And Snape had been so courteous and apologetic! He had been dissembling, she was sure, but the existence of a Snape, however false, who was not an ill-tempered bastard was just as surprising to Hermione as his comfortable sitting room had been. Privately, she allowed that her estimation of him had been somewhat incorrect in some respects. She also wondered if the men's conversation was an example of how Slytherins interacted normally. If so, she pitied them...how exhausting such constant pretence must be!

Hearing footsteps, she twisted in her chair and saw that Snape had re-entered the room. He returned to his place beside the fire and levitated Slytherin's goblet onto the mantelpiece.

"Is he all settled?" Hermione asked.

"As settled as he's going to be," Snape answered darkly. "I've told him that, until we can figure out how to return him to his own time, he'll need to pass himself off as my cousin. Thank Merlin it's the summer holidays."

"Do you think he'll be able to do that?"

Snape raised his black eyes to her and regarded her strangely. "He looked positively delighted."

Hermione shivered. The prospect of a Slytherin...*the* Slytherin...pleased by the idea of playing pretend didn't bode well.

Noting her reaction, Snape commented bleakly, "My thoughts exactly."

That evening, in her own quarters, Hermione ran a bath and sank gratefully into the hot water. She felt a bit guilty at leaving Snape alone with Slytherin...what if he got wand-happy again? What if he tried Legilimency on Snape to find out what was going on? Or...she shivered...what if Snape tried Legilimency on *him*? The very idea was ghastly; Hermione resolved to keep her mind blocked in their presence at all times. She knew, however, that her mild guilt was misplaced; Snape would not want her in his rooms any more than necessary. And for that, she realised suddenly, she was grateful, because she did not want the responsibility of dealing with "Sal".

Rarely were her days as fraught with dramatic events as today! She thought she had left adventure behind when she had taken the position of librarian, but it appeared that she was wrong. Evidently, she had not lost much of her reckless Gryffindor courage, either...in retrospect, she was amazed that she had had the nerve, not only to point her wand at Salazar Slytherin, but to snatch his from him with her bare hands!

Thinking of it, she quailed a little...then grew still, her hands paused in her soapy hair. Slytherin had called her a Muggle thief, but Snape had contradicted him. What was it that he had said?

Oh! she recalled suddenly. *He called me a clever witch!* A strange, warm, tingly feeling suffused her face and chest. Resolutely, she set her hands to work scrubbing again. *Well*, she thought, half amused, half confused, *I guess there's a first time for everything.*

Snape slept poorly that night and woke the next morning with a tension headache that resonated all the way down his spine. *This is perfect*, he thought sourly, his thin features twisting with displeasure. He retrieved a vial of painkiller from his bedside table and downed it in a single gulp. After the defeat of the Dark Lord, he had hoped for a quiet life, brewing his potions, writing a few articles, perhaps even a book, one of these days. It seemed he was not to be allowed any peace after all. *Salazar Slytherin*,

he mused. *How I would have loved this, if it had happened twenty years ago* Now, the thought of managing this farce daunted him. Voldemort had been bad enough...what would Slytherin be like? It would be so easy, he thought, to turn this over to the Headmaster and wash his hands of the whole affair. For some reason, however, he didn't want to do that: Snape was secretive by nature and, Slytherin to the core, hoped that he could somehow turn the situation to his benefit.

Of course, the involvement of Hermione Granger would make that more difficult. *bossy, interfering little baggage!*...but he considered himself more than equal to the challenge of manipulating her. It was his ability to manipulate Slytherin that worried him. He hoped that Hermione would make that task easier. She did have a way of doing and saying the most unexpected things...perhaps her talent for distraction would work to his advantage. That manuscript of hers, for one thing: she would undoubtedly pester Slytherin about it once she realised she now had the perfect opportunity to verify her suppositions.

Then Snape bolted perfectly upright in bed, jarring his head and wincing with the pain. *That bloody manuscript!* What if his interpretation of it had been correct? Hermione had to be the only virgin witch on the staff, unless Minerva had led a more sedate youth than he thought. He envisioned Slytherin taking great interest in the state of the girl's hymen and felt a little ill. There was something a bit pervy about the idea of Slytherin nosing into her sexual history; shaking himself, Snape crawled out of bed and padded into his washroom. *Surely not*, he thought firmly. *I must be wrong. Slytherin wouldn't be interested in that.* Turning his mind carefully away from his own interest in the matter, he stripped off his nightclothes and turned on the tap. Perhaps a little foray into Miss Granger's mind at breakfast would not go amiss...just to make sure, he told himself. *If she's not a virgin, she'll have nothing to worry about.*

Severus looks quite ill at ease, observed "Sal" contentedly as the thin, dark man introduced him as a Snape cousin to the other staff members at the high table *I make him uncomfortable. Good.* He smiled graciously and shook hands with the other professors, responding carefully to their courtesies through a translation spell, assessing them in his mind one by one. Minerva McGonagall...sour-faced, cold, but clever-looking. She peered at him distrustfully through her spectacles; evidently, his host was not known for being a family man. He would have to watch her. Filius Flitwick...clever again, and good-natured. Slytherin expected no trouble from the short Charms professor. There was the grey-haired Healer from last night, too...what was her name? Poppy? She seemed pleasant enough. This cataloguing of people continued in his mind as he took his seat next to Severus and tucked into the sumptuous breakfast on the table. It was a far cry from the weak ale, barley bread, and bland porridge to which he was accustomed. The sausages, in particular, were delicious.

"What do you do... Sal?" McGonagall asked politely from further down the table. "Does an interest in Potions run in the family?"

Slytherin considered the question for a moment, wondering what he could answer that would discomfit Severus most. "Oh, yes," he replied, smiling. "I'm surprised Severus hasn't mentioned my business...I'm sure it would be very popular here at Hogwarts where there are so many teenaged girls. I manufacture beauty products, you see."

To his left, Severus choked on his pumpkin juice and favoured him with a most delightful glare.

"Is that so?" McGonagall commented. "I'm sure it would be very popular, indeed." She regarded Severus curiously, much to Slytherin's secret pleasure.

"I would be happy to offer you a consultation, if you like," Slytherin went on, thoroughly enjoying the furious chill radiating from the man beside him. "I'm sure Severus would not mind if we took over his office for an hour or so...would you, cousin?" he asked, turning in his chair.

"Not at all," Severus answered through gritted teeth. He stabbed a piece of bacon on his plate with particular viciousness. "Filius," he said suddenly, "what about this staff meeting, then?"

Slytherin returned his attention to his plate, satisfied that he had thoroughly annoyed his officious host. A muffled cough from further along the table reached his ears; under the pretence of refilling his mug of juice, he glanced over to see the girl from last night...reintroduced to him as Hermione Granger...covering up what had obviously been a snort of laughter. Casually, Slytherin sent a few mental feelers her way, wondering absently what he might find in her unguarded thoughts.

To his surprise, her found her mind competently blocked. *Hmm*, he thought consideringly. *What is she hiding?* Making a note to investigate further later, he concentrated on manipulating the utensils in his hands...he was perfectly comfortable with the knife, but the "fork" was giving him some slight trouble, and he realised he would need more practice in order to wield it as gracefully as everyone else. In the meantime, he tried not to draw attention to his clumsiness and listened to the unfortunately rather dull conversations of his neighbours.

When breakfast came to an end some little while later, Severus turned to Slytherin and said pleasantly, "Well, Sal, I daresay you'd like a tour of the school. Have you quite finished eating?"

Instantly suspicious, Slytherin replied, "An excellent idea, thank you."

Severus stood and motioned for him to do the same. As Slytherin was pushing in his chair, the younger man leaned down to McGonagall and said in a carrying whisper, "He fancies himself a beautician, but he makes his money from a potion for piles. I would be careful what I let him put on my face, if I were you." Then he straightened and smirked at Slytherin. "Shall we be off?"

Lip curling, Slytherin followed him from the Great Hall, ignoring the stifled giggles of the bushy-haired Granger. *Touché*, Slytherin thought to himself with satisfaction.

Instead of taking him round the school, Severus led him directly back to the study in the dungeons. Slytherin had moved all the furniture against the wall the night before and conjured for himself a large featherbed. Severus's look of displeasure at the sight pleased him greatly.

"Now," said Severus, "there are some things we must discuss. Do sit down," he sneered, gesturing at the ornate bed.

"Of course," said Slytherin, reclining luxuriously against the bolsters as Severus pulled up a chair. "What is on your mind?"

"Firstly," said Severus coldly, "I will be looking into the matter of returning you to your own time. I expect your complete helpfulness with this task. You will provide for me exact details of what you were doing when you were transported here, as they may help me to determine an appropriate course of action."

"Happily," Slytherin acquiesced, having no intention of doing anything of the kind. He reached behind him to fluff his pillows into a more comfortable shape.

"Secondly," Severus continued, "there is the matter of your sequestration."

"My...my *what?*" Slytherin exclaimed, caught off guard.

The other man's lips twisted into a smirk. "Your sequestration. Surely you didn't think I would allow you the run of the castle, to do as you please?"

Keeping his own face carefully neutral, Slytherin said calmly, "I'm afraid I don't understand. Do you intend to keep me locked up until you find a way to return me home?" He laughed lightly in disbelief.

"I assure you, that is exactly what I intend to do." Severus's smirk blossomed into an extraordinarily unpleasant grin at Slytherin's splutter of outrage. "I shall provide you with books from your own time, of course, and all the quills and parchment you desire. I shall even permit you to enjoy the company of myself or Miss Granger, if you wish, and you will naturally take your meals with me in the Great Hall," he said silkily. "But you will have no access whatsoever to any information or similar materials. I cannot have you carrying knowledge from the future back into the past...you could do irreparable damage to the course of history."

This echo of Godric Gryffindor's contemptible concerns drove Slytherin into a perfect fury. Snatching his wand from his sleeve, he hissed, "You bastard! Who do you think you are?"

Severus was on his feet in an instant, grin disappearing, and trained his wand on Slytherin as quickly as a striking snake. "Do not even think about it," he hissed back. "I know spells you could only dream of. I would not wish to use them on you." The look of grim anticipation on his face suggested that this last statement, at least, was a complete lie. Slowly, Slytherin lowered his wand.

"You will allow me to have congress with other members of the staff?" he repeated cautiously.

Severus blinked, but he swiftly covered the concern Slytherin had glimpsed in his eyes and corrected sternly, "Not other members of the staff, except at mealtimes. Only myself or Miss Granger."

Sensing a weakness, Slytherin enquired slyly, "She is your lover, then?"

"That," Severus snapped, "is none of your business."

Shrugging unconcernedly, Slytherin leaned back again on the bed and said resignedly, "Very well. As long as you provide me with sufficient... entertainment, I will accept your strictures. For now," he added darkly.

"See that you do." Severus sheathed his wand and glanced once again at the opulent bed, his lip turned up in disdain. "If you will excuse me now, I shall fetch you some reading material. Do not try to leave this room." This final threat hanging in the air, he whirled round in a billow of black robes and departed, slamming the study door behind him.

Slytherin did not rise from the bed immediately; instead, he listened carefully until he could no longer hear the younger man's footsteps. Then he stood up, looked around him, and walked over to the bookcase that stood against the far wall of the room. He had not seen Severus ward the books there, but all the same, Slytherin approached carefully. Extending his arm, he touched his wand tentatively to the spine of a large, leather-bound tome. The instant the wood came into contact with the book, a spark of energy erupted into the air and was sucked summarily into the wand. Had he touched the book with his bare hand, Slytherin would have been blown off his feet. Nodding grimly to himself, he returned to the bed and sat on the edge, gazing pensively into space. *This*, he thought, *is going to require some consideration*. He smiled. There was little he liked better than a good challenge, and Severus appeared to be a worthy one, indeed. Slytherin's uneasiness at being thrust so far into the future was wearing off rapidly; he was nothing if not adaptable. His experiment had not turned out so badly, after all. *There's a great deal of potential for me to make trouble here*, he realised gleefully. *I'm going to enjoy this*.

Hermione was less than pleased when Professor Snape erupted into her library in a swirl of robes and ill temper. The sound of the doors crashing open echoed in the slight headache that had developed behind her eyes during breakfast; guarding her mind so strenuously for the duration of the meal had been no small feat. Passing by her desk without so much as a glance, Snape strode into the stacks and disappeared for some time, though Hermione could hear the careless rustling of pages from his direction and the occasional irritated slam of a book onto a table. Wondering what he had gotten into his bonnet, she busied herself with cataloguing manuscripts and tried to ignore the racket coming from within the stacks. Hermione had always been good at tuning out distractions while she was working; when she was in an industrious state of mind, the level of her concentration was strong enough to blot out even the most obnoxious surroundings.

Thus intent on her work, she failed to notice when Snape finished gathering the books he wanted and brought them to the desk. The impatient snap of his fingers under her nose made her jump. Tearing her eyes from the parchment in front of her, she raised her head and said stupidly, "What?"

Looking as though his own eyes wanted to roll out right out of their sockets, Snape shoved his pile of books at her sharply and snapped, "I wish to take these out."

With a wave of Hermione's wand, the titles of the books appeared in her ledger under Professor Snape's name. "Due back in a week," she said mildly, turning back to her work.

"I hope not to need them that long," Snape muttered. Clearing his throat, he said in a slightly more conciliatory tone, "You should know, Miss Granger, that I've sequestered our guest in my quarters. He is not to be allowed any information about what has happened in the past millennium."

Hermione nodded; this seemed a wise plan.

"However," Snape continued, shifting on his feet in what looked to Hermione surprisingly like nervousness, "I have assured him we will attend to his diversion. Thus," he said, gesturing, "the books."

She took a closer glance at the titles and nodded again. "I see these are all quite old."

"In addition," Snape said, ignoring her comment, "I have promised that we will keep him company. May I count on your attendance this afternoon?"

It dawned on Hermione then that she had left her newly discovered manuscript in Snape's office. There couldn't be any harm, she decided, in showing it to Slytherin...if he really was Slytherin...and asking for his assessment. As long as she didn't tell him how the material had been interpreted these thousand years, discussing the manuscript with him wouldn't count as giving him contraband information. So she smiled generously at Snape and answered, "Certainly. I shall come down directly after lunch."

He narrowed his eyes as though unconvinced by her casual reply, but his suspicion withered in the face of her innocent smile. "Very well," he said shortly. "I shall see you at lunch." Levitating the books in front of him, Snape left the library.

Hermione found her research into the Pince Collection...as she had begun to refer to the pile of manuscripts the former librarian had stuffed into the dank hidden chamber...very satisfying that morning and felt she had worked up quite an appetite by the time she descended the wide staircase to the Great Hall for lunch. Snape and Slytherin were already seated at the table when she entered, laughing at a joke Professor Flitwick was telling. All three men looked slightly guilty as she took her seat and put a sandwich onto her plate, and she assumed that the joke the tiny professor had learned in the Three Broomsticks the night before was not considered fit for a lady's ears. Hermione laughed a little to herself, thinking of some jokes she had heard from Minerva McGonagall that had turned the air blue, but she said nothing and began to eat.

Slytherin, she noticed, was much less exuberant than he had been at breakfast. Captivity, it seemed, did not agree with him. If this man was truly Salazar Slytherin, she thought, she and Snape would do well to be prepared for attempts at escape or manipulation. Knowing how unhappily she herself would have regarded being locked up by strangers and denied a plentiful supply of books, she felt some sympathy with the expression of dejection on Slytherin's face.

It did not escape her that Snape was looking none too joyful, either. He had undoubtedly passed a trying morning, if Slytherin's mischievous statements at the breakfast table were anything to go by. In fact, she decided as she watched him out of the corner of her eye, Snape's appearance was quite haggard; his eye sockets were wreathed in shadow and his face was even paler than usual. He kept rubbing his temples in between desultory bites of food, and Hermione wondered if he was suffering from a headache. She felt rather bad for him all of a sudden; she was glad she had agreed to baby-sit Slytherin this afternoon and resolved to urge Snape to have a brief, restorative kip while she did so.

The two men, neither of whom seemed particularly interested in food, left the table before Hermione had finished eating, so at the end of her meal, she made her way alone into the dungeons. After a quick detour to Snape's office to retrieve the manuscript, she presented herself at the door to his quarters and knocked firmly.

Almost immediately, the door wrenched open, and a long, black arm snaked out to pull her unceremoniously inside. "Finally!" Snape breathed. "He's in the study. Forgive me if I take my leave."

"Of course," Hermione agreed graciously. "You look as though you could use a little sleep."

Snape paused in his rush for what she assumed was the bedroom door and seemed about to berate her for her consideration; she was therefore quite surprised when he

said, "Yes, I believe you're right." Then he flicked his wand, wrenched open the door, and disappeared into the room beyond.

Well! she thought. *If this is the effect Slytherin has on Snape, I hope he keeps it up!* It was nice not to be insulted, for once, for being kind.

She unwarded the door to the study carefully, alert for any attempt by Slytherin to make a break for it, but nobody rushed at her when she entered the room, and she saw immediately why that was. Salazar Slytherin, in his shirtsleeves and trousers, was lying on an enormous four-poster featherbed, propped up by a veritable heap of down pillows, a piece of parchment in one hand, and a quill, the end of which he tapped against the corner of his lips pensively, in his other hand. He looked for all the world like a rakish and slightly aged Romantic poet.

He raised his head when she entered and gave a small smile, his eyes travelling along her body quickly before meeting her own. "Miss Granger," he said happily, "do come in. What a refreshing change you are," he added dryly, plumping up some pillows for her.

"Thank you," Hermione answered. Ignoring the preparations he was making for her to join him on the bed, she sat down in Snape's wooden chair instead. "How are you this afternoon?"

"Magnificently bored," he stated immediately. Pointing at the manuscript floating next to her, he remarked unashamedly, "I hope you've brought that for me."

"As a matter of fact, I have," she said, smiling at him. "Although I don't think you'll find the material comes as any surprise to you." She waited while he summoned the parchment to him and scanned through it rapidly. At first he seemed quite pleased to find that it was his own work he was reading; after a moment, however, his brow furrowed, and he shook his head as if in some confusion. "Something the matter?" Hermione observed nonchalantly.

"No," he responded slowly, "nothing the matter." Then he looked up, puzzled. "But there's a mistake here...as I'm certain you've already guessed." He regarded her appraisingly.

Suddenly, Hermione realised she had been stupid to bring him the manuscript without thinking things through properly...she should have known he would grasp the implications of the change in the text at once! He knew, of course, what the document had said originally; he could see in the manuscript what word had been altered; he could figure out easily how that alteration changed the meaning. Obviously. And now he was waiting for her to give something away. She felt like an idiot.

But as they say, she thought to herself, *as good be hanged for a sheep as a lamb.* "You know," she commented aloud, "I'm a Muggle-born."

Slytherin's expression didn't change. "And?"

He was playing games with her. So be it. "Fine," she snapped at him. "Then you won't mind telling me what this document said originally."

This statement seemed to amuse him, but he shook his head at her in mock sorrow. "I'm afraid I will mind very much indeed... unless there's something in it for me." He raised an eyebrow calculatingly.

"There doesn't have to be anything in it for you," Hermione said indignantly. "I could just take my manuscript and go," she pointed out.

"You wouldn't do that, I think," Slytherin countered, lying back indolently against the pillows. "That would make me very unhappy. I would have to ensure that Severus felt my unhappiness quite keenly..." He trailed off, watching her expectantly.

Stunned by this thinly veiled threat to make Snape miserable, Hermione retorted haughtily, "Don't overestimate the importance of your information." Her fingers itched to snatch the manuscript from his grasp, but she knew that would damage the parchment, so she contented herself with an imperious glare.

Slytherin was unimpressed. "You, my dear, are a poor liar." His lips turned up in a smirk. "Your very body language betrays you...you lean forward like a hound straining for the hunt. You can have what you want quite easily, you know. I'm not asking for much."

"What is it you want?" she demanded instantly.

Instead of answering, he patted the feather mattress next to him. Reluctantly, Hermione got to her feet and went over to sit primly on the edge of the bed. "Well?" she prompted. "What are you asking for?"

Slytherin dropped his head back against the pillows and gazed up at her face, searching her eyes intently. She stared back at him defiantly, confident that her Occlumency skills were adequate to fend off this obvious attempt to worm out her thoughts. At last, Slytherin blinked and grinned at her. Still holding her gaze, though not as intently, he said casually, "I want you to kiss me."

Hermione leapt from the bed to her feet. "Absolutely not!" she cried, horrified. She had not been quick enough in looking away, she knew: that first second of shock had allowed him to penetrate her thoughts, although she wasn't quite sure what he had been looking for or expecting to find. "You can't be serious!"

"Very well," Slytherin said resignedly. He floated the parchment back toward her and put his hands behind his head. "What shall we do now?"

Thrown off by his lack of concern, Hermione busied herself in securing the manuscript in a safe position. She had expected him to cajole her or taunt her; she certainly did not want to kiss him, but she was not prepared for the fact that he didn't really seem to want it either. When she turned to face him, he was holding his quill once again, having enchanted his own piece of parchment to dangle above his face as he lay on his back.

Determined not to say anything, Hermione picked up one of the books Snape had taken out of the library that morning and began to read, but her thoughts kept returning to Slytherin's unexpected behaviour like a tongue to a sore tooth. Finally, after several minutes of silence, she blurted, "Why do you want me to kiss you?"

Keeping his eyes on his own work, Slytherin shrugged. "I thought it might be a nice diversion."

Repressing the urge to snort in disbelief, Hermione asked, "That's it? It's not because you knew it was something I wouldn't do?"

His head turned to face her. "I didn't know it was something you wouldn't do."

The tone of disappointed judgment in his voice was unmistakable. Hermione immediately felt like a laced-up prude...it would only be a kiss, she told herself. It wasn't as though he had asked for her virtue. People kissed each other all the time in return for affection, she reasoned; it would hardly be prostitution to kiss him in return for a little information. On the other hand, if she were Slytherin, she would have asked for a fair trade, an exchange of data. Information was, after all, the very thing he was being denied. So why was he asking for a kiss?

Squaring her shoulders, Hermione got up from her chair and returned to her perch on the edge of the enormous bed. "You'll tell me what the manuscript said originally if I kiss you?" she asked to confirm their bargain.

Slytherin blinked and shoved the parchment and quill aside. "Exactly," he affirmed.

"All right," Hermione said bravely. She closed her eyes and puckered her lips slightly. When a few seconds had passed with no reaction from Slytherin, she opened her eyes to find him watching her in amusement. "What?" she asked, slightly offended.

"I believe our agreement was that *you* would kiss *me*," he said, the corners of his mouth twitching. Mimicking her, he lowered his eyelids and raised his lips slightly in her direction.

Hermione looked down at him, noting his long body stretched out on the down duvet, his relaxed position on his back with his dark-haired head supported on the palms of his hands, and wondered what the hell she thought she was doing. *All for a good cause*, she reminded herself firmly. *One day, other Muggle-borns will be thanking me*. Screwing up her courage, she leaned over him, bracing herself with her arms, careful not to touch him anywhere, closed her eyes, and brushed her lips briefly against his. She could tell from the feel of his lips that he was grinning...no doubt he expected her to pull away immediately, considering the bargain fulfilled. Well, she was not going to be played by this most archetypal of all Slytherins! Defying his expectations, she kept her lips firmly where they were, moving them gently and deliberately across his mouth until she felt him stop smiling and begin to kiss her in return.

To her surprise, Slytherin's mouth was very warm and firm...not at all the cold, snakelike sensation she had anticipated. She found herself enjoying the kiss a little bit, thinking it quite pleasant, and admitted him willingly when he opened his mouth and traced his tongue across the seam of her lips. She slid her tongue along his tentatively, growing slightly breathless, and gave a little gasp when he began to explore the inside of her mouth. This was not at all the kind of kiss she had imagined sharing with Salazar Slytherin! This was delightful; she wished that he would move his hands from behind his head and hold her a little closer.

Almost as if he had read her mind, he shifted a little and ran his hands up her arms to her shoulders, which he grasped to pull her down into the bed with him. He turned onto his side to face her, and then his fingers were in her hair, massaging her scalp, tilting her head into a position in which he could caress her mouth more thoroughly. She returned the favour, anchoring her hands in his thick, dark hair, her thumbs grazing his firm jaw, and kissed him back with equal enthusiasm. The hot, tingly feeling from last night's bath returned to her face; she felt flushed and anxious and wriggled a bit to try to relieve the tension. Her movement brought her into closer contact with Slytherin's chest, and a spark of electricity seemed to zip through her frame.

When she gasped again, Slytherin pulled gently away from her lips and grinned at her smugly. "I think you've done more than your part," he said quietly.

"Oh!" Sitting up hastily, Hermione blushed and fidgeted, smoothing down her hair nervously and straightening her robes where they had rumbled. "Yes. Quite." She cleared her throat and said, "Excellent. Now fulfil your half. What did you write in that manuscript originally?"

"As you no doubt assumed," he answered, "partway down the right-hand column, the word *genius* has been changed to *genus*."

"Ah." Hermione nodded, pleased. "Yes, that's what we thought. Go on."

He cocked one eyebrow at her. "What do you mean, go on? That's it. That's what I wrote originally."

"Well, yes," Hermione said, slightly frustrated, "but what did you mean?"

"Ah," Slytherin repeated, mocking her. "That was not part of our bargain, Miss Granger. You asked what the parchment said, not what it meant. If you want to know that," he continued, obviously taking pleasure in her flush of anger, "it'll cost you more than a kiss."

"You...you," Hermione stuttered, incensed. "You knew what I meant when I made that bargain!"

"Did I?" Slytherin asked. "I'm not a mind reader."

Jumping to her feet, Hermione flicked her wand angrily at the manuscript and sent it flying into the air. She kept her furious gaze on Slytherin until she had the door to the study unwarded and opened, then directed the manuscript out the door, feeling a momentary pang at the treatment the piece of parchment was receiving. She swept out behind it, her robes billowing in a passable imitation of her former Potions professor, conscious of the sound of laughter that followed her until she had slammed the door and warded it with the nastiest spells she could think of. Trembling with humiliated anger, Hermione flung herself into one of the leather armchairs by the fire and ground her teeth together in self-disgust. For the first time in her life, she had been bested by a Slytherin. Forcing herself to relax her jaw before she ruined her molars, she glanced back toward the door of the study and imagined she could hear Slytherin laughing mockingly still. *Everyone's always said not to make deals with Slytherins*, she recalled ruefully. *Well, at least I got burned by the original!* The thought was small consolation.