

The Scientist

by neelix

A short account of how Hermione became aware of Severus.

The Scientist

Chapter 1 of 6

A short account of how Hermione became aware of Severus.

When Hermione Granger decided to return to Hogwarts to start an apprenticeship with Severus Snape, only one of her school friends had supported her, and that was Harry Potter. This might seem to be an odd thing, given Harry's personal history with the Potions master. But of all the changes that had happened after the war, the biggest change was Harry Potter's opinion of Severus Snape.

On the night that Hermione had invited Harry to her flat, they had enjoyed two plates of chicken curry, courtesy of the Taj Mahal take-away just around the corner, and two bottles of cheap white wine. The wine wasn't important, because the spices in the madras tainted everything they put into their mouths after the first mouthful. More importantly, they had talked long into the night about the prospects of Hermione spending five more years under the tutelage of the hardest taskmaster in her chosen field.

The positive aspects were obvious. Severus Snape was unrivalled in Potion making, and Hermione could learn his exacting methods and absorb his knowledge. Then there was the kudos attached to working with such a highly respected member of the Potion-making community, which would certainly pay dividends in the future. In addition, Severus was an exalted war hero who had received many accolades on top of his Order of Merlin, First Class. These were the pluses, and they could only help Hermione to further her own career.

The negatives still existed, however. Severus was still stubborn and bad-tempered, and the fact that Hermione was still friends with Harry hadn't improved his opinion of her. In fact, at her interview it had been the first question he had asked.

'Do you remain in contact with Mr Potter?' he had sneered.

'Forgive me, Professor, but does that have a bearing on the outcome of the interview?' she had answered, as calmly as she could.

He had glared at her, but chosen not to answer. Hermione had been relieved that her insolence had not adversely affected the outcome either, and she had been ecstatic that he had offered her the apprenticeship, despite her misgivings.

On the curry night, Hermione and Harry had agreed that beneath the mean façade and all of the bluster and billowing robes, Severus Snape was fundamentally a good man. And so she had agreed to become his apprentice.

However, the one thing that neither Harry nor Hermione had considered was that Severus Snape was male, in a very real sense of the word. He exuded maleness from his pores, and his sexuality dripped from each syllable as he directed and instructed Hermione in her tasks.

'Chop diagonally, Miss Granger,' he would insinuate slowly, 'and stir clockwise, obviously.'

His voice was enough to make the most hormonal teenager drop her knickers and beg to be taken in the Potions classroom, and in normal circumstances Hermione would not have been so affected. However, Hermione Granger was a late bloomer where her hormones were concerned, and they had decided to come out and dance shortly

after her apprenticeship started. The longer Hermione worked alongside Severus Snape, the more aware of him she became.

Although Hermione was twenty-one years old when she started her apprenticeship, she felt like she was back at school. Severus treated her like a student. His directions were to be followed to the letter, and they were not to be questioned when they were perfectly straightforward. She was not to contaminate her work area, and her hair was to be under control at all times. It was clear that Severus Snape was in control of his lab, and Hermione was grateful for his instruction. She accepted everything he had demanded of her with polite submission to his authority, and a quiet determination not to let herself down.

During the school holiday, they had cleaned out the Potions store next to his classroom. The searing summer heat had made Hermione feel almost faint, and with Severus's agreement she had removed her usual Hogwarts robes in order to stay cool in the small workspace, prompting him to do the same. There was no window, and no air, and Hermione had wilted. Severus had insisted on climbing the ladder to the top shelves. He had been afraid she might drop something. After three trips up and down, he had paused. Sweat was glistening on his upper lip, and he removed his jacket. Hermione watched, mesmerised, as his long fingers unfastened every last button. As he shrugged his jacket from his lithe frame, Hermione noticed his taut, muscular shoulders, and as he turned to hang his jacket on a hook behind the door, she bit her lip to stifle a gasp. His shirt had clung to his back with sweat, and the translucent fabric caused the welt marks and other ragged scars to shine through vividly. Unaware of this, Severus rolled up his shirtsleeves, and Hermione's eyes drifted to the now faded Dark Mark on his forearm, before flicking back to the scars on his back.

Hermione fought to reconcile her quiet, intelligent and very diligent Potions master with the evidence of his former life, and as she continued to stare, her eyes scanned the rest of his body. His shirt was tucked neatly into the waistband of his black trousers. The black fabric clung closely to the top of his firm buttocks, then softened at the top of his obviously muscular thighs. His shape was usually hidden beneath his voluminous robes, and Hermione found herself captivated by him.

As Severus turned to climb the ladder, Hermione quickly averted her gaze, but not before he had registered her appraisal. He noted the change in the rate of her breathing, her enlarged pupils, and her tongue as it ran over her bottom lip. He paused to look at her for a moment, his face expressionless, and then set off, back up the ladder.

It had taken them three weeks to carry out a full stock take, in addition to the cleaning and replenishing of ingredients, and the change to the normal routine had brought about a shift in their working relationship. They stopped calling each other by their formal titles, and became Hermione and Severus. He became less bothered by her need for knowledge and started to encourage her questions, and they both found they were enjoying each other's company immensely.

But Hermione was finding Severus distracting. Even when they weren't talking, she was aware of him, and his presence in the room made her tingle all over at times. More and more often she found herself drawn to staring at him as she was brewing, and sometimes when she raised her gaze to him, he was already looking at her. There were times when their eyes would meet for a heartbeat, until one of them looked away. And the more aware of Severus she became, the more Hermione lost the power of normal speech. Severus would say her name in his deep, smooth voice, caressing her ears, and she would have to consciously engage her brain to loosen her tongue, in order to respond appropriately.

When the Yule Ball came around, Hermione consciously dressed for Severus. Her hair hung loose around her bare shoulders, and her dress was a sheath of Slytherin-green silk. It had been expected that they would dance together, and Hermione held her breath throughout as he held her hand tightly in his, and felt his other hand on the small of her back. The dance had been over before it had really begun, but Hermione had committed each moment to memory. During the Christmas break, at home with her parents, she would allow herself to be pulled back into the memory time and time again. However, by the time Hermione returned to her post in the New Year, she was so besotted she had lost the ability to speak to him altogether.

They hadn't been in each other's company for almost a fortnight, and as Hermione opened the door to the lab, she saw him, standing almost as she had left him, with his eyes focussed intently on a steaming cauldron. He had his back to her and was dressed in just his shirt and trousers, as there were no classes to teach that day. Tearing her eyes from his derriere, Hermione busied herself. She smiled at him and nodded hello before lifting her parchments and commencing her tasks for the day.

Severus smiled at her and enquired about her holiday, thanked her for her Christmas gift and then went into his private quarters for a cup of tea. Hermione was relieved. She had lost the ability to string a coherent sentence together. All she had been able to do was nod and smile like an imbecile.

And so it continued throughout the day, until Hermione felt that the atmosphere was so charged, she was trembling. She could hardly breathe when he entered the room, and each time she looked at him, she imagined his lips on her mouth, and she couldn't stop herself from undressing him with her eyes. And then he spoke to her, and her mouth dropped open and her eyes widened as she registered what he had said.

'Hermione, you are going to give yourself cardiac arrest if you do not stop fantasising about me. Now, you can either kiss me, or leave for the day. You will achieve nothing otherwise.' Severus quirked his lip in a small smile.

Hermione dropped the long-handled ladle she had been using to stir her potion, and stared as Severus walked towards her. Her eyes were fixed on his mouth, and her knuckles were white as she gripped the edge of the workbench. Soon, Severus was standing so close to her; she could see his nipples through his shirt and the shadow of dark hair on his chest.

Severus took her hand in his and stroked the palm with his thumb gently. Hermione shuddered and took a long breath as she looked into his dark, shining eyes.

'Which will it be, Hermione?' he said softly, and his gaze penetrated her as they stood so close to each other.

'Kiss,' she whispered hoarsely, and her heart started to beat loudly in her ears.

'Thank the Gods,' he murmured, and then lowered his mouth to hers.

Reviews are always welcome. Thank you!

The Scientist

Chapter 2 of 6

A short account of how Hermione became aware of Severus.

When he looked back, years later, Severus was hard pressed to pinpoint the change in his relationship with Hermione. He did remember that when she had started as his apprentice, it had been against his better judgement. Minerva had put him over a barrel because he had told her the month before that his workload was too great. Rather than reducing his working hours, she had thrust Hermione in his direction, and he was forever indebted to her.

After the war and the subsequent celebrations, most of which he managed to ignore, Severus Snape had returned to Hogwarts with the intention of making just enough money to retire on comfortably. He had had his eye on a Spanish villa, or perhaps a cottage on one of the smaller Greek islands. He just wanted somewhere to hide out indefinitely, and to live out his days in peaceful anonymity.

Minerva had badgered him about it no end. She pleaded with him to live his life and not let it peter out into a lonely, isolated existence. She had been right, much to his chagrin, and she would often remind him of how she saved his life while bouncing his youngest on her knee. Severus would curse his bad luck that he was surrounded by women who loved to prove him wrong.

Hermione's scent lingered long after she had left the room, and it was this that first alerted Severus to her charms. A mix of vanilla and roses, sometimes with a hint of musk, it had taken Severus some time to realise where the aroma was coming from. Then one day he had walked past her to reach the shelf of ingredients behind the workbench, and the had scent assailed his nostrils, teasing him and tempting him to inhale deeply. His mouth had started to water slightly, and his eyes had fallen on her in amazement when he realised that such a wonderful fragrance was coming from his apprentice.

It was also at that moment that he had noticed her hair was no longer bushy, but rather silky and wavy. The colour had surprised him, too. In his mind he had remembered her as being quite mousey, not chestnut with copper highlights and golden shimmers as the light hit it. It was quite a surprise.

After their wedding, Hermione teased him mercilessly about the summer in the Potions store, when he had almost seduced her by stripping off in the summer heat. Severus humoured her, but his memory was somewhat different. He recalled that she had practically fainted in the heat until she had finally requested to remove the ridiculously thick robes. Why she hadn't just removed them he couldn't imagine, but as she shrugged them from her shoulders, her blouse had gaped open slightly at the front, and he had been treated to a view of her creamy breasts, encased in simple white lace. She had breathed out a relieved gasp, and he had caught a hint of peppermint mixed with her usual scent. The combination of aroma and the view of her body had forced him to retreat up the ladder to hide his slightly growing erection, and he had chastened himself for entertaining impure thoughts of her. This was Hermione Granger, ex-student and now his Apprentice. Anything else would have been highly inappropriate.

The heat in the potions store had affected him eventually, and he had followed her lead, removing his heavy jacket and hanging it beside her robes on the hook on the back of the door. Her scent had permeated the fabric of the robes, and he had pretended to take his time hanging his jacket, just so he had more opportunity to inhale deeply. He had closed his eyes and allowed himself to indulge for a moment, then brought himself back to the present. He had turned to ask her about the origins of the fragrance, but she was staring at him, with her breath coming in short bursts, causing her breasts to rise and fall. His erection had started to grow again as he stared at her, and he had to climb up the ladder without asking his question so that she wouldn't notice his arousal.

She kept staring at him. He didn't know how long she had been doing it, but on more than one occasion he had glanced up at her to find her staring straight at him, sometimes with her mouth slightly open and her cheeks a little flushed. And so he had decided to test her by looking at her more often. She really should have been concentrating on her work, but every single time he looked up, her eyes had been on him. He had challenged her on one occasion, asking if everything was well. She had stammered a little and stumbled over her words, shocked that he had spoken to her. Afterwards, she had averted her eyes, and he had noticed that she stopped staring as often. He had been shocked to realise that he was disappointed.

They had shared a dance at the Yule Ball, a tradition that Minerva had insisted on after the war. He could still feel her in his arms when he closed his eyes, and he knew he was smitten.

Then she had left him at Christmas to visit her parents. That was what it had felt like, that she had left him. He knew she would return, but as she bade him goodbye, he had continued to stir his potion, raising his hand in a non-committal wave, so that she wouldn't see the emotion etched on his face or recognise the gut-wrenching pain that was gripping his stomach.

The door had closed with a soft click, and he had dropped the ladle, turned out the fire beneath his cauldron and walked to the Floo. Minerva had listened with patient attentiveness to his mumbled musings about his Apprentice. To his shock and delight, she hadn't beaten him around the head with her broom, but had encouraged him to pursue matters. Whatever they may be.

Hermione had bought him a Christmas gift of a book and a small marble pestle and mortar, which had been delivered by Shinty, his house-elf, first thing on Christmas morning. Neatly packaged and wrapped with green and silver paper, a hand-written gift tag showed a smiling Santa Claus. It had been the only indication that Christmas had arrived in the dungeons. He had stared at it for some time, running his fingers lightly across her writing. He had liked the way she had written his name, her softly rounded letter 'S', and the small kiss she had placed after her own name. He had taken the tag from the parcel carefully and tucked it into the pocket of his jacket, and then painstakingly unfastened the sticky tape.

She had thought about him, he had said over and over to himself. She had thought about him.

He couldn't contain his happiness to see her back in the lab. She had smiled at him, and he had smiled back at her, making stilted conversation just so he could hear her speak. She hadn't fully responded to him, and had seemed distracted. But she was staring at him again, and Minerva had assured him that this was a good thing.

She looked lovely, he had mused as he stared at her. He had been so tempted to walk over and take her in his arms, to inhale the scent he had longed for and missed so much. He had been at a loss.

'I am going for tea, Hermione. I shall return shortly,' he had murmured, needing to get away from her before he lost his head.

He had paced his sitting room for a while before finally Flooing Minerva for advice. The direct approach had been suggested, yet Severus hadn't felt so scared in his life. What if Minerva was wrong?

He had waited almost all afternoon, gathering his courage and watching her. The tension in the lab had been palpable, and as his eyes met Hermione's for the umpteenth time, he had known. He had seen it in her face. Her eyes had been wide and her pupils large, her breathing had been laboured, and she had run her tongue prettily across her bottom lip. He knew, and so he had asked her. He had shocked himself, and startled her, because she had dropped her ladle and stared at him open-mouthed.

But thank the gods; she had wanted him to kiss her. He remembered it, even now. Her lips had been soft and warm under his, and her mouth had opened gently to let his tongue probe her sweet wetness. She had tasted delicious, the kiss had been heady, and he had held her gently, burying his fingers into her curls. His nostrils had been assaulted by her enticing perfume, and he had realised it must come from something she was using to tame her chestnut locks.

And as they had finally come up for air, she had smiled at him dazzlingly, and he had felt the world shift beneath his feet.

A/N: This was meant to be a one-shot but it's become a tad more than that. Reviews are always welcome. thank you!

The Scientist

Chapter 3 of 6

A short account of how Hermione became aware of Severus.

After they had shared their first kiss, Hermione and Severus had spent the rest of the day ensconced in an armchair beside the fire in his private quarters. There had been quite a bit of snogging, most of it initiated by Hermione, and quite a bit of not talking and staring into the fire.

Severus hadn't really known what to do next. His instinct had told him that dragging her to his bedchamber and ravishing her on his bed might not be the thing to do at that moment. And because he knew he shouldn't do it, it was all he could think about. Her breasts had been squashing softly against his chest each time Hermione had moved in to kiss him, and the aroma from her hair had made him want to keep her curled up on his lap for the rest of his life. No food or drink would be necessary. He had all he needed, right there.

The week after the first kiss had been exquisite torture for Hermione. Her head had been full of thoughts of him, and when she closed her eyes at night, the taste of him had flooded her senses and pooled between her legs with a deep, throbbing ache. But he had made no move to entice her into bed, and she had started to doubt herself. She knew that she aroused him. The evidence was clear whenever they had retreated to his chambers at the end of each day and curled up in what had become their chair. At times, his erection would be tenting his trousers before he reached for her and pulled her into his waiting arms.

Hermione had taken to pleasuring herself more and more to relieve the tension, and the frustration had driven her mad with longing. The weekend had seemed the ideal chance to fulfill both of their needs, but he had kissed her goodnight and wished her a good weekend, with no thought of them spending any time together.

Hermione had spent the weekend in tortured agony and missed Severus every minute.

And so it was, on a certain Monday morning in the dungeons, she had set out to seduce a Potions master.

Severus had berated himself constantly for not asking her to visit him over that weekend. It had been on the tip of his tongue, but he knew that if they had hours of free time to spend with each other, he would have given in to his baser instincts. For some reason, he had always wanted this thing with Hermione, whatever it was, to be different.

He hadn't counted on the witch herself taking matters, literally, into her own hands.

He had been sleeping when she entered his bedchamber, and her polite cough had woken him with a start. He had turned abruptly, pointing his wand at the interruption, and she had giggled, covering her mouth with her hand.

Severus always slept naked, and the bed sheets had tangled between his legs as he twisted towards her. It hadn't taken him long to realize that up until that point, his bare buttocks had been facing the door.

'How long have you been there?' he had murmured with a low growl.

To give Hermione her due, she had had the decency to blush to the roots of her hair before she lied.

'Not long,' she had replied before nibbling on her bottom lip.

'But long enough to enjoy the view?' he had said with a smirk.

Hermione had burst out laughing and covered her face with her hands.

'Did you want something?' he had whispered quietly, and Hermione had peeked at him through her fingers to make sure he wasn't a towering inferno of rage. Once she had been sure of him, she had stood tall, dropped her hands by her sides and walked towards him where he lay.

'You, Severus,' she had whispered, and tears had sprung into her eyes. 'I love you. I want you.'

Severus had stared as the meaning behind her words permeated his sleep-fogged brain. His eyes had softened as he looked at her, and with a slow, deliberate shuffle, he had made room for her in the bed.

Although she had had some experience pleasuring her own body, and knew which bits went where, Hermione was still technically a virgin at the time. Still, she had thrown herself enthusiastically into proceedings, and had explored his body thoroughly with her small, deft fingers. She had weighed his testicles experimentally, rolled them between her fingers and thumbs gently, and grinned sexily at the moan that escaped from Severus as she brushed his glistening cock with her breasts. Her vagina was throbbing and she could feel her labia plumping up with desire for him, and when his hands delved between her thighs, Hermione had known she had officially died and gone to heaven, or wherever naughty witches go to when they die.

She had caressed him, touched him with feather light fingers, and eagerly licked whichever bit of him had been in front of her as they rolled around his huge bed. And as his mouth sought hers for the umpteenth time, he had flipped her onto her back and pinned her with his legs.

'You are tormenting me,' he had hissed at her, then chuckled at the gasp that escaped her mouth as he travelled down her body with his lips, kissing and sucking each nipple, lingering as he nuzzled her pubic hair and then plunging in, tongue first, lapping and licking and generally driving her mad with lust.

She had orgasmed almost immediately, and before she realised it he had positioned himself above her, nestled the head of his cock between her still-pulsing lips, and slowly, gently, but with a determined look on his face, Severus Snape had claimed Hermione Granger as his.

Severus had almost missed breakfast in the Great Hall that day, and even the Slytherin students had giggled as he strode past them, resplendent in his teaching robes, his boots thumping down hard on the tiled floor, and his hair in a mussed up mess on his head where he had forgotten to tame it.

Minerva's eyebrows had shot up beneath her hairline as he sat down gracefully beside her, and with a discreet flick of her wand, Severus's hair had righted itself without him ever knowing.

The Scientist

Chapter 4 of 6

A short account of how Hermione became aware of Severus.

The courtship that ensued between Hermione Granger and Severus Snape did not run smoothly. There were no candle-lit dinners or trips to the theatre, no handholding on moonlit walks by the lake, and no sidelong, loving glances at the table in the Great Hall.

There were, however, stilted conversations that punctuated the atmosphere every couple of weeks where Severus was unable to articulate himself properly, and Hermione would leave in a flurry of perfumed hair products and ruffled feelings, with the dungeon door slamming in her wake.

But in-between the confusion, they had the chair by the fire, and they had the bedchamber. And they had a passion between them that made the air crackle with a magical energy. It grew to such an extent that on one memorable night, they had actually made love floating above the bedclothes, although neither of them had noticed until they reached their conclusion and fell back to the mattress with a soft flump. Hermione had giggled, and Severus had laughed, his body shaking against hers and his eyes dancing with the joy that she was beneath him, and he was still inside her, and this really wasn't just some beautiful dream.

And so it went on, until Christmas came around again. With it had come the complicated issue of how Hermione would spend her two week holiday. Severus had infuriated her no end when he had refused to tell her what he wanted. He had decided that this was her decision to make and that his Christmas would be the same as every other year as far as he was concerned. He would remain at Hogwarts, there would be no decorations in his quarters, and should she choose to visit him, or perhaps stay a few days, then all well and good. At least, that is what he had told Hermione.

What he had really wanted was for her to stay with him. And not just for Christmas. But he hadn't even told her he loved her, after a year of her sharing his bed, although he had been close, so many times. Hermione had had no such qualms about telling him how she felt, usually in the throes of passion or afterwards, when she had laid her head against his chest and he had stroked her soft curls with his slender fingers.

'I love you, Severus,' she would mumble, half sated and half sleepy against his skin.

Severus would inhale a little, ready to form his reply, to tell her that he loved her too, that he would always love her, and that she filled his thoughts and his heart always. But he never did, and the words would die unsaid on the tip of his tongue, leaving them both disappointed.

Christmas morning had dawned, and there was snow on the ground around Hogwarts Castle. At 2 p.m. on that day, the dungeon had been empty, although a fire had flickered in the hearth and had sent tendrils of light around the room that bounced off the cut-glass decanter, which had been still half-full of Ogden's.

He had looked a lonely figure, and his dark, thick robes had been wrapped tightly around his frame as he stood looking out over the frozen water. His blackness had stood out in stark contrast to the surrounding snow, and if it hadn't been for a line of footprints showing the route he had taken to get there, one might have thought him to be a statue.

And then, a snowball had hit him squarely between his shoulder blades. He hadn't flinched, but had bent and scooped a large handful of snow in his gloved hands and packed it together loosely. He had turned, his face set, and walked purposely to the tree that stood tall and proud a few feet behind him. He had stood beside the trunk and waited quietly.

Hermione had stood with her back to the rough bark, panting a little and biting her lip to stifle the giggle that had threatened to give her away. Her woolly hat was pulled down over her curls, and she had rubbed her gloves together to dispel the remnants of wet snow that had stuck to the purple knit. She had risked a look around the side of the tree, and her stomach had dropped in disappointment. He had gone back without her.

'Shit,' she had muttered with a sigh and then stepped around towards the path, right into a face full of black leather glove and soft, white snow.

Severus had laughed as she sputtered and spat the snow from her mouth and brushed it from her face with purple fingers. Her eyes had closed, and flecks of snow had stuck to her eyelashes like tiny diamonds. She had screwed her face up and started to laugh, and he had grabbed her around the waist and kissed her soundly, not caring that they were in full view of the school and that anyone glancing in their direction would see them.

Hermione had clung to him, her joy still on her lips, and she had laughed into his mouth until she had sighed contentedly and wrapped her damp gloved hands around his forearms and leant against his chest, opening her soft mouth to his probing tongue. He had moved his grip and crushed her fiercely to him, until she had gasped for breath and pushed him playfully with her arms, but he had refused to move and pulled her closer, nuzzling his face into her neck and losing himself in her perfume.

'I love you,' he had murmured, and he felt her sag slightly against his chest and squirm her hands around his body, splaying her fingers against his back and pulling him towards her, even though he was so close there was nowhere for him to go. And they had held each other for what seemed like forever.

By the time they walked back to the castle hand in hand, the light had faded, and the fire had started to die in Severus's quarters. But it had seemed to both of them that the sun was shining and that everything was imbued with a warm glow as they walked quietly to the bedroom. Hermione had tripped over her open trunk as she stepped dazedly into the room, and Severus had caught her with strong arms as she stumbled.

'When we are married we can expand our quarters, and your clothing can be stored more appropriately,' he had muttered with a frown, glaring at her open trunk and noticing for the first time just how cramped the space was for two.

Hermione had paused and stared at him open-mouthed until Severus turned his gaze back to her and noticed her fish-like gape.

'What is it?' he had said, and his mouth had twitched slightly at the surprised look on her face.

She had smiled then and shook her head as he pulled her closer and started to remove her clothing.

'Nothing,' she had said, still smiling. 'Hurry up, though, won't you?'

Their eyes had met, and not for the first time that Christmas, the sound of laughter had bounced around the walls of the dungeons.

The Scientist

Chapter 5 of 6

A short account of how Hermione became aware of Severus.

Time passed, as it has a habit of doing. They were married three Christmases after their first kiss, and they were almost a family two more Christmases after that.

Severus had always adored Hermione, but he had found her especially appealing when she was carrying his children. Her temper would become erratic, and he found she could curse like a navy. In addition, she would cry at the silliest thing, and turn to him for comfort and reassurance at inopportune times of the day. His fifth-year students had become quite used to Mrs Snape knocking tentatively on the classroom door and being comforted by a softly spoken Professor Snape, who would then stroke her hair softly and usher her out of the room before turning and glaring as if daring any of them to comment.

But her skin had glowed, and her hair had become thick and lustrous, and her hormones had made her as eager for him as he was for her at the end of each day. And her stomach would swell softly and move of its own accord. Bath time became an event, and they would wait with bated breath for a foot to wriggle or kick and laugh as ripples cascaded across the surface of the bath water.

When Hermione had thought he wasn't looking, she would softly rub her stomach and hum lightly to the baby, and Severus would smile and allow tears to fill his eyes as he watched her.

St Mungo's was well used to mothers in the midst of childbirth. The extra-powerful Silencing Charms around each room was a testament to that. What St Mungo's was not accustomed to was Severus Snape, Expectant Father.

He would pace, naturally. And he had insisted on being in the same room as Hermione at all times.

'My child is being born, and you will let me in,' he had murmured silkily, his voice giving away the veiled ire that lurked beneath. No one had tried to argue with him afterwards, nor at any of the subsequent Snape births. But he did have a habit of getting in the way.

During a break in contractions, Hermione had held her hand out to Severus and pulled him to her side, murmuring that she needed him to stay with her, stroke her brow and hold her hand. Severus had nodded, his lips pursed tightly together as if he was unable to speak, and did exactly as she instructed him. When his back had turned, Hermione had caught the eye of the nearest mediwitch and winked at her.

After what seemed to both Hermione and Severus to be a terribly long time, combined with a series of frantic pushes and screams of exertion, Hermione had given birth to her first child and provided Severus with an heir.

Caleb Sebastian Snape had been born with a shock of black hair that sat in a small curled mop in the middle of his crown, and his eyes, when he had finally opened them, were the darkest shade of brown that they looked almost black. He hadn't cried at first when he had been placed in his father's waiting arms. They had surveyed each other seriously, until a large shudder had wracked through Severus's chest, and a teardrop had fallen from his nose and landed on Caleb's cheek. The baby had wriggled and whimpered, and years later Hermione would curse Severus around the dungeons when Caleb refused to shower and would blame his father for her son's aversion to water.

They went on to produce three further children, all girls. Ceris arrived two years after Caleb, and the two siblings grew close over the years. Her poker-straight, chestnut coloured hair was a stark contrast to Caleb's black curls, and on first glance no one would have thought them to be brother and sister. However, if anyone had looked closely at their eyes, there would be no mistaking the family resemblance. And no one would doubt that they belonged to the Snape family.

The youngest two were a happy surprise, and had arrived together but a few minutes apart. Hermione had gasped in shock at being told during her labour that a second baby was on its way. Carly and Ciara were like two peas in a pod, with curly chestnut hair and tiny, button noses. As they got older, Severus would mutter that they were like a pair of mini-Hermiones, running around the dungeons and causing mayhem in his lab. Then he would chase them and catch them and revel in their laughter as his long, slender fingers tickled them into submission, watched by a laughing Hermione who was so proud of her beautiful family.

The most poignant day for the Snape family was the day they moved from Hogwarts.

They had expanded the dungeons as much as they possibly could to accommodate their growing family, and although Severus and Hermione had put it off for as long as they could, necessity had decreed that they needed more space and a more normal life for the children.

Severus had decided that the move needed to happen before Caleb's eleventh birthday, so that he could arrive at Hogwarts with the rest of the first years as a normal student. Reluctantly, Hermione had agreed, and after a short period of frantic house hunting, they had finally found a home on the outskirts of Hogsmeade. It was close enough to the village to be convenient and far enough away that students visiting for Hogsmeade weekends wouldn't pass by the house. With a little expansion, and some tasteful interior design, they had moved into their own home as a proper family. On the first night, Severus and Hermione had sat on their new, squashy, cream sofa, and listened to the children running into each other's bedrooms and giggling amongst themselves.

'How are you feeling?' he had asked her and threaded his fingers through hers.

'Like I have come home,' she had said. She had raised her eyes to the ceiling and smiled broadly at the sound of her children.

Later that night, after they had christened their new bed, Severus had thanked the gods over and over for bringing Hermione to him.

'I'm glad I found you, too,' she had mumbled into her pillow, and the bed had shook with Severus's laughter at his wife's unconscious use of Legilimency as she fell asleep.

The Scientist

Chapter 6 of 6

A short account of how Hermione became aware of Severus.

Present day

Hermione stepped gingerly up the stairs, lifting her skirts to avoid tripping, and walked down the landing to her eldest daughter's bedroom. The door was ajar, and she paused for a moment as she heard the voices within.

'Just remember what I said, Ceris. You will always have a home here, whatever happens.' Severus sounded almost like he was pleading, and Hermione bit her lip as she continued to listen.

'Dad,' Ceris sighed deeply, 'we've already talked about this. I know what I am doing. You always encouraged me to know my own mind, remember?'

Severus grunted, and Hermione could hear his robes swish as he walked across the room, followed by the sound of softly clicking heels as Ceris followed him.

The noise was muffled, but Hermione could hear Ceris talking to Severus in reassuring tones, and she took the opportunity to push the door open and step inside. She looked over to the window where Severus and Ceris were holding each other in a tight hug.

'Your dress, Ceris. It will crease,' she whispered softly as she walked towards them and laid her hand on Severus's shoulder. Severus relaxed his grip a little and reluctantly let his daughter step from his arms.

'Is everything okay?' Hermione gazed up at Severus. His jaw was clenched and eyes were dark and glassy, and Hermione knew he was close to crying in front of Ceris, something he would not want to do at all.

'Severus, could you check on the others? We'll be down shortly, once I have steamed out those creases.' Hermione frowned in mock concentration at the back of Ceris's now crumpled silk dress and pulled out her wand. She didn't notice Severus's gaze soften and a grateful smile grace his lips. He relaxed a little and walked from the room without a backward glance.

'Oh, Mum.' Ceris turned to Hermione in exasperation, her fists tightly clenched. 'Why can't he just be happy for me? Albus isn't Harry Potter, and he isn't James either.' Her eyes met her Mother's beseechingly.

'Ceris, sweetheart.' Hermione held her arms open, and her daughter stepped into them, relaxing her head against Hermione's shoulder. Gently, Hermione stroked her daughter's hair as she held her close. 'It's nothing to do with Albus, or Harry or James. It's because you are his eldest daughter and he feels he is losing you, that's all. He should have been a Gryffindor, the way he protects all of you,' she laughed softly.

'I'm going to miss him so much, Mum,' she sighed.

'He will miss you too. You had better make sure you stick to your promise. He won't relax until he gets your owl every day. Now,' Hermione patted Ceris lightly, 'let's get this dress sorted and get going. Otherwise, Albus will think your father has locked you up and thrown away the key!'

Ceris laughed and kissed Hermione softly on her cheek. 'Thanks, Mum,' she said brightly.

The chapel was beautifully decorated with millions of tiny cream roses that matched the small headdress that adorned Ceris's hair. Candles floated serenely above the wedding party, and gentle music was being played from the balcony by a group of very talented House-elves.

As Severus walked his daughter slowly to the altar, his eyes scanned the guests as they turned to watch. Wary faces looked at him first and then softened as their eyes fell on Ceris. She had never looked more beautiful, and his chest filled with pride mixed with emotion. He forced himself to look at Harry Potter, who nodded and smiled as their eyes met. Severus nodded briefly and let his gaze drift from the older Potter to the younger one who had stolen his daughter's heart.

Albus was standing tall and proud, and his eyes were filled with tears as he stared at Ceris on her father's arm. He couldn't pull his eyes away from her face, and Severus was reminded of his own wedding day, and how he had felt when Hermione had approached him.

Hermione's hair had been smoothed into soft waves, and her dress had been cleverly designed to show off each curve to its best. But he hadn't noticed all of that until later. All he had seen was her eyes shining with love and her smile that dazzled him and left him speechless.

He knew exactly how Albus was feeling, and with a soft sigh, he relaxed. Ceris would be in good hands.

They stopped at the altar, and Severus looked up at the light shining through the blue and purple stained glass. He hadn't realised he was distracted until he felt Ceris pull at the sleeve of his dress robes, and he sheepishly grinned down at her scowling face.

'Who gives this woman to be married?' the Celebrant repeated patiently.

'Her father,' Severus said softly. He smiled gently at Ceris and leant forward, kissing her softly on her cheek. 'Be happy,' he whispered as he squeezed her hand. He turned and found himself face to face with his wife, who had quiet tears streaming down her face. Taking his place beside her, he linked his fingers into hers and watched proudly as his daughter became a Potter.

He was holding her too tightly, and she could feel his erection pushing into the front of her dress. His hands were in the small of her back, and as they swayed to the music, he nuzzled her hair and kissed at her ear gently.

'I love you,' he mumbled.

'Are you drunk?' she hissed.

'A little,' he said 'but I still love you.'

'You're embarrassing the children,' she muttered.

'They don't have to watch,' he murmured silkily. Shifting his position, he grabbed Hermione's hand and dipped her seductively as the song ended to a round of applause. Hermione laughed as he pulled her upright, his smile a little lop-sided.

'You really are drunk!' she exclaimed.

'Stop complaining, wench. You told me to relax and enjoy myself. That's exactly what I am doing,' he said.

He wrapped an arm around her waist and pulled her close for the next dance, and Hermione grinned up at him. He was still as gorgeous as ever, and his hair was still dark and silky. He had grown it a little longer and lost a little weight for the wedding, and he looked fitter than some men who were half his age. With growing desire, Hermione allowed herself to grind against him discreetly. Severus moaned and wrapped his other arm around her to hold her close.

'Is it too early to leave?' he whispered in her ear.

'Well, the happy couple have already departed, so I guess we could go in a few minutes,' she said huskily, licking her lips a little.

'Tell the children we will see them at home. I'll get the cloaks,' he muttered urgently.

With a heated glance, Hermione nodded and walked over to the rowdiest table in the room, surrounded by a group of lively and not very sober teenagers. She caught Carly's eye and motioned her over, told her that they were leaving and not to hurry back. Carly grinned at her mother knowingly and winked. Hermione blushed and then giggled before turning to where Severus was staring at her intently. She forgot the crowd instantly, and her feet guided her to where he stood. At some unspoken signal, their lips met in a searing kiss, and the crowd around them erupted in a chorus of catcalls and yahooing. Neither of them noticed, and Severus grabbed Hermione's arm firmly, twisted on the spot, and Disapparated them directly into their bedroom.

They kissed passionately, and in moments their clothes were pooled around their feet as they stumbled towards the bed. Severus paused and pulled away from her slightly, brushing her curls away from her face and gazing into her amber eyes.

'Thank you,' he murmured, smiling at her slightly.

'For what?' Hermione grinned and started to reach for him.

'For everything,' he whispered and then bent to capture her lips in his.

The End

A/N: I just wanted to say a heartfelt thank you to not_so_saintly for her valiant efforts to make me a better writer - I hope it's working! And to all of the other admins at The Petulant Poetess for being so encouraging and supportive. And to you, for reading and reviewing. It's meant a great deal.