

When Circumstances Change

by Hanagasume

It has been nearly two years since the fall of Voldemort, and Hermione and Severus are still together. What trials and pleasurable circumstances lay ahead for the couple? The awaited sequel to From Dire Circumstances.

Continued Existence

Chapter 1 of 18

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Chapter 1 - Continued Existence

Long periods of war are usually followed up with a time of peace and a sort of harmony. That was the way it was in the Muggle world, and the same could be said for the Wizarding world. The fall of Voldemort had come as quite a relief for most, but offered no solace to the likes of Severus Snape. He sighed at the memory as just one year before, he had been watching over Hermione, as she'd rested in a coma, for five months after the war had ended.

He glanced across from the seat he was sitting in and saw the beautiful witch, lounging comfortably on the chaise lounge in his study. She was twenty years old now, and if possible, even more radiant. Smiling to himself, he was glad that it was the weekend, and that he was offered the brief respite, before returning to Hogwarts to teach the next day. He enjoyed times like these, when Hermione would read, and he was given the chance to simply sit and admire her.

'Severus, you're staring at me,' she piped, looking up from her book.

'Yes,' he admitted quietly.

'Shouldn't you be grading those essays? We have to go back to Hogwarts tomorrow,' she said, raising a curious eyebrow. 'What seems to be bothering you?'

He dropped his quill and stood, making his way over to her slowly, letting her admire his lithe form, and taking the extra time to let his eyes wander over her slim, yet completely desirable length also. 'As we are to return to Hogwarts tomorrow, Professor Granger, perhaps you will entertain with a more pleasurable activity that we will not have the opportunity to engage in during the week?' he suggested dangerously.

Hermione smiled coyly. 'Perhaps when you have finished grading those essays, Master Snape,' she answered.

He sat down on the chaise next to her and tucked a curl that had come loose from the knot at the back of her head behind her ear. 'You are a tease, Miss Granger,' he said with a pout.

Hermione couldn't help but to giggle. 'Not now, Severus. I have Arithmancy papers to grade as soon as I finish these books. And knowing you, the "activity", as you so amply put it, will keep us occupied for far too long, you insatiable old man,' she teased.

Nodding in resignation, he left the lounge and went back to the tediously boring task of marking and grumbled something about "stupid little dunderheads" under his breath and continued on. Hermione laughed at his offhanded comment and set her book aside.

Only a few months before, she would have all too willingly given in and let him sweep them off to the bedroom or, better yet, take her on the Oriental rug in the study itself. But lately she had taken to disregarding his advances a little, to finish her work first, and then attacking him later -- if he was good.

'You take your job too seriously,' Severus said in monotones.

'You only say that because it doesn't involve you, or any of your blasted Potions,' Hermione replied in kind, fighting the urge to laugh at his frustrations.

'Believe what you will, Madam,' came his beaten reply. She had won that time.

'Change that attitude, Severus Snape,' Hermione scolded softly. 'You know I love you more than Arithmancy or Hogwarts for that matter.'

That made Snape smile. It was a good thing she knew exactly what to say and when to say it. Shaking his head, he bent over the essays again, just as Hermione began the task of grading her own classes. 'You look quite lovely today, Hermione,' he said dutifully.

'Your attempts at sexual blackmail will not work with me, Severus,' she responded with a sniff.

'That wasn't my intention, Hermione. But for the sake of interests, did it work?' he asked, barely hiding his smirk and the amused twinkle in his eyes.

'For your information, Mr. Squiffy, it did not. And keep interrupting me like this and I will be forced to send you to a different room tonight,' she threatened, although there was an underlying laugh there.

Snape wisely refrained from interrupting her for the rest of the evening and was then given the right to sweep Hermione out of the study and carry her up to their shared bedroom. He set her down in the sitting room and let her wander into the bathroom to bathe while he went down to clean up in the bathroom down the hall. When he returned to the room, she was propping up pillows, dressed in a daring, silk negligee, the colour of deep wine, which had thin straps and fell to her mid-thigh.

He approached her silently from behind, clad only in his long pajama bottoms, and wrapped his arms around her slim form, pulling her flush against his long, firm body. 'You look good enough to eat,' he whispered provocatively, caressing her sides gently.

Hermione spun in his arms and locked her arms around his lightly muscled middle, pressing her cheek against his firm chest. 'You're not looking too bad yourself, love,' she replied, nipping and licking a light trail over his chest.

Snape groaned softly, and stopped her torturing mouth from continuing its path. Helping her into the bed, he then entered it himself, sliding into place beside her. With a silent spell, he extinguished the lights and wrapped Hermione up in his arms. 'Goodnight, love,' he murmured against her neck, closing his eyes happily.

'How long have we been together, Severus?' she asked out of nowhere.

'One year, and six months on Wednesday,' he replied almost sleepily. 'Why?'

'I was just wondering. It seems like we've been this way for a lot longer than that,' she answered, pressing up against him closer and inhaling his delicious scent.

'You say that, yet Weasley still seems to think that he holds some claim over you,' Snape said bitterly. 'Why don't you tell the rotten sod to bugger off?'

'Severus!' she exclaimed, swatting him lightly. 'He's one of my best friends. I can't do that.'

'I could, quite easily in fact,' he replied with a smirk, closing his eyes and yawning a little.

'So you're tired now, hmmm?' she questioned.

'There is only one thing that could keep me awake at this time,' he said with a deep chuckle.

'And that is?' Hermione asked, rubbing her leg provocatively along his own, sending a rush of blood to his groin, and spreading warmth all over his body.

'Well...' he started, but was cut off when Hermione leaned up and seized his lips in a gentle kiss. She threaded her fingers through his raven tresses and pulled him closer, angling him so that there was maximum contact, before ending it suddenly. 'Well, there is always that.'

'And?' she asked, running her hands up his taut chest and tasting the flesh of his neck.

'Do you really want an answer to that?' he asked, grinding his hips against hers as she let a hand caress his jutting hip bone.

'Mmmhmm,' she mumbled with a nod, letting her hand travel down to its ultimate target, to begin fumbling with the ties of his pants. She withdrew her mouth from his neck for a moment. 'But maybe later.'

Snape needed no other encouragement. He kissed her gently on the lips, teasing her mouth open with his tongue before sliding her silky negligee over her head and tossing it to the floor somewhere. He found her sensitive spot near the base of her throat and suckled it gently. There would be a mark there the next day, but he liked reminding her that she was his.

Hermione moaned softly as he moved his mouth to her breast and tortured her relentlessly with his tongue, all while removing her panties with one fluid movement and discarding it with the negligee.

Hermione mirrored his actions, removing his pants and silky, black boxers at the same time, freeing his throbbing member and stroking it gently with her fingertips. Snape gasped and stopped her movement quickly, abandoning her breasts to kiss her lips tenderly. 'I will not last tonight if you do that, Hermione,' he warned.

She nodded and allowed him to position himself at her entrance. He plunged in swiftly, drawing a grunt from them both, and simply rested there, allowing her time to adjust to his size. After a while, she whimpered, and he began a slow rhythm.

'Please...' she gasped.

'Please... what... Hermione?' he groaned through each slow stroke.

'Harder... faster,' she breathed.

Severus simply obliged, pounding into her, until they both reached their completion, collapsing into the mattress, spent and completely sated. Snape kissed her forehead, feeling her curl into his body, still resting inside of her.

'Goodnight, pet,' he murmured.

'Night, Severus,' she managed with a smile.

Proposal & Deliverance

Chapter 2 of 18

Hermione's day just goes from bad to worse as she lets her mind linger on one of her greatest fears.

A big thank you to Madbrilliant, who was the beta for this chapter

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Chapter 2 - Proposal and Deliverance

Snape looked up from his breakfast at the staff table in the Great Hall and then looked at Hermione next to him. She looked quite beautiful just sitting there in silent thought. She was resting her chin on her steepled fingers, looking pensive and staring at a cup of coffee.

"It's not going to appear in your stomach on its own, Hermione," he said teasingly.

"I know," she replied nonchalantly. "I just don't feel like drinking it yet."

"Is everything alright?" he asked, giving her knee a squeeze from beneath the table. She smiled at that and turned to look at him.

"I'm fine, Severus," she answered softly. "I just have a few things running through my mind that I have to deal with. Everything will be all right shortly."

Severus nodded and looked out the closest window to find the winter weather beginning to have an effect on that cool Wednesday morning. The Christmas break was in just a few days. A small number of miserable days before he could finally leave the castle behind and hopefully do the thing that he had been meaning to for a long time. And he would put that plan into motion--soon. That evening, perhaps.

"I will see you later, Hermione," he said, letting his hand caress her thigh beneath the table teasingly.

"Severus," Hermione warned, quelling him.

"I know," he apologized quickly, standing from the table and sweeping out of the hall through the staff door, hardly making a sound as his shoes move across the floor.

Hermione smiled after him.

Perhaps he had forgotten that it was their one-and-a-half-year anniversary? She felt slightly dampened by the thought but decided to let it pass. He might remember later. Shaking her head, she turned her attention to her food and started to eat. It was going to be a long day.

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Hermione sighed as she sat at the desk in her office. Lessons had finished for the day, and she had since lost all hope of Severus remembering their anniversary at all. She sighed and felt her lip tremble a little. She was feeling slightly upset that she was the only one thinking about it and wasn't surprised when the first tear slid down her cheek.

Giving in to the pressure, she dropped her face into her hands and let the tears flow freely down her cheeks as she sobbed miserably. "Oh Merlin, Hermione! Stop being such a sodding girl," she cried at herself, feeling really pathetic.

It was too trivial to bother with. Why was she so upset about some silly little anniversary? It was going to be the Christmas break in two days, and she had nothing to be worried about. She certainly felt a lot more emotional than usual, though. She reached out for a tissue just as the door to her office opened and Severus stepped inside.

"Hi," she sniffed ruefully.

"Hermione, are you alright?" he asked, rushing straight to her side when he realized she was, indeed, crying. He wrapped two strong arms around her and pressed a kiss to her left temple. "What happened?"

Hermione choked back her emotions and managed a soft, "...just being silly."

He let her cry out everything onto his shoulder for a few more minutes, inestimably curious as to what had sparked her sudden grief. After the sobbing settled, he lifted her tear-stained face up to look him in the eye and kissed her lips gently. "Hermione, love. Tell me what is bothering you?"

"I thought--I thought that you might have forgotten me," she stammered, turning even redder.

Snape was relieved when he heard this but also felt a little frustrated at her emotional state. "Hermione, I could never forget you," he crooned softly to her. "I love you, and I came here this afternoon to ask you an important question and tell you Happy Anniversary."

Hermione sighed in relief.

"What do you have to ask me?" she asked him thoughtfully.

Snape let go of her and lowered himself onto one knee before her slowly. Hermione's eyes widened, one of his hands resting on her lap as the other went into his robes to withdraw something from within. He pulled out a small mahogany box with a design carved into it. He opened it and presented it to her. Inside, on the cushioning there, rested a beautiful platinum ring with a design of two snake heads curled around the twinkling diamond in the centre, creating an elaborate knot.

"This ring has been in my family for centuries now and was handed to me by my grandmother to give to the woman I sought to make my wife," he explained as the tears began to well up in Hermione's eyes once more. Although, this time it was joy. "I know I should have asked you this a very long time ago, but I hope you can forgive me for my fears of rejection."

Hermione nodded wearily, smiling at him softly.

Snape took a deep breath to continue. "Hermione Jane Granger, will you do me the great honor of becoming my wife and making me the happiest man alive?" he asked, voice hitching in his throat.

Hermione smiled brightly and set aside the box, throwing her arms around Snape's neck and hugging him close to her and pressing kisses all over his face. "Yes, yes, yes!"

A million times yes!" she exclaimed before kissing him fiercely on the lips.

Snape felt an unfamiliar churn in his stomach, and a rush of relief filled his anxious heart. She said yes. "You said yes," he uttered softly when the realization dawned on him. All of his fears had been for naught.

"Of course I said yes, you silly man. I couldn't live without you," she replied in earnest, slipping out of her chair and pushing him backwards so that he was sitting on the ground before sitting in his lap and gently cradling his face in her hands. "I love you."

Severus didn't need to hear any more than that. He seized her around the hips roughly and pulled her into a heated kiss, full of exploratory groping and desperate clinging. They both pulled away, panting, when the need for air became necessary and simply rested there, holding onto each other. "When do you want to get married?" Severus asked finally.

"As soon as possible," Hermione said firmly, flashing him a brilliant smile.

"You're sure about this?" he asked anxiously.

"I have never been surer about anything, Severus," she replied, pressing a soft kiss to his temple.

Severus sat contemplating for a moment and sighed. "How does next Wednesday sound to you?" he asked hesitantly, wondering whether or not that was too soon. Hermione smiled softly. Perhaps it was perfect. "Will you have enough time to make your own arrangements?"

Hermione nodded. "Certainly. Minerva and Molly Weasley will help me, and Ginny as well," she replied.

Then Severus remembered the ring. Reaching up, he plucked it from the desk and opened it to his fiancé once more, looking into her eyes for permission to slip it onto her finger. She held out her hand and let him put on. She was somewhat comforted by the extra weight there now. It felt right. So perfect, as if it should have been there all along.

"Thank you, Hermione," Severus said, resting his head against hers.

"I should say the same to you. I was worried all day that you had grown tired of me and moved on because I hadn't seen you all day," she said with a slight sob.

Severus looked at her, quelling her sadness. "I'm sorry to have upset you, love," he soothed.

Hermione felt a rush of emotions head straight to her tear ducts. Why the hell was she so emotional? Mentally shrugging it off, she hugged Snape tighter to her, inhaling his masculine scent. "Let's go somewhere more comfortable," she suggested.

"Of course, Professor," Snape said teasingly before they made their way to Hermione's chambers.

Examination Room #13

Chapter 3 of 18

Hermione goes to St. Mungo's.

Thanks again to Madbrilliant who did a wonderful job beta-ing.

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Chapter 3 - Examination Room #13

"Hello? Miss Granger?" came the soft voice of the receptionist she had met no more than ten minutes before.

Hermione turned in her seat and faced the lady, smiling kindly. "Sorry," Hermione apologized for not having heard her before. "Is there something I can do for you?" she added hastily.

"Yes, miss. Your appointment is in examination room number thirteen and your Healer will be Healer Blake. He specializes in the care of witches," the older woman said warmly. "Just step in whenever you are ready. And don't be afraid. The Healer is a nice man," the woman reassured.

Hermione wasn't that nervous after hearing the surname Blake. Hadn't he been her Healer from after the war? He was the Healer that Severus had gotten when she first woke, and he was the one that had helped with her therapy when she had recovered. She rose from her seat gracefully and walked down the cold white linoleum hallway, feeling the unwelcoming chill of the institute and shivering. She reached the door with the number 13 on it and knocked gently.

"Come in!" came the call from within.

She opened the door slowly and peeked her head inside, looking around the plain examination room and shrinking back with anxiety until she saw the Healer. He beckoned her in, understanding that she had a slight phobia of hospitals, and it was quite understandable, considering her past ordeals.

"Welcome, Miss Granger. To what do I owe this pleasure?" Blake asked in a kind tone.

"I've been feeling ill of late and I thought I'd see a Healer about it before my wedding in a few days," she replied nervously.

Healer Blake nodded in understanding and stood up from his chair, offering Hermione a seat before reseating himself. "Can you tell me some of the symptoms that you've been feeling?" he asked calmly, tapping his fingers in front of his face in thought.

"I have been getting nauseous, dizzy, and more recently, extremely emotional," she recited, wondering what that could possibly mean. "Is that bad?"

"Not at all, Miss Granger," Blake replied. "Can you please stand for me?" he asked, standing from his seat as well.

Hermione stood up gracefully and clasped her hands behind her back. The Healer whipped out his wand and went closer to her, making her step back involuntarily. "It's alright. I won't hurt you," the man reassured softly, let the tip of his wand run over her abdomen and hover above her southern region.

They both noticed the tip of the wand glow with a bluish light as it hovered above her abdomen, and the Healer stepped back with a smile on his face. "Just as I thought. Miss Granger, I am relieved to inform you that you are not ill, per se," he chuckled.

Hermione looked at him curiously. "What is it then?"

"You're with child, ma'am," he replied, holding a hand out to shake hers.

"I—I'm... You mean I'm pregnant?" Hermione stammered, shaking his hand with a look of mild shock plastered across her features. "There is a child inside me?"

"Exactly."

Hermione dropped into her seat and felt her eyes grow wide. She was going to have a baby. She had a new life growing within her womb. A small bundle of joy like the one she had lost only a year before. She had been blessed with another child. And she was going to be married to the man of her dreams in just a few short days. Hermione's look of wonder caused Healer Blake to laugh.

"I never thought I'd see the day where a mother was more speechless than my wife," he laughed softly, causing Hermione to look around at him with a bright smile. "You're five weeks along."

"I'm going to have a baby," she repeated softly.

Healer Blake nodded in confirmation. "That's right."

"I—well, thank goodness," she exclaimed, wondering how Severus would take the news. "I think that it would be best if this information stays in this room for now, though."

"Why?"

"Let's just say that I do not want to worry my fiancé until he can handle the news," she replied, hinting that she just didn't think that this was such a great time. "But I do thank you for your concern. I will be fine and I will tell him as soon as he's ready."

"Or maybe you are just waiting until you are ready to tell him?" Blake suggested.

"Perhaps," Hermione answered, shaking Blake's hand. "In any case, I have to go plan a wedding."

"Good luck with everything, and my blessings to you and Professor Snape," Blake said warmly.

"Thank you," she replied, leaving the room.

Hermione exited St. Mungo's as soon as she could and Apparated to the Burrow. She went to the kitchen and found Ginny and Molly sitting at the kitchen table. "Sorry I'm late. My appointment ran a little late," she apologized, shrugging out of her coat and taking a seat.

"What appointment, dear?" Molly asked kindly.

Hermione mentally kicked herself for letting that one slip. What could she tell them? She couldn't just lie to Molly Weasley. Or even Ginny. They were like human lie detectors after living under a roof with Fred and George.

"Oh, well I just had to pop into St. Mungo's--" she began, but was interrupted.

Both redheaded women jumped out of their seats and exclaimed a loud "WHAT!" in unison.

"Calm down and I'll explain," Hermione said evenly.

She waited until both of them were in their seats and looked like they were going to stay that way for a long time, or at least until she had finished. "Go on, 'Mione," Ginny begged.

"Well, I was feeling a little sick during the week. I was emotional, dizzy, nauseous, and felt pretty terrible, so of course when I began throwing up at odd times during the day, I made an appointment at St. Mungo's without telling Severus," she stated. "And you have to promise that you won't tell him or anyone else this."

Both of them nodded mutely.

"I saw the Healer and he told me that I am pregnant," she said carefully.

Ginny's jaw dropped and Molly looked shocked. Hermione shook her head. She knew this would be their reaction. They couldn't honestly think that she hadn't been intimate with Severus after living with him for so long, could they? And then she had to voice that.

"Please don't tell me that you really thought I was a virgin," Hermione sighed.

"Well, actually, 'Mione... I thought you were still 'pure,'" Ginny admitted and Molly nodded in assent.

"Merlin," Hermione muttered. "Of course I've slept with Severus! We've been together for over a year and I have been practically living with him, my things mingled with his, sleeping in the same bed. Didn't that ever occur to any of you?" she asked, completely flustered at their naivety.

"Well..." Molly trailed off uncomfortably.

"Oh, for goodness sake! I, Hermione Jane Granger, am sleeping with and am having incredible, mind blowing sex with my fiancé, Severus Tobias Snape," Hermione said, making Molly blush. "Oh, Molly, don't be juvenile. You know very well that your children didn't just fall out of the sky!"

At that, Ginny laughed initially and then cringed at the message Hermione had been meaning to deliver. Then, Hermione turned on her.

"And, Ginevra Weasley, you can't honestly say that you've never shagged Harry. He's your husband, for Merlin's sake!" Hermione exclaimed, making Ginny turn red.

After a tense moment, Molly patted Hermione's hand. "Congratulations, dear. I'm glad to hear that you will be having a child with the man you love."

"Me too," Ginny added.

Hermione blew out the breath she had been holding and smiled. "Thank you both, and I'm sorry about embarrassing you all with the details of my personal life. Now, if you don't have any objections, could we finish the plans for my wedding?"

The redheads nodded, and they laughed their way through the Floo connection to Minerva's office.

Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed & Something Blue

Chapter 4 of 18

The wedding day has finally arrived...

Thanks go to Madbrilliant for beta-ing yet again.

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Chapter 4 - Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed & Something Blue

The dressing room was quite cluttered and there were noises coming from things that surely had no right to be making any noise at all. Hermione was a bundle of nerves, just waiting to be unraveled. She pitied the person who would suffer her wrath. It was only one hour until she would be walking arm-in-arm with her father to meet her husband-to-be at the centre stone for their binding. That in and of itself was a daunting prospect.

It was odd how women were rarely nervous about their marriage while they were planning for it and making all of the preparations but suddenly became nervous on the day of their wedding. And Hermione was no exception to this.

"Calm down, Hermione," her mother cooed softly. "You look beautiful and everything will be fine."

And it was true. Hermione was indeed a vision, with her hair softly pulled back from her face in a knot with curly tendrils framing her face gently and the smallest white flowers adorning it. Her wedding robes were exceptionally beautiful, accentuating her curves in all of the right places and falling nicely around her ankles, hugging her ample cleavage. She would be going in without shoes, as was the Wizarding tradition, but it didn't seem to make any difference to her appearance. She was truly radiant.

"You should try being the bride then, Mum," Hermione said ruefully.

"I was, once, and I know exactly how you feel. Just try and forget about that for now and come with the girls and me to the couch. You are nearly ready but there are just a few things left to complete your outfit," the older woman said calmly.

Hermione nodded and sat with Ginny, Molly, Minerva, and her mother around a small coffee table on the other side of the room. Her mother pulled out a few boxes and set them down on the table and smiled.

"I know you're a witch and all, Hermione, but I thought it would be nice to have a few Muggle customs in your wedding too," she explained. "So, the girls and I got together and collected what you would need."

Ginny picked up the first box and handed it to her. Hermione opened it and found a small brooch that looked like it was an antique. It was a beautifully shaped rose that sparkled with tiny diamonds in the centre. "This is what Muggles like to call your something old. It was my Great Grandmother's brooch that she wore on her wedding day and every other woman in our family has as well," Ginny said with a mischievous smile.

Hermione laughed. "Thank you, Ginny," she said, and she pinned it just above her breast on the outer robe.

Next was Minerva's turn, and she handed her a small box that had a ribbon adorning it. "Severus asked me to give this to you. It is your something new," Minerva said, smiling. "It's a very nice something new, might I add."

Hermione opened the box and felt her eyes widen. They were the most beautiful teardrop earrings that were made out of the same platinum setting as her ring and necklace were with a similar design. Ginny helped her put them into her ears, cooing over them and making suggestive faces. Hermione swatted her away and pressed on, waiting for Molly to give her the next box.

After Ginny took her seat again, Hermione thanked Minerva and took the next box from Molly Weasley. "This will be your something borrowed. It is a platinum hairpin that I got from my mother when she passed away," Molly explained as she took the rose-shaped setting away from Hermione and pinned it into her hair.

"Thank you, Molly," Hermione said as she hugged her best friend's mum, on the brink of tears already.

"And now for the final piece," Jane Granger announced brightly. She pulled out the blue garter and handed it to her daughter, who examined it curiously. "It's a garter, dear. You wear it around your leg."

Hermione nodded and let them help her slip it up to the middle of her right thigh. She folded her robes down again and they all sat there in silence. Before too long, a knock sounded at the door, and Hermione's stomach gave that familiar twist again and she felt as if she was going to be ill.

"I'm going to be sick," she announced and ran into the bathroom.

After vomiting the little food she had eaten that day into the toilet bowl, she brushed her teeth again and walked out with more composure. Perhaps she was not that nervous at all. It must have just been the morning sickness.

She caught sight of her father, Philip, as soon as she arrived.

"Are you ready, darling?" Philip Granger asked warmly.

Hermione nodded and went to her dad, who gave her a light peck on the cheek before holding out his arm to her and leading her out of the room. Minerva and Ginny walked ahead of them, and her mother and Molly had already joined the guests. She could hear the guests gasp when they saw her two bridesmaids enter and could see the doors.

She smiled at her dad just as the doors opened. She was getting married...

Marital Bliss

Chapter 5 of 18

Severus had a nervous moment before the wedding begins.

Again, thanks go to Madbrilliant for being a brilliant beta!

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Chapter 5 – Marital Bliss

The sea of guests that had been invited had actually shown up for the wedding. Severus felt a little bit nervous under the watchful eye of so many of Hermione's friends. He was quite astounded at the number of people Hermione actually knew. How could one witch have so many faithful admirers and friends?

He mentally shook his head. Of course Hermione would have this many friends. Who wouldn't want to be friends with her? She was kind, compassionate, empathetic, sweet, wonderful, beautiful, intelligent, and many, many other things. He had to constantly remind himself that he was not the only one who thought those things about her.

"Severus, loosen up, old man," Remus Lupin said as he approached him from the side.

"You're here. I thought you weren't ever going to show up, Lupin," Severus snarked familiarly.

"I was kept a little late at work. Forgive me for my tardiness," he said, buttoning his last cuff on his shirt. "And besides, you weren't going to get married without your best man, were you?"

Severus merely raised an eyebrow as if to say "Wouldn't I?" and went back to glaring out at the crowd. He was beginning to get anxious and had to constantly dry his palms on the back of his trousers. As tradition required, Severus had foregone footwear and was dressed in black trousers and a white silk shirt with the buttons around his neck undone. His hair had been tied at the nape of his neck with a silk tie, and he looked quite respectable.

Lupin was dressed in similar black trousers, but with a maroon-colored shirt instead. Harry Potter, of all people, just a little way down the isle, was similarly dressed in the same trousers and a medium-blue shirt. He couldn't remember for the life of him why he had agreed to have two attendants, but it seemed to please Hermione, so he went along with it.

And then Harry walked up and took his place next to Remus, just as Dumbledore took his spot at the front. He would be performing the ceremony for them, as a personal favor to Severus. It was what Hermione wanted, after all. And he would do anything for her.

"Are you nervous, my boy?" Albus asked cheerfully.

"Of course I'm not, you old coot," he answered sarcastically.

Albus chuckled. "Then I suppose now would be a bad time to tell you that I set you and Hermione up and pushed you two together in her final year at school?" he asked fondly.

"I was aware of that, you meddling old fool," he said with a meek smile of his own. "I do not regret that you did, however."

"I can tell," Albus replied with another hearty chuckle.

And then the doors opened for the first time and closed again after Hermione's two attendants had walked in. Ginny was donned in dress robes similar in color to Lupin's while Minerva was dressed in a lovely shade of blue.

He felt the butterflies in his stomach now. She would be walking through those doors at any moment. The Hall had fallen dead silent, and everyone seemed to be on the edge of his or her seat in anticipation of the bride's entry.

Once Ginny and Minerva had taken their places, the doors opened for the second time, and Severus sucked in a sharp breath. He saw his bride there, looking absolutely ravishing in her white and cream wedding robes. He saw her look straight into his eyes, and his mind, and smile at him shyly.

Her father walked her down the isle and towards him. As she got closer, she became even more beautiful to him. Her smile was breathtaking, and he found it hard to look at her without wanting to pick her up and carry her away, so the wedding.

Philip Granger let go of his daughter as soon as he reached them and reached out to shake his hand. Severus accepted the hand and shook it firmly, looking his soon-to-be father-in-law in the eye. "Take care of my girl," Philip said seriously.

"I swear to it, Philip," he replied, smiling at Hermione, who blushed at this exchange and his glance profusely.

Philip stood up straight and waited for Dumbledore to speak.

"Who gives this woman to be married to this man?" Albus asked, looking straight at Hermione's father.

"Her mother and I do," Philip replied before taking his seat next to his wife in the pews.

Dumbledore nodded and began his long tale and sermon as Hermione and Severus stood in front of him together, hand in hand, gazing into each other's eyes lovingly. Occasionally as Albus spoke, she would squeeze his hand, or his would rub small circles over the back of her hand soothingly, until it finally came time to speak their vows.

"Do you, Hermione Jane Granger, wish to take Severus Tobias Snape, as your husband, to love and to hold, in sickness and in health, in life and in death, to honor and love for the rest of your life?" Albus asked seriously.

"I do so wish."

"And will you, Hermione, promise fidelity to Severus only, for so long as you both shall live?" he asked.

"I will."

"Hermione, will you ever hurt Severus, or bring harm to him in any way during your marriage?" he asked.

"I might."

"Is that your intention?"

"No."

"Very well," Albus said and then turned to Severus. "Do you, Severus Tobias Snape, wish to take Hermione Jane Granger as your wife, to love and to hold, in sickness and in health, in life and in death, to honor and love for the rest of your life?"

"I do so wish."

"And will you, Severus, promise fidelity to Hermione only, for as long as you both shall live?" he asked.

"I will."

"Severus, will you ever hurt Hermione, or bring harm to her in any way during your marriage?"

"I might."

"Is that your intention?"

"No."

"Very well, would you both please exchange rings?" Albus prompted, looking to each of them.

Hermione released Severus' hands, turned to Ginny, who stood next to her, and accepted the plain platinum ring, engraved with hers and his new initials. She turned back to Severus and smiled, letting him take her left hand in his.

"Hermione, I ask that you wear this ring, as a symbol of my love, fidelity, loyalty, and passion for you," he said as he slowly slipped a twin platinum ring onto her ring finger to sit snugly next to the engagement ring.

She smiled at him and took up his left hand next. "Severus, I ask that you wear this ring as a symbol of my love, fidelity, loyalty, and passion for you," she said softly, tears welling in her eyes as she pushed the ring over his knuckle and onto his finger.

Severus caught her hand in his and kissed it gently before they grasped hands and turned back to Albus.

"These two people have proven their love, passion, loyalty, and faithfulness to one another. I ask that you bless them and encourage their budding love for one another," Albus announced, and then he turned to look at Severus. "You may now kiss your bride."

Severus didn't need to be told twice. He used one long-fingered hand to tilt Hermione's face up to his and kissed her tenderly, with all the love that he had in him.

He pulled away to look into her tear-filled eyes and smiled. "I love you," he whispered before pulling her into a tight embrace.

Albus chuckled and smiled out at the guests. "I present to you Severus and Hermione Snape!" he announced happily.

Family Ties

Chapter 6 of 18

The wedding reception, followed by the after party...

Chapter 6 – Family Ties

Hermione never once thought it was possible for her to ever feel as at peace as she was in the security of her husband's embrace. Her arms tightened around his neck instinctively as she thought of security, as they slowly danced among the other coupled dance partners at their wedding reception. She sighed in contentment, snuggling into Severus' embrace, resting her head on his chest and letting him dictate their movements on the floor.

"I love you, Madam Snape," he growled into her ear, pulling her to him possessively and kissing the top of her head.

Hermione giggled and smiled into his silk shirt. "I like it when you wear white," she admitted, kissing his silk-clad chest.

"I think we've been at this blasted party quite long enough, don't you, wife of mine?" he asked, loosening his grip on her so he could gaze down at her beloved face.

He arched an eyebrow at her and smirked. She slapped away his wandering hand, which was attempting to stray inside her outer robe. She leaned up and gifted him with a chaste kiss before taking his hand and leading him off the dance floor.

"Let's say goodbye and go home," she suggested thoughtfully, tugging on the lapels of his shirt a little in an impatient gesture.

"I have a better idea. Let's just leave."

Before Hermione even got the chance to protest, her husband's arms were around her waist and he Disapparated them away. They appeared in the sitting room of Snape Manor a moment later, both curled around each other, staring into each other's glistening eyes.

"Severus, you shouldn't have done that," she protested weakly before she tugged his head down for a searing kiss.

"Mmm hmm... but I just couldn't wait for you any longer, wife," he replied, nipping at her bottom lip and then sucking it into his mouth and kissing her back with all of the passion he had kept in check during the past week.

"Gods, Severus," she moaned. "Take me to bed, love."

"With pleasure," he growled, picking her up from the ground, causing her to squeal, and carrying her over the threshold of their bedroom.

He dropped her onto the bed unceremoniously and toed his shoes off before walking over to his young wife. He let his eyes follow the length of her, taking in her recently mussed-up hair, kiss-bruised lips, her flushed cheeks, crinkled dress robes, and her chest, rising and falling heavily with her legs spread invitingly.

He unclasped the front of her outer robe and pushed it off her shoulders, letting it pool on the ground, leaving her in the strapless, white inner robe-dress, silky and falling to her ankles.

"Beautiful," he murmured silkily.

He shifted himself to sit on the edge of the bed and forced her into a sitting position so that he could unlace the back of the dress. Once that tedious task was complete, he set about sliding the silky slip of material down her slight, yet ample curves and slim frame. His fingers gently brushed the sides of her breasts as he went.

Her nipples tightened at the contact, making her shiver. Once the dress was off, she was left scantily clad in a simple pair of white lace knickers.

"Exquisite," he breathed, drinking in the sight of his wife, breasts standing at attention and begging to be tasted, the dusky pink nipples contrasting against the creamy smooth flesh of the globes.

"You're terribly over-dressed, my husband," she said impishly with a wicked grin. She switched positions with him and forced his hands out of the way to begin undressing him.

"Vixen," he accused playfully.

She pushed the shirt over his shoulders and pulled the silk tie out of his hair, dropping her hands to toy mischievously with the edge of his waistband and the button that closed the front of his tented trousers.

"Hermione," he warned in a no-nonsense tone.

She laughed and released the button as she kissed a fiery trail down his chest, helping him work the pants down his toned legs where they joined the rest of their discarded clothing in a growing pile on the floor. He pressed her into the bed and pinned her with a needy kiss, moving down her neck and capturing a dusky nipple in his mouth. He suckled it gently, letting his teeth graze it lightly while massaging the other breast with his expert hands.

"Please," she whimpered as he teased her.

"Please what, Hermione?" he asked wickedly, releasing the turgid nipple from his mouth.

He didn't give her the chance to answer before he crashed his lips back to her own and kissed her senseless, all the while removing her damp knickers. After a while, the strain became too much and he took to pleasuring her orally, plunging his fingers in and out of her hot cavern, suckling her clit, and teasing her over the edge with his lips, tongue, and fingers.

She bucked her hips, and it wasn't long until her muscles clamped around his fingers as her orgasm ripped through her violently.

Severus removed his fingers and slithered back up her body to lie facing her. He then treated her to the show of licking every last bit of her juices from his fingers. A more erotic sight would have been hard to find.

He dispensed of his own silky, black boxers at tossed them onto their pile of clothing. Slowly, he found a comfortable position for them both and settled beside her with his cock situated between her slightly spread thighs.

Once her breathing had returned to normal, he wrapped his arms around her tightly, leaning down to kiss her lips tenderly.

"May I have you now, my wife?" he asked huskily.

"Please," she replied as she wrapped her own legs around him, pushing down a little and taking the head of his manhood into her scorching and moist cavern.

He groaned a little and pushed in further until her was fully sheathed within his wife's tight heat. He waited until her body adjusted to his size and only began with shallow thrusts when she begged for him to continue.

"Patience, witch," he hissed.

After what seemed like ages, the languid thrusts became unbearable and forced him to pound into her hard and fast. They both went over the edge together, her contracting muscles causing him to find his release shortly after she reached her own completion.

Panting and sweating, they detangled from each other and managed to tiredly pull the sheets over themselves, snuggling into each other's bodies.

Hermione sighed and looked into his inky black eyes. "I love you, Severus," she said, pulling his body closer to her own. "Thank you. That was wonderful."

"I agree," he said, tightening his arms around her. "Who would have thought an insufferable Gryffindor know-it-all would be like that," he teased.

"I'll have you know, you sneaky Slytherin, that your wife had better be the only Gryffindor know-it-all that is like that with you," she said huffily.

"Of course, my beautiful, sweet Gryffindor," he replied.

She smiled at him, but jumped as he reached for the floor across her lap. "What are you looking for?" she asked out of curiosity.

"My wand, I have to cast the contraceptive on you," he mumbled.

Hermione blanched a little and bit her bottom lip. She hadn't planned on telling him so soon, but she supposed it was as good a time as any.

"Severus, it won't work."

"Why ever not, pet?" he asked when he resurfaced.

"Because I'm already pregnant," she said quickly.

"What?"

"You heard," she replied.

Severus sat in silence for a moment before he seemed to grasp the concept. He was going to be a father. Looking back at his wife, he smiled.

"You're not angry?" she asked.

"Not at all," he answered simply.

Hermione breathed a sigh of relief. "I love you, Severus Snape."

Nothing more was said that night as Severus aimed to show his wife and mother of his child just how much he loved her.

Suffolk Manor

Chapter 7 of 18

Hermione and Severus head to Suffolk Manor for a holiday, and begin making plans for Christmas.

Thanks to Madbrilliant for the beta-ing of yet another chapter!

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Chapter 7 Suffolk Manor

As they packed their things in companionable silence into the bags set out on the bed, Hermione glanced out the window. The snow was falling thick outside and she smiled. Although it had only been two days since Severus had abducted her from their own wedding reception, she felt as though those two days had been two of the most brilliant days of her life. They had not gotten out of that bed, except to entertain each other with the luxury of bathing, for the entire time. And now, well, she was just eager to get on with their honeymoon in their Suffolk Manor.

Two strong arms came around her waist the moment after she zipped her bag closed. "Are you ready to leave yet, love?" Severus murmured, nuzzling his nose into her neck.

She smiled and leaned her head back against his shoulder, turning her head just enough to plant a small kiss to the hollow at the base of his throat. "Of course I am. Do you want to leave so soon or would you prefer to crawl back in to bed for a few hours?" she purred, sliding her fingers loosely through his hair.

He chuckled and planted a kiss on her forehead. "I think we should get going. I have plans to discuss with you, and we really shouldn't be late," he said silkily.

"Oh, all right," she huffed, flicking her wand at her bag and shrinking it to a size that would fit snugly into the pocket of her copper-colored day-robies.

"Good," he said, doing the same to his.

Severus wrapped his arms around Hermione and kissed her soundly before Apparating them away to their manor in Suffolk. They arrived at a massive wrought iron gate, much the same as the ones at Hogwarts save for the winged boars. Instead, these ones were topped with griffins standing proudly with their wings outstretched and eyes glinting, even if they were only marble.

Hermione gasped in amazement. "Severus, this place is remarkable!" she said as the gates opened for them. She looked around at the snow-covered English countryside and sighed in awe. It was beautiful. "Why have we never been here before?"

"This house is far too big. Some house-elves stay here and keep everything in fully functional order so that when we chose to come here, everything will be perfect. That includes the guest rooms," he added, smiling. "The other estates are run in much the same way."

Hermione mouthed a "Wow" as they walked together through the snow along what would have been seen as a long drive in the fairer seasons. Soon after, she could see the roofline of the house just beyond them and after a few more minutes of walking, Hermione stood next to her husband, openly gaping at a house that similarly resembled the Snape Manor on Spinner's End, except on a much larger scale.

"See something you like?" Severus asked, leaning to rest his chin on her shoulder and wrap his arms around her.

Hermione nodded mutely and allowed him to release her only to grasp her hand and tug her towards the front steps up to the entry door. He opened it and ushered her in first, making sure that he took her coat and hung it up with his. She peered around the Entrance Hall and felt like gasping again, but held it in. It was grand and decorated in varied shades of cream, with a silver chandelier with crystal droplets hanging from it. Whoever decorated the hall had very good taste indeed, Hermione thought.

Severus grasped her hand firmly in his once more and pulled her along with him gently. "Let's go see the whole manor before we sit down and have our discussion," he suggested.

Hermione nodded and he led the way. They viewed the whole of the first floor, which was mainly the kitchens towards the back of the house, the Grand Ballroom, the Dining Hall, and the parlor. The Dining Hall and parlor were carpeted with a delicately colored oriental carpet while the Ballroom and kitchens were polished hardwood. Everything smelled clean and natural.

Next was the second floor, on which he made her close her eyes before they entered the only room on that floor that was not a guest bedroom or his personal office. When Hermione opened her eyes she nearly fainted from the shock. She collapsed backwards into Severus' arms when she was faced with the most amazing library she had ever seen. It was an almost exact replica of the amazing library she had seen in an animated version of *Beauty and the Beast* when she was younger, even down to the very last ladder. There were staircases and the space of two floors dedicated to the sheer walls of books.

"This is the grandest library out of all of them," he whispered into her ear. "My favorite one and this is the reason why we came to Suffolk instead of Oxford."

"Oh my, Severus this is absolutely amazing!" she exclaimed when she had found her voice.

"Indeed. The rest of the house is very much that same, just guest rooms and, of course, our own room on the fourth floor, but we will most definitely be able to acquaint ourselves with that later," he purred, leading her towards a lounge nearby a roaring fireplace. "For now, I would like to have our discussion."

Hermione nodded. "Good, I've been meaning to ask you about that."

He pulled her into his lap and wrapped his strong arms around her. "I was wondering what you would like to have occur around Christmas," he said carefully.

"What do you mean?" she asked curiously.

"I mean, my dear, how would you like to celebrate it? Would you like it if we had guests?" he offered, although that was not the end of it.

"Are you planning on inviting people to stay with us for Christmas?" she asked quietly, looking into his eyes with silent adoration.

"I was thinking of something slightly more elaborate than that, wife," he answered.

"Like?"

"Like, perhaps a Christmas Ball in our manor to celebrate the season as well as hold our first "occasion" as husband and wife," he answered smoothly.

Hermione's eyes lit up with an excitement that he usually only saw as she read a book. "Are you serious? You want to do this? You're actually comfortable with the prospect of hosting lots of people and having a party?"

He nodded and chuckled. "I only ever hated parties because there was never the woman I loved there to enjoy it with. You're here now and I will enjoy any time I spend with you," he said, chortling again at the surprised look he got from Hermione.

"Oh, Severus, I love you!" she exclaimed, throwing her arms around his neck and claiming his lips with her own in an open-mouthed kiss.

"I know," he replied cheekily when she broke away.

She swatted him on the shoulder playfully and kissed him on the tip of his nose lightly. "So, who shall we invite?"

"Well, I suppose Albus and Minerva are a given and I assume the rest of the faculty at Hogwarts wouldn't be out of the question. Although, I do believe we spend quite enough time with them and their inane conversations there, let alone be subjected to them on my holiday," he said with all of his usual snarkiness.

Hermione laughed and admonished him lightly. "I will insist that the Potters come and the Weasleys too," she reminded him. "And I suppose that the rest of the old Order had better be on the list."

As she said that, Severus summoned a sheet of paper and a quill and wrote all of the names they had mentioned so far. After about an hour, they had a carefully deliberated list of exactly who would be attending, including Hermione's parents, and settled to just rest against each other as they made plans. They were to have just over two hundred guests and found that they had more than enough rooms to accommodate them for a few days.

"What date shall we have them arrive on?" she asked quietly.

"Shall we have the arrival date on the twenty-fourth and the Ball on Christmas day? Of course, they will have to stay at least one more night after that, as well," he suggested seriously.

"That sounds perfect, husband mine," she said, kissing his thin lips gently.

"And how does dinner in an hour sound to you?" he asked, shifting her off his lap to stand.

"It sounds like we have just enough time to take a bath," she said with a suggestive smile.

Severus could only smirk at his bold little Gryffindor. He held her hand and together they exited the library. It was going to be a wonderful Christmas...

Plans Into Actions

Chapter 8 of 18

The planning and preparations for their Christmas commence, and Hermione learns something new about Severus and his family...

Omnipresent thanks to the ever-so-brilliant, Madbrilliant, for beta-ing this chapter!

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Chapter 8 Plans Into Actions

Since the arrival of the Snapes at Suffolk Manor, the generally empty building seemed more alive with the planning of the proposed Christmas Ball, including the preparation of the guest rooms and the sending of invitations. Hermione had spent much of this time in the Library, catching up on the reading she had been unable to do while teaching at Hogwarts and completing the room plan for the guests during their stay.

She had seen very little of Severus in this time, and even when they retired to bed for the few days before the party, little had been said as he had returned from making preparations in the Wizarding town nearby, totally exhausted. Although she had been positively dying to be with him those nights, she left him to sleep, nestling into his side because that was all she could do.

That night, she watched from the second floor at the top of the staircase as he walked no, stumbled through the front doors and tossed his black jacket at one of the house elves, muttering a quick thanks. She gasped at the sight and rushed down the stairs to catch him at the bottom as he slumped weakly against the banister.

"Oh, God, Severus what happened?" she asked in a worried tone, brushing his hair back from his face and leaning her forehead against his.

"I was in town before one of the elves alerted me to an errant troll on the grounds. I wanted to get rid of it before the ball, and I'm afraid I'm not as fast as I used to be," he said softly. "It got a few hits in before I managed to knock it out."

Hermione pulled him tight against her and pressed kisses all over his face. "Severus, you are a wonderful stupid man! You could have been killed!" she exclaimed, half-dragging him up the stairs.

They eventually made it to the bedroom, and Hermione had to help him undress carefully before laying him back on their bed and examining the unclothed chest. She peeled his trousers off and healed the bleeding gash on his thigh immediately and then the broken ribs and bruised back.

"Wait here, I'm going to run you a bath," she muttered, pressing a swift kiss to his cheek before retreating.

Severus was still aching, despite the fact that most of the bruising and broken bones were healed. It was mostly because of his joints, but didn't bother to mention that to his wife lest she become more upset than she already was. She emerged from their bathroom mere moments later and told him that his bath was ready and practically

had to drag him there anyway because his body just didn't want to cooperate with his will.

She got him there, and he stepped out of his boxers slowly and then lowered himself into the steaming hot water. She sat on the edge of the tub behind him and began rubbing his sore muscles firmly, kneading out all of the tension within and enjoying the soft moan he emitted after ten minutes of the massage.

"That feels really good, love," he said in between soft noises of pleasure.

She leaned forwards and softly kissed the pulse beating in his throat and nuzzled his neck. "Good, because you most certainly deserve it after what you've been through," she answered quietly.

He leaned back into her embrace and kissed her cheek when she came within reaching distance. "Come and join me in the water, Hermione. We have spent far too little time with each other this week, and I've missed you dearly," he pleaded weakly.

She kissed him slowly and pulled away, pulling off her warm flannel pajamas and knickers, stepping into the water in front of him, and sliding down so her back was pressed firmly to his front. He wrapped two long arms around her, and she rested her head on his shoulder, breathing in the herbal scent of the water.

"Everything is ready for the arrival of the guests tomorrow, my love," he commented, drawing lazy circles over the flat plane of her belly. "Are the rooms all ready and assigned?"

She nodded and sighed. "It's all ready and perfect. I inspected each of the rooms myself this afternoon, and I'm sure that you'll approve of my bedding selection."

"I'm sure that anything you chose will suffice," he answered sleepily.

"Let's wash up and go to bed," she murmured, turning to reach for the soap and lathering up his chest.

They washed each other fairly quickly after that, and once Hermione was swathed in her red silk bathrobe and Severus in his black one, they tumbled into bed and fell asleep wrapped loosely around each other.

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Eight hours later, Severus woke to the sounds of the curtains being drawn open loudly, snapping him from the best sleep that he had in a long time. His body was not aching much thanks to the potion Hermione must have put in the water for the bath the night before and her soothing hands.

He stretched languidly and opened his eyes, staring up into the smiling face of his angel. "Morning, love," he said, smiling up at her.

She leaned forwards and kissed him firmly, running her hands over his chest on the inside of his bathrobe. "Good morning to you too, Severus," she replied, pulling back and grabbing his hand. "Get out of bed. The guests will be arriving shortly."

"How soon is shortly?" he asked mischievously.

"Three hours," she replied nonchalantly.

"In that case," he said, grabbing her around the hips and pulling her atop him in the bed, "we're staying in bed for a little longer."

Hermione laughed and allowed him that liberty, mostly because she had been craving it too.

About one hour later, they managed to get out of bed, spent and sated, and stumble into the shower together. They emerged from their room dressed and ready before the guests were set to arrive and sat down to a light breakfast in the parlor. Hermione made a check through the guest list once more, noticed a few names that she did not recognize, and decided to ask Severus about them.

"Severus, who's Anne Plinth," she asked curiously.

He looked up uncomfortably and cleared his throat, teacup still in his hand. "She is my cousin. Well, at least the only one I like," he answered. "She lives in Wales, but I invited her and her husband Theodore."

Hermione smiled and nodded. "Okay, so the other names on the list that I don't know should be various other family members too?"

"Yes."

She ran her finger along the list and felt her eyes widen. "Who is Stephen Prince?" she asked weakly.

He looked up and sighed, rubbing a hand over his eyes and pinching the bridge of his nose. "He is my younger half-brother, the child of my mother's disastrous second marriage," he answered. "I rarely get the chance to talk to him as he lives in America, but we owl each other regularly enough to be friendly."

"You have a brother?" she asked with a furrowed brow. "Why have you never told me?"

"It didn't seem too important," he answered, not looking up and reaching for his *Daily Prophet*.

"Did you even invite him to our wedding?" she asked with just a hint of hysteria.

He looked up and saw that she was getting wound-up and attributed it to be a part of her out-of-control pregnancy emotions. "Love, I did invite Stephen, but he had a business trip to attend to that could not be postponed. He sent his well wishes and an apology," he answered with a heavy sigh.

She seemed to cool down at that comment and settled back into the chair, picking up the teacup that she had left when she had begun reading the list. "I'm sorry, Severus. It seems that my hormones are a little messed up at the moment," she apologized.

He stood up from his chair, rested his teacup back on the coffee table, and went to her side, dropping to the floor beside her and clasping her free hand in both of his. Kissing her knuckles gently, he breathed in her sweet vanilla scent and closed his eyes.

"There is nothing to be sorry for, Hermione. I love you, and I love the thought of you carrying OUR child more than anything in the world," he murmured thoughtfully. "Now let's go and get ready for our guests, hmmm?"

She nodded and stood up from her seat, putting the teacup down and following her husband out of the room.

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Please review! I am a junkie!

Arrivals & Meetings

Chapter 9 of 18

The time for the ball has arrived, and along with it, the invited guests.

Hugs and chocolates go to Madbrilliant; beta extraordinaire.

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Chapter 9 – Arrivals & Meetings

The guests began arriving around midday, and the hosts were left with more than enough people to greet and with which to talk. Severus had become rather distracted with the members of his family that were very unlike him and talked a fair bit more than he ever did. Hermione thought it was rather humorous to watch him surrounded by people that looked nothing like him.

Hermione had managed to find Ginny and Harry throughout the time between chatting to members of the Order and watching her husband try to escape the family cluster.

“Hermione, this house is positively amazing!” Ginny exclaimed, hugging her tightly.

“It’s a bit excessive though, isn’t it?” she asked with a laugh.

“Hermione, you look great,” Harry said as he hugged her also. “And Ginny’s right, this is a really beautiful place, but I have to ask one thing.”

“What?”

“Who are those people that are surrounding Severus?” he asked, pointing towards the cluster.

Hermione looked over to where he was indicating and smiled. “Those are his relatives,” she answered. “Speaking of which, I have to go play hostess and actually meet them.”

She waved to her two friends as she left them and headed towards her husband, who was beginning to look uncomfortable with being so confined between relatives. He looked at her with relief and held out a hand to her as she walked towards them, accepting her and drawing her to his side.

“May I introduce my wife, Hermione,” he said with an adoring glance at his beloved witch.

Each and every one of his family either hugged her or shook her hand in both of theirs, proving to her yet again that none of them were anything like her stiff and stern husband.

“Hermione, we are all so glad that Severus could find such a beautiful light to even out his dark side,” his cousin, Anne, said kindly. “He has become much more polite with you in his life,” she added teasingly.

The cousin in question was only slightly shorter than Hermione herself and had long blonde hair that was straight as the result of the Prince family genes and had a pert nose and bright smile. She seemed to look a lot like Severus’ mother in the pictures she had seen of her. But that might have been because Severus’ mother and Anne’s were twin sisters.

“Thank you so much, Anne. I am so glad that you could come,” Hermione replied politely, holding the older witch’s hands in her own. “It is so good to finally meet some of Severus’ family.”

Anne would only have been ten years older than her, only a few years younger than Severus. Hermione noticed that Dumbledore had dragged Severus away across the hall to Minerva and they were all talking amiably and familiarly to each other. She turned back to his cousin and bid her goodbye so that she could greet her parents as they walked through the front doors.

“Mum,” she said as she rushed into a loving hug with the older woman. “You’re finally here! I was getting worried.”

“No need to be, dear. Your father was trying to be smart and lost the instructions for the portkey that you sent us and I had to figure out how to work it myself,” she answered.

Hermione laughed and let go of her mother, getting pounced on immediately by her father. “Hello, daddy. I missed you!” she squealed, hugging him ferociously.

“Hello, muffin. How’s my girl?” he asked, kissing her on the crown of her head.

“I’m smashing, but I heard from a very reliable source that you misplaced something this morning,” she teased.

“Goodie,” he said sarcastically.

She grabbed on to both of her parents hands and led them to where Anne and Theodore were. “Come on, I want you to meet some of Severus’ relatives,” she said with a grin.

They finally made it to the other side of the hall, and Hermione approached a smiling Anne and her charming husband. “Anne, Theo, this is my mum and dad, Jane and Philip,” she introduced. “Mum and Daddy, this is Severus’ cousin Anne and her husband Theo.”

They all shook hands and Hermione left them there to mingle. She could tell that her mother would get along great with what she knew of Anne already and had a feeling that practically anyone could get along with the extremely amiable Theodore. After she bid them to talk and get to know each other, she looked around to see if she could find her husband anywhere, but he was nowhere in sight.

She had a look into the parlor and happened upon most of the Order members and the Weasleys as well as their spouses, but he wasn’t there either. Finally, she went back into the entrance hall and saw the door open again and watched as a man of supra-average height walked through the door. He had dark brown hair, a nose of similar yet not so desirable proportions as Severus’ and had the same stiff posture and cool air.

This must be the infamous Stephen Prince. She did not know much about him, but he looked enough like a Snape that it could be none other than a Prince. She walked across the hall and met him as he removed his winter coat.

“You must be Stephen,” she said, holding out a hand to him and smiling brightly.

He smiled slightly back and accepted her hand, shaking it firmly before bring it to his lips and kissing it. His hands were smoother than Severus', and he looked to be only a few years younger than her husband. His lips were fuller than the ones she knew and she felt the difference on her knuckles.

"And you must be my sister-in-law, Hermione," he said smoothly.

Hermione noticed immediately that his voice was different than her husbands'. It wasn't as deep, or silky, or even seductive as his, but was slightly higher and a little more rough. "It's a pleasure to finally meet you," she said at last.

"The pleasure is all mine, Hermione," he said easily.

"How long will you be staying in Britain?" she asked as they walked further into the house, towards the parlor, where everybody seemed to have retreated.

"For a while," he answered. "I will be staying in the house I own in London and doing business here before I return to Jersey."

"Is it nice in New Jersey?" she asked politely, trying to keep up a conversation with him. "I hear it gets chilly there in winter."

"I like it there but I like it here better. I grew up in Britain, after all," he replied with a chuckle. "I might be persuaded to stay longer, but I might need to find a reason first."

"That sounds like a wonderful idea," she responded with a grin. "I'm sure that Severus would love to see you more often."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that, Hermione," he replied darkly.

Hermione noticed a hint of sadness in his words and sought to comfort him. "Why do you say that?" she asked as they took a seat.

"When we were younger, Severus and I had a falling out. We did resolve some of our differences, but not everything, it seems, can be fixed," he answered.

"What was it about?" she pressed.

"His dark mark," he replied. "It was my fault he went to get it. I was supposed to stop him, but instead, I pushed him and it drove him to Voldemort."

Hermione gasped, and Stephen pushed up his sleeve. "I took the mark, too," he said, showing her the faint outline the ex-Death Eaters had in memory. "I was stupid and young, five years younger than him. When I took the mark, he went to Dumbledore and pleaded a second chance, sending me to America in hiding and falling under Dumbledore's protection, becoming a spy. We were both so stupid and young."

Hermione bit her lip and looked across the room to where Severus was standing, regarding her and his brother with a blank mask of indifference. She flashed him an apologetic look and stood up from the chair, leaving the room without another word.

Severus would not be happy with her, and she needed some space to clear her mind...

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Please review! I really appreciate feedback!

For Love's Sake

Chapter 10 of 18

Christmas morning has arrived, and Severus helps straighten out a few misunderstandings.

A big hug and a kiss for Madbrilliant for being an awesome beta!

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Chapter 10 For Love's Sake

On the Christmas morning, the day of the ball, Suffolk Manor was teeming with excitement and banter. Everyone had risen early with their Christmas gifts at small piles at the ends of their beds before they would head down to the Dining hall for a late breakfast at half past eight. Severus Snape woke to find one half of the bed empty and his wife nowhere in sight. The presents had not been touched at the foot of the bed, and her dressing gown was missing from the ornate peg on the wall next to the bathroom door.

He got out of the bed and pulled his own thick black bathrobe on and slid slippers on his feet. He figured that there were only a few places Hermione frequented in the house and decided to check them first. He Flooded from their private sitting room to the Library and then to the parlor, but he still did not see her. The last place he went to was his private study, but she was not there either.

Just when he felt himself begin to panic a little, he Flooded to the kitchen to get a cup of tea to soothe his frazzled nerves. When he stepped out of the fire, he almost tripped when he saw Hermione seated at one of the long benches, sipping from a mug quietly.

"Hermione..." he said with a heavy breath.

She looked up at him with weary surprise and patted next to her on the chair, offering him a seat. He went to her immediately and rested a hand on her thigh on the outside of her long, thick, white bathrobe. "I've been looking for you," he said gruffly.

She bit her bottom lip and opened her mouth to apologize to him, but he stopped that immediately and lowered his lips to hers in a slow, lingering kiss before pulling back. Hermione had been avoiding him since the conversation she had with Stephen and had fled as soon as she has seen him. He was unsure yet as to what had driven her away, but guessed that she perhaps misunderstood his regard for Stephen as annoyance at her.

"I am terribly sorry about yesterday, Severus," she apologized while he was too distracted to stop her.

"I am sorry, too, my love. I was not mad at you last night, but at Stephen for being so careless," he replied in kind, hugging her close. "I should have guessed that he would bring up that lot again."

"It doesn't change my opinion of you, Severus," she hastened to reassure him, caressing his cheek gently. "I love you."

"And I love you," he murmured. "Happy Christmas."

They left the kitchens shortly afterwards and returned to the large pile of Christmas presents at the foot of their bed. Severus tossed her the nearest gift, which she caught before throwing him a rueful look and poking out her tongue at him.

"Very funny, Snape," she said with a grin before starting to peel the tape off the present.

Severus sat right behind her and kissed her cheek, wrapping his arms around her and resting his chin on her shoulder so that he could watch her unwrap the gifts. She smiled and continued until all of the gifts were sitting in one pile near their bathroom door and the wrapping paper littered the floor in huge piles.

"Severus, love, we have to clear up this mess and get ready for breakfast," Hermione said, after a while of just sitting there, wrapped in her husband's embrace.

"Let's go back to bed first," he mumbled lazily, nuzzling her neck with his nose before nipping at it gently with his teeth. "I'm sure everyone can find their way to breakfast themselves."

She relaxed in his arms and relented to the glorious torment for a while, until his hands worked their way inside of her bathrobe and began doing things to her that guaranteed they would have trouble arriving to breakfast on time. She removed his hands, pranced into the bathroom, and closed the door, blocking him out and taking a cold shower.

Half an hour later, Hermione and Severus found themselves in the Dining room with the rest of their guests. Hermione sat and ate with her mother and Anne while Severus acquiesced to eat with his brother and her father with Albus for her sake. All in all, it was a rather pleasant affair.

"How did you sleep, Mum?" Hermione asked as she nibbled on some toast.

"Very well, the beds here are magnificent!" Jane replied with a smile. "Your father and I are very impressed. We had no idea you had a house like this!"

Hermione laughed. "To tell you the truth, I had no idea that Severus even had this Manor either."

"Oh, it's been in the Prince family for hundreds of years," Anne added helpfully. "Severus' mother inherited it as the oldest of an all-girl family of Princes and passed it to her eldest son."

Hermione smiled and looked across the room to make sure that Severus was playing nice with all of the other men. He seemed fairly neutral, so she went across the room to find some of the order members and ended up being hauled into a conversation by Julia Sinistra, the Astronomy Professor at Hogwarts.

"Julia, how are you?" she asked politely, sitting next to her on one of the lounges and grasping both of her hands in her own.

"Excellent. This is a wonderful house. I had no idea that Severus had such beautifully kept homes as this," Julia replied with a smile.

Sinistra was the very same age as Severus, but was in Ravenclaw in that year with Rolanda Hootch. She was not the most attractive woman, but had lovely clear blue eyes, long blonde hair that was slightly streaked with white, and a long straight nose. She was pretty enough, but had never married after her affianced husband died in the first uprising of Voldemort. And she had, of course, made the mistake of dating Sirius Black like many women in that age group. Hermione was often quite surprised that Severus had never considered dating the woman, as she was quite intelligent and charming.

Then again, the only woman that could truly tolerate his moods and snarky sarcasm was Hermione.

"Are you enjoying the school year so far?" Hermione asked with a small smile.

"Hmmm, the students are quite tiresome, but of course, they would be. And with Filius due to retire soon and my new duties as Head of Ravenclaw, all I have time for any more are the students," she said with a half-laugh. "No more night outings for me."

Hermione agreed and caught sight of Stephen walking in their direction with a smile gracing his features. She extended her hand to welcome him and draw him over for introductions.

"Julia, I would like to introduce you to Stephen Prince, Severus' younger brother," she said to the older woman. "And Stephen, this is mine and Severus' colleague, Julia Sinistra."

"A pleasure," he said suavely, taking Julia's hand and kissing it.

Julia was obviously not accustomed to such formal gestures and blushed slightly as the slightly younger man joined her on the seat. "Nice to meet you," she squeaked.

Hermione almost laughed openly at this and decided to let them have a chat without her. "Well, I have to go and check up on some arrangements in the kitchens, so if you'll both excuse me, I'll take my leave and you can get to know each other better," Hermione said, slipping away quickly.

Stephen smiled at the blushing Sinistra and decided that it was cruel to leave the poor woman waiting and began the conversation. "You're a colleague of Severus?" he asked.

"Yes, I teach Astronomy at Hogwarts," she answered. "I don't believe Severus has ever mentioned a brother."

"I live in America, and we don't talk often, so it isn't a surprise. Besides, I never got the chance to attend Hogwarts for my schooling," he replied with a half-smile. "I went to Durmstrang in Bulgaria because my father went there when he was doing his studies."

"What was it like there?"

"Tough. The Headmaster was quite strict even then, and he didn't take kindly to misbehaved boys. I knew Igor Karkarof there, though he was a few years above me and rather a bad influence," he said with a smirk. "I take it you went to Hogwarts?"

"Yes, I was in your brother's year, but we didn't get along very well. He was friends with Rolanda Hootch, though, and she was in Ravenclaw with me," she answered. "We get along better now since I began teaching at Hogwarts. I only started teaching seven years after he was there though, and he can be a little testy."

"I know all about that. I grew up with him," Stephen replied.

"Was he always like that?"

"He was, but has improved significantly since he has known Hermione," he said with a grin. He was beginning to like this woman. She was nice, after all.

Tidings of Comfort and Joy

Chapter 11 of 18

The Christmas celebrations continue, and Hermione talks to Severus about his brother...

Eternal thanks go to Madbrilliant for continuing to be a brilliant beta!

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Chapter 11 Tidings of Comfort and Joy

Stephen Prince let his eyes wander over the crowd until a particularly beautiful sight caught his eye. The woman he had met earlier that day, Julia Sinistra, if he remembered correctly. She had been quite lovely indeed, and he found that she was surprisingly easy to talk to, and even though she was technically his senior, she treated him more like an equal than anyone he had ever known, other than Severus.

He would have to remember to thank his brother for inviting him when he could; otherwise, he may never have met this lovely specimen. He admired the way her deep wine-colored dress robes clung to her generous curves and slim waist, exposing the tops of her breasts in that oh-so perfect way. He approached her head on and bowed to her formally.

"May I request a dance, Miss Julia?" he asked suavely.

She blushed and accepted his hand shyly. "I would love to," she replied, letting him lead her onto the dance floor.

Hermione watched this display with keen interest as she spun in her husband's arms on the floor, gracefully sweeping around and across to the song. "What has you so interested on that side of the room, my dear?" asked velvet tones in her ear.

She looked up into Severus' glittering obsidian eyes and smiled beatifically. "Your brother seems quite taken with Julia Sinistra," she commented impishly.

He smiled for a moment before he realized what that implied. "You cheeky little minx!" he exclaimed softly. "You introduced them on purpose. What were you hoping to achieve?"

"Nothing in particular," she replied with a shrug. "I just figured that he needed love just as much as the next person, and besides, Julia has had a rough time of it too. They'll be good for each other."

He smiled and leaned down to kiss her lightly on the lips. "You are right, I suppose," he conceded.

"And besides, it'll be good to have him closer so you two can spend more time together, like a family," she urged gently. "I know you care for him and he cares for you too. You both need to put everything aside and sit down to have a decent conversation. It's no use leaving things the way they are."

"Why not? We've been content this way until now," he asked with a defeated sigh. He knew that she had an ulterior motive and that he would never win this argument. She was right.

"Because he's your family," she pressed.

"I know. That's the problem," he gritted out. "Blood is thicker than wine."

"And you have too good a heart to try and push him away again," she added giving him a brief peck on the cheek.

"I wouldn't if I hadn't fallen in love with you," he replied honestly, because it was true. He hadn't really known all that much about love until he had begun to love her.

She blushed and kissed him on the lips, which he reciprocated most ardently, kissing her hard with a deep-lying passion that had been bottled up for twenty years as they danced slowly to the soft music. When the need to breathe outweighed their desire to continue their snogging, Hermione rested her head on his chest.

Severus had to admit, she really did look more than beautiful that night. She was wearing the loveliest cream and silver dress robes made from only the finest silk, the inside layer a simple cream dress and the outer layer with sleeves to her elbows and only going as far as her knees in a darker shade of cream with silver trim. He liked and appreciated immensely that she had worn this instead of a red gown. He disliked the color then as much as he ever had and only tolerated her in it occasionally.

It was then that he decided that he had yet to dote on his wife for her choice of dress and decided it was only fitting. "You look lovely tonight, pet," he said warmly.

"Thank you," she said softly, hugging him tighter. "You look very handsome, Severus. Silver looks good on you."

Severus himself had decided to wear nice, black wizards dress robes with silver stitching on the inside and a silver silk waistcoat to compliment Hermione's dress lining. He looked out over the people dancing and sitting at the tables. He spotted Jane Granger and his cousin Anne sitting at a nearby round table, looking their way and smiling encouragingly at him as they talked quietly.

Later, he saw Phillip Granger and Theo, Anne's husband, sitting at the bar talking animatedly and drinking snifters of something that Severus was certain was quite strong. He could tell they were highly intoxicated by the way they laughed so loudly at times. He saw Potter and Ginny dancing near to them, the woman curled into Harry's chest much the same way Hermione was coiled into his.

He smiled slightly and nodded at Harry, who smiled back and nodded his head understandingly. He rubbed his wife's back and held her even closer. They both understood what it was like to be in love, and that was one of the reasons why they had overcome their intense hate for each other. That and when they had both struggled with Voldemort to save Hermione.

He respected Potter now. Ronald Weasley, however, was a totally different story. Even though he had moved on from Hermione choosing Snape over him, he was still very possessive of her and didn't act any more maturely than he had as a student. But at least he didn't make any scenes.

"Severus, what is the time, dear?" asked Hermione, her voice slightly muffled by his chest.

"Not too late yet, though I imagine some of the older guests will be off to bed soon," he said. "Would you like to sit down?"

"Yes, I think that's a good idea. I should go talk to Mum and Anne. I haven't spoken to them much today, and then I'll go catch up with Minerva," she said, releasing him slowly.

"Alright," he said, offering his arm to her and escorting her to the ladies before he went to join the men in the other room where they were drinking, talking, and playing

various games. He spotted Albus by the chess set, playing a game on his own and decided that it wouldn't hurt to talk to his old friend.

"May I join, old man?" he asked as he approached.

Albus looked up and smiled with both his blue eyes and grinned from behind his beard. "Of course, that would be grand. We haven't played in quite a while, have we?"

"Not for two years, Albus," he said softly. "Not since you sent Hermione off with me that Christmas."

"Ah! But it was the best Christmas you had ever had at the time, was it not?" he returned easily as he made the first move on the chessboard.

"Touché," Severus replied, making his move.

They played for an hour in relative silence until Severus saw that his old friend had grown tired and put a hold on the game, charming the pieces to stay as they were so they could continue another time. "Go on up to your room, Albus. You look beat," Severus suggested as they stood.

"Good idea, my boy, and might I say you're looking a little tired yourself. Not getting much sleep?"

"In a matter of speaking," Severus said with a slight smirk.

"Married life, hmmm?" Albus asked.

"Nothing better, trust me," he said, looking pointedly at Minerva. "When are you ever going to get around to asking that woman to marry you?"

"Why I "

"Don't be daft, Albus. She'd marry you in a heartbeat if only you would stop being a chicken and say the words," Severus interrupted, looking warmly at him.

"I'll consider it," Albus said wisely. "I think I might be too old."

"Nobody is too old to get married," Snape said, gazing at Hermione, who was with Minerva by then, thinking of what good fortune he had.

Albus went up then, and Snape walked back into the ballroom to see that the men at the bar hadn't moved, some people had left the floor, and his brother was sitting at a table with Sinistra, having what appeared to be an interesting chat. Perhaps the woman would be good for him after all. He had never seen Stephen so attentive to a woman before and had a feeling that she was not like the woman he knew.

The night had been wonderful, and Snape found himself thinking that he was glad they had decided to have this ball. Everyone seemed to be happy, and he could tell that he had pleased his wife.

He smiled and decided to go to her. He felt the sudden urge to kiss her.

Winter Frost

Chapter 12 of 18

The Snape's return to Spinner's End, and Severus has a conversation with Stephen about Julia Sinistra.

Many thanks to Madbrilliant for the beta-ing of this fic!

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Chapter 12 – Winter Frost

When the holidays began to draw to a close, people became frantic and everyone in the Wizarding world went about preparing their return to work and their normal lives. It was as if, when the holidays came, they were different people with other lives than the hectic ones they lived daily. The guests had left the manor two days after Christmas, and Hermione and Severus lingered there until New Years before they returned to Spinner's End for the remainder of their break to prepare for their return to Hogwarts.

Hermione and Severus both decided that it was easier if Hermione stayed as Professor Granger at school, so that the student body didn't have anything to speculate about. It was safer to stay out of the gossip column, after all.

Stephen had decided to stay in England at his house in London for a time and visited them every few days when he wasn't working. It was good because Severus seemed to have taken Hermione's advice, and they had built bridges over their past hurt – properly this time.

It was actually on such a visiting day that Severus asked the question that had been burning in his mind for about a week.

"Have you seen Julia since Christmas?"

Stephen looked at him – astonished. "I haven't. Why?" he replied in his slightly roughened voice.

"You seemed to enjoy her company immensely while we were in Suffolk; why the change of mind?" Severus commented, wisely choosing to say "mind" instead of "heart".

"I didn't change my mind on anything, Severus. She was lovely company, but I hadn't even considered it," Stephen lied effortlessly. He didn't need to complicate his leaving by getting involved with Julia. The last thing he needed was to fall in love – but that was the problem – he was already intrigued and infatuated with her.

"Oh," Severus said blandly, obviously not believing him.

Stephen smiled. "I could never lie to you, could I?" he said, shaking his head ruefully. "I should have known better."

"Indeed."

"I like her, of course. But you can't expect me to stay in England, can you? I can't just leave the States like that," he defended weakly.

"You can," Severus returned. "You left England quite easily to begin with."

"I had no choice in that matter. You know that. And as much as I love it here, I think that I need to go back for something," he said. "Besides, Julia could do far better for herself than me."

Severus smiled. "I say the same thing to myself about Hermione all the time, but it was easier to accept it than reject it. You can't put off your life any more, Stephen. You'll end even more bitter than I."

Stephen chuckled. "I'll think about it, but I won't make any promises," he replied evenly.

"Good."

A while later, Hermione returned from Diagon Alley after placing all of her textbook orders in Flourish and Blotts and walked into the room with a bagful of something that immediately caught Severus' eye. "I trust you two are ready for lunch?" she asked, handing the bag of books to her husband.

"Thank you, my dear, and yes, lunch would be lovely," Severus said smoothly, taking her hand and kissing her palm tenderly in greeting.

"Hmmm, very smooth Mr. Snape," she said warily, taking her hand away and raising an eyebrow at him before walking out.

Stephen chuckled at that and Severus smiled at him. "That's how you do it, Stephen," he said with a small smirk.

"You manipulative bastard," Stephen joked.

Hermione returned with a tray of sandwiches and a pitcher of some juice for them and sat down on the arm of Snape's chair. She was starting to show a small swell around her middle from the pregnancy, barely noticeable, but just enough to indicate that it was going along all right. She had to go for her check-up the next day at St. Mungo's before she returned to teaching.

"You look radiant, Hermione," her brother-in-law commented politely.

She flushed a little more, even after already having that motherly glow about her, and ducked her head a little. "Thanks, I guess," she said modestly.

Severus took one of her hands and gave it a gentle squeeze. "He's right, you know. You do look quite beautiful today, love," he said with a smile.

She felt her heart flutter at his words. It was funny how he could always do that to her still, even after so many years. She supposed that her love only grew for him every day at this stage. It was strange, however, that she had not been more moody lately.

"I'm going to go and get cleaned up. Remember, we are going to the Potters' tonight," she reminded, standing up from the chair gracefully.

"I would never forget," he said, feigning exasperation.

She patted him on the shoulder before walking out once more, and Stephen decided to speak again. "You're quite the lucky one, Severus," he said sincerely.

"You could be too," Snape reminded.

Stephen nodded and finished off his sandwich. Standing, he straightened out his jacket and smiled. "Well, I had better leave then. I'm sure you'd like to get ready for your evening and I'll come see you at Hogwarts this weekend."

Snape stood and held his hand out to his brother, shaking his hand and clapping him on the back. "Take care until then and think about what we discussed. I will know if you haven't."

"That's creepy, Sev," he said.

"Get going then, you useless lout," Severus teased.

"Yes, sir," Stephen said before Apparating.

Severus slowly looked around and found Hermione standing in the doorway, fully dressed still. "Coming up for a shower?" she asked innocently.

"Of course," he replied, going to her side immediately. He called on house-elves to clean up the lunch tray and went with his wife to their rooms. After a long, exhilarating shower, they left the bathroom dry and went to retrieve their clothes for dinner that night. Hermione had insisted that he wear his cream-colored trousers, and he agreed on the condition that he could wear whatever shirt he pleased and, typically, he pulled out a black silk shirt and his black Macintosh jacket to go over it.

He left the top two buttons undone and tied his long hair back neatly with a bit of black leather. Hermione had chosen a simple pair of nice brown trousers, her white blouse, and her light tan v-neck sweater to go over the top. She managed to tame her hair into a loose braid down her back.

Before they left, he helped her into her long, black winter coat that fell to her knees before pulling his own long jacket on and handing her the ruby-red scarf. He wrapped his own charcoal scarf around his neck, and they Apparated to the trees just beyond the Potter household.

"You look lovely, Hermione," he said as they walked along hand-in-hand.

"And you do too," she commented, eying him off in the smart, Muggle attire that he was sporting. Even though there were limited colors, he still looked sexy as hell to her. They neared the Potters' door and, before Hermione could reach over and press the doorbell, he swooped in and stole a breathtaking kiss from her.

Once he pulled away, she smiled up at him. "Let's go inside, hmmm?" she asked softly.

"Lead the way, Madam," he said, gesturing for her to do as she pleased. "I will follow your instruction."

She pressed the doorbell, and then voices could be heard shouting "Just a minute!" so they waited. Next thing they knew, Hermione and Severus were engulfed by redheads and Potter.

Severus groaned inwardly. Just his luck.

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A/N – Please review! I am an addict – feed my addiction!

Utterly Convincing

Chapter 13 of 18

In which Stephen bumps into Julia in Muggle London...

To the brilliant Madbrilliant, many thanks, hugs and chocolates!

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Chapter 13 - Utterly Convincing

The Christmas holidays were fast coming to an end, and work was beginning to become the major priority once again. People returned to the Ministry from their vacations and to their homes that had become dusty from unuse, and for the wealthier families who had house-elves, they had taken them along with them and let the houses become as aforementioned. Stephen Snape knew that the time to return to Jersey would be soon, as he couldn't spend too much longer in England before he became attached again.

He had seen Severus and Hermione only the evening before for dinner and had mentioned that he would be leaving soon, but that he would return to visit them at Hogwarts sometimes when work wasn't so consuming.

There had been many times in the last couple of weeks that he had considered transferring to Britain from Jersey. As a Gringotts curse-breaker and master, he had been stationed in America for more years than he could remember, removing dark curses and other wards, hexes, and traps from ancient Magical areas for research and the collection of artifacts and profitable items.

He knew that he could just as easily return to Britain, as there were enough people on his research team that had elevated sufficient enough to take over his work there. None of them were brilliant or even as smart as he was, but they were good enough that, with practice, they could become even more adequate. Severus had been urging him to stay, but he didn't know if Julia was interested in him enough to stay.

Stephen sat in silent contemplation. How did things get so out of hand for him? In the end he gave up thinking about it all together and decided to focus on enjoying his last few days in his home country. It was entirely too depressing to think about, after all.

"Mr. Prince, sir?" squeaked a tiny voice from beside his chair.

He turned and looked down to see a pair of golf-ball sized eyes staring up at him nervously. "Yes, Lindy? What did you want?" he asked quietly, but politely.

"Is sir finished with his breakfast?" she asked anxiously.

This particular house elf was by far the most timid and afraid of all the elves he employed at his London home. She was loyal and true, so he had kept her and decided that perhaps he should take her with him to Jersey so that she would be more accustomed to serving him.

Sighing, he nodded and dismissed her with a wave of his hand once she had collected his breakfast tray. He got up from his seat and dragged himself to the bathroom to clean his teeth before getting on an appropriate coat for his outing that day. Earlier that morning, he had planned to explore a bit of Muggle London and was starting his little adventure with a trip to the London Zoo's new tiger exhibit and polar bear Park.

He walked through his back door to the yard and Apparated to an alley near the entrance to the zoo, walking to pay for his entry from there. He had never been overly interested in any creatures, other than fierce non-magical predators and dragons as a child, but he felt that he needed to get in touch with all of those things he had missed out on when he was young and find out if he actually would have liked visits to the zoo at any stage.

If he liked it, perhaps he would consider bringing his children there at some point, if he ever did get around to finding the right woman. He realized that he was slightly jealous of Severus for having Hermione in his life, but he knew that one day he would fall in love and become as soft as his older brother was fast becoming because of his witch.

He paid entry and strolled inside and along many winding footpaths to the "big cats" exhibit. He had always liked panthers as he had always felt an affinity towards them, not to mention that his Patronus became a panther as opposed to a magical creature.

"So, you like big cats?" asked a soft, somewhat familiar female voice from beside him.

Stephen turned his head to look at the woman without moving away from the railing and was startled to see Julia looking back up at him with cheeks pink from the cold and sparkling eyes. "Hello to you too," he said with a small smile.

"Fancy seeing you at a London zoo," she commented.

"It has been a while, Julia. How do I find you?" he asked politely with a fractional inclination of his head.

"I'm very well, Stephen," she replied with an enigmatic grin. "I hope I find you well too."

He nodded. "I have had a quiet break since leaving Suffolk," he replied, the corner of one side of his mouth twitching into a lopsided grin. He couldn't help but smile at her.

Sure, she was a few years older than him, and although the lines of her age were just beginning around her eyes from smiling, she was absolutely beautiful to him. He had never been so enchanted, so challenged to achieve higher by a woman before. He didn't know much about her, but he wished that he could stay to get to know her.

"What brings you to Muggle London?" she asked, sensing that it would become awkward if she gave up on conversation.

"I should ask you the same thing," he replied, trying to dodge the question, lest she laugh at him.

"I came here to visit my family in London for the New Year and promised to bring my niece and nephew here for the day," she replied, nodding her head in the direction of two fairly young, blonde children. "Emily is five and Thomas is seven."

"I see," he said simply, trying to avoid her gaze.

"How much longer will you be staying in London?" she asked curiously, hoping that he would be staying awhile.

"Not long," he answered. "I have to get back to work at some point, and there's no use avoiding the inevitable."

"Would you like to have lunch with us today? After we leave the zoo that is only if you're not busy," she said hurriedly.

He smirked in a very Severus-like manner and nodded slowly. "I would love to have lunch with you, Julia," he said in a soft, slightly gravelly voice. It was unfortunate for him that he had not inherited Severus' silky voice because that could have sounded so much more seductive.

She blushed and he held out an arm to escort her to her niece and nephew, only to find them a few feet away, watching and pointing at the big cats in awe. When they stood beside them, the boy, Thomas looked up at Stephen, giving him a suspicious look. Emily smiled brightly, however, and shyly ducked behind her aunty.

"Who's he?" she squeaked.

Julia smiled and shook her head at the children affectionately. "Thomas, Emily, I would like you to meet Mr. Prince," she announced softly.

Stephen stepped forward and held out a hand to Emily who immediately took it and shook it enthusiastically. Thomas was slightly more reserved from experience, but shook it nonetheless. "It is nice to meet you both. You may call me Stephen," he said with a smile.

"That's my middle name," Thomas announced with a half-smile.

"It's a good name," Julia insisted. "Now look, you both have the same name in common."

Emily stepped forwards boldly and took one of Stephen's hands with her own small one and gave it a squeeze. "My middle name is Rae. It's not the same as yours, but I like it anyway," she said with a grin.

Stephen couldn't help but to smile back at such an affectionate little gesture from a girl he had only just met. Then again, Emily did look quite a bit like Julia. "I think it is a lovely middle name," he reassured her, making her beam even brighter.

"Will you have lunch with us?" Thomas asked, taking his hand on the other side with a wide smile on his face.

Stephen nodded and looked up to see Julia smiling at the picture he presented with the children. She could see him being a wonderful dad someday, and she wasn't just thinking that because she was attracted to him. "All right then, let's go and have lunch," she announced.

They walked back along the pathways together, this time with Emily holding one of Stephen's hands, Julia holding the other, and Thomas holding her free hand. They looked exactly like a happy family, he mused. He could also get used to holding her hand in such a fashion.

"Stephen, how long will you be staying here?" Emily asked softly as they walked along to find a place for lunch.

"I'm... not really sure. Why?"

She shrugged and grinned. "Aunty Julia told us about you before, and she smiled more today than she has all holiday," she said simply.

Stephen looked to see Julia blushing a little and he smiled. "I think that I could manage to stick around a little longer," he said, giving Julia's hand a small, affectionate squeeze before leaning in and kissing her cheek.

"I would like that," she admitted, making his heart swell.

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A/N - Please review! I am an addict!

Inevitable Return

Chapter 14 of 18

Hermione and Severus return to Hogwarts and teaching...

Thanks to Madbrilliant for the beta, and thank you to everyone that has left a review, or many as the case is. I really appreciate all of your support!

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Chapter 14 Inevitable Return

Hogwarts was still frozen over and covered in a thick layer of powdery white snow. The Christmas holidays had ended and the Hogwarts Express had returned the students only two days before. Most of them seemed surprised to find that on their return there were two Professor Snape's instead of just one. However, it was infinitely clear that the majority favoured one over the other. Hermione had expected for the students to give her a world of grief for marrying their Potions professor.

She had been pleasantly surprised to discover that not one of the students had suspected their relationship in the slightest. In fact, they all appeared to be oblivious to it and were shocked that all of a sudden she had married him. They had been dating for years since she left Hogwarts. Hermione smiled in remembrance. It was just over two years since that first fateful Christmas when Albus had sent Hermione to stay with Severus. Who would have thought that she would fall for him and become his wife?

But she did not really perform all of the duties that one's wife did or at least not really so far. Sure, sometimes she would grab a couple of things every now and then for him, but she did not cater to his every whim like an obsessive teenage girl. But perhaps that was a relief. Who knew?

It was lunchtime in three minutes, and her fourth-year Hufflepuff-Ravenclaw class was doing a pop quiz on their coursework from before the holidays to refresh their memories. The last few seconds seemed to creep past until it was finally time.

"Alright, students, quills down and pack up your things," she announced, eliciting cheerful chatter from them. "You are dismissed."

They all left, and she summoned every last test to her, including one that came to her from outside the hallway. She smirked. One of her students was trying to escape with their test paper again, and she knew who. Jacob Cootes was always playing the fool. She left her things in her office before heading down to the Great Hall to have something to eat as she was starving.

She entered through the staff door and found Severus already in his seat and sat down in her assigned chair beside him. "Afternoon, love," she greeted tiredly.

"Good afternoon, Hermione," he replied, adding a dash of Tabasco to his salad dressing to make it less bland.

"One of my students tried to avoid having to hand in an exam today," she said with a soft laugh. "You would never believe me if I told you who he was."

"Who else but Mr. Cootes?" he drawled sarcastically.

Hermione smirked. "That is biased logic. I think you are only saying that because you want your Slytherins to win everything, you grouch," Hermione teased affectionately.

"Indeed," he agreed.

"Oh, you're no fun. Always agreeing to get out of trouble, but then doing it anyway," she grumbled.

They laughed, shocking most of the students in the Great Hall, as they had never known the original Professor Snape to find humor in anything. Hermione smiled at the fuss it had caused, and they took the rest of their meal in silence. Hermione returned with Severus to his office in the Dungeons and sat on the edge of his desk, just beside where he was reclined in his desk chair.

"Do you think we gave them enough to talk about?" she asked, referring to those in the Great Hall.

"I think I have scared them out of their sensibilities enough for one day, I suppose," he replied with a smile at his beautiful wife. "Ah, love, you look like an angel today."

"Just today?"

"Especially today, my lovely," he insisted, reaching out a hand to draw her to sit on his desk in front of him.

They chatted for a little while longer before lunch ended, and Hermione flooded back to her office from there as he had a Double Potions with his seventh years. Hermione had nothing to do that afternoon, as there were no more classes for her to teach until the next day, so she wrote a letter to Harry. He had written to her, asking if it would be fine if he came to visit.

Hermione had intended to say yes the entire time, but had simply been too lazy to do so. She wrote a brief missive, hoping that he would be able to stop over on his travels. She smiled just thinking about their good times in the old days. She sent off the letter with her owl and walked to into her old chambers that still contained a few of her belongings and sat down on a couch to read for a little while.

When the time for the last lesson of the day came around, Hermione woke up from the light nap she had drifted into and put away her book before leaving the rooms to go to her office. She flooded directly to their chambers in the Dungeons from there and entered the kitchen to make herself a cup of coffee. She heard the sound of her husband entering the room with a loud slamming noise only a little while later and rested her hand on her slightly rounded stomach. With her teaching robes on, one could hardly tell she was pregnant at all.

"Severus, love, would you like some tea?" she called to him.

"I'll be fine," he called back and, by the sound of his tone, she could tell that he had found a better substitute in the form of a bottle of the finest whiskey.

She took her coffee with her to the sitting room and placed it on a table, removing her teaching robes and hanging them up in the cloak cupboard. She walked over to her husband who was busily pouring himself a tumbler of the potent liquor. He downed the contents quickly and put the glass back down on the table before turning to wrap his arms around his lovely wife and mother of his child.

"Hmmm, so how was your afternoon, my love?" he asked, leaning in to nuzzle the tender skin of her neck.

"Uneventful. I wrote a letter to Harry, and I should imagine that he will be stopping by Hogwarts for a visit at some point," she replied, tilting her neck to give him better access.

"Lovely," Severus said sarcastically.

Hermione hit him playfully. "Oh be nice, Severus. He's one of my best friends. I couldn't deny him," she said in a serious tone. "I expect you to be on your best behavior when he comes."

"I will if he does," he said stubbornly.

"Very well, Mr. Snape. But if you are anything less than civil to him, you will be sleeping alone on the couch for a week until you repent," Hermione warned, pulling back and then pressing her mouth to his, kissing him before he could argue with her logic.

Later on, the two found themselves clothed in only bed sheets, both slightly sweaty and panting for breath after their love-making. Severus placed his hand on Hermione's slightly rounded belly and gently traced small circles, pressing soft kisses to it every now and again. Hermione stroked her husband's hair as he came to let his head rest on her chest and his strong arms encased her tightly.

She felt more loved than anyone had the right to, and soon she would have to go for her next check up to ensure that everything was well with the baby. It had not yet been announced that she and Severus were expecting, so they would have to think about that too. Soon she thought, soon they would tell everyone. She would make sure she found out the gender as well.

Sighing, she pulled out of her husbands' arms and went to relieve herself, as the call of nature was too strong to ignore. He was fast asleep, in the age-old tradition of men everywhere after they had made love to their woman and found satisfaction and completion. Whether it happened both ways, only Merlin knew. She chuckled and got dressed in a simple bathrobe with the intention to shower later.

When she arrived in the kitchen, an owl was taping on the window and she went to retrieve some mail, feeding it a treat as she did. It was addressed to her husband, so she put it on the desk in the study for him to read later.

"Hermione," moaned a voice from the bedroom. "Come back to bed, love."

She shook her head silently and went to stand in the doorway of the room, her arms folded across her chest. "I'm not getting back into bed until after dinner tonight," she replied.

"But, my love, we can order food down all the same," he said in a whiny voice, putting on that face that would have made most women cave in, but Hermione stood her ground.

"No," she said, smiling and leaving her husband in bed. He would follow her out soon anyway...

Currently Engaged Elsewhere

Chapter 15 of 18

Stephen stops to do a little shopping on the way to Hogwarts...

A big hug to Madbrilliant, and thank you to everyone who has reviewed!

Chapter 15 Currently Engaged Elsewhere

The sunlight filtered in through the windows, passing the curtains that were draped around the bed through a gap. Stephen woke and stretched, heading for the shower and washing away the sleepiness. He dried himself off and dressed in something decent before going downstairs to where his house elf had made him breakfast. He smiled and thanked the elf, letting his mind wander to pleasant thoughts as he absently ate his meal.

Though it had not been long since he had met her, Stephen felt like he was falling in love. Julia had returned to teaching at Hogwarts and, while Hermione and Severus were unaware of it, he had been seeing her every second day when either of them had spare time. He had been considering over the past few weeks whether he should do the right thing and ask her to marry him and came to the conclusion that it would be worth it.

He had filed for a transfer in the company he worked for, to base his research and business in London, and then left for Diagon Alley with one thing on his mind – finding the perfect ring for Julia. He wasn't sure if she would say yes, but after knowing her for three months, he decided that it was worth a shot. She seemed to like him as much as he liked her. He arrived at the jewelers, and the old man who owned the shop approached him from the other side of the glass displays.

"How is it going today, my boy?" the old man asked politely.

"Good, thank you, sir," Stephen said, looking at a line of attractive gold rings.

"Are you searching for anything in particular?" he asked, giving him a warm smile.

"Yes, I am looking for a rather particular ring. Something for a woman whom I intend to engage myself for marriage," he replied, knowing that it would go easier if he had professional help.

"Ah, I see. Well, come and sit by the desk here, and we can discuss the lady, and maybe I can come up with something suitable for you," the old man offered, gesturing towards a desk with a chair on either side of it.

Stephen went willingly and sat on one side while the shopkeeper sat on the other with a notebook and a twinkle in his eyes. Did all old men have crazy twinkles in their eyes, or was he simply going insane? Shaking his head, Stephen sat and waited for the old man to ask him some questions.

"So, my boy, is there anything special about this particular witch? Does she do anything significantly different to anyone else?" he asked softly.

"She's a professor. She teaches Astronomy," he replied.

"Ah, so she is an intellectual. What is her eye colour?" he continued as he wrote notes.

"Her eye colour is crystal blue, and before you ask, her hair is of the fairest blonde," Stephen said with a smile on his face as he thought of her silky locks.

"She sounds like a fair catch to me," the man said with a chuckle at Stephen's sudden faraway look. "Now, can you tell me what her date of birth is so that I might be able to go from there? And what was her school house?"

"Ah, her birthday is in December, I believe. And she was a Ravenclaw, the Head of Ravenclaw house now," he replied, still not entirely with the old man.

"Good, good. Now, I believe with everything you have told me that this young woman is Julia Sinistra?" he asked with a smile that only widened when Stephen nodded. "Excellent, I thought she would never marry after losing her fiancé in the Dark Lord's first uprising."

"She was engaged before?" Stephen asked, suddenly more aware of his surroundings.

"Yes, to my young nephew, as it happens. She has been heartbroken for many years, and it is grand that a good young man like you is trying to bring happiness back into her life. She swore when Henry died that she would never see another man," he replied. "Whatever you did, thank you for doing it. She has finally let go."

Stephen thought for a moment on everything he was hearing. Julia had been engaged once before and she had sworn after he died, she would see no other man. What had he done that had been so deserving of her attention? She saw him regularly and wrote to him and he to her when they were unable to meet. Did this mean that what the shopkeeper said was true? Had Julia truly let go of a love she had twenty years before?

"I think I have the perfect ring for her, my boy," the shopkeeper said jovially, noting the surprise on his face.

Stephen snapped back into the present and followed the man who was beckoning him to the next room. They were now in a darker back area filled with glass cases of jewelry. They stopped before the smallest, most antique of cases, and the shopkeeper unlocked it and pulled a velvet box from within before closing it and locking it back up. They went back to the other room and sat down before he finally opened the box to view the ring.

"This is a very old piece of work that I began twenty years ago, when my nephew was still here with me," he said softly. "He designed this ring and was going to give it to Julia as her engagement ring. I made it, but before he could give it to her, he was taken by the Dark Lord and silenced. He was a member of the Order of the Phoenix."

Stephen admired the yellow and white gold ring. It was twisted and pressed together in an intricate pattern, with a beautiful ceylon sapphire twined in the middle of it, sparkling the colour of Julia's eyes on a good day. It was perfect. He picked it up and examined it more closely, running his fingers over the smooth finish.

"It's perfect, but are you sure you are willing to part with it?" he asked quietly.

"It was designed and made for Julia's hand," the man replied. "I want you to take it, put it on her finger, and make her happy."

"Thank you. This is a great honor," Stephen said, inclining his head to the man. "I am sure she will be delighted that you remember her so well and so kindly."

After a few more minutes of signing papers and paying for the ring, Stephen left the shop feeling a surge of inspiration. He didn't care that he had only just decided to propose; he was going to do it as soon as he could. He hurried home and made himself presentable before Apparating to the gates of Hogwarts and heading straight for Severus' rooms to tell him and Hermione what he was planning, before going to the woman he had fallen in love with, telling her what she meant to him, and then asking her to be his wife.

He finally reached the Dungeons around noon and knocked on the door to their chambers frantically, feeling his insides turn over and over. Hermione opened the door first, dressed in her teaching robes, and the first thing that he did was hug her and spin her around, not without noticing the slight swell where her baby was growing as he held her. Severus appeared at the doorway, giving him a look that said to put his wife down, and he did, as he wanted to live long enough to see Julia at least on last time.

"What is the meaning of this, Stephen?" he asked dryly.

"I'm going to ask Julia to marry me," he replied energetically with a huge grin.

"Then what are you doing down here?" Hermione exclaimed, hugging him again with a smile on her face. "Get your arse up to her and ask, you dolt."

Stephen smiled once more, and after kissing Hermione's cheek in his euphoric state, he bolted out of the dungeons and hurried to get to Julia's rooms. He finally reached the fourth floor and met the wood of Julia's office door. He took a deep breath and then knocked soundly three times.

"Come in," said her soft voice from the other side.

Steadying himself and checking that the ring was in his pocket, Stephen opened the door and walked in, closing it behind him and standing before her desk. "Surprise," he said softly, making her eyes fly up from the parchment before her to look at him.

She smiled widely at her lover. "Stephen, what are you doing here?" she asked, standing from her seat and going around the desk to greet him with a kiss.

He held onto her tightly, returning the kiss passionately, tongues mating and hands fisted in each others' hair as they relearned their touch, taste, and smell. He hadn't seen her for five days. Once they broke apart for some much-needed oxygen, he led her back to her chair and made her sit down.

"I came to discuss something important with you," he replied, kneeling down on the floor before her. "Julia, I know that we haven't been together a very long time, but I feel that time shouldn't be a concern in these matters," he began, sensing the tears well up in her eyes. She was still smiling. "I love you. And I never wish to be parted from you again. Please do me the honor of becoming my wife?"

Julia was speechless as he pulled a beautiful ring from his pocket, holding it up to her as he clutched one of her small hands in his, looking her in the eyes the entire time. She felt her heart swell with love and happiness, as she held her left hand out to him, allowing him to slip it onto the appropriate finger. He smiled and leaned up, capturing her lips in a kiss.

"Yes," she whispered to him when they broke apart. "Yes, and I love you too."

"Good," Stephen said happily.

Weekend Wedding

Chapter 16 of 18

Severus has duties in Hogsmeade, and Stephen meets with him to ask an important question.

This story was beta'd by Madbrilliant - the world's awesomest beta.

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Chapter 16 - Weekend Wedding

It was a Hogsmeade weekend at the school, and with Hermione unable to go down to the village and supervise due to the little bundle of joy in her belly, Severus had offered to take her place, being the gentleman that he was. Hermione was very thorough when she thanked him the night before for taking her place so willingly, so he had no reason to complain for the rest of the day.

He walked into the Entrance Hall, watching as all of the students lined up to get marked off on the Hogsmeade list by Argus Filch. Julia Sinistra soon descended the stair and stood beside him to await the students' departure. It seemed that she had been unfortunate enough to have Hogsmeade duties also.

"Good morning, Severus," she said politely.

Severus looked at her and nodded. "Good morning, Julia. I trust my brother is well," he said, and then he noticed something flashing slightly on her hand and saw that there was a ring on her finger that had not been there before. "Very well by the looks of things."

Julia looked down at her finger and blushed a little before looking back up at her colleague. "I suppose there really is no such thing as a secret in this castle," she said sheepishly.

"I wouldn't bother trying to hide it," Severus said with a heavy sigh. "The chase is what Albus and Minerva get kicks out of."

Julia laughed at that. "I know it seems like this is moving rather fast, but I love your brother quite a lot," she explained pointlessly.

"What Stephen does is his own choice," Severus said firmly. "I am not his father and I am not your judge."

Julia nodded and walked away so that she was walking with the middle lot of students, leaving Severus to bring up the rear of the group. As he walked, he thought about what the ring actually meant. From where he stood, it obviously meant something, but he just couldn't put his finger on it. Julia would be a wonderful influence on his half-brother however, and that was good enough for him.

When he reached the village, he saw Stephen walking down the street in Julia's direction and then upon reaching her, leaned down and gave her a light peck on the cheek, before looking in Severus' direction. Taking that as his cue to join his brother and fiancée, Severus closed the distance between them and held out a hand to his younger brother to shake it.

Stephen accepted the hand warmly. "So, I suppose this means that we have your approval," the younger wizard asked a little nervously.

"I suppose it does," Severus replied. "Congratulations, Stephen. I didn't think you had it in you."

"And on that note, do you think you and Hermione could do us a favor?" he asked hesitantly.

And so that was how Severus found himself standing in his uncomfortable dress robes in the office of Albus Dumbledore, beside his younger brother while his pregnant wife stood beside Julia, as they were married. When Stephen had asked Severus for a favor, he'd had no idea that he was going to ask that of him.

Minerva and Poppy Pomfrey were the only other people present, and Albus was officiating over the short ceremony for the couple. At the end of it, Stephen and Julia exchanged plain wedding bands before they shared their first, tasteful kiss as husband and wife. It was all over and done with inside of an hour, and all Severus and Hermione had to do was sign a witness paper for them and they were then officially Stephen and Julia Prince.

"Thank you for doing that, Severus," Stephen said, giving the older man a short hug.

"Yes, well. You didn't exactly give me much of a choice," Severus replied a little stiffly.

"Severus, be nice," Hermione huffed, hitting his shoulder lightly. "You know you wanted to be a part of that, so stop trying to act otherwise."

Albus, who had been watching the exchange in amusement, burst out laughing at Hermione's comment, at which point Severus frowned deeply at his friend and employer. Everyone else in the room, however, refrained from laughing and settled for smiling. Hermione eventually got fed up with his scowls and hugged him around the middle, pressing her belly into him.

At this, Severus' face softened, and he embraced his wife and led her towards the fireplace. "While this was all very lovely, I am afraid that we have had a little too much excitement for one day," he said, tossing in Floo powder. "See you at dinner, Albus."

After they left the room, Severus led Hermione to one of the lounge chairs and sat down, pulling her to sit between his legs and lean backwards against him. He closed his eyes and let a hand rest on her belly, tracing circles and patterns over it with a long finger. He sighed heavily, betraying himself to his wife.

"What is on your mind, Severus?" she asked in concern.

He wrapped the other arms around her and simply let both hands rest on her belly. "I feel like they bypassed having a relationship and went straight to serious commitment before they could get to know each other," he replied.

"They will be wonderful together," Hermione insisted.

"They might very well be," he conceded. "I just don't want either of them to be needlessly hurt."

"They won't be," Hermione said, covering his hands with her smaller ones. "People don't need months or years together like we did to fall in love. It could be days or even hours or seconds for that matter. What counts is everything they do and say to each other now."

Severus gave his wife a gentle squeeze. "You are wise beyond your years, my love," he said tenderly, kissing the top of her head.

"One of us has to be," she teased.

"You are also a shrew," he said, running his hands up her stomach to cup her full breasts, beginning to knead them.

Hermione moaned softly as she felt her desire begin to spread through her entire body. "And you, Mr. Snape, are trying to seduce me," she said softly.

"Was it that obvious?" he asked, sliding a hand within her robes to slither between her legs and beneath her dress.

"Only a little," she said, pushing his hands away and standing up before walking towards the bedroom. "Would you care to join me, sir?"

Severus smiled wickedly, eyeing his lovely, pregnant wife with a burning desire. She was so beautiful, cheeks flushed and glowing with desire, eyes glittering, and her arm extended out to him, inviting him to join her in the exertion of their love.

"I would love to join you," he said, following her to the door before lifting her into his arms, and kicking the bedroom door closed behind him.

oOoOo

Julia smiled at Stephen as she gazed across at him, lying on the other pillow on her bed. The only thing that covered their bodies was a thin layer of sweat and the Egyptian cotton sheets of the bed their bed. She was married to this wonderful man. He smiled at her slowly, wrapping an arm around her waist and pulling her closer to his warm body.

"I love you, so very much," he said a tad hoarsely, kissing her temple and twining his legs with hers.

"I love you too," she said softly, tears leaking from the corners of her eyes.

Stephen leaned down and captured her lips in a soft kiss, stroking the tears off her cheeks. Breaking the kiss, he moved down her neck and paused to suckle her collarbone for a moment, tasting the saltiness of their combined sweat on her body. His arousal kicked in again and he began to stir against her. Julia smiled, all-too-happy to accommodate his desires, as they were shared needs.

After making love a second time that night, Stephen waved his wand and the lights went out before he drew the covers over their bodies, and he watched as Julia drifted to sleep beside him. He was so very happy that his heart felt like it would burst from all of the emotions coursing through his body.

He closed his eyes then and fell asleep shortly afterwards, the sound of his new wife's even breathing helping him find respite.

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Please keep in mind that reviews are a writer's best friend!

All He Ever Wanted

Chapter 17 of 18

The school year is finally drawing to a close, and everyone is getting excited.

Thanks go to Madbrilliant, beta extraordinaire

Chapter 17 All He Ever Wanted

The halls were filled with the sounds of students yelling and cheering. It was the afternoon of the last day of exams and, by the sound of things, the students had all finally been dismissed from their classrooms. Hermione had been observing a class of her sixth year Arithmancy students that afternoon and had been relieved also when it was finally over. It was getting to a stage in her pregnancy when she would have to limit the amount of things she did to sitting and sleeping. It was just lucky that the school year finished before her confinement.

She left the classroom after warding it and then slowly made her way down to the Dungeons in order to take a bath and a nap before dinner. When she arrived, Severus had yet to return to their rooms, so she simply turned the faucets for the bath and watched as it filled up, adding some bubble formula to it. She undressed and looked down at her belly, swollen and round with their child, and smiled in a very maternal way. Sliding into the bath, she let out a sigh of pleasure at the warmth and closed her eyes, lying back and relaxing.

When Severus entered his and Hermione's chambers, he was feeling quite weary as he hung his robes up on the hooks near the doorway. He made his way through to the bedroom, unbuttoning parts of his clothing as he did, and paused at the bathroom door, instantly knowing that his wife was already in there. With a smile, he nudged the door open and began to fully undress.

"Hello, love," he said, letting her know he was there.

She opened her eyes and looked over her shoulder to where he stood on the other side of the bathroom, hastily stripping out of his clothes. "Hello, yourself," she said with a wicked smile. "Going to join me, are you?"

"I thought I might," he replied, kicking his clothes out of the way and moving over to her.

She slid forward in the large tub, leaving room for him; he stepped in and sat down behind her, wrapping his arms around her once he had submerged himself. He rubbed his hands over her rounded stomach, nuzzling the back of her neck gently. Pregnancy had only made her more luxurious to him, even though he had no complaints about her whatsoever when she had not been pregnant. But for some reason, the idea of making love to his pregnant wife was very arousing.

"You are the loveliest woman I have ever met," he murmured into her throat as he kissed it and continued to stroke her stomach. "And you are my lovely woman."

Hermione laughed softly, covering his hands with her own and moving her hands with his as he rubbed and stroked. "You are the loveliest man I have ever met," she replied. "And you're handsome as sin too."

He let out a laugh at that. "Someone is delusional," he said, smiling into her neck.

"Not at all, love," she said softly, arching into his hands as they cupped her breasts, swollen with milk. "A wife is allowed to think whatever she likes about her husband. It's my prerogative."

Two hours later, the two were lying in bed, both warm from sleep, and rousing slowly in order to get up for dinner. Hermione sat up first and looked down at her husband, smiling at how he looked, squinting up at her with barely-opened eyes. She leaned down and gave him a kiss before slipping out of bed and going to the drawers. Pulling on some knickers and a bra, she then summoned a dress from the closet and donned that also.

Severus sat up slowly as she did this, and he noticed that she only had a little trouble pulling on her knickers while still standing, which was surprising at that stage of pregnancy. He was so proud of his little trooper, and he joined her out of the bed and began the process of dressing himself. Once he was fully dressed in his trousers and was doing the final buttons of his frock coat, he went out into the sitting room and found Hermione pulling on her navy teaching robes.

"Don't you ever get tired of doing that every day?" he asked, accepting his robes from her as she held them out for him.

"Get tired of what, love?" she asked him.

"Of getting up and trying to dress yourself while you're standing," he answered. "Do you ever get tired of being pregnant with our child?"

Hermione smiled at him, knowing that he would be asking these questions at some point. If she were honest, she had sort of expected it earlier. Sighing, she walked over to him and put her arms around his shoulders in a warm embrace.

"Severus, it is a blessing to carry our child," she replied honestly. "As much as my back hurts sometimes, and even when my ankles get swollen and I feel like a whale, I still love growing this child within me. It makes me feel like I am useful."

"Darling you are useful whether pregnant or not," he insisted, wrapping his arms around her and hugging her tight.

"I think I said that wrong," she said with a laugh. "What I meant is that I feel like I am complete like I have a purpose other than to teach."

"Ah, I understand now," he said with a nod.

"Now, husband of mine," she began, gaining a chuckle from him, "would you care to escort your planet-like wife to dinner?"

Severus laughed softly at that and offered her his arm. "I would love to escort my beautiful, wonderful, pregnant wife to dinner," he replied, and they left their chambers together.

When they arrived at the Great Hall, many of the students were already there, as well as the staff. It seemed that everyone was equally excited about the summer vacation approaching. Stephen and Julia were seated at the far end of the table, gazing at each other lovingly as they rightly should do. It had only been a couple of weeks since their impromptu wedding, and the pair were obviously getting excited about their honeymoon that was delayed due to Julia wanting to finish out teaching the year.

Severus took his seat on Albus' left side after seating Hermione right beside him. "Good evening, Albus," he greeted the headmaster politely.

"Ah, Severus, my boy," Albus said with a lot more enthusiasm. "I have never seen everyone looking forward to the summer like they have been this year."

"Perhaps, Albus, it is because the Quidditch World Cup finals will be held outside of London once again," Severus said dryly.

Albus chuckled and let his twinkling blue eyes rest on the younger man once more. "And do you and Hermione plan to spend her confinement at Suffolk Manor? Or will you simply return to Spinner's End?" he asked with interest.

"We decided that it would be best to stay at Spinner's End," Hermione answered as dinner appeared on the tables. "It is in London and its closer to St. Mungo's."

"Ah, yes, that is a good idea," Albus agreed.

Dinner progressed along at a leisurely pace, until Albus stood shortly after finishing his dessert and cleared his throat to speak to the students. "The end of the year is fast

approaching, and soon you will all be back on the Hogwarts Express, heading home for a break, before some of you will return, while others of you who have completed your education here will not," he began warmly. "Now, I know the temptation to cause mischief in the last few days here is very great, however, I implore you not to, as there will still be Professors on duty in the halls and house points can still be lost.'

"Damn straight," Severus muttered under his breath so that only Hermione could hear.

"Now, with that being said, I wish you all a goodnight," Albus concluded before sitting again.

The students all began chatting as they exited the hall, and Severus stood, holding a hand out to help Hermione from her seat. She smiled and left the hall with him, allowing him to spoil her and be tender with her in front of the students. As soon as she had their baby, she was sure that he would go back to being formal in front of the students. Once they were in the privacy of their chambers, Hermione sat down on the lounge while Severus went to make some tea in their little kitchen.

"Albus does like to drag on his speeches," he muttered as he returned.

Hermione smiled. "He always did like that," she agreed, taking the cup that he handed her and taking a sip before returning it to the saucer.

"I think I am going to enjoy this summer," Severus said out of nowhere, sitting beside her.

"I think I am going to enjoy it too," Hermione admitted. "I think I'm going to like being a mother."

"Do you think I am going to be a good father?" he asked, looking at her with a slightly worried expression.

Hermione took another sip from her tea and put the cup and saucer back on the coffee table in front of the lounge. She put a hand on the side of his face and leaned in and kissed him tenderly on the lips. "You will be a wonderful father, Severus," she whispered against his lips before kissing him a little more firmly.

When they broke apart he smiled at her lovingly. "You know, this you are all that I have ever wanted," he admitted quietly.

Favorable Circumstances

Chapter 18 of 18

A month has passed since the holidays had begun, and Severus contemplates his good fortune.

I would like to thank Madbrilliant, my beta, for the time that she put into beta-ing this fic for me. And also to all those who both read and reviewed. It means a lot to me.

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Chapter 18 – Favorable Circumstances

If, three years beforehand, somebody would have told Severus Snape that he was going to end up falling in love, he would have called them daft. If they were to have told him that he was going to fall in love with Hermione Granger, Head Girl of Hogwarts and a shining example of everything he had not thought he could be, he would have hexed them silly. If three years before, somebody had told him that he was going to be deliriously happy and married to Hermione Granger, who was pregnant with their child, he would have paid for their room in St. Mungo's mental ward.

But there he was, and he was in love, and his wife was Hermione, and not a single soul was daft or hexed or in a mental ward because of him. He sighed, staring out the window of his library, wondering how he had come to have such good luck. He had been retreating to his library a lot more often in the past week, but for what reason, he had yet to figure out.

The school year had finished about a month and a half before, and he had taken Hermione immediately to Spinner's End in order to begin her confinement. He had caught her out trying to do things far too many times in the first couple of weeks, when they had been told specifically by Poppy that she was to keep off her feet and relax. But, in the last few weeks she had learned to behave and, whenever she wanted to be somewhere, she made sure to let her desires be known to him beforehand and often let him assist her movement.

Just as he contemplated heading down the stairs to the parlor to check up on her, he heard her voice calling out to him, and he immediately strode out of the room and down to her. He entered the parlor and found her propped in a precarious position on the nearest lounge, her face taking on an expression of distress.

"What's wrong, love?" he asked, rushing over to her and taking her hand in his.

"Ah, I think my water just broke, so I think we had better get to St. Mungo's before I have this baby in the lounge," she said with a sheepish smile.

His complexion paled a fraction before he hoisted her into his arms and carried her over to the fireplace. "Linus!" he called out frantically and an elf appeared with a pop.

"Yes, Master Severus?" Linus asked.

"Please pack a bag for Madame Snape," he said quickly. "We will be at St. Mungo's."

"Yes, Master," he replied before disappearing with a snap.

Severus ignited the wood in the fireplace wordlessly and grabbed some Floo powder, tossing it at the flames before walking in. "St. Mungo's," he said in a clear voice.

As soon as he said it, they were both sucked into the Floo network and, in a matter of seconds, stepped out of another fireplace and straight into the emergency ward at St. Mungo's. Before Severus even got a chance to say anything, Healers rushed forward and pried Hermione from his arms, placing her on a bed. The charmed bed began to roll from the Emergency room and out a pair of doors while Severus was forced to stand and watch her roll away.

"Where on earth are you going with my wife?" he demanded from a young man who was obviously only a junior.

"To the Maternity ward on the fifth floor," the man squeaked.

"Well, don't just stand there! Take me to her this instant!" Severus hissed in a low and intimidating voice.

Without another word, the young man led Severus through the doors and into the lift, pressing the buttons and tapping his feet in nervousness as the lift slowly rose to the fifth floor. Once they were there, he led them straight to the reception desk and began talking rapidly to the redheaded witch who was stationed there.

"Snape, Hermione Jane?" she asked Severus.

"Indeed. Where have you lot put my wife?" he replied crisply.

"She's in room 777," the witch replied, and Severus immediately took off down the corridor until he came to the room that the woman had told him.

He reached for the door handle and tried to turn it, but it would not open, so he pulled out his wand and tried to unlock it. Without success the first time, he was about to try it again when the door opened, and a rather large woman dressed in the matron's robes came out, but effectively blocked him from going into the room. He frowned at her, but she would not budge.

"What is the meaning of this? Why can I not go in to my wife?" he demanded, getting angrier by the minute.

"It is not customary for the Wizard to attend his wife or even be in the room when she is giving birth, Mr. Snape," she replied, giving him a firm look.

"Blast customary! I demand that you let me in to attend my wife," he replied rudely. "I am a Potions Master and I have had sufficient medical training to be able to handle it."

"But sir..." the woman tried.

"Not another word, Madam," Severus said shortly. "Please move aside and allow me into the room."

The witch decided that moving out of the angry man's way was a good idea judging by the way he was looking venomously at her, and Severus finally walked into the room. He looked over to the bed, which had the curtain drawn around it, and heard the sound of Hermione whimpering in pain. The sound broke his heart, and he entered without a second thought, spying Hermione lying there in a hospital-issue gown with the Healer checking her vitals. She was pink in the face, sweating, and obviously uncomfortable.

"Severus!" she exclaimed softly when she saw him, reaching out her hand for him to come to her. "Where did you go? I didn't think you would be here."

"I would never abandon you now, love," he said softly, taking her hand and moving to sit next to her on the bed, putting his arms around her shoulders and slipping partially behind her so she could rest her head on his chest. "I will be making a complaint to the Hospital about the treatment of patients and spouses, however."

Hermione laughed softly. "Only you would be complaining about something like that at a time like this," she said, the last part a groan as a minor contraction hit.

Severus felt her grip his hand in a way that was painful, but he allowed her this because of the pain she was going through in order to give birth to their child. He used his other hand to move her sweaty curls from her face, dropping a kiss to the crown of her head. Linus popped in and left a bag in the corner and, while he was there, Severus asked him to go to Stephen and let him know, and to tell Albus and Minerva also. Confident that everyone would know soon enough, Severus settled back to wait it out.

"Healer Blake, I want to have this baby now," Hermione said with a groan as yet another contraction hit.

"You are not yet dilated enough, Hermione," the Healer replied, taking her other hand and giving it a gentle squeeze. "Not long now though, not long now."

Hermione let her head fall back on Severus heavily and groaned. Severus chuckled at her, which made her turn her head to shoot a glare at him. "You wouldn't be laughing if you were the one having contractions every few minutes, Mr. Snape," she snapped.

Severus leaned in and kissed a sweaty temple. "Now, love, don't be like that," he murmured. "Soon you will have a pink, squishy life in your arms that we created together; just think about that."

Hermione's frown quickly melted into a smile, and she gently squeezed her husband's hand lovingly. He always knew just what to say. She was just about to sit up a little when the door opened again and a very flustered Molly Weasley entered the room, with Ginny walking in behind her. Hermione smiled at them both, and they went to her side, patting her face and stroking her hair, all the while ignoring the fact that Severus was sitting there.

"Mrs. Weasley, my wife no longer has hair in her face, so why do you persist in stroking it?" he asked curtly.

"Severus!" Hermione exclaimed. "Don't talk like that to Molly."

"Madame Snape, if Mrs. Weasley had acknowledged my presence in the room, I would not have been so affronted," Severus replied coolly, shooting a look at the older woman.

That shut Hermione right up and after that, no one really said anything until another contraction hit, and then was followed by another, and another sharp one all in a row. "Healer Blake... now?" Hermione asked in a strained voice.

"Yes, now," Blake replied, moving Hermione into a more comfortable position, with Severus still behind her, holding her hand.

Ginny and Molly went over to the other side and held Hermione's free hand as a nurse entered and went to assist Healer Blake in parting her legs. Hermione felt like the contractions were constant at that point and was holding onto Severus' hand with an iron grip, openly groaning and making agonized sounds.

"Severus... Sev, it hurts," she murmured in her pain.

Severus leaned and whispered against her ear. "I know, love," he said softly. "I know it hurts. Just keep squeezing my hand. I love you. I love you."

"I love you too," she said softly before a scream was ripped from her throat as she pushed down on the next contraction.

"That's it, Hermione. Just keep pushing through each contraction. Deep breaths now," Healer Blake crooned.

After ten more minutes of pushing, the Healer could see that Hermione's energy levels were waning, but he kept her working. "Yes, Hermione, just one last push and you'll be done, dear," he encouraged her gently.

Hermione pushed one last time, and the next thing heard in the room apart from her harsh breathing was the sound of a baby's cries. She let out a sigh of relief and slumped against Severus, her body still trembling a little from the exertion. She closed her eyes as the baby still cried, and a few minutes later, she opened her eyes when a soft bundle wrapped in a blanket was placed in her arms. She saw the most amazing sight she had ever seen: a pink little baby, with a smattering of black, soft hair, with a little button nose and long eyelashes.

"Madame and Professor Snape – meet your baby girl," said Healer Blake to their new parents.

Hermione turned to look over her shoulder at Severus who was as silent as the grave. She saw his face held a slightly stunned, yet entirely tender expression. She leaned up and placed a kiss on his lips that made him snap back into focus. He smiled at her before using his free hand to gently trace a line down the baby girls' face.

"She's beautiful," he said a little hoarsely, his voice choked-up with emotion. "Just like her mother."

"She has your hair," Hermione said with a grin.

"But your nose, thankfully," he replied with a smile of his own.

Molly and Ginny slipped out of the room to give the new family some space and to let everyone that had gathered know that it was a girl. Hermione and Severus sat and watched their baby, eyes closed and resting in the arms of her mother contentedly. It was the single most amazing thing they had ever witnessed.

"What shall we call her?" Severus asked.

"Evelyn. She looks like an Eve to me with her dark hair. And I have a feeling that she's going to have your dark eyes too," Hermione answered, leaning down and kissing her little head.

"I like that. Evelyn Serenity Snape. How does that sound to you?" Severus asked, wondering if his wife would approve of the middle name he added.

"I think that sounds just right," Hermione said.

"I love you," he told her, kissing her cheek tenderly.

"I love you too," Hermione replied.

From just beyond the room, looking in through the window, the group of their friends and family stood and watched the new family. They looked so right together that the women shed tears and the men just looked on with the softest of expressions. And there was no doubt that, if they were asked, they would all agree that Evelyn Serenity Snape was born in only the most favorable of circumstances.

End.