

25 Dates

by averygoodun

Hermione's grandmother comes to take care of her after she's injured, but decides
Hermione's love life isn't up to snuff.

Part I: Oh Circe!

Chapter 1 of 12

Hermione's grandmother comes to take care of her after she's injured, but decides Hermione's love life isn't up to snuff.

Disclaimer: Not for profit, 'cause I don't own it. Besides, I don't think JK would ever write anything like this, ever. Certainly not to show, anyway.

*A/N: This is a **very** silly response to the (rather absurd) WIKTT "Circe" challenge. I decided to write it in drabble form because I thought it might be amusing (proving to myself that I can write something other than angst), and because if I tried to write a full bodied story fulfilling all the rules it would be absolutely massive. I plan for this to be 100 drabbles long. Consider it a writing exercise: a sketch, if you will. That said, all mistakes are my own.*

Part I- Oh, Circe!

Hermione winced as she saw the owl fly toward her, guessing what news it carried.

"Would you like me to read your note for you, 'Mione?" asked Ron, misinterpreting her flinch.

She sighed, then nodded, deciding it was for the best if her friends knew. She watched slightly anxiously from the hospital bed as Ron unrolled the small parchment.

"Expect your grandmother shortly." Ron looked at her, confused.

"But no Muggles are allowed at Hogwarts," Ginny stated.

Hermione closed her eyes and prayed for courage. "She's not a muggle. She's a witch. A very powerful witch.

"Her name is Circe."

Silence greeted her pronouncement. When she opened her eyes she found her friends staring at her opened mouthed, more than a little wary.

"I'm neither lying nor mad," she said, interpreting their looks. "Circe is alive and well, and still popping out kids all over the Muggle world. My granddad was her latest lover. She was disappointed my dad didn't show any magical leanings, but then, he's really more like granddad than her."

"Why didn't you tell us about this?" Ginny asked, still stunned.

"I'd rather be known for me than my grandmother," Hermione said

"I can relate," muttered Harry.

Ron shook his head to clear the confusion. "Why is she coming here?"

Hermione shrugged then winced as pain seared through her torso. After regaining her breath, she said, "My parents told me that if I went and got myself grievously injured again they'd sick her on me. I thought they were joking. I guess not."

"How?" Ginny asked. "How can she still be alive?"

"There are some things polite conversation does not allow, and talking about her immortality is one of them," said Hermione, grimacing as she remembered a bygone lecture. "She prefers talk about past lovers. And swine."

Her friends were disrupted from their questions as a striking woman stepped into the ward. She was dressed in loud blue muumuu covered in white and yellow flowers. She looked about her quickly, stopping her search when she saw Hermione.

"Darling child! What have you gotten yourself into this time?" she exclaimed as she rushed over to embrace her granddaughter.

"Hello, grandmum," Hermione sighed, ignoring her friends who were gawking at the interloper.

"Dearest," said Circe with a slight rebuke, "haven't I told you a million times to call me Circe?"

Hoping to distract her grandmother, Hermione introduced her friends.

Circe seemed pleased to meet her friends, but shooed them away after the introductions.

"I hope you don't mind; Hermione and I need to discuss some things." Her friends left, too shocked at meeting Circe to object.

"So darling," Circe repeated, "how did you injure yourself this time? Was it Lord Thingamabob again?"

Hermione giggled at the nicknames her grandmother insisted on using, though was cut off by pain again.

"No, one of his Death Eaters. I'll survive."

Circe pursed her lips and hummed in disapproval.

"This time, yes, but I'm not giving you another chance," she said with finality.

Hermione's temper flared. "Circe, it's my life! I'll decide how to help my friends, fighting or no!"

Circe shook her head, while squaring her shoulders. "If that's how you feel, then I'll put a stop to this whole war business myself. It's such nonsense anyway. Voldyhoo is just a spoilt brat who needs a good spanking."

Hermione looked at Circe with both fear and admiration. "But Gra- Circe, what about your pacifist leanings? What about hiding your identity?"

"Tosh! I'm not letting you get yourself killed because I prefer anonymity. Besides, my specialty has never been killing," she said, grinning.

Before Hermione could object, Circe changed the subject. "So which one of those handsome boys is your lover?"

Blushing madly, Hermione stammered, "Neither. I don't have a boyfriend."

Looking scandalized, Circe bore down on her granddaughter. "But you're over eighteen! By the time I was your age, I had seduced at least fifty men."

"I have no desire to seduce anyone, let alone fifty men, grandmum. I'd rather concentrate on my career."

Circe frowned, but said nothing. A tense moment passed before she suddenly smiled. "That's fine, dear. Now where's that Headmaster of yours? We have a villain to squash."

Paraphrasing the Rules: "Throughout her long life Circe has been taking human/Muggle lovers and having children with them and letting her children be raised in the Muggle world, not the wizarding world." Hermione is one of Circe's granddaughters, though you choose which parent is Circe's child. Hermione and family know Circe's the real thing.

As for the story's direction, Hermione was injured by Voldy/Death Eaters so her parents call on Circe to watch over her. Circe comes, makes Hermione's love life her business and seeks out an appropriate mate (Snape). She makes a deal with Dumbledore/Order to help them fight Voldy if Snape agrees to go on 25 dates with HERmione. The rules of the dates: 1) the date must last at least three hours or it doesn't count as a date, 2) the number of dates they must go on is 25, 3) Severus must take Hermione away from Hogwarts for a certain number of the dates, go out to dinner, theater, etc., 4) there must be a goodnight kiss at the end of each date, on the lips.

Other: "You must show the Slytherins' reaction when they find out that Hermione's blood is a hell of a lot bluer/purer than theirs..." At some point Circe goes round to Malfoy manor disguised as a hag and be mistreated by Draco or Lucius.

Part II: Circe Almighty!

Chapter 2 of 12

Circe goes looking for Hermione's perfect match without consulting Hermione first.

Disclaimer: I highly doubt JK would ever dream of using Homer's creation except as a joke for background information. She certainly wouldn't be making her related to Hermione. Therefore, I'm not JK, as I expect you gathered by now.

Part II: Circe Almighty!

Circe did not immediately go to the Headmaster's office as was expected. Instead, she meandered about the school observing its male denizens. She would not let Hermione wither away into spinsterhood. She wanted to see her happy and couldn't imagine life being happy without a lover.

It soon became evident that there wasn't a suitable boy at the school; besides, Circe had always preferred men to boys. They tended to be less... clumsy.

She looked around for someone more mature and immediately found her quarry. He wasn't attractive, especially with that sneer, but (she guessed) he was lonely as well.

After casting a Disillusionment Charm on herself, she followed the sneering man for half the afternoon taking careful mental notes. By the end of the day she was humming with excitement. He seemed singularly perfect for Hermione.

He had a foul temper, but Circe suspected Hermione's kindness would grease his mood, eventually. What Circe saw most, though, was the intelligence burning through his cold eyes. He would be Hermione's equal.

Besides his mental prowess, she noted with pleasure that he had skilled hands. He would be adept at the art of pleasure.

She happily left to find the Headmaster's office.

It didn't take long for Dumbledore to call an emergency meeting to order when Circe announced her aid. That evening everyone gathered at headquarters, most glancing curiously at the Greek witch in their midst.

"It seems we have gained another powerful ally," said Dumbledore. "It's my honor to introduce you to Circe."

Everyone stilled, looking wide eyed at the witch. Circe could see none believed her. Whipping out her wand so fast that not even Dumbledore could react, she quickly transfigured the Headmaster into a boar, waiting a second before turning him back.

"Do you believe me now?" she asked.

Dumbledore smiled as Circe curtsied an apology, then turned to his Order. "I have no doubts about her identity or her affiliation. She is here to offer her help without reservation."

"Actually, Albus, that's not quite true," Circe interrupted.

Dumbledore looked at her questioningly, so she explained. "I have a granddaughter at Hogwarts. I will help you if you help her."

"We will not alter grades or offer unearned honors," a tightlipped McGonagall said.

"Oh, my dear, that wouldn't be needed. She's an excellent student all on her own," Circe scoffed. "No, what my granddaughter needs is a love life."

"The love lives of students are their own affairs," Snape said sourly.

"That may be so, but my granddaughter needs a little help getting an affair to mind," Circe pointed out.

"What do you propose we do to help your granddaughter?" asked Dumbledore, hesitantly.

"Headmaster," Snape cried, outraged, "you can't seriously be considering-"

"Severus, I am just gathering all the information so we can weigh the options judiciously," Dumbledore interrupted, then gestured for Circe to continue.

"I have decided that Severus here would be a most suitable match for my granddaughter. I want him to take her on 25 dates."

"What?" yelled Snape, all the color draining from his face. Dumbledore stopped a tirade from starting with an upheld hand.

"Madam, Severus is a professor, and it would be most inappropriate for him to court a student," Dumbledore explained, causing Snape to sigh with relief.

"Shame," Circe said. "If you can't grant this request, then I'm afraid I won't offer my services."

The room went silent, all eyes darting between the Grecian and Snape. Though all knew the seriousness of the situation, a few couldn't hold back slight smirks.

"Who is your granddaughter?" Snape asked reluctantly.

Circe smiled. "Hermione Granger."

Snape's harsh laugh cut through the dead silence.

"I'm guessing she doesn't know of your proviso?" he asked. "I think you'll have an even more difficult time making her agree than me."

Circe smiled infuriatingly. "You underestimate yourself, young man."

Snape's eyes narrowed dangerously. "If you're doing this at her bequest..."

"No, she has no idea of my plans. I daresay she would be rather mortified to know what we're discussing right now."

Slightly desperate, Snape said, "Why not a boy her age? I'm sure we could blackmail- convince someone more suitable."

"She doesn't need a *boy*," she said.

The room grew hotter as everyone blushed. Dumbledore faced Circe disapprovingly.

"Although we would be honored to receive your help, if we do as you ask there must be guidelines. I cannot condone an intimate relationship between a teacher and a student."

"Albus!" cried Snape, appalled.

Dumbledore's eyes twinkled madly. "Severus, you have the most to gain. Destroy Tom and spend time with a lovely young woman..."

Snape sank into his seat, slumping in defeat. He sulked through the rest of the arrangements, positively cringing when Circe insisted on a goodnight kiss for every date.

"Merlin, help me," Snape muttered.

The next morning found Hermione waking to her grandmother's cheerful face.

"Darling, I have great news for you!" the older woman said.

Uh-oh, Hermione thought, but said, "News?"

"The Order accepted my offer. Oldmoldy won't last another month."

"The catch?"

"No catch darling, at least not for me." Circe smiled ominously. "All I asked is for you to be taken care of."

"Taken care of?" Hermione asked warily.

"You know, attended to, looked after, courted."

Hermione nearly fell out of bed. "GRANDMUM!!!"

"Oh, don't thank me now, dear. Save your strength. You need to be healthy for your first date."

AN: *The dates start in the next part...*

Part III: For Circes Sake

Chapter 3 of 12

The dates start.

Part III: For Circe's Sake

When Hermione was released from the hospital a week later, she dreaded the coming evening. No longer could she put off the prearranged dates. She was afraid of who Circe had set her up with, as no amount of coaxing would loosen the witch's lips.

As evening fell, she paced her room, waiting for her doom. Five seconds past the strike of seven, a knock on her door sounded.

Quickly she checked her reflection and finding it sufficient opened the door only to slam it shut.

Breathing deeply to calm herself, she reopened the door to a furious Professor Snape.

"What was the meaning of that, Miss Granger?" Snape growled through clenched teeth.

"I'm sorry, Professor; you startled me," she explained. "I'm expecting someone else."

"Unfortunately, your expectations will not be met. I am here to..." Snape's face wrinkled in disgust, "escort you."

Hermione's mouth fell open as she stared at her professor. "You? But, you're my teacher!"

"Very astute, Miss Granger," he snarked. "Disturbingly, your grandmother doesn't care."

Hermione's face grew hard with anger, but Snape was surprised to find it wasn't aimed at him.

"That conniving, meddlesome, interfering old wench. I won't let her get away with this."

"Well, well, aren't you the vengeful little one?" Snape smirked in concurrence of Hermione's ire.

Hermione looked up at him with a gleam in her eye and said, "Well, are you going to help me wreak vengeance, or shall I do it all myself?"

"We can't do anything before the Dark Lord is defeated," Snape said, looking down at her thoughtfully. "Circe's assistance is too valuable. However, it seems I have to spend three hours with you tonight. We might as well use it constructively to plan for the future."

Hermione smiled, inviting him in for some tea and plotting.

They surprised each other by plotting amicably, debating the merits of different revenges in a relaxed, almost friendly, fashion. Snape was impressed by Hermione's guile while Hermione marveled at Snape's casual demeanor.

All went well until the three hours were up. Snape suddenly became tense and unpleasant once more.

"Has Circe told you the conditions of each date?" he asked tightly.

Hermione paled slightly and nodded, getting up to lead Snape out.

Snape sighed with disgust as he reached the door. "Understand that this is for the sake of the Order," said he, then pecked her quickly on the lips.

The next date started awkwardly as they were confronted by Circe.

"You can't stay in all the time, you two. I've said at least fifteen of your dates need to be outside castle walls. Go take her to a movie and shoo!" she exclaimed, shoving them out the castle doors.

Snape rubbed his arm where Circe had held it a little too tightly, his thin lips pursed. Glancing over at Hermione, he noticed she had fared no better as her reddened ear proved.

"Shall we keep a tally of physical injuries?" Hermione asked.

Snape glanced her way, lips quirking up.

Their evening was spent at the Three Broomsticks discussing ground rules for their dates. They concurred Order business would be avoided, as would talk of Voldemort. Snape refused to talk about himself, and Hermione conceded weather was a safer topic.

They found neither was fond of frostbite or damp socks and agreed to take advantage of any good weather, staying in when it turned foul. They set up a tentative schedule, adjustable as needed, for trips to the apothecary and other such errands.

By evening's end, they chanted dully, "For the good of the Order," as they kissed goodnight.

By the time their third date came, the whole school was murmuring about the Head Girl and the Potions master. As the two headed to Hogsmeade, they were confronted by an angry Draco.

"Professor Snape, *sir*," he said mockingly, "Are the rumors true? Are you seeing the Mudblood behind Dumbledore's back?"

"I would take care of how you address Miss Granger, Draco," Snape said warningly.

"Oh sorry, sir, I didn't mean to offend *you*."

"Be more concerned about not offending her grandmother- Circe."

Draco's eyes widened in horror and shifted onto Hermione, who smirked.

"Careful who you call dirty, Malfoy."

A large gathering of Slytherins confronted them as they returned to the castle three hours later. Hermione looked at the threatening crowd before her and unconsciously edged closer to the Professor.

"Is it true, Granger? Is Circe really your grandmother?" a fifth year asked.

"Yes," was all she said before the crowd before her broke out in angry rumblings. She heard the word Mudblood tossed around a few times before a low voice whispered in her ear:

"Come, I'll take you to your door. Let the children work out the politics by themselves."

She nodded silently, grateful for the escort.

"Thank you," Hermione said softly, as they reached the Fat Lady. Snape inclined his head in response, then lowered his lips to hers. She thought the kiss lasted fractionally longer than the previous two, but chalked it up to imagination when he turned abruptly, striding off without a backward glance.

When she stepped through the portrait hole, she was confronted with more angry glares, this time from Gryffindors.

"Is it true?" demanded Ron, furiously. "Are you dating the Greasy Git?"

"Yes, but not willingly," Hermione answered calmly.

"He's forcing you?" Ron cried, anger mounting.

Hermione grimaced. "No, my grandmother is."

Upon Hermione's pronouncement, the angry glares became pitying stares. It took Ron half a second before comprehension dawned, and he enveloped her in a sympathetic hug.

"Does she hate you?" Ginny asked later as they sat round the fire.

"Not that I know of. This is her way of helping me."

"Why the Greasy Git, though?" asked Harry.

"*Professor Snape*," Hermione rebuked, then sighed. "Apparently, she considers him the best option for me. And to be fair, he's not that greasy close-up."

As one, her friends said, "Ew!" not wanting any details.

"Please, don't enlighten us," Ron begged, looking green.

AN: *Next up, more dates, a movie, fluff and... feelings?*

Part IV: What in the Name of Circe?

Chapter 4 of 12

Their dates progress. Are those feelings floating about in the air?

Part IV: What in the name of Circe...?

Life settled down surprisingly well after their third date. The news spread throughout the school, but it actually benefited the pair. Everyone felt a profound sympathy for Hermione, being forced to date *Snape*, whereas Snape gained status with his Slytherins for currying favor with Circe through her granddaughter. Everyone was convinced that neither enjoyed their dates.

The reluctant couple, however, were finding they weren't totally adverse to each other's company. Once they discovered safe topics to discuss, they engaged wits most satisfactorily.

By the end of their fourth date, they were equally surprised just how quickly the time had passed.

"Oh!" Hermione said as she looked at the chiming clock. She turned back to Snape, who seemed slightly startled but masked it quickly. "It seems as though time has flown."

"Indeed," said he. They stood up in tandem, walking over to the door awkwardly.

"Well, er, thanks," she said.

"What for?" he asked.

"Talking, and, you know, treating me like an equal, I suppose."

"It seems I have little choice until these dates are done," he sighed.

"Er, right," she agreed a tad nervously.

He bent down to kiss her and withdrew quickly, leaving before any questions could arise within.

Their next date started mostly in silence, any conversations they had being stilted and awkward. After fifteen minutes of being uncomfortable, Snape suggested they make it an 'out' date and visit a muggle cinema. Hermione, feeling as discomfited as Snape, readily agreed, wondering if there were any movies they would both enjoy.

They argued in front of the theater for thirty minutes before agreeing. Once inside, Hermione insisted on buying popcorn even though Snape was disgusted by the yellow goop they poured on it.

Snape eyed Hermione's hands and muttered, "And they call *me* greasy."

Hermione smiled, then offered to share.

After their sixth date, Hermione mused that something had changed between them. No longer did they need revenge for a topic to keep the conversation going. She was almost alarmed at how much she was enjoying their dates, not that she'd ever admit it.

Snape, too, had noticed a change. He found himself humming on the way to her room; then he almost smiled when she opened the door, grinning at him. He was unnerved by it and vowed to investigate - after their date ended. He needn't ruin a pleasant evening with moralistic musings.

Their kiss that night was guarded.

Circe observed them at the Three Broomsticks on their next date. She smiled at the progress they seemed to be making. They weren't comfortable with each other yet, but it was now an embarrassed air that surrounded them, not malicious. Acceptance of their new feelings was just around the corner.

Her smile broadened as she saw Snape pull out Hermione's chair, then let out a satisfied sigh when Hermione blushed becomingly. She didn't miss Snape smirking with pleasure.

Circe's drinking companion turned to see what she was looking at, then turned back to her and grinned, blue eyes twinkling agreement.

The stubborn nature of two fools will often decide their fate. For Hermione and Snape, however, other mitigating factors interfered, rendering their pigheadedness for naught.

By their eighth date, they individually knew they were attracted to the other, but neither was willing to make the first move. Snape refused for matters of integrity. She was a student still and he her teacher. He had promised Dumbledore that no lines would be crossed, though he snorted at that, thinking goodnight kisses would not be considered regulation.

Hermione, however, refused to make a fool of herself, not with so many dates remaining.

Their night ended with a new tension, both suppressing their feelings lest they get hurt. They avoided contact as they made their way back, even eschewing conversation.

When they reached her door, she said, "Well," but stopped as Snape spoke at the same moment. They each gestured for the other to continue, neither taking the initiative.

"Screw this," Hermione huffed, and impatiently leaned forward to finish the date. When her lips met his, however, she noticed how soft they were when not fraught with tension.

Looking up, she noticed he seemed shocked at her move. She fled before he blinked.

Hermione hid her embarrassment successfully around her friends, but she couldn't help turning beet red when Snape picked her up the next time. She was grateful he pretended not to notice, acting cool and distant as per normal.

By the time they reached the gates, she realized he was not acting normally. His face and shoulders were tense and his stride too quick.

Before she could stop herself, she said, "I'm sorry."

He stopped short, turning so quickly she ran into him. Grabbing his cloak to keep from falling, she looked up at him. His dark eyes burned into her.

"What are you sorry for?" he asked, his voice unusually soft.

"For last night, sir. It wasn't my intention to be forward."

He raised an eyebrow and smirked. "I thought a Gryffindor would apologize for running away, not rushing in."

Hermione frowned, and looking down, realized she was still grasping his cloak. Letting go and stepping back, she looked back up at him contritely. His gaze had returned to normal: completely unreadable.

"Even lions get scared, sir," she said. She thought she saw a flicker of emotion in his eyes, but before she could interpret it he turned, continuing on.

They were quiet throughout their entire date, seeming lost in thought. Hermione's thoughts kept revolving around the flicker of emotion she saw, trying to determine what it was. She became so consumed by her thoughts she didn't notice her professor watching her.

"It's time to go," he said, breaking her concentration.

Startled, Hermione looked up, then quietly prepared to go.

Neither said a word on their trek back to Hogwarts. Just as Hermione was about to step out of the secret staircase into the last corridor, Snape stopped her with a hand on her arm.

"Wait a moment," he said.

Hermione looked up at Snape curiously, patiently waiting for him to continue. It was difficult to see in the dim light, but he seemed agitated even though he stood still before her.

"I didn't mean to frighten you," he finally said.

She frowned in thought. "You didn't, sir, or at least it wasn't your fault."

"I don't understand," he said looking confused.

"Neither do I, sir. That's what scares me."

He looked at her shrewdly for a moment, then stepped forward to open the passageway to the corridor.

His kiss that night was softer than normal, though just as short.

AN: *Next up: Some of Draco's 'wit', some hurt feelings, and a visit to Snape's quarters.*

Part V: A More Serious Interlude

Chapter 5 of 12

It can't all be fun and games...

Part V: A More Serious Interlude

"Hey, Your Royal Muddness," a voice drawled across the hall, making Hermione shake her head.

"What's up, my dear ferrethead?" she cooed sweetly, seeing Snape behind him a ways.

Malfoy snarled slightly, but decided a smirk would look better. "So tell us, how does it feel to be Snape's tart?"

She saw Snape's face contort, but with a tilt of her head, he stayed back.

"Why, interested in the job, Malfoy?" she replied smoothly, walking up to him seductively. "Can't say, as I don't hold that title, but shall I pass on your resume?"

Snape chose that moment to appear.

"What is going on here?" Snape asked disdainfully, not focusing on anyone.

"Granger here's been insulting you behind your back, sir. I would watch out."

Snape raised his eyebrow at Hermione, and she suddenly wondered if she *had* insulted him.

"Any insult I've handed out was aimed at Malfoy, sir," she said, regretting the "sir" instantly. A chorus of sniggers came from the Slytherins as many of them shot leering looks at her. Snape quelled them with a single glare, giving Hermione a dose as well.

"Your advice is sound, Draco. I would watch out," he said, then strode off.

That night Hermione waited anxiously for Snape to arrive. As time passed, she grew more concerned that he had been insulted by her thoughtlessness. After nearly an hour of waiting, she gave up and set out to find him, needing to apologize. He didn't answer his office door.

Wandering about the dungeons, she couldn't see any sign of life. She had just given up on finding him when she heard shuffling footsteps coming her way. Some instinct pushed her to hide behind a statue, for which she was grateful, as she watched Draco floating an unconscious Snape through the dungeons.

Hermione rushed out, disregarding Draco's blood stained robes.

"Is he alright?" she asked.

"Granger! What the hell are you doing here?"

"What happened?" she pressed, ignoring his question.

"It's none of your business, and if you know what's good for you, you'll disappear right now," he snarled.

"Cut the menace, Malfoy. You're injured, and Snape's unconscious. Tell me what happened, and I'll help you out."

Draco looked at her assessingly, then sighed. "Fine, but not here. We need to get him to his chambers."

Once he had carefully placed Snape on his bed, Draco turned, giving Hermione a vicious smile.

"Worried are we?" he said. "He must be good if he's convinced a Mudblood to care." Hermione scrunched her brow, confused. "What, don't understand?" Draco continued. "Little Miss Know-It-All doesn't know a Death Eater when she sees one?"

Hermione scowled at him, thinking fast. "Don't be silly, Malfoy. Dumbledore would never--"

"Dumbledore is a fool," he spat, then raised his wand at her. "Dumbledore thinks Snape's reformed, that he regrets his past. His robes might not show it tonight, but Snape revels in killing Mug--"

A stupefy cut short his rant. Hermione turned to see the headmaster at the hearth.

Not questioning his presence, Hermione began, "Professor Snape's been injured, sir."

"I gathered," was his terse reply as he made his way to the bedroom. Hermione followed Dumbledore, eager to help if possible. When she entered the bedroom, Dumbledore was trying to coax Snape's unconscious body to drink a potion. After he had laid his form back down, he gave Hermione a piercing look.

"Why are you down here, Miss Granger?"

"He stood me up, sir," Hermione answered nervously. She was relieved when his twinkle returned.

"Would you mind looking after him while I attend to some things?" he asked.

After a couple of hours watching Snape's motionless form, Hermione wondered if Dumbledore would ever return. She was just about to leave when a grunt from the bed turned her around.

"Professor Snape?" she queried.

"Unh," he replied, screwing his eyes shut more tightly.

"Professor Snape, sir," she said again.

"Uhhgg," was all he managed, this time accompanied by a pained head toss. Worried, she leaned in to feel his forehead for fever, but the instant her hand touched his skin, his eyes shot open, and his hand gripped her arm tightly.

"Miss Granger! What do you think you're doing?"

She backed off quickly as far as she could with him still holding her arm.

"I was just checking you for fever, sir."

"What are you doing here at all?" he snapped, clearly incensed.

"Professor Dumbledore asked me to watch over you until he returned," she said nervously.

He grunted unpleasantly but let go of her arm. When she lifted her hand to touch him, though, he eyed her sharply.

"It's to find out if you need another potion, sir," she explained.

Reluctantly, he nodded, allowing her palm to press against his head. She sighed, relieved no fever was evident.

Another hour passed before Dumbledore showed up. Snape and Hermione immediately mistrusted the twinkle in his eye.

"Am I interrupting anything?" he asked jovially as he entered the room. The pair glared at him, annoyed at the implication. Dumbledore held up his hands in a pacifying gesture. "I only ask because of your scheduled date." Hermione looked at the clock, then at the headmaster suspiciously.

"I believe the headmaster just pointed out that this could qualify as a date," she said. Snape looked at her, then distastefully at Dumbledore who promptly turned his back, beard twitching. An uncomfortable kiss ensued.

On her way out, Hermione noticed Draco's form still sprawled on the floor.

"Sir," she asked Dumbledore, "what about Malfoy?"

"When he wakes up, I'll tell him I hexed him to stop him from saying too much," Snape answered. "I wouldn't want to scare off Circe's granddaughter, now would I?" He quirked his lips in an almost friendly way.

"Of course not, sir," she said as she smiled back. Her smile faded, though, as she thought about Draco and his chosen path. "I don't suppose Draco's faking his allegiance?" she asked.

The somber look on two faces was answer enough.

AN: *Next up - A declaration goes awry, and Circe decides to step in - again.*

Part VI: Well, Circe!

Chapter 6 of 12

Maybe it was too soon in their relationship for Hermione to have visited Snape's quarters.

Part VI: Well, Circe...

When next they met, Snape's discomfiture was palpable. Hermione, thinking it was because of her presence in his bedchambers a week prior, was equally uncomfortable. Neither said anything for the first two hours. Those torturous hours were spent secretly trying to gauge the feelings of the other while seeming disinterested.

Madam Rosmerta put an end to their stalemate by bursting into giggles as she observed their covert glances when refilling their mugs yet again.

Snape glared Rosmerta away, then turned his ire on Hermione.

"What game are you playing at?" he demanded. Hermione gaped at him, unprepared for the assault.

"What do you mean by that?" Hermione said angrily.

"Don't be impertinent, girl. Just answer the question, or so help me--"

"What? So help you what, exactly? You'll stop dating me? You'll give me detention? A beating? Maybe you'll tie me up and throw me to the centaurs?"

"Don't be ridiculous, girl. I'll just make you miserable!"

"And how do you plan to do that, Professor? Please enlighten me!" Hermione nearly shouted.

Snape glowered at her, then stood up to tower over her, menace radiating from his body.

"I'll make sure you feel for me as I do for you!"

Snape stepped back from her, a look of panic flashing across his face before the normal sneer took over. Before she could respond, he turned and left for the toilet. Hermione looked out the window, trying to decipher the threat.

"What do you mean, Professor?" she murmured to herself. "I know you loathe me, and quite frankly I couldn't be more miserable knowing that, what with how I feel."

A gasp made her turn to discover a startled Snape standing behind her seat. He looked momentarily bewildered, but quickly reverted back to anger.

"It is time to go," he said.

Neither said a word on their march back to the castle, but Snape seemed almost reluctant to end the date by the time they reached Gryffindor tower.

"Miss Granger..." he'd started, almost plaintively, then braced his shoulders for a storm and continued: "Miss Granger, I do not loathe you, nor do I wish you miserable, exactly."

"Exactly?" she asked, pursing her lips and crossing her arms imperiously.

"I do fervently wish you shared the discomfort I endure when I'm with you."

Hermione's lips disappeared altogether. "Don't worry, I do."

She pecked him sharply on the lips before escaping in disgust.

When their twelfth date started neither was inclined to talk, as both felt slighted by the other. Snape felt as if his declaration had been willfully thrown aside while Hermione inferred that she was nothing more than an annoyance to be endured. Neither wanted to be the first to break their sulk, so the stony silence lasted till their kiss.

Both squeezed their eyes shut tight as if they could block out the contact if they tried hard enough. They parted with an alacrity that spoke of a mutual distaste. Circe watched with a frown, wondering how things had disintegrated.

"Darling child, may I have a word with you?" a brassy voice called out through the empty corridor. Hermione turned, knowing it was useless to ignore Circe.

"Certainly, Grandmother. What word would you like?" Hermione's tone was chilly, and Circe knew she needed to tread with care.

"I just wanted to know if you're enjoying yourself on your dates. I would hate to think of you miserable." Hermione eyed Circe suspiciously, hoping the concern was genuine.

"Truthfully, I was enjoying myself, but knowing I'm making the Professor uncomfortable doesn't bode well for future enjoyment."

"Uncomfortable, eh? We'll see about that..."

Snape's office was invaded by a gaudy dress containing the infuriating Grecian he'd love to loathe. He bit back any sharp remarks, not wanting to experience her Transfiguration skills first hand.

"May I help you, Madam?" he said.

"Yes, you may. I was just wondering if the dates with Hermione are at all bearable. Is there a reason she's been single all this time? Is she unmatched?"

Snape unwittingly pinched the bridge of his nose.

"I see no reason why she's single, besides it being her choice."

"Oh?"

"She is attractive and intelligent. For someone out there, she's a catch."

Circe thought long and hard about the conundrum before her. She was almost positive Hermione and Snape liked each other, but both were too proud to admit it. She was

positive Hermione's snit could last through another thirteen dates and suspected Snape's could, too. She needed to create conditions where they would cast aside their anger and reveal their true feelings. She needed to make them feel as if they were going to lose one another forever, irrevocably.

Her eyes lit up as a thought struck her, and she smiled with manic glee. "Dumbledore," she announced, "It's time for war."

AN: Next time: *Snape goes missing, and yet Circe is happy... Should Hermione be worried?*

Part VII: Should Circe Meddle...

Chapter 7 of 12

Snape's gone missing, but Circe doesn't seem concerned. Should Hermione be worried? What about Snape?

Disclaimer: *In an alternate universe I expect JK is sitting at her computer typing a disclaimer out for fan fiction based on my work. Seeing as this is not that universe, the characters herein are obviously not mine.*

Part VII: Should Circe Meddle...

Heavy rain on their next date did not encourage a peace treaty between the two. Their date was halfway through when Snape broke the continued silence with a hiss of pain and clutched his forearm reflexively.

"As enjoyable as this has been," he said with a snide undertone, "I'm afraid we must reschedule this date." Snape stood up, bowed curtly, and exited before Hermione could do anything more than cast a worried glance at his back.

She knew it must be an impromptu meeting he was attending, and wondered for whom it bade ill. She hoped he'd be all right.

At breakfast the next morning, Hermione noticed both Snape and Draco were absent. She deliberately dawdled until the last minute, but they never showed up.

As the week wore on, and no sign was seen of the two, Hermione grew more and more concerned. Every day she would cast a worried glance at the head table, drawing playful jabs from her friends.

"Oi, 'Mione! If you keep looking over there, we'll start to think you actually like the git," Ron pointed out sensitively.

"What makes you think I don't?" she answered bluntly, barely noticing the shocked looks her words garnered.

Circe gleefully watched her granddaughter's worry increase over the week. She smiled victoriously when she heard Hermione's retort to her friends' banter, knowing it was time for Snape's return. Now the only problem was getting him back.

Circe knew he had gone off with the Malfoy brat to their last summons, but she had been unable to locate either of them since. She figured they must be somewhere unplotable, but had a pretty good hunch as to where to start her search.

"I think," she mused to herself, "it's time to play the crone and wander from door to door."

Circe had learned many things from Zeus in her youth, one of which was that the measure of a person was best taken when they had no clue who you were.

She had heard a lot about the Malfoy family since coming to Hogwarts and very little of it was good; she had a shrewd guess as to how they would treat an old beggar woman in search of a little food.

Donning her rags, she set off, apparating just beyond the Malfoy estate gates. She could feel the wards screaming as she knocked on the kitchen door round back.

A man answered the door, scowling when he caught sight of the old woman.

"Go away!" he ordered, then tried to slam the door.

Circe jammed her cane in the door and put on her most disturbing toothless smile. "Can't you spare an old woman a few scraps of bread?"

Lucius narrowed his eyes, then smiled dangerously. "Of course! Where were my manners? Come in and I'll give you a *treat*." Circe then allowed herself to be grabbed and thrown into the dungeons.

"You'd have been better off getting a job," Lucius laughed as he slammed the cell door shut.

When she was sure her host had gone, Circe dug out her wand and cast some light on the bad situation. As she waved the light around, she saw a form huddled in the corner.

"Oh dear," she remarked, as she bent over the body and recognized the face. "Now how did you get yourself in such a pickle, dearie?" she asked the unconscious Snape. "Did you comment on their manners perchance?"

She quickly cast a few diagnostic spells, then a healing charm. Little by little, Snape's breathing got easier, so she sat down to wait for him to wake.

A good deal of time passed before Snape deigned to wake. Circe helped him into consciousness by flicking his shoulder blade repeatedly.

"For the love of Circe, stop hitting me!" Snape grumbled, rolling away from the offending finger.

"Nice to know you love me," Circe said, eliciting another groan from the huddled mass.

"What are you doing here, or have I died and gone to Hell?" Snape muttered.

"Now that's a fine way to talk when I *had* decided to rescue you."

"Just leave me to rot. I'll not be missed."

"That, dearie, is where you're wrong." Circe stated.

"So tell me how you got yourself into such an undignified position," Circe demanded when Snape finally managed to sit up.

Snape hesitated, then shrugged, bowing to the inevitable. "Narcissa was a mite offended that I (supposedly) stunned Draco the other month. When I came over for a nightcap with Lucius, she was a perfectly *stunning* hostess. I woke up in here."

Circe nodded, a knowing look on her face. "Well, we mothers can be a bit overprotective."

Snape started pouting. "Lucius has been coming down to laugh at me ever since. It's not very nice, I can tell you"

"There's no point feeling sorry for yourself. It's your own fault you picked the wrong friends," Circe scolded.

"Yes, yes, fine. Now can we go?" he asked.

Circe frowned at his attitude and shook her head. "I think it would do you good to think things through down here a while. I'll be off to let Hermione know you're okay, though."

"So you're just going to leave me in here to rot?" Snape said, feeling a little panicky.

"Oh, come now. Do you really think they'll leave you here when you're next summoned? They'll have had their joke by then."

Snape's bark of laughter was cut short as Circe disappeared with a pop. Closing his eyes, he muffled his frustrated screams in his robe.

The only good Circe's visit had wrought was bringing him hope with tidings of Hermione's concern.

Circe hurried up to Gryffindor Tower; she had good news to share.

Flouncing into the common room, she announced loudly, "Hermione, darling, all's well with your Snapeypoo."

Everyone in the common room looked at Circe for a stunned moment before bursting into giggles. Everyone except Hermione. Hermione scowled at Circe as the room rang with laughter. Circe beamed back.

AN: *Next up:* WAR!

A Very Brief War

Chapter 8 of 12

The final battle in 200 words. And some other stuff.

AN: Warning: *This part includes scenes of war and therefore diverges from the romance in the storyline. As such, be prepared for much more silliness beyond the normal scope. Oh, and remember, the "t" is silent on Voldemort (JK says so).*

Disclaimer: Not mine, nor for money. Had loads of fun, though.

Part VIII: A Very Brief War

Snape scowled for the billionth time. He inwardly cursed Circe for the umpteenth time. He shook his head in despair one last time, dimly aware that he was getting dizzy from doing so.

Suddenly the door opened revealing Lucius, interrupting Snape's set pattern.

"Is it tea time already?" Snape asked bitterly.

"Unfortunately, no. The Dark Lord is curious about your absence from Hogwarts. I don't really want to be in his bad graces again, so..." He opened the door for Severus.

"At least you have your priorities straight," Snape spat.

Lucius closed the dungeon door, not noticing the missing crone.

Snape and Lucius had reached the entrance when their marks started burning.

"Drat," they said in unison before apparating to their master's side.

"My loyal minions, bow before my greatness," the Snake Man hissed. "Tonight we will defeat that brat, and Dumbledore will meet his doom. I have acquired the assistance of a most powerful ally, one who will help bring about my victory."

A witch stepped out of the shadows dressed in an avocado green toga with gold flowers in her hair.

Snape didn't get the chance to frown before Voldemort announced with a flair, "Meet my mistress, Circe."

The bad guys marched up to Hogwarts grounds, but the good guys stood at the ready. Phalanxes of the Order were headed by Dumbledore himself.

"Stand down, Tom, or you'll face your greatest fear," Dumbledore declared.

"Not on your life, Dumbledore. You're not the boss of me!" Voldemort retorted, somewhat childishly.

"So be it," Dumbledore replied, and then the battle started. Hexes flew and curses hit. People fell left and right. There was no mercy on the field that night.

In the midst, a couple met, embracing at their reunion.

She said, "You're still alive."

He kissed her in reply.

Circe watched as Hermione and Snape finally overcame their differences. She then turned to the humanoid beside her and smiled with wicked thoughts.

Voldemort looked at his lover, and smiled back, misreading her expression.

"Well, lover, it's been fun, but you're no Odysseus," she said, then turned her wand on him. In an instant the man disappeared, leaving an angry pig squealing in his place.

"Harry, over here," Circe cried, pointing to the swine.

Harry tromped over and aimed his wand. "*Ookcayigpay!*" Harry roared. Steam formed and cleared, revealing a roast pork.

"Clever," Dumbledore cheered. "Wouldn't have thought of that."

Not even Fang ate the roast that night, so Hagrid took it to Aragog. But the fate of the Snake-Turned-Man-Turned-Pig bothered no one, as long as he was dead. The celebrations that night were loud and cheery.

Dumbledore asked Harry to say a few words to mark the occasion, so Harry looked down at the spot charred by his spell.

"Here lay evil Voldemort;

Thank the gods that he's no more!

He made life hell,

but it ended well,

so let's not be too sore," he rhymed.

Everyone cheered wildly, praising the brevity as much as the content of his verse.

AN2: So, I might have cheated just a wee little bit, but according to my word processor, each part contains exactly 100 words, so I'm not going to feel guilty.

Next up: A little plotting, a little revenge and lots of snogging.

Part IX: Vengeance to Circe

Chapter 9 of 12

Snape comes up with a plan for Circe's benefit.

Disclaimer: I own the rights to all the characters within. Er, yeah, don't think so, though it's a nice thought.

Part IX: Vengeance to Circe

After a week's vacation to celebrate the demise of Lord Doohicky, life at Hogwarts slowly got back to normal. Hermione's schedule returned to pre-battle conditions.

Snape knocked on her door the first evening back. When she opened it, she couldn't help but smile.

"You know," Snape drawled after parting from her lips, "I think I came up with a most suitable revenge for your grandmother."

"Do tell," she encouraged.

"Circe wants us to be happy together, yes?"

"Oui," Hermione agreed.

"Well, for revenge, all we need to do is act miserable."

A smile crept across Hermione's face. "Excellent!" she said.

They spent their date ensconced in her room, plotting an outline for revenge. In private they could revel in each other (as much as Snape's honor would allow), but in public they would act as if nothing would please them more than to cause grievous harm to the other.

They decided to end the date with a loud fight, staged so everyone, but especially Circe, would hear.

"You miserable wanker!" Hermione screamed.

"Insufferable know-it-all!" Snape replied harshly, as he exited hastily. Pity for Hermione soared as their public kiss that night left no one in doubt of their mutual distaste.

On their next scheduled date, they made their way to Hogsmeade with as little amiability as possible. Snape strode forward with such speed that Hermione had to sprint to keep up. Only when they reached Le Cuisinart, the local French bistro, did Snape stop for her.

Dinner was actually enjoyable. They played footsie under the long tablecloth, though they kept the vicious banter up. The most difficult part of the entire evening was not laughing at their silly game.

After dinner, Snape didn't wait for Hermione on their way back, but Circe missed the apology Snape gave at the door.

They privately rejoiced that it was raining hard on the evening of their next date. They took the opportunity to seclude themselves in Hermione's room and whisper sweet nothings in each other's ears.

They didn't dare cast an Imperturbable Charm, lest Circe suspect it was all an act, so they kept their voices down, and bodies close, to give the impression of silence.

Snape was musing that he didn't mind the arrangement at all as he nuzzled Hermione's ear and fondled her bum. Whenever she got close to laughing, he had the excuse of kissing her to muffle the noise.

After their last date's heated encounter, both had mixed feelings about making the next date an outing. Both wanted to continue where they had left off previously, but at the same time, both knew the temptation to cross the line they had already stretched was growing. So, they resigned themselves to their public personas and tried to relish the other's acting skills.

As they ate, Hermione came up with an idea. Testing the theory, she stared at Snape balefully and thought at him, *Could we communicate through Legilimency if I knew it?*

Snape sneered back, but nodded his head fractionally.

Neither could wait for their next date, though, theoretically, little snogging would be involved. Snape entered her quarters and dropped his displeased mien as soon as the door closed.

"You, my dear, are brilliant," he exclaimed, as he made up for their last good night kiss.

"I'm only brilliant if I can learn it," she replied, then kissed him back rather passionately.

Snape laughed at her remark, making her look at him with real anger in her eyes.

"As if you couldn't learn anything you put your mind to," he said, smoothing away her anger with another kiss or two.

They didn't leave much time for lessons, but Snape had brought Hermione a book on the theory, knowing she would find it useful.

By the end of her first lesson, she was barely able to enter his mind, which he had opened just for her. The memory he left for her to find made her smile.

"Our first kiss wasn't terribly romantic, was it?" she asked.

"I think not," he replied, thinking for a moment. "But then that makes it eminently suitable, for I am not a romantic man."

Hermione shrugged at his whispered response. "I suppose," she replied mildly.

Circe watched with growing alarm as the couple parted that night with obvious dislike. She couldn't understand where everything went wrong, but was determined to find out what the matter was.

"Hermione, dear," she said softly the next day, "are your dates with Severus still uncomfortable?"

Hermione watched her grandmother's face, which was unusually worried. "They're worse than ever before," she replied with a straight face.

Circe frowned, then looked down in thought. Hermione felt a momentary pang of guilt as she watched her grandmother's face cloud over.

"Well, I'll see what Severus has to say for himself," she said.

Circe found Snape humming in his office and decided to observe him a little before confronting him. Casting a quick Disillusionment Charm, she walked in to see what he was doing.

He was stirring a cauldron full of a shimmering, violet fluid that smelled of honeysuckle and grass. She looked at him in astonishment as she recognized the potion and smiled as he hummed on, oblivious to her presence.

As she left the office, she recognized the tune he was humming. She retreated to an empty classroom to think about how to proceed.

Things were obviously not as they seemed.

AN: *Next up: Circe develops a plan of her own, and then things get complicated.*

Part X: Circe's Revenge

Chapter 10 of 12

Snape forgets that fooling Voldemort was child's play compared to fooling Circe.

Disclaimer: I imagine JK wouldn't even dream of writing something like this, let alone show it to the world, but, still, the credit for the characters goes to her.

AN: Warning: This has some questionable language in it. As a Yank, none of the words bother me, but...

Part X: Circe's Revenge

Circe thought back to her conversation with Hermione. She had felt the twinge of guilt Hermione experienced, but originally thought it was because of failing something. After seeing Snape making *that* potion, whilst humming "Brown Eyed Girl," well, they obviously were better actors than she had anticipated.

Vengeful little buggers, she thought. They couldn't just enjoy their newfound happiness in peace, could they? They had to get her back for making them happy, didn't they? Well, she'd show them it wasn't wise to mess with love. It wasn't wise to mess with Circe either, now that she thought about it.

It didn't take long before Circe had a fully formed plan waiting to be executed. She dropped her Disillusionment Charm and knocked on Professor Snape's door.

"Enter," his voice shot out.

When she came in, she noticed all traces of the potion were gone as was his humming demeanor. She looked at him thoughtfully for a moment and then proceeded.

"Severus, how are your dates progressing with Hermione?"

"As well as can be expected I suppose," he sneered, his tone implying the worst.

"Mm. That's too bad," Circe said, smiling seductively at him. "Maybe she's the wrong one for you."

Snape stared at her, hoping he was misreading her signals. When he spoke, he was grateful his voice remained squeak-free.

"Perhaps."

Circe smiled hungrily. "Well, it doesn't happen often, but I can admit it when I'm wrong. I must say I *am* slightly shocked, but I'll also concede that I'm rather pleased."

She had advanced on him slowly throughout her speech and was now standing before him, running a finger lazily up and down his frock coat buttons.

"As I've gotten to know you a little better, it's plain to see that you need a mature woman, not a girl."

"Madam!" Snape objected, pushing her hand aside and backing away from her quickly. "Are you trying to seduce me?" His voice did squeak that time.

"Trying? No." Circe smiled at him. "I do not *try* to seduce. I succeed." She then brought her lips to his and proceeded to kiss him boisterously.

Several things went through Snape's mind in quick succession. First, though Circe was one talented witch, she couldn't compare to Hermione. Second, Hermione would KILL him if she found him snogging her grandmother, and third, he would really deserve it.

He pushed Circe away forcefully. "Woman, desist*now*!"

Circe wiped her mouth and smiled triumphantly. "I knew it! You love her! I don't know why you two tried to fool me, but--"

Snape cut her off. "Why do you think I'm in love?"

"Because, silly boy, the only times anyone has actually refused me was when they were in love. Or preferred men."

"Well, you are correct," Snape unwillingly conceded. "I am in love."

"Oh, that's so wonderful, we must owl my son--"

"It's not with Miss Granger," Snape interrupted.

Circe stopped and stared. After a few moments, she gained her voice and asked, "Who, then?"

"Albus Dumbledore."

He was having a difficult time restraining his smirk, which threatened to cut loose its bindings and run rampant across his face. It was *very* difficult; Circe's face was satisfyingly stunned.

"But... He's never... You... Hermione... You kissed her!" she finally managed to vocalize.

"Madam, do you think I want to advertise my true relationship with Albus? It is not exactly an appropriate arrangement," Snape pointed out.

Circe hummed thoughtfully, then looked up with a smile.

"Well, I must go congratulate Albus on such a fine catch."

Snape sincerely hoped his scheme would amuse the headmaster enough to play along.

AN: *Next up: Snape talks with Dumbledore, and subterfuge ensues.*

Part XI: Circe the Fool?

Chapter 11 of 12

Things get fluffy for our pair.

Disclaimer: As if!

AN, part I: *First, my humblest apologies about the delay. I hit a huge stumbling block, and then real life kinda claimed me for a while. Sorry. Secondly, this is catagorized as Humor/Romance, so here you go... (fluff, fluff, fluff)*

Part XI: Circe the Fool?

Circe left Snape's office before he could think of a plausible reason to accompany her. He watched until she was out of the dungeons, then made his way to the fireplace.

"Headmaster's office. Password: jujubes." A swirl of green flame later, he was dusting himself off in front of a slightly bemused headmaster.

"Severus! What an unexpected pleasure."

"Headmaster, would you do me a favor and play along with a scheme of mine?" Snape quickly recounted the salient details and was relieved when a mischievous twinkle lit Dumbledore's eyes.

"I've always wanted to put one over on Circe," Dumbledore admitted.

Snape exited via Floo moments before Circe crashed through the door in a distinctly disgruntled mood.

"My dear, whatever is the matter," Dumbledore asked, opening his arms invitingly.

Circe crossed her arms and scowled at him. "Is it true?"

"Is what true?"

"You and Severus being in love!" Circe snarled dangerously.

"Ah, that. Yes, well, Severus asked me to tell you it is," he replied calmly. Circe's scowl lightened slightly, so Dumbledore continued. "Think of the fun it will be to watch Severus and Hermione continue dating under the cloak of secrecy."

Circe's wicked smile reappeared while Dumbledore twinkled jovially.

Once he reached his office, Snape gathered up a handful of Floo powder and spoke to the fireplace. "Headgirl's room. Password: please." He stepped into the green flame and a swirl of robes later emerged facing a very surprised Hermione, along with Potter and two Weasleys.

Stymied by the presence of her friends, he hesitated before saying, "Miss Granger, forgive my intrusion."

"Shall we leave?" Ginny asked, winking at Hermione. Severus, catching the by-play, couldn't restrain a blink.

To everyone's surprise it was Severus who answered. "No need. You three could be useful in our game."

"Game?" asked Ron, worriedly.

Everyone agreed to help the charade, although grimaces were exchanged between the boys at the implications of the game. After they hashed out the details to Severus and Hermione's liking, her friends left so they could "discuss" other things.

A nice, long, healthy debate later, Hermione and Severus let their lips rest as they cuddled up on her settee.

"I'm looking forward to not being a student," Hermione admitted after a while.

"Mm," said Snape, nuzzling her neck with his nose. "So am I," he growled lustily.

"Not long now," she added with a smile.

"Nope," he answered, smirking back.

Snape and Hermione managed to meet outside a couple days later. Needing to collect ingredients, he took her for a leisurely walk through the forbidden forest.

He found it odd that they didn't encounter any creatures, good or bad, as they perambulated, but he was grateful. It gave him time to enjoy her company -- distraction free. Hermione was similarly grateful to spend time with Severus with no act to keep up.

Little did they know that they were being followed by an interfering old coot and a meddlesome crone who sighed contentedly as they watched Snape lovingly kiss Hermione's palm.

As the end of term neared, it became harder to find the time for dates. More often than not Severus would slip into Hermione's quarters via Floo only to find her studying with her friends. She never insisted he leave, so eventually he brought papers to grade. He'd listen to them quiz each other, smirking at how bossy and impatient Hermione became.

Therefore, he was surprised when one day he Flooed in and she was alone with no open books in sight.

"I've been waiting for you," she said, advancing on him slowly.

He smiled salaciously and met her halfway.

Hermione surprised him again when she knocked on his door one evening during his office hours.

"Miss Granger, do you have an appointment?" he asked, masking his surprise and delight with a scowl.

"No, Professor Snape, but I was wondering if you could help me with some properties of lacewing I don't understand," she answered, closing the door behind her with a soft click.

Snape quirked an eyebrow at her obvious move. "What really brings you here?"

"I would think that was obvious, *Professor*," she replied.

He didn't get a chance to counter, as his mouth was soon otherwise occupied.

Severus decided to repay the favor the next opportunity he got. When he was done marking essays, he Flooed in to find Hermione and her friends studying as usual. He adopted his fiercest scowl, aimed it at them and spat, "Out! Now!" He was quite pleased at how quickly the interlopers disappeared.

"What the hell was that for?" Hermione demanded angrily when she saw him smirking.

He decided to use body language to answer.

When they came up for air, Hermione narrowed her eyes in annoyance. "I do have to study, you know."

He silenced her qualms with another kiss.

It was a while before they could meet again, as Hermione insisted on studying for the NEWTs with no distractions. Besides in class, the only time Severus got to see Hermione was when he brought her midnight snacks. He was only slightly disgruntled to have her shove him out immediately with barely a quick kiss for thanks.

At the end of the last day of testing, she appeared in his office wearing a smile.

"Severus, I'm no longer a student."

His eyes lit up before he remembered their plans. "What about our revenge?"

"What revenge?" she replied whilst kissing him.

AN, part II: *Okay, you guys will probably not like the last part, which will be coming soon. I stuck to my original challenge of keeping to 100 words for 100 chapters, despite the temptation to expand beyond that. So, to finish it off without going over the limit, I needed to skim a bit in places.*

Anyway, the next update is the last, and sorry, it's gonna be a short one (6 'chapters').

Part XII: Sweet Circe!

Chapter 12 of 12

Hermione's grandmother comes to take care of her after she's injured, but decides Hermione's love life isn't up to snuff.

Disclaimer: Not mine, never was. Even the plot bunny. Are you really that surprised, though?

AN 1: *I am so sorry for the delay in posting this last segment of the story. Please forgive me, even if I really don't deserve it.*

Warning: Yet another bad pun within. Tread with care. Oh, and there's also fluff. Lots and lots of fluff.

Part XII: Sweet Circe!

Severus woke to find himself lying beside a mop of bushy locks. He smiled gently to himself as he smoothed back Hermione's hair to reveal her slumbering face.

She looks so young, he thought, then frowned, realizing *she was* young. His doubts began rearing, but before they could take off a pair of cinnamon eyes opened and smiled at him.

"Good morning," she croaked lovingly.

"Yes, it is, isn't it?" he replied, more cocky than he felt.

"Indeed," she drawled, doing a fine impersonation of him. Before he had time to respond, he was engulfed in her love once again.

They woke up gradually that afternoon, happy, but hungry. Severus forced himself to get out of bed to Floo the kitchen while his love dozed contentedly.

He donned a bath robe and made his way to the living room.

"Good afternoon, Severus," a familiar voice said, stopping him cold. Very glad he had tied his robe, he turned around to look at the headmaster.

"Albus," he said, hoping he would get a chance to say good-bye to Hermione.

"I was worried, seeing as you missed both breakfast and lunch. I imagine you and Hermione must be very hungry by now."

Snape's stomach plunged.

"Headmaster..." he started, wanting to explain.

"Now, now, Severus. You have broken my heart, but I will survive," Dumbledore said with an insidious twinkle in his eye. A chortle from behind alerted Snape to another presence in the room.

"You told her," Severus accused Dumbledore.

"My dear boy, how could I lie to my Lady?" Dumbledore responded beseechingly.

"The issue," Circe interrupted with authority, "is what your intentions are toward my granddaughter."

Snape looked at Circe earnestly. "I would like nothing better than to have her as my wife."

A gasp from behind made him twirl around.

Hermione stood there gaping, too shocked to do anything else. She and Severus looked at each other for an interminable length of time before she rushed into his arms.

"Is that a yes, then?" Snape asked into Hermione's uncombed hair.

She looked up at him, her eyes watery, but happy. "Was that a proposal?"

He nodded slightly, his jaw tightening with fear.

She smiled and said, "Then, yes."

Severus relaxed and enveloped Hermione in his arms, holding his world to him closely.

"I suppose a wedding could count as their final date," Circe murmured to Dumbledore on their way out.

Many people were scandalized by the wedding of the Head Girl of Hogwarts to her Potions' professor the day of the Leaving Feast, but that didn't prevent them from eating the food or drinking the wine that was served.

Hermione guessed that *someone* had slipped a little something into the punch, because by the time she and Severus left for their honeymoon, no one could find a reason to object to the pairing.

As they made their final rounds, Severus whispered, "Do you think Circe will make pigs fly tonight?"

Hermione snickered quietly, then turned to say good-bye to Circe.

"Grandmum," Hermione said.

"Dear, what have I told you?"

"That without love, knowledge is useless?"

Circe smiled down at her granddaughter. "Definitely," she said, then turned to Severus. "Take good care of her."

"Nothing less," he replied.

Hermione turned to go, but Severus held back to ask, "How did you guess my true feelings?"

"*Amorotherapy* isn't for the feint of heart."

Severus blushed, but said, "It could have been for Albus."

"Honeysuckle isn't really his style. Though I must confess in my jealousy I forgot that fact," she explained.

"Dumbledore?" Hermione asked.

Circe twinkled. "I always have fancied younger men."

AN 2: Okay, so this was the last part. Thank you very much to all who reviewed; I'm glad you had as much fun reading this piece as I did when writing it. For those of you who read and didn't review, I hope you got some enjoyment out of it as well.

Many thanks go to the ever patient SouthernWitch_69 who has dealt with my lousy punctuation and offered validation anyway.

Cheers,

Avery