

Planting Paradise

by timestep

Potion Mistress Granger arrives on an exotic island to harvest some rare plants.
What happens when she meets a mysterious stranger?

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Chapter 1 of 1

Potion Mistress Granger arrives on an exotic island to harvest some rare plants. What happens when she meets a mysterious stranger?

Although the island was usually deserted, Reginald always took the precaution to quickly take in his surroundings following Apparation. As soon as he appeared, he immediately checked to ensure that no one had noticed his arrival. Muggles could only access the island by boat, but he had occasionally encountered a guest from the resort on the neighbouring island visiting the secluded beach for a quiet afternoon.

Satisfied nobody had noticed his sudden arrival, Reginald strode through the lush foliage. At the edge of the tree line, he paused to scan the open beach area. He stopped short, his foot still mid-step, surprised to see a woman sunbathing near the water. Moving silently but quickly, he backed behind a tree.

Certain he would not be observed, he sat on the ground so he could study the woman. She wore a bright blue bathing suit, a modest one-piece cut a little high on her legs to enhance their shapeliness. She was lying on a large colourful beach towel, one lovely leg bent slightly at the knee. He noticed that she was nicely toned and her sun-streaked brown hair was pulled into a loose bun.

The woman suddenly sat up, turned, and scanned the tree line. As she turned her attention back to the water, Reginald swiftly performed a Disillusionment Charm.

Attractive, he thought, taking in the features of her face. He estimated she was in her early forties.

After watching the ocean for a while, the woman picked up a pad of paper and began sketching the plants and cliffs that were near the clear blue water. When she finished the drawing, she set the pad next to her towel and began reading a book.

Reginald was beginning to wonder if she would ever leave when she finally gathered her belongings, stuffing everything into a large canvas bag. She gracefully rose to her feet, slipped on her sandals, and then began walking straight toward him. As quietly as he could, Reginald drew his long legs up to his chest so the woman would not accidentally trip over him.

He watched as she walked into the trees, looked around, and Apparated from the island.

So, she is a witch. I wonder why she was here?

Reginald stood, released the Disillusionment Charm, and tried to regain the feeling in his legs after sitting for so long. Once he could walk again, he made his way to where the plants were growing near the cliff line the same cliff the woman had been sketching.

He pulled a notebook from his pocket and began making notes about the size and quantity of the plants.

These Haucu plants will be perfect for harvesting during the full moon next week. I just need to add some protections to shield them from prying eyes and unwelcome hands.

As he turned to leave, something shiny in the sand caught his eye. Walking over to the spot, he bent over to pick up a sketchbook with a metal spiral binding. Looking at the drawing of the plants the woman had done, he noted that it was extremely detailed.

Hmm, I wonder if this belongs to that woman? he thought, as he considered benefits to locating the attractive witch. He flipped through the pad, searching for a name. As he reached the back cover, he found a name written just inside. "Bugger!" he exclaimed out loud. "Granger the one person who will know the value of these plants."

Reginald sat down in the sand, staring at the sketch as he contemplated his plan of attack.

I need to find a way to ensure that she does not harvest these plants. But how to do this?

Reginald began to play with the sand, watching it run through his fingers.

Time to inventory the situation. Everyone on the island knows me as 'Reginald,' so I don't have to worry about anyone revealing my true identity. Granger will never recognise me, since I had my nose and chin modified by that plastic surgeon, and I've gained just over a stone since she last saw me twenty years ago.

Perhaps if I attempt to court her I can get close enough to determine her plans.

He smirked, recalling that he had found her attractive to look at before he realized she was the insufferable know-it-all.

He stood up and started walking to the tree line.

"Court Granger." Reginald shrugged as he walked. "I've done worse, I suppose."

He took one last moment to look around and Apparated back to the island he currently called his home.

~oOo~

Hermione walked up to the bar located on the normally crowded beach. She was wearing a flowing sun dress with small straps on her shoulders. Hermione enjoyed having a drink near the water but hated crowds. She found that 8:00 in the evening was the perfect time to enjoy the beach the daytime crowds had gone in for dinner, and the night time drinkers had not yet awoken from their evening naps.

Hermione sat at the bar and ordered a gin and tonic.

"I'll have the same," a friendly sounding male voice beside her said in a noticeably English accent.

Curious to see who belonged to the voice, she looked to her left and saw a tall man with shoulder length dark hair, which was neatly tied back. He was wearing black linen trousers with a pressed seam and a crisp white linen shirt. She smiled at him as the bartender made their drinks.

"Reginald, you don't normally venture here at this time of the evening," the bartender said as he put the drinks down.

"Yes, but I was told that this lovely lady could be found here," he said, gesturing toward Hermione.

"You're looking for me?" Hermione asked, clearly confused.

"Yes, Miss Granger," he said turning to her and smiling, "I was told I could find you here. Or is it Mrs?"

"Ms, please. I'm no longer married. Why were you looking for me?"

"To return this," Reginald said, sliding the sketchpad to Hermione.

"My sketches! I've been looking for this. Thank you Mr? Um ..."

"Brown. Reginald Brown."

She smiled at him gratefully. "Thank you, Mr Brown. Wherever did you find it?"

"There is an island next to this one. I often motor over in the late afternoon after I close my shop to gather plants for my herbal remedies. When I was walking across the beach, I saw your book sitting in the sand. Fortunately, you were registered at the third resort I called."

"That was so very kind of you. I can't believe you worked so hard to find me."

"And now that I have met you," he began with a smile that didn't quite meet his eyes as he took her hand and lifted it to his lips, "I'm so very grateful that I did. I would have hated to have missed meeting someone as lovely as you."

Hermione blushed as she ran her finger over the rim of her glass.

"Please allow me to take you to dinner," she said, looking at him through lowered lashes. "I mean, to thank you for returning my sketch book."

"Regretfully, I have plans this evening. Maybe tomorrow?"

Hermione smiled widely and nodded. "Yes, I think that would work. Shall we meet here at the same time?"

"Until tomorrow, Ms Granger."

~oOo~

The next evening, Reginald arrived at the beachside bar a little early. It wasn't that he was anxious for the evening with Ms Granger to begin, but instead that he needed to ensure he had composed himself into the right frame of mind before she arrived. He ordered a scotch on ice and sat at a table that allowed him a view of both the ocean and the resort. Opening the newspaper, he waited for Hermione to arrive.

When he finished reading, he glanced at his watch, noting that Hermione was late.

"She is still insufferable," Reginald muttered as he tossed aside the paper.

"Excuse me, Mr Brown," Hermione asked as she finally arrived, "what are you muttering about?"

Surprised that she had been able to catch him off-guard, he quickly rose to his feet. "Oh, I'm sorry. Just something I read in the paper," he replied as he pulled out her chair, allowing her to take her seat before he returned to his own.

"Shall we go for dinner?" she asked as she took a moment to take in the evening, "or should I order a drink so we can enjoy the view for a few minutes?"

"I will defer to you, Ms Granger," Reginald said in his gracious host voice. *If you can make a decision without a book, that is* he thought with a smile as he finished the sentence in his head.

Hermione looked around for a few minutes at the near empty beach. She stretched her legs, crossing them at her ankles.

She sighed as she watched the water then looked at the mysterious man next to her. "This has always been my favourite time of day at the beach. Personally, I despise crowds. It's always so peaceful when the people are all gone. I don't suppose that you know a quiet place with a view and good local food?"

"If you would call me Reginald, I'll take you to one of my favourite places. It's small, however, and if we don't get there soon," he said, draining his drink, "there may not be any tables left."

"Only if you will call me Hermione," she said as they stood up. "Please, lead the way."

~oOo~

Reginald led Hermione to a rundown-looking restaurant located on the waterfront. As Hermione glanced at him, he could read the trepidation on her face.

"Trust me, CoCo makes the best food."

He placed a hand on the small of her back, guiding her inside the small, ill-lit restaurant. It took a few minutes before their eyes adjusted to the darkened room after being out in the sun. The interior of the restaurant was panelled in dark wood. On one side of the room was an ornate bar. The opposing wall of the room was lined in high-backed booths, and the middle of the room held several well worn tables, most of which seemed to tilt in one direction or the other.

A woman, leaning over a notebook on a nearby table, looked up when she heard the door open.

"Grab any seat you want," she said, gesturing at the half-filled room. "I'll be over sometime."

Reginald nodded as if this were a common occurrence. "We'll be on the back porch."

"Luckily for CoCo, the food is worth coming for, because the service here is lousy," Reginald commented to Hermione as he grabbed two menus from the table they were stacked on and lead her toward the back of the restaurant.

Reginald stopped at the rear door before opening it with a flourish. Hermione stepped outside and looked around. She was surprised to find herself standing on a porch with a set of stairs that led to the beach. The porch was the complete opposite of the inside of the restaurant. Where the inside was dark, this was bright and airy. The railing consisted of open slats of wood that were painted a creamy white, so you could see the ocean while dining. The tables were made of wrought iron with cushions in the same creamy white. Giant café umbrellas were scattered around the porch.

Hermione walked to the railing and placed her hands on the rail, leaning over to take in the view. The low evening sun was reflecting off the blue ocean, and in the distance, she could just make out the cliffs from the island she had visited the day before.

"It's beautiful, isn't it?" the low voice of her companion murmured softly in her ear.

"I'm not sure I've seen a more perfect sunset anywhere else on the island."

"It's one of the three best views at sunset on the islands."

She turned her head to look at him with curious eyes. "Where are the other two?"

"One is from the inlet on that island," Reginald said, pointing at the island across from them, his arm just brushing her shoulder as he pointed. "And the other is from my bedroom's French doors."

"I guess I'll only see two of those views while I'm here," she responded with a smirk.

Hermione walked to an empty table along the railing. "Let's take this table."

"What would you recommend?" she asked as they sat down and opened the menus.

"Everything they offer is good; I can order a selection of dishes for us if you would like."

Smiling, she closed her menu. "That would be nice."

After they ordered, Reginald poured each of them a glass of wine and sat back to enjoy the view. "Why have you come to visit our corner of paradise?"

"Research."

"What kind of research do you do?" he asked.

"I am a pharmacist. I have always been interested in how plants can be used to heal. The little island I left my book on has some of the only sources of rare plants growing in the world. I came here to study them," she explained.

Hermione played with her wineglass as Reginald processed the information she had inadvertently revealed.

"Why are you here?" she finally asked, trying to fill the silence. "Based on your accent, you obviously have lived in Britain."

"Yes, I lived there most of my life. I was a Chemistry teacher for many years. I inherited a large sum of money from my uncle about twenty years ago, so I retired from teaching and moved here. As you've mentioned, there is abundant plant-life here, and a plethora of tourists who are willing to pay for local remedies."

"Do you miss teaching?"

Reginald shook his head emphatically. "Those so called students?" he said, his words dripping with disdain, "Absolutely not! I spent my years teaching alternating between preventing them from blowing up the classroom and keeping them from stealing ingredients for their extracurricular experiments."

"I'm sure if they were doing extra experiments, it was for a very good reason." At least I know I did, she thought, smiling to herself.

"I can think of no reason that a student should conduct an experiment without supervision," Reginald said, his face unconsciously taking on the expression used in the classroom when disciplining students.

"Well ..." Hermione replied, suddenly feeling like she was back in the classroom again, "sometimes students think that they have no option but to test their knowledge on their own."

Reginald looked at her knowingly. "Let me guess, you conducted experiments without supervision?"

Hermione blushed as she looked down at the table. "On occasion I felt I the need to practice my lessons, but," she added, looking Reginald in the eyes, "I always believed I was doing it for the right reasons."

He shrugged, his lips twitching in amusement. "Perhaps I've misjudged my former students."

Laughing, Hermione nodded her agreement before changing the subject. "Do you like living here? Do you miss Britain?"

Reginald took a sip of his drink and looked out over the ocean.

"I like it as much as any other place," he said with a tone of indifference. "I've been able to open a small shop in town. It's a meagre life, but I have a roof over my head, and I can afford to eat. I do have a small project that I'm working on; if everything goes as planned I will be able to live without worrying about the shopping whims of tourists."

"If you don't like being here, why not go do something else?"

"So far I have not found anything else I'd like to do. While I do miss it, I can't return to Britain. Until my small project is completed, I don't have many other options."

Before Hermione could ask another question, their food arrived. As they ate, they chatted about books and current events. When they finished eating their meals, they each sat back and relaxed for a few minutes.

As Reginald reached for Hermione's wine glass to fill it, his fingertips brushed hers. She looked up at him and smiled.

"You were right, Reginald, this food is fabulous. I never would have found this restaurant on my own."

"Would you like some dessert?" he asked, surprised to find that he truly wanted to extend their evening.

"Maybe another night. I don't think I could eat another bite. I do have a big day tomorrow. I think we should call it a night."

"I see."

They sat in silence as Hermione signalled for the check.

"Maybe I could stop by your shop tomorrow," Hermione said, hoping to get back the comfortable feeling that had existed just a few minutes earlier.

After Hermione paid the check, they walked back to the resort, discussing the activities available on the island. When they arrived at the lobby, Reginald turned to Hermione.

"I had a very nice time this evening."

"So did I. The food was amazing, and the view was not to be missed." Hermione smiled at him, brushing an imaginary spot from his shoulder. "I'm very glad I met you."

"How long do you anticipate staying here?"

"At least until next week."

"Hopefully that will give us some time to spend together."

"I would like that."

Reaching for her hand, he kissed the inside of her wrist, discovering that it didn't repulse him as much as he would have thought. "Until next time."

WOW, tingles all the way to my toes. "Bye."

Hermione turned to walk back to her room as Reginald walked out the front door.

When she entered, Hermione quickly performed every check Bill Weasley had ever taught her to ensure that her room was safe. Opening the case next to the desk, she tapped it with her wand three times and said, "Neville Longbottom" on the third tap.

As she finished saying his name, an image of Neville appeared, hovering in the empty case.

"Hermione, how is life in paradise?"

"Crowded. But, I was able to see the plants yesterday. They will be ready for harvest next week. I can't believe our luck at learning about these plants just weeks before their gestation was completed."

"You always had that magic touch, Hermione. How was your day?"

"I lost my sketchbook yesterday. This lovely gentleman found it for me, so I took him to dinner this evening to thank him. He chose the most wonderful restaurant."

"I'm glad you have fun. Have you checked on the plants today?"

She shook her head. "I'm going over now before I go to sleep. I just wanted to check in with you real quick. Shall I contact you again tomorrow?"

"I'll be waiting. Don't get sunburned."

"Goodbye, Neville," Hermione said as she closed the lid, breaking the connection.

Hermione went into her bedroom and changed into a pair of shorts and a t-shirt. She slipped on a pair of sandals before she set the protections on her room and Apparated to the island.

As soon as she arrived, she quickly checked to ensure that no one had noticed her arrival.

Satisfied that she was alone, Hermione started to walk through the lush foliage toward the cliffs, stopping to look at the beach before leaving the tree line.

Shocked, Hermione covered her mouth with her hands before she could make a sound.

Why is Reginald here? Hermione thought as she watched him as he stood next to the plants she had drawn only the day before *And what is he doing?*

Hermione cast a Disillusionment Charm and crept closer to observe Reginald.

Bloody hell, he's a wizard!! she thought as she watched him waving his wand over the plants and mumbling incantations quietly.

When Reginald had finished, he quickly walked back to the tree line and Apparated away from the island after verifying that no one was in the vicinity.

Hermione sat on the sand, staring at the spot from which Reginald had disappeared while she tried to understand what she had just witnessed.

I should go see what he did Hermione thought as she released the Disillusionment Charm.

As she approached the Haucu plants, she reached out to touch one. She quickly found herself sprawled on the sand. Shaking her hand, she looked closer. Pulling out her wand, she began running the diagnostic spells she had been taught to determine which protections were placed on the plants.

"It can't be; I saw him die!" she said as she quickly re-ran the series of diagnostics. "The only person I know who used this particular layering of spells was Snape. Could it be him?"

Hermione just stood still, unsure what to do next.

"It has to be him. I don't know anyone else who would even know these plants had any value. Well, at least I know they will be well protected."

"FUCK!" Hermione suddenly exclaimed, realizing that she had just gone on a date with Snape. "Dinner, with Snape, and I enjoyed it? No-one will ever believe me."

With her mind reeling at the evening's unexpected events, she slowly walked to the Apparation point and returned to the resort.

~oOo~

After lunch the next day, Hermione decided it was time to find out what Snape was up to. She put on her pale pink dress with the low neckline and the short skirt, pulled her hair into a twist to show off her neck, and put on her strappy sandals. After one last check in the mirror, Hermione went in search of Reginald's shop.

When she arrived, Hermione peeked in the front window. The small space was filled with low shelves filled with bottles, jars, and boxes. She did not see Reginald through the window but did see a few customers. Taking a deep breath, she reached for the door handle and walked inside. As she waited for the customers to leave, Hermione walked up and down the aisles looking at the contents of the various containers.

Some of these are definitely magical potions. I'd recognise this lotion anywhere Hermione thought, looking at a jar with a brightly coloured label. *Interesting how he modified the name of this ingredient.*

"I wouldn't bother with that jar," a silky voice behind her said softly in her ear. "I have a much more effective jar in my back room."

Hermione felt a tingle down her spine as his voice echoed in her head.

"Let me guess," Hermione said, putting the jar back on the shelf. "You've replaced the ginger with Bubotuber pus."

"What is a Bubotuber?" he asked, making sure his face expressed his confusion rather than the surprise he felt. *Why would she bring that up with me? Has she figured out who I am? There is no way I've slipped. I've perfected this persona over the years.*

"I'm sorry; I thought a person as experienced as you are in local remedies would have discovered the value of a Bubotuber. Maybe I could introduce you to it one day."

"That would be... delightful. You seem to know so much."

"Only about some things," Hermione said, quietly fighting to keep her old insecurities from surfacing. "Not about everything. I mean, I read a lot, but there are still many things that I have not yet learned." *Keep your cool, Hermione. Don't let him rile you.*

"Maybe I should close the shop early today, and we can discover what things you have left to uncover."

Hermione blushed as Reginald smiled and walked over to lock the front door.

"Follow me."

"Excuse me?"

"Follow me."

"Please?"

"If you say so." Reginald walked through a door at the back of the shop. He stopped when he reached the middle of the room and turned to Hermione.

"If you don't plan on coming, I can just open the shop again."

Hermione followed Reginald to the sitting room. *Rude as always*, she thought, trying to keep her irritation under control. *If I didn't need to learn what he is after, I would never let him talk to me this way.*

"This room is lovely. Where do you grow your plants? I'd love to see them."

"I wish I could show you, but some of the plants are top secret. I can offer you something to drink."

"I'd love some tea."

"Make yourself comfortable, and I'll be back in a few minutes."

Hermione sat on a worn couch and looked around the sparsely furnished room. She noticed that he had very few personal effects and only a few books.

"I was looking in my reference books last night, and I couldn't find any information about the plants I was sketching the other day," Hermione asked from the sitting room. "Can you tell me about them, Professor Snape?"

"They are very rare, only a few people..." Hermione heard the voice slowly trail off.

Hermione stood and walked to the kitchen. From the doorway, she saw Snape standing with his back to her, his hands gripping the counter so tightly his knuckles were white.

"Are you all right, Professor?"

"My life was never good, but for the past twenty years it has been acceptable. Then you show up." Turning quickly, Snape moved to stand before Hermione, then lifted her chin with his finger. "Why is it," Snape said in a low, menacing tone, "that you always manage to arrive in just enough time to ruin everything?"

"I don't believe," Hermione retorted, brushing aside Snape's finger, "that I have ruined anything. I've left your protections on the plants, although I must admit I was a bit

surprised to find myself thrown across the sand when I went to look at them last night. That's how I figured out who you were. At first, I just thought that Reginald was a wizard, but then I discovered that the protections on the plants were placed in the unique layering that you always used."

Hermione sat down in one of the kitchen chairs. "Am I correct in assuming that we are both planning to harvest the Haucu next week?"

"Yes. That is the special project I mentioned to you the other night. This is how I was planning to live for the next fifty years. As you can see," he said mockingly as he gestured around the flat, "selling potions to tourists has given me the ability to live in a lavish style."

"So, we have a problem."

"Yes," Snape said as he set a cup of tea in front of Hermione, "we have a problem."

He picked up his own cup and leaned against the counter.

How do I keep Hermione from harvesting those plants? I could lock her in my bedroom... but knowing my luck she will escape. I could... no that won't work. I guess I'm back to courting her so I can trick her into letting me have the plants.

Hermione was observing Snape's face as she drank her tea. She watched it change from a smirk to a scowl then to a look that she could only describe as resigned. He stared into his tea cup for a minute.

Remember, he thought as he looked at her with a smile, *I must be pleasant if I am going to court her.*

Knowing Slytherins, she became very concerned when he smiled.

I don't know what he is up to she thought, *but he definitely is working on a plan. I need to watch him closely. I will just have to make sure I don't leave him alone.*

"Since we have a few days before the plants can be harvested," Snape finally said, "maybe I could show you more of the island while we wait. We can resolve the ownership of the plants later."

"What about your shop? Don't you need to be open?"

"I'm only busy on days the cruise ships stop at the island. I can close for a few days, and it won't hurt business too much." And if my plans work, I won't need this shop for long anyway.

"In that case," Hermione said with a smile, "I would love to see more of the island."

"The only thing I ask is that you continue to call me Reginald. I don't want to risk my cover."

"I should be able to do that... provided," she added with a smirk, "you refrain from acting like your former self."

He reached for Hermione's left hand. "I will not make any promises I can't keep," he said silkily.

Laughing, Hermione raised her tea cup in response to Snape and finished drinking her tea. Placing the empty cup on the table, she gently pulled her hand from Snape's. "Thank you for the tea. I really need to get back to the resort. I have to contact Neville before he begins to worry about me."

"Longbottom? What does he have to do with anything?"

"Neville is a most respected Herbologist, and my research partner."

"You let Mr Longbottom conduct experiments? And just how many cauldrons has he melted this week?"

"None, thank you very much, Professor. Neville does the theoretical research, and I do the applied. He really is very talented."

"Yes, showing once again how you are the 'Greatest Witch of your Time.'"

"Thank you," she said with a chill in her voice. "Now, if you will let me go, I need to contact Neville before he starts to worry about me and organises a rescue mission. I didn't come here alone without a backup plan."

Snape rolled his eyes. "No, of course you didn't. You must always surround yourself with your insufferable friends. I suppose it's a good thing I didn't decide to lock you in my closet after all no matter how tempting the idea is."

"And thank you for that too. Shall we meet for dinner tonight?"

"I suppose we should," Snape said as he led Hermione to the door to the flat. "I will collect you at your room in an hour's time."

"Good afternoon then, Reginald," she said from the doorway.

~oOo~

Just as she had the previous evening, she reached for the case next to the desk and contacted Neville.

"You are late, I was beginning to worry."

"I'm sorry, I was unexpectedly detained."

"Are the plants alright?"

"Yes, but the interested parties just doubled."

"But I thought you said the reference you found in the potions literature was so old that people would no longer realise the Haucu's value?"

"It seems that the gentleman I met the other evening, Reginald, is a bit of a potions connoisseur. After I talked to you last night I went to the island to check on the plants and discovered Reginald on the island setting a few protections. I stopped by his shop this afternoon and confirmed that he is also interested in them."

"Do you need any help?"

"Not yet. I'm going to stick with him until I can determine why he wants them. If you don't hear from me at this time every day, send help. I don't think I'm in any danger, but I don't trust him completely either."

"Let me know if you need anything," Neville offered, concerned by the seriousness of Hermione's tone of voice.

"I will. I'll talk to you tomorrow. He's coming to pick me up for dinner soon, and I need to freshen up."

"Take care of yourself, Hermione."

"I will," she said with a small smile.

"Let me know if you shag him."

Hermione closed the lid without responding to Neville's inane statement. "Men!"

She sat in the chair in the room, leaned her head back, and thought about her conversation with Neville.

"Why didn't I tell him about Snape?" she wondered just as her eyes drifted shut.

A knock at the door woke Hermione. She rubbed her eyes for a moment as she tried to remember why someone would be knocking.

"Who's there?" she asked.

"Reginald."

"Just a minute."

Hermione stood and straightened her sundress. She looked in the mirror, smoothed down her hair, and put on some lipstick. Certain she didn't look like she had been asleep, she opened the door to greet Reginald.

"Good evening."

Hermione noticed that he was dressed in black jeans with a burgundy linen shirt and black shoes. She had never seen him dressed so informally, and she thought he looked quite sexy in jeans.

"Hello, Ms Granger. I thought we could take a picnic to the island so we could check on the plants," Snape said, indicating the hamper in his left hand.

"I'm not sure I know you. What have you done with the person I knew?"

"You may want to bring a jacket," he said, ignoring the question. "It might get cold on the island."

"Shall I meet you there?"

"I'm not sure I trust you to go there without me. Maybe I should Apparate us together."

There's the Snape I know, Hermione thought. Must be in control and doesn't trust anyone.

Snape took a step toward Hermione, placed his arm around her waist, and Apparated them to the island.

Once they arrived, they walked to the tree line, their eyes scanning the area for other people. Snape took Hermione's hand and led her to the middle of the beach. Reaching into the hamper, he took out a blanket and spread it out on the sand.

"Please, sit, make yourself comfortable. Would you like some wine?"

"Yes, that would be nice," she replied as she settled herself on the blanket.

While Hermione sipped her wine, Snape set out the food, and they began to eat dinner.

"This is wonderful."

"I thought you should see the sunset."

"When is sunset?"

"Not for another hour. But please, don't feel compelled to fill our time with inane chatter."

Hermione pulled up her legs and wrapped her arms around her knees. Resting her chin on her knees, she watched the water for a few minutes as Snape packed up the remnants of their meal.

"My daughters would love this. Knowing them, they would bring shovels and pails to build sandcastles. When they finished that, they would insist we go swim in the ocean. They love jumping the waves."

Snape watched Hermione for a few minutes. Planning to admonish her for interrupting the peaceful silence, he instead found himself asking, "How old are your daughters?"

"Clara is fourteen; Elizabeth is twelve. They are both at Hogwarts."

"Gryffindor, no doubt."

"Elizabeth is, but Clara is Ravenclaw."

"Of course, if not Gryffindor, a Granger would only be in Ravenclaw."

"She comes by it honestly; my former husband was a Ravenclaw."

"Yes, I do believe you had mentioned that you had been married when I first met you. What happened?"

"He developed a drug addiction. It was horrible for the girls... and for me. We finally had to leave. That was five years ago."

"Do you miss him?"

"I miss the person he was, but not the person he became. I miss the plans we had made, trips we wanted to take, conversations we had as we were falling asleep. That's why I'm here; Neville and I believe that this plant will cure addictions. I just want to give my daughters their father back."

"And your husband?"

"No, it's too late for that," she said, turning to look at Snape. "He will always be special to me he gave me my daughters but I've moved on."

Snape reached over and patted her arm. Hermione reached up to touch his hand.

Hermione's gaze returned to the ocean again. The sunset had turned the sky a vibrant pink, and the sun was just beginning to disappear into the water. They sat watching

the sunset in silence, unaware that they were still holding hands.

"Oh, you were right, that was breathtaking," Hermione said, taking her hand back.

Snape stood and brushed the sand off his jeans. Reaching down, he offered a hand to Hermione to help her up.

"Thank you."

Snape walked over to the plants, Hermione close behind.

"I'm capable of checking the protection charms without your expert assistance."

"I don't doubt your capability, but I don't plan to leave you alone until I am safely in my lab with the plants."

"If you think you are taking my plants, you are sadly mistaken."

"I'm too tired for this argument right now. Let's just take a look at the plants so we can go to sleep."

After they verified that the specimens were doing well, they collected the picnic hamper and Apparated to Hermione's hotel room.

"Where did you want to sleep?" Hermione asked.

"I was planning on sleeping in my bed."

"I'll quickly pack a few necessities. Why don't you sit down," she said, indicating one of the wing chairs in the room.

"I think you misunderstood, Ms Granger; I plan to sleep alone."

"And I think I told you that I didn't plan to let you out of my sight until those plants are harvested."

"And just what do you think I will do to them in the next few days? If anything happens to them now, they will be worthless. I don't plan to do anything to jeopardise them."

"All the same..."

Snape sat down and began to untie his shoes. He removed his jeans and shirt and climbed into bed.

"And what do you think you are doing?" Hermione said, shocked to see Snape in her bed.

"I'm going to sleep. If you insist on our staying together, I insist on being comfortable," he said as he pulled up the covers. "You may join me, or sleep on the floor."

~oOo~

As Snape slowly awakened, he realised that the thing tickling his nose was the hair from the body next to him. It took him a minute to remember that he wasn't at his home and that he was asleep next to Hermione Granger.

Impertinent woman, Snape thought as he lay staring at the ceiling. *Why she would think I wouldn't mind her sleeping snuggled against me is beyond my comprehension. Now to see if I can extract myself without waking her up. She is much more enjoyable to be around when she is sleeping and quiet.*

As Snape started to move, Hermione stirred.

"Elizabeth, did you have another bad dream, sweetheart?"

"It's not Elizabeth," a deep voice replied in return.

Hermione squeaked as she grabbed the covers. As she remembered who was here and why, she relaxed.

"Sorry, I forgot you were here."

"Yes," Snape said sarcastically, "I could tell that by the way you had been using me as a pillow."

"Sorry about that." Hermione blushed. "I always used to sleep snuggled up on Jonathan. I suppose old habits die hard."

"I'll be back in a moment," Hermione told Snape as she left the bed and headed to the loo.

Returning to the bedroom, she walked over to the telephone and turned to Snape as she picked it up.

"Would you like something for breakfast?"

"Yes, thank you. Coffee and whatever you are ordering."

When their meal arrived, Hermione and Snape took it out on the balcony overlooking the beach.

"What should we do today?" Hermione asked. "Do you need to work in your shop?"

"No, today is not a cruise ship day. Is there something you would like to do?"

"I've heard the botanical gardens are beautiful. I'd really like to see them."

"We'll need to go to my flat so I can change, but that should not take long."

Hermione and Snape spent the rest of the week visiting various tourist sites. Snape was surprised to discover that he enjoyed building sand castles and was even more surprised to discover that Hermione didn't irritate him as much as she had in the past.

~oOo~

The day before the plants were to be harvested, Snape woke early. He slipped out of bed without Hermione noticing and made some coffee from the in-room coffee pot. Bringing his cup out to the balcony, he sat down to enjoy the peace and quiet of the beach and watch the sunrise.

As he watched the waves, he felt Hermione place her hand on his shoulder.

"Thank you for the coffee," she said quietly, not wanting to disturb the peace of the morning.

"You're welcome. I didn't want to wake you."

"I wasn't sleeping very well. I was thinking about the plants; they need to be harvested tomorrow."

"I know."

"I've been thinking about this. Neville and I talked about it some yesterday."

"And what, pray tell, did Mr Longbottom have to say? Did he have any great wisdom that we do not?" he said defensively.

"Professor... erm... Reginald Oh, I just don't know what to call you anymore."

"Yes, I've noticed that you seem to be increasingly uncomfortable addressing me by name," Snape said quietly, unable to keep the hurt from entering his tone.

Hermione moved to the chair next to Snape and took his hand.

"For years I knew you as my professor. You were never very nice to either me or my friends. But, you held my respect because you were my teacher, even if I thought you spent your time hurting us as often as you protected us. Then I met you last week. Reginald was attractive, mysterious, intelligent, and sexy..."

Snape scoffed.

"No, really, I thought so immediately after meeting you the night you returned my sketch pad, and I looked forward to having dinner with you. I wasn't sure the smile would ever leave my face. Not only was I going to be able to bring these plants home to my lab, I was hoping to have a fun holiday fling. Then I discovered who you were. I was shocked; I had a hard time trying to reconcile the friendly Reginald with the dark and serious professor. Then this week, you've let me see more of the 'real' you, the combination of Reginald and your former self. So, I don't know how to refer to you anymore."

"I see," Snape said softly. "I've been Reginald so long that I no longer feel like my former self."

They sat in silence for a few minutes, watching the water and drinking their coffee.

"Neville and I think you should have the plants. We don't feel it is right that you should have spent four years cultivating the Haucu only for us to claim ownership of them."

"It was five years," he muttered. "Just like a Gryffindor to make a decision based on the approach that is most 'fair,' but I see your point."

She sighed and looked away from him. "Spoken like a true Slytherin: only able to think about how to manipulate someone into giving them what they want. I would have hoped that we could have left our school prejudices behind. I suppose you now think that I have only made this decision because you were nice to me this week."

He arched an eyebrow. "Didn't you?"

"I suppose in a way I did." Hermione shrugged. "But I made this decision even though I know the only reason you have been nice to me is so you could find a way to convince me to let you have the plants. We only have one condition."

Snape scowled. "And that would be?"

"We want the ability to bid on the plants. I still would like to find a cure for drug addiction; I truly believe this is the key. And you determine that we won if ours is within ten percent of the highest offer."

"And why should I allow you to buy the plants if you are not the highest bidder?"

"Because," Hermione replied with a smirk, "you like me. Think about my offer for a bit." She rose and kissed Snape on the top of his head. "I'm going to take a shower."

While Hermione was gone, Snape thought about what she had said.

Who am I now? I really haven't been Snape for almost twenty years. It's been easier to be Reginald since I left Britain and changed my appearance. I'm almost sixty years old. Maybe Hermione is right; maybe it is time for me to let go of my school prejudices. I've enjoyed spending time with her this week. I wonder if she would stay if I asked. It might be time to give someone a chance. But I have nothing to offer her.

When Hermione returned, Snape was still sitting where she had left him.

"Let's go out. You are brooding too much."

After a short walk around the resort, they spent a relaxing day sitting on the balcony of Hermione's room at the resort. As Snape read, Hermione made sketches of the island.

By the time they arrived for dinner at CoCo's restaurant, Snape had finally solved his dilemma from earlier that morning. Once they finished their meal, Snape paid the bill.

"Let's go for a walk on the beach," he said, reaching his hand out for Hermione's.

He led them down the patio stairs, tucked Hermione's hand in the crook of his arm, and walked toward the water. Once they were in the shadows of the island, Snape began to speak.

"It's been many years since I've spent this much time in the company of another person. I didn't hate it as much as I thought I would."

"I suppose that is a compliment?" Hermione asked, laughing softly.

"Yes, I suppose it is; but I've always known that you were leaving, so I've worked hard to keep myself distant from you. I realised this morning that I want you to stay. I don't want to be alone anymore."

"I can't stay just because you want someone around; I need to mean more than that."

Snape turned and kissed Hermione softly.

"If you know anything about me, you must know I can't be around just anyone. I do want you to stay. But," he said, "without selling these plants, I can't offer you anything."

"So, we are back to you trying to manipulate me into giving you them," Hermione said coldly as she moved away from him.

"Yes, Ms Granger, I suppose you would think that." Snape turned his back to Hermione. "I should have known better than to believe you could set aside your schoolgirl prejudices," he said, deliberately using her words from earlier that day.

"Can you deny that you started this whole charade just so you could keep the plants?" Hermione challenged him.

"No, I cannot deny that. But as the week progressed, I started to doubt my plan. I liked waking up with you every morning, even if the only reason I was sleeping with you was because you didn't trust me," Snape said softly.

Hermione looked at him sceptically.

"Before you doubt me completely, I have a proposal for you."

"I'm listening."

"I will give you some of the plants for your research, but the rest I will sell to the highest bidder. This way I will have something to offer you."

"There is one flaw in your plan. If my experiment works, I will have to wait another five years until these plants are ready to harvest again. I don't see where this is fair to me or to Neville."

"Ah, there is one thing I have withheld from you. I know where another plant is growing. It will be ready for harvest in the next year."

"Of course," Hermione said, disgusted, "I should have known. You will never change. You will always think of yourself first. And to think I was starting to care about you."

Snape sat down on the beach and ran the sand through his fingers. After watching him for a few minutes, Hermione sat down next to him.

"Ms Granger, I am who I am. Reginald has changed me some, but I will always be someone who will rely on me, first and foremost. I have done so since I was a child. However, I would like to try with you. That is why I have asked you to stay, to share in the harvest of these plants, to support your research project."

Snape was surprised that it wasn't as hard to admit this to Hermione as he thought it would be.

"I didn't have to tell you about these plants," he continued. "But, if you consider all angles, you will see that my plan benefits both of us. This way, you have your research and we could be together now rather than waiting another year."

"But, I can't stay here. My girls, my life, are in Britain. I can't be that far away." Hermione moved closer to Snape and leaned her head against his shoulder. "Why don't you come to Britain?"

"I still have too many enemies in London. I can't risk being seen there, I know too many secrets."

"I don't live in London. I have a nice cottage in the country. It is surrounded by a couple of acres of land. As long as you don't act like an arse, no one will believe you are anyone other than who you say you are. You don't have to decide now; just think about it. Please?"

Snape turned and kissed Hermione, tentatively at first, but soon the kiss was filled with need. As they broke apart, Snape stood up, then reached out his hands to help Hermione and pulled her in for another kiss.

"Let's go home," Hermione said, tucking her head under Snape's chin.

Wasting no time, Snape Apparated them back to Hermione's room.

~oOo~

A few weeks later, Hermione woke early one morning and looked around the warm bedroom in her cottage in Britain. She loved waking up in the saffron yellow room with its sage green accents; it always made her feel warm and cosy. Her eyes rested on the painting she had recently completed of the view from her balcony back on the island. She snuggled closer to the man who lay next to her, his arm instinctively curled around her waist.

As she looked at the picture, she thought to her time on the island. *Truth be told*, she thought smugly as she lay in bed, *Reginald would wonder how I became so Slytherin in nature. After all, I managed to end the week with the man, the plants I need, and my life in Britain; and he believes it was all his idea. Not too bad, Granger. Smiling to herself, she fell back to sleep.*

~fini~

A/N Written for lipasnape for the 2007 SS/HG Winter Exchange. I want to thank my betas, Dacian Goddess, SSHG316, and Potion Mistress. I'd also like to thank Symbologie for helping me with story development.

Prompt: 1. Severus survives but does not want anybody to know. With a new face (permanent transfiguration potion or some other magic; no greasy hair, no huge nose, no crooked yellow teeth, no deep seductive voice) he lives a new life somewhere abroad. He runs into Hermione (holiday, conference or whatever) and conversation occurs. She may be married or not, happy or not, but the dialog must be interesting and in two parts (either at one sitting or over a period of time): first he exploits his anonymity and his knowledge of her; then she recognizes him somehow and returns the favour by not telling him she knows who he is. No continuation of relationship or romance is required, but some hope for the future would be nice.