

Ultimate Retribution

by Hanagasume

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OOC - so don't say I didn't warn you

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Chapter 1 of 1

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It was only supposed to be a one night stand. That was how it had started out, but obviously, not the way it had ended. Severus had not planned on finding himself emotionally attached to any woman if he could help it, and yet, it had happened the opposite way around. He had fallen, and it was too late to go back now...

Three months earlier...

Severus had been keeping the shop all morning and had quickly grown tired of the whining customers who continually interrupted his writing. He had been writing a book about all of the potions that he had created in his life and had commissioned a publisher to sell his book abroad. The works he had already completed were bestsellers amongst the potions and other magical experts in the wizarding world.

And then she had entered the shop, the door tinkling softly as she did. She had gone straight past him without even so much as acknowledging his presence in his own bloody bookshop. The nerve of some people... Severus then noticed that she had entered the potions section of the shop, searching for something before pulling a book from the shelf and moving towards the counter, towards him.

'Would you like a bag?' he asked plainly, not having enough patience to spend all day speaking with his former student who was still a know-it-all, yet one that had finally managed to control her bushy hair.

'No, I'll take it as it is,' she replied in an equally impatient tone. 'How much do I owe you?'

'You already know the price,' he commented.

'I suppose I do,' she said quietly, pulling out the exact money from her pocket and placing it on the counter before walking to the section of the bookshop where there were couches and a small lecture area.

This was where some of the most brilliant minds in the wizarding society often met to talk and debate things. Coincidentally, there was a potions lecture that day by one of his acquaintances, Professor Isaac Helms. He watched her retreat with vague interest as she sat and pulled a notebook out of the bag that had been slung over her

shoulder. Smart girl; she was taking notes.

One week later, she came again with her bag and her notebook and even without a lecturer or debate scheduled for that day, she sat in those chairs and ordered a coffee before scribbling away like mad in the journal she kept. Severus began to wonder just what the girl was doing, and it was then that he realised he had made a mistake. She wasn't his student any more, and he had no right to think of her as a girl. She was a woman now, and he was insulting her without even trying to. He supposed that after all of the years doing exactly that, only intentionally, he had become used to using it in daily life without a second thought.

That day he sat down alone behind the counter and wrote in his research journal when business had grown a little slow as the lunch hour approached and people disappeared in search of food. He did this every day, yet this day he had found it slightly harder to concentrate than other days. He assumed that this was because of the girl. She was a distraction and he was curious about her.

That afternoon she actually stopped before she walked out for the day and looked in his general direction. 'Good day, sir,' she said stiffly.

'Good day, Miss Granger,' he replied as the door swung shut.

Hermione Granger did not return the next week or even the week after that, despite the debates and lectures that had taken place in that time. Severus had almost come to think that perhaps she would not be coming back at all. However, on the third week since her last visit, she returned, took her usual seat, ordered her coffee, and opened that infernal notebook again.

By Merlin, the girl was relentless with whatever she was working on. He simply tried to ignore her, as had become his routine with her in the shop, but this time the curiosity was threatening to cause him to explode. He left the safety of his counter and approached her silently, not wanting to frighten her off before he could ask her.

He stopped just short of her and walked around the longer way, sitting down in the chair opposite her. She looked up at him, and he saw the brief flicker of surprise in her amber eyes before it passed and was replaced with curiosity.

'What are you working on?' he asked, tilting his chin towards her notebook as he asked in indication.

'Why do you ask?' she replied with a slightly frosty edge to her voice.

'Curiosity,' he murmured softly.

'Oh, well in that case, it's just notes for my latest assignment,' she said in reply to his original question, refusing to meet his eyes.

'You set yourself assignments?' he asked in amusement.

She narrowed her eyes at him a little and picked up her quill to work again. Why the hell had he chosen today of all days to come over and annoy her? Didn't he have better things to do than torment and condescend former students?

'Not that it is any of your business, Professor Snape," she spat back, "but yes, I do. It helps me schedule things and keep on track with all of my research and development.'

Severus noticed the change in her demeanor and decided that it was time to back off or risk losing a limb. Besides, why did he even care about what she was doing with all of her little pet projects? She was no longer his imposition, and she was minding her own business, not asking him what he was writing every time she walked past him. Feeling foolish, he stood and left abruptly, returning to the solace of his office and grabbing a book from the shelf.

She left promptly at three that afternoon, just as she always did, no doubt to return next week to repeat the tedious process. And she did. She walked through the door, making the bell chime as she entered and browsed the selection of charms books this week, purchasing her selection wordlessly, and then going to her spot and ordering a coffee. Severus would have to say that this was a record. She would have to have been his most constant customer ever, and at the rate things were going, he imagined she would remain so for a while yet - even if he was a mean bastard.

This week, on her way out, she stopped by the front counter, behind which he was seated with his journal full of notes and writings, and looked at what he was holding. It was his turn to be surprised when he looked up and saw her standing there like that. Where had she come from?

'Professor Snape, what are you working on?' she asked quietly.

'My next published work,' he replied drolly.

'I shall look forward to reading it, then,' she said softly with a sort of eagerness in her eyes that told of her enthusiasm for books. 'Good day, sir.'

'Good day, Miss Granger,' he replied before she left the shop.

The month that followed, the same process was repeated every week, although instead of coming one day a week, she began appearing two days, alternating with the week. Their conversations slowly became longer than a mere two sentences until Severus would actually sit with her and read over her notes, pointing out small errors and helping her find solutions for them.

Finally, it was Halloween, and she had been there the entire day since early morning as the first patron to enter the shop. It had been the same as ever, and then she had suggested that she decorate it in the traditional theme. He had shrugged and told her to do as she pleased as long as it was not too garish. She had laughed at that comment and simply floated lanterns and spread spider webs around liberally. It wasn't too obvious and created a subtle gloom about the place. The last thing she did was to change the conches to black, which Severus wholeheartedly approved of.

'Oh, honestly, I can't believe you still wear those repressive, black teaching robes around,' Hermione said as he argued that his attire was perfectly suitable. 'And don't you tell me that all Potions masters wear those kinds of clothes. I've received mastery and I can wear a different shade.'

'Yes, and I believe that I can wear black. It is a dignified and suitable shade that is appropriate for my practical work with potions ingredients,' he insisted.

'I have never met a more boring man in my entire life,' she exclaimed in defeat as he smirked triumphantly.

'I can't be any more boring than that prude, Percy Weasley,' he pointed out.

'Oh, you're right, he is a lot worse,' she agreed, nibbling on her bottom lip in that way that she always did. For some reason, however, it seemed to draw his attention more than before. 'But you're a close second.'

'I can accept that,' he said coolly.

With a sigh and a shake of her head, Hermione looked back at her journal and picked up her quill, scribbling something down with her brow furrowed. 'Is it possible to infuse wormwood and wisteria together in a potion without it combusting afterwards?' she asked curiously, 'because I have a theory that just might work.'

'It has not been attempted before, purely because most Potions masters fear to cause an explosion,' he replied. 'I, however, have never felt the need to use it in a potion and so have not contemplated the possibilities.'

Hermione smirked at that. 'You mean you searched for an alternative so that you did not have to contemplate the measures to infuse them without exploding them,' she said with a snarky sort of grin.

'Got it in one,' he replied with an almost smile.

They lapsed into silence for a while as Hermione tried various arithmetic calculations and Severus continued with his steadfast writing. A little while later she looked up at him as he wrote and allowed herself a moment to examine him. She had recently come to notice that his nose was not nearly as big as she had once thought it was. While it was long and hooked, it had an aristocratic and proud air to it, and she had a feeling that any other wouldn't have suited him.

While his physical appearance was not unpleasing to her, it was not the first thing that she noticed about him. It was his hands as he wrote. His skin was pale to be sure, but his fingers were long and elegant, and possessing strength. They were a little calloused from all of the work he had done chopping up ingredients for potions, and there was no doubt that with his build, he was still reasonably fit from his days working as a spy. It was odd that she was only just beginning to notice these things about her former professor, but, as another surprise, this didn't faze her.

She was brought back into the present when he shifted in his seat and placed his books on the table as a customer beckoned him to the counter to make their purchase. She was often surprised how he managed to sell books with his unapproachable aura and general snarkiness.

'Honestly, you'd think that people would just stop shopping here if they weren't happy with the service,' he grumbled as he walked back to his journal and notes.

Hermione laughed at that. 'I was just thinking the same thing myself,' she said when his eyebrow shot up in question.

'Hmmm...' he grunted.

Hermione packed up her things at three that afternoon and slung her bag over her shoulder as she stood to leave. 'Well, I'm off. Molly and Arthur insist that I go to the Burrow for Halloween dinner every year,' she said as she watched him stand and gather his things.

'Indeed, they have been attempting to include me in their festivities for years, however, I have not once been tempted,' he said, eliciting another soft laugh from Hermione - as he had come to think of her as in his head lately. 'Make no mistake, I have nothing against Arthur or his wife - it is their troublesome brood and their spouses, and any offspring that they cared to have.'

'Hmmm, it is a bit of a Weasley predilection to raise Quidditch teams,' Hermione agreed with a smile.

'Do you keep in contact with Messrs Potter and Weasley still?' he asked on a whim, even if he could care less about those two idiot boys.

'Not as much as we once did, but that can only be expected,' she replied. 'They're both working for the Ministry and off flirting with their fan girls every weekend. I am just a private researcher with no real life outside of my work.'

Severus was startled by her reply. Surely she would have been involved with someone? She was an attractive, powerful witch who was likely to bear powerful offspring one day, so what was the problem with young males those days? Then it dawned on him. She was much like he was: solitary and far too intelligent for any prospective suitors. And that was just fine with him. He had never been in love and avoided romantic entanglements of any kind.

'Well, I won't keep you,' he said, snapping out of his thoughts. 'Have a pleasant All Hallow's Eve.'

Hermione smiled. 'You too, Professor,' she said.

'Dispense with the formalities. You haven't been a student of mine for five years,' he said with a wave of his hand.

She nodded and left. It was three-thirty; half an hour later than usual. He closed up shop early that day, Apparating to his home and settling down in his study with a tall glass of Odgen's finest Firewhiskey. He saluted the fire and swallowed the whole glass, continuing this until he felt too tired to stay up any later, and went to his room where he collapsed onto the bed without changing, his last thoughts of a beautiful brunette witch with the dark brown curls and amber eyes.

Severus didn't see Hermione for a whole week after Halloween, and when she walked into the shop on Friday afternoon, he was surprised she had even come at all. He had thought about her all week, expected her to walk in every time he heard the bell over the door ring. She smiled at him upon entry and went straight to him at the counter.

'Afternoon, Severus,' she said, testing his name out. She hadn't had the chance to call him that before.

'Good afternoon, Hermione,' he replied in kind, taking the same liberty. 'You have been busy this week?'

'Yes, actually, I had to go on a trip with my parents to Sweden to visit my dad's old friends from Muggle graduate school,' she answered with a small smile.

'Sounds... interesting,' he commented with a smirk as she rolled her eyes at him. 'So you didn't really enjoy your trip?'

'It was fine, although there is only so much you can take, spending your days away in the company of four fifty-year-olds who are dentists, doctors, or Paediatricians,' she answered.

'Ah... I see,' he said quietly. He was suddenly extremely conscious of his age. He was only forty-two, yet some days he felt older than that.

'It wouldn't have been so bad if they hadn't been talking about things that I have no intimate knowledge of. If they had talked of potions though...' she said with a glint in her amber eyes.

He smirked at that. She looked so much more beautiful than normal when she got that look in her eyes. In fact, he had been having many problems with getting her out of his mind. She was like the thing that, once you found it, you couldn't get rid of it. But he found himself not wanting to get rid of her.

She left just before closing time after showing him a formula she had come up with to infuse the wormwood and wisteria together - truly, she was brilliant. He closed up that day for his weekend off, thinking about whether he should invite her to dinner one night - purely as acquaintances, of course. In the end, he decided he would give it a couple more weeks until he was sure that he wouldn't be rejected.

Two weeks passed, and it was nearly closing time that day when Hermione began to pack her things to leave. She had been leaving later and later over the past few weeks after becoming lost in her work and immersed in intellectually stimulating conversation with Severus. Before she left, Severus caught her by the elbow gently and stopped her, causing her to turn back and look at him with curiosity.

'Yes?' she breathed.

'I was wondering... that is, if you weren't opposed to it.... we could go out to have dinner sometime...' He stammered a little, clearing his throat uncomfortably.

'Is this a date?' she asked slowly.

'Not if you don't want it to be. We could go as colleagues or friends,' he suggested helpfully.

'I'd like to go on a date with you, Severus,' she said, swallowing the nervous lump in her throat at her admission. 'Name a date and place.'

'How does next Wednesday evening sound? Seven; I'll collect you at your house?' he offered with a small smile. 'As for dress, wear something nice.'

Hermione grinned at that. 'Yes, sir,' she said with a mock salute. 'I shall see you then?'

'Of course,' he said in a low, silky tone. 'Good evening, Hermione.'

'Good evening to you,' she said and, with that, left the shop. Severus slumped into his seat behind the counter, relieved. He waved his hand at the door to ward it and to close it up.

The weekend and following week passed surprisingly fast, and Severus soon found himself sitting in a Muggle restaurant across from a beautiful Hermione, who was dressed in a lovely, black silk wrap-around dress, with some of her curls pinned back and the rest gently framing her face. He had not yet come to regret asking her to dinner, and their conversation had been stimulating for the most part. Even when they didn't talk it was a comfortable silence, not a nervous one.

Severus had long come to terms with the fact that he wanted Hermione. She was powerful, beautiful, and despite being modest and mostly innocent, she was the sexiest woman he had encountered in years. They ate dinner in companionable silence and mutually agreed to skip dessert and have coffee before Severus paid the tab. They left, and Severus Apparated them to his home in Canterbury. He took off his coat and assisted Hermione with hers.

'You have a lovely home,' she said softly, looking around the entrance hall and at the grand staircase with the fine burgundy carpet.

'I'm glad you approve,' he replied, standing behind her and resting his warm hands on her bare shoulders, slowly moving them up and down to ward off the chill. 'Let's move to the sitting room and I'll get a fire going.'

She nodded, enjoying the feeling of his warm hands caressing her smooth skin, and allowed him to lead her to the other room. He passed her a snifter of brandy once she was sitting down and poured the same for himself, waving his hand at the fireplace to light it.

'I have had a wonderful evening, Severus. Thank you for inviting me,' she said as he found a seat beside her on the lounge.

He nodded and swallowed his brandy, setting the glass to the side as she did the same with hers. They faced each other on the seat and, when she saw her desire reflected in his eyes, leaned forwards, cupping his smooth cheek with her petite hand and brushing her lips across his. Her eyes fluttered shut when he pressed back more firmly, and she parted her lips willingly when his tongue begged for entrance. They had both known that this would happen, and Severus was willing. If only for the one night, he would know what it was like to make love to Hermione Granger.

He deepened the kiss further, tangling his tongue with hers and pulling her body closer with his arms around her waist. She ended up having to straddle his lap, and when they broke apart, they were panting to regain their breath. Hermione pressed her forehead to his, closing her eyes and revelling at the way he made her feel so alive. No man had ever made her feel like this.

'Hermione... what we are about to do... are you all right with it?' he asked hesitantly, stroking his hands up her sides.

'More than all right,' she said, kissing his lips tenderly.

The simple kiss led to another mind-blowing one, until the need to breathe became paramount and they parted again. He then Apparated them to his bedroom where they were now sitting on his bed, his back against the headboard of the queen-sized four-poster. It wasn't long before they began to undress each other slowly, kissing languidly in between the removal of an item of clothing until they were left with skin pressed to smooth skin, and mouth to willing mouth.

'Hermione... I have to know... have you been with another man before?' he asked softly, lightly brushing a curl from her eyes.

She swallowed thickly, averting her eyes. 'No,' she whispered.

Severus had never been more amazed in his life. Hermione Granger was a virgin? What the bloody hell was he doing? He was defiling her in the worst way. He had no right to take this from her; this precious jewel of her innocence. He was the lowest form of cad there was.

'I... I can't take that from you...' he stammered helplessly.

Hermione stopped him, silencing him with a tender kiss. 'It has to go some day. Why not tonight?' she said with a smile, gently stroking his cheek. 'I want you to take it, Severus. I am not going anywhere...'

'Oh, Hermione,' he choked out in a slightly emotional voice.

He did take her that night, bringing her as much pleasure as he could, repeatedly, to make up for the pain he had caused her. It was the most memorable one-night-stand he had ever been fortunate enough to have. While he knew that Hermione had been just as willing as he had the night before, he was sure that she had only been interested in the one night. Actually, he had convinced himself that if this opportunity had ever arisen, she would not want more than the one night.

And so that was how he had found himself in such an alarming predicament. He had fallen in love with her over the three months that she had been frequenting his shop, sitting and researching and talking to him. She was so brilliant and kind and wonderful, it was no wonder he was in love with the woman lying in bed next to him, clothed in only silk sheets.

She was even beautiful in sleep, her arm thrown over her head and her chest rising and falling with her steady breathing. She had a smile of contentment on her lips, and her hair was sleep-tousled and possibly a little mussed from their activities the night before. He couldn't help but to lie back down next to her and spoon to her back, letting an arm drape over her possessively.

He fell back to sleep, and some time later woke to find Hermione facing him with her arms wrapped around his waist, his leg insinuated between hers.

'Good morning, sleepy,' she said with a smile.

'Good morning yourself,' he replied, tightening his hold around her and pulling her flush against him.

She leaned up a little and pressed her lips to his firmly for the first of many good morning kisses she had planned to give him. She realised, last night when he had asked her if she had been with another man before, that she loved him, and that she didn't ever want another man to touch her in such a way again. She was quite comfortable to wake up in his arms everyday from that day forward. And if he didn't feel the same way, she was determined to make sure he did eventually.

'I hope you don't plan to brush this off as if it never happened, Severus. I have no regrets... Do you?' she asked carefully.

He smiled at her wistful tone, feeling hope rise in his heart. 'None whatsoever,' he replied, kissing her hard and trying in earnest to communicate to her physically what he could not yet say verbally. That would take time yet.

After their round of lovemaking that morning, both went to his bathroom and showered, cleaning the remnants of last night's activities and those of that morning away before dressing. He put on his normal black trousers and a crisp white shirt, leaving the top few buttons undone. She dressed in one of his shirts which she had transfigured to her size, and wore her wrap-around silk dress as a skirt.

'Breakfast?' he asked with a smirk.

'Please, I'm famished,' she replied, following him down to the kitchen.

After breakfast, Severus Apparated them to the shop and, with Hermione's assistance, opened up for the day. They went to his office in the back, and he closed the door, casting a ward to let him know if anyone wanted his assistance, before turning to Hermione.

"Was last night and this morning... did you want to continue in that manner, or would you prefer to return to being colleagues and pretend it never happened?" he asked firmly, looking her in the eyes the whole time.

Hermione smiled at him and kissed the end of his nose. 'How could you even ask that?' she said softly. 'Severus, I think... I know... I'm in love with you, and I don't want to forget last night, ever.'

His heart swelled with joy at her confession, and he swooped down and kissed her with everything he had, pouring out his love for her. He ended it slowly and held her close to him, breathing in the scent of her hair. 'I love you, too,' he whispered, allowing the first true smile to tug at lips so used to sneering.

He was content...