

Dark Clouds

by Hanagasume

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N A big thank you and hug to my beta, Madbrilliant for going over this fic. This story was written for the Granger Enchanted Christmas Challenge '08. The prompt chosen was #6. *Christmas was about family... so why was she doing everything in her power to ruin hers, with the one wizard who could taint her for life?* Enjoy!

It was always supposed to be about family at Christmastime.

That was the way it had been for centuries; and the tradition had never been broken. For one Hermione Granger, this was especially true. Every year at Christmas, up until she had graduated from Hogwarts, she had spent Christmas with her mother and father, and sometimes a few of their extended family. When she had left Hogwarts, she spent a few Christmas' going back and forth between her parents' house, the Burrow, or Grimmauld Place with the Weasleys or the Order. When she had married Charlie Weasley after two years of dating, a scant number of months after her twentieth birthday, she began spending more and more time with the Weasleys.

Although she had retained her own last name for professional reasons, she was very much a part of the Weasley family. That year, Molly Weasley had planned a huge combined Christmas party between the Order and her family to be held at Grimmauld Place. Hermione had celebrated her twenty-fifth birthday a few short weeks beforehand, and, with only a couple of days until Christmas day to go, the occupants of the Burrow had been frantic.

Hermione had helped out where she could, of course, but with people like Molly and Ginny around, one could hardly get a word in. So, she was content to run errands and watch over all of the Weasley grandchildren; including Harry and Ginny's two boys, Ron and Lavender's little girl, and lastly, Bill and Fleur's little girl. On the afternoon of Christmas Eve, Ginny took over watching the children, while Hermione had gone to Diagon Alley to do a little last minute shopping with Charlie.

He had gone immediately into the Quidditch shop to talk to one of his friends, and had left Hermione to her own devices, for which she was grateful. She had browsed for a while in Flourish and Blotts until she had found an interesting book that she thought Minerva McGonagall might like and purchased it before heading to the Apothecary to purchase a few things for herself. In an unexpected move, Hermione had gone into Healing and Potions after finishing at Hogwarts. Everyone had expected her to follow Harry and Ron into Auror training, but she did not. She was content to practice Medicine, and had her own clinic in Aberdeen.

The bell on the door jingled as she entered the Apothecary, and it reminded her vaguely of the season and holiday. Smiling, she walked down to the last row of shelves, to where all of the rare and expensive Potions ingredients were stored. Lovingly, she swept the pad of her index finger along a beautiful, magical snapdragon's stem. They

didn't bite unless their petals were touched. This particular one was a striking shade of purple, with vibrant and healthy leaves.

'It's exquisite,' she murmured more to herself than anyone else.

'Indeed it is,' said another voice. A familiar voice. 'It was just delivered today.'

Hermione paused for a moment, her mind ticking over the possibilities of who it could be. The pitch was deep and silky; a voice that could invade one's senses, slide through one's veins, and take over completely. She knew that voice. Turning to look over her shoulder, she saw Severus Snape standing over by the end of the row, leaning against the shelf behind her casually on a shoulder. Hermione could hardly even remember the last time she had seen him without his robes on.

This Snape was dressed rather casually, considering who the man was, in black trousers, a white linen shirt that was buttoned all the way, a black waistcoat with a pocket watch, and his frockcoat on the outside, unbuttoned all the way and hanging open. He was tall and thin, but Hermione sensed that, despite his thin appearance, the man would have wiry muscles beneath. Indeed, she could almost see them ripple a little as he crossed his arms in front of his chest.

'Professor Snape,' she exclaimed softly. 'What a surprise.'

'I would have to say the same thing, Granger; or is it Weasley these days?' he replied, sarcasm dangerously edging his voice.

Hermione frowned automatically at that jibe. He hadn't changed a bit. He was every bit as much of a bastard as he had been at Hogwarts. 'It's Granger, although I am indeed married to Charlie Weasley,' she answered coolly.

'At least you had the sense not to marry the youngest boy,' he said simply, his eyebrow quirking up momentarily before unfolding his arms and walking towards her. 'Now what brings you here, Granger?'

'Potions ingredients,' she answered. 'For some experimental potions I will be continuing after Christmas.'

He nodded, looking at her in a way that made her feel a little nervous. Clearing her throat a little, she stepped away from the magnificent plant, and moved further down the aisle away from him, to browse the different types of dragon scales he had available. Only certified Potions masters were able to purchase dangerous ingredients such as those, which made her all the more grateful for having had the sense to do her mastery those few years back instead of settling down with Charlie a year earlier. It was lucky that she had married the more patient of the Weasley males.

'If you told me what you were working on, I might be able to make a suggestion on what scales might be best suited to the base potion and the other ingredients,' he said in that silky voice, walking further towards her.

'Oh, well, I was looking to modify parts of the nerve restorative draught, and then use it experimentally on paralysis victims, as well as include it in my research towards a cure for Cruciatus-induced damage,' she answered, pleased to be able to speak of her work without worrying whether Snape understood her or not. She knew he did. He was brilliant, if nothing else, and was one of the most highly recognized Potions masters in all of Europe the world even.

'That sounds promising,' he admitted, which caused Hermione to beam. 'Well, in my opinion, the Chinese Fireball scales would be best suited to any draughts that involve the nervous system.'

'Oh yes, they do tend to add a soothing effect to it,' she mused as she watched him unlock the cabinet door with a small charmed iron key, and collected the amount she needed.

Finishing, he locked the cupboard once more and handed her the bag, the back of his hand brushing against her palm. Hermione felt her palm tingle a little from the contact; his hands were surprisingly warm. She closed her fingers round the bag of scales, withdrawing her hand away from him and looking at him a little fearfully. Her eyes were met by his intense black gaze, and her stomach did a flip. She could think of no reason as to why her insides were fluttering. She hadn't felt like that since her seventh year while sitting in his Potions classroom, listening to his lectures.

'Are you well, Granger?' he asked, as he watched her back away from him slightly. He moved forward again, closing in on her.

Hermione soon found herself backed into a corner of the aisle, against a shelf with glass doors drawn closed and locked. He stood close, standing tall and looking down his hooked nose at her. Needless to say, the fluttering increased as he loomed closer, and she swallowed hard. She was aroused by him, and he knew it. Her blush spread from her cheeks across her nose and down her neck hotly. She cursed inwardly at herself for she was married, for goodness sake.

'Gods, why do you keep following me like that?' she blurted out in frustration and confusion, her back pressed firmly to the shelf behind her.

'I should think it was obvious, Granger,' he murmured low, taking the last step and pressing his front into hers. He leaned down so that his lips were beside her ear. 'I want you,' he whispered.

While Hermione had no idea where on earth that had come from, the dark-haired man pressed against her did. Severus Snape was a man, and although his life had been hard and all the women he had ever cared for had either deserted him or been killed, he still wanted this. Hermione Granger had been his long-time obsession since the day she had graduated from Hogwarts. At first, he had dismissed it as a passing infatuation, but soon he found himself growing more attached to her.

After she had left Hogwarts, teaching had held no joy for him, and after having to listen to Albus and Minerva's constant reports on Hermione's activities, he found that he had to leave. He finished there two years after she graduated, and she had married Charlie Weasley, to his great disappointment. He saw her occasionally at Order meetings and parties, and had even caught her staring at him in an odd manner a few times, but had thought nothing of it, until the last time he had seen her during the summer. He had caught her staring at him and had raised an eyebrow. She had blushed.

Now, with him owning the Apothecary in Diagon Alley, he knew that she would enter his shop sooner or later. When she had moments earlier, he knew that it was his chance to test the theory. He was in love with her and wanted her badly, and he didn't care a whit that she was married. He shifted against her a little, letting her feel his hardness against her stomach, which caused her to gasp.

'But I'm m-married,' she said, a noticeable tremor in her voice.

'Do you really think I am the sort of man who would give a shit about that?' he asked her with a slight growl as her hips twitched and her body rubbed against him.

'You always hated me and my friends...' she said, closing her eyes and trying to keep her arms to her sides instead of throwing them around his neck as was her wont. 'You called me names, and you've never been nice...'

His chuckle was deep and resonant. 'If that is the case, then explain this,' he said, grabbing her hand and pressing it to his groin. 'If I was so cruel to you, explain to me why you are not pushing me away. Fight me if you do not want this; stop your body from responding to me chase away the arousal I can smell coming from you.'

Hermione whimpered in response. 'I-I can't,' she said with a half-sob.

'You can have it,' he growled, pressing his cloth-encased prick against her hip. 'I've wanted you for a millennia, or so it has seemed, and if you want me, I am yours,' he said softly into her ear. 'But I will caution you, Hermione if you want this, you will not play games with me. I am far too serious about you to fluff around.'

His comments then made Hermione pause. 'Just how long is it that you have wanted me for?' she asked breathlessly, her chest heaving, crushing her breasts to him.

He smirked, leaning in and capturing her mouth in a chaste kiss, which left her lips feeling as though they were on fire. 'Since your graduation,' he murmured softly,

spreading light kisses from her ear and down her jaw.

Hermione pulled back from him sharply. 'That long?' she exclaimed, her eyes burning with anger. 'You have been waiting this long to bloody well tell me that you are attracted to me? You attended my wedding, worked with my husband, and sat near me in Order meetings all the time, and yet you've said nothing?' she continued, her anger mounting as she pushed him back and away from her. 'Severus, if I had known back then what you are only telling me now, I would never have married Charlie. I was smitten with you my entire seventh year, and when I left Hogwarts, I was so sure you still hated me!'

His face went slack with shock for a moment during her speech, and it was only when she stopped, her breathing harsh from speaking so quickly, that he regained his senses and pressed her against the shelves again. He leaned in and wordlessly claimed her mouth, his hands grabbing her waist and lifting her legs so that they were wrapped around his hips firmly. Hermione's hands immediately plunged into the dark, silky strands of his hair, which was longer than it had been when he had taught, going past his shoulders. She anchored his head so that his mouth was pressed more firmly to hers.

Severus ate at her mouth, plunging his tongue within and sucking, biting, and pulling back occasionally to gently kiss it better. Hermione was a whimpering mass against him, her heat and his arousal rubbing together in a way that made them both moan. Eventually, they had to pull back for air, and their foreheads pressed together as they sucked oxygen into their lungs rapidly. Hermione moved her mouth forwards to kiss him again, but was stopped with a gentle hand on her cheek.

'We can't do this here,' he said, still breathing hard from their kisses. 'Tomorrow night at Grimmauld Place... come to my rooms...'

Hermione sucked in a deep breath and closed her eyes before nodding solemnly. She would go, and she would sleep with him, not because she didn't love Charlie she loved him, but not so much passionately as comfortably. She would go because she felt fire thrum through her veins at Severus' gaze, and touch, and kisses. She would go to him that night because he was in love with her and because she knew that part of her was in love with him too.

'I'll come to you, I promise,' she said in a whisper. 'But Severus I can't promise anything beyond then the future will sort itself out after tomorrow...'

He nodded understandingly. He was asking a lot of her to go to him Christmas night, and to ask any more would have been unfair. That she was willing to give him the one night was huge, and he would remember it always. And if there was nothing between them beyond that night, he would have to be satisfied knowing that she cared for him, and that she had given part of herself to him that night. He released her slowly, setting her back on her feet and pulling out his wand, casting a quick charm on them to right their clothing and hair.

'Go back to your husband now, Hermione,' he said to her, handing her the small bag of dragon scales. 'And I will see you at the party tomorrow night.'

She nodded numbly, drawing out her money pouch and following him to the counter. He tried to wave off her money, but she placed it on the counter anyway and left. When she arrived back at the Quidditch supplies shop, Charlie was still there chatting to his friend, and didn't notice her until she took his hand with her own. She felt a little guilty touching him at all after the snogging session with Severus back in his shop, but she felt like she needed to be grounded again at least for a little while.

'Ready to head home, love?' Charlie asked with a broad smile.

She nodded firmly. 'I don't much feel like shopping any more,' she answered quietly. 'I have everything I will need for the time-being.'

'Excellent,' he said, before bidding goodbye to his friends.

They walked out of the shop hand-in-hand and down to the nearest Apparation point, reappearing at their house a moment later and entering the house together. That night, after having sex with her husband, Hermione lay awake for hours, staring at his dashing handsome features and feeling empty and unfulfilled. Her heart ached at the thought of hurting Charlie, but it hurt even more when she thought of never being able to show Severus the depth of her feelings for him. Apparently she had not buried them quite well enough when she had graduated from Hogwarts.

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'Hermione, could you help me with peeling the potatoes, dear?' called out Molly Weasley, just as Hermione finished hanging the last of the decorations in the sitting room. 'The boys can easily finish those themselves.'

Obediently, she left the decorating to the Weasley men, and went down into the kitchen to help Molly, Ginny, and Fleur with the cooking. Personally, she was not a terribly good cook, and could only deal with simple things. It was just lucky for her that Charlie had acquired cooking skills during his time in Romania, or they would be starving, living on takeaway, or going to the Burrow nightly for meals. She was very grateful not to have to do that. Molly always had fussed about Hermione being unable to cook as well as she could.

'Oh, and Happy Christmas, dear,' Molly said as she handed Hermione a peeler on her arrival into the food preparation area.

'Happy Christmas,' she murmured in reply.

She took part in the tediously boring task for nearly an hour, before all of the potatoes were peeled, and then began the task of quartering them. Halfway through that task, the door to the kitchen opened at the top of the stairs, and someone could be heard walking down them. Hermione turned to look at who it was, just as Severus Snape himself stepped from the bottom stair into the domain. She smiled warmly at him, positive that nobody was watching her. She received a small smile in return for her efforts, and he walked over to them.

Hermione admired the way he looked in his comfortable-looking dark-wash jeans and white linen shirt under his black cashmere sweater. He looked so approachable and dashing in casual clothes. Despite her fondness for his usual attire, she found that she liked what he was wearing no less. Besides, they would be easier to get him out of later on that night when it counted. That thought made her smile, and she saw him smirk, getting the feeling he knew what was on her mind.

'Severus, Happy Christmas!' Molly exclaimed, rushing over to give him a brief hug, handing him a small knife. 'You can help Hermione with the potatoes, dear.'

'Certainly, Molly. Happy Christmas,' he replied politely, standing beside Hermione and beginning to quarter the potatoes with her.

While they worked, their hands bumped and brushed against each other, and Hermione felt at though she wouldn't be able to chase the heat away from her face. The man did strange things to her just by being near her. He had a look of satisfaction on his face from the moment she began to blush, and would glance at her every now and then, only to find she was looking back at him too. It sent a thrill through him to know that she was blushing because of him.

'Are you still quite certain about later tonight?' he whispered to her so that no one could hear him but Hermione.

'I am sure,' she replied, letting her hand fall on his wrist, giving him the physical reassurance along with the vocal. She wanted to be with him no matter what the consequences she would face afterwards. Regardless of the outcome of their night together, she knew that Severus would support her.

After they were finished, Molly shooed them from the kitchen, and Hermione joined the rest of the Weasley men in putting the last touches to the decorations, while Severus went off to see Arthur. Fred and George swooped up from beneath her and lifted her up as she went to put the star on the top of the tree. When they lowered her down again, she was smiling and laughing along with them. She truly did love the Weasleys and Charlie too, but she just wasn't satisfied in her marriage, and she had been getting the feeling that perhaps her husband wasn't either.

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Hermione watched from her spot on the couch beside Ginny and Tonks as Arthur handed out the Christmas presents that year. He was dressed in the most ridiculous of Santa costumes, and originally she had been appalled that he would deign to wear it. By that point, she had drunk enough spiced mead to be pleasantly loosened, and it

was just a funny sight instead. Dinner had been a lovely affair, with the majority of the Order members gathered around the table, eating, drinking, and laughing with each other. She loved times like those where everyone got along. But despite the general camaraderie in the room, Hermione felt as though something had been missing.

Severus had been seated at the opposite end of the table from her, and she had been sitting with Charlie, Harry, and Ron, who talked about Quidditch. She had been bored out of her brain trying to block out Quidditch on one side and general female gossip on the other side from Molly and Minerva. Now, with everyone fed and intoxicated, and all sitting around accepting and giving presents, she was happy. In her hand was a small white box, with a silver ribbon tying it shut and she was waiting until later to open it. She knew who it was from, and she had a feeling that she was going to be extremely grateful to that particular someone soon.

'Hermione, this one's for you,' Arthur said, tossing over a present that floated gently into her lap. It was not firm under the wrapping paper, and she rather suspected that it was some sort of clothing.

Her suspicions were confirmed when she opened it, and a soft, lovely cashmere wrap slinked out of the partially opened wrapper. There was a small note attached to it, with writing that was familiar. She looked over at Severus for the umpteenth time that night and smiled at him with a nod. He had given her two gifts. She just hoped that he liked the books that she had purchased for him. After the last present was handed out, people began dispersing, and it was at this point, when Hermione picked up all of her gifts in her arms, and bid everyone goodnight, before heading up to what would be her and Charlie's room.

She walked along the hall and stood just outside the door, noting that the room was rather quiet. Figuring it was because Charlie was still downstairs with everyone else, she grasped the handle and opened the door. What she saw when she opened the door however, was something that she had not expected. Charlie was, in fact, in the room, on their bed, with another woman. Her gasp caught in her throat as she silently watched her husband mount the woman and begin thrusting. Their moans were ringing in her ears, and it was all she could do not to make a noise.

'Oh gods, Charlie... faster!' the woman called out.

'I'm going as fast as I bloody can, Vanessa,' he growled in response.

Hermione knew that voice well. It was Vanessa Vector, her former Arithmancy professor at Hogwarts, and one of the members of the Order who had joined shortly before the final battle. She was also a Ravenclaw who had been in the same year as Charlie at Hogwarts. Her husband had mentioned all of this information to her in passing a while back, including the fact that he had dated her for the most part of their seventh year. It had all seemed like pointless information until that moment.

Tears welled up in her eyes. She clutched her Christmas presents to her chest, and backed out of the room, closing the door softly as she did. Numbly, she blinked the tears away and walked back down the hall, climbing the next flight of stairs, an unpleasant feeling settling in her stomach. She wanted to wretch and be sick, but she swallowed it down, making her way to the room at the end of the hall Severus' room. She knocked on the door then, and was startled when it opened to her immediately. Severus was staring at her sad face then, and just as tears began to trek down her cheeks, he pulled her into his arms and closed the bedroom door, locking and placing wards and silencing charms on the room as he did.

'Hermione, what is the matter?' he asked, leading her over to the bed and sitting her down on it, before removing the items from her arms.

She closed her eyes and brought her legs up before hugging her arms around them. He saw that she was distressed and put an arm around her to comfort her, stroking her hands with the other. They sat like that for half an hour, with Hermione constantly crying and Severus providing a shoulder on which she could cry. Soon, her sobs became sniffs, and she let go of her legs and simply rested against him, hiccupping every now and then from her crying.

Tilting her chin up so that she was looking at him, he frowned. 'What happened?' he asked her seriously.

She sucked in a deep breath. 'I walked into my room and found Charlie with someone else in our bed,' she said softly, trying to turn away. 'I know it's silly, considering what I was going to do tonight, but I just hadn't expected to walk in on something like that. I was shocked.'

He turned her face back to him gently and kissed her forehead. 'I understand, pet. It would come as a shock to anyone but you were not satisfied in your marriage, were you?' he asked. 'Does this not make your decision easier?'

She nodded. 'Certainly, it makes it easier but it hurts to think that this could have been going on for a lot longer than just tonight,' she said softly, averting her eyes from his. 'I hadn't even contemplated leaving Charlie until recently, and I certainly hadn't thought of sleeping with anyone other than you before now.'

Severus pulled her closer to him and stroked her hair gently. 'It's an unpleasant thought for sure,' he conceded, pressing a kiss to the top of her head. 'Come on you look like you could use a hot bath.'

Hermione nodded and let him lead her to his bathroom, accepting the clean towels he handed to her, and watching as he went about the bathroom, turning on the taps to fill the bath, and pouring various potions in to soothe her. Once the bath was full, he turned back to her and took the towels, placing them on the bench beside the sink and grasping the bottom of her sweater. She shyly unfolded her arms and raised them above her head to allow for him to remove it from her. Once the woolen garment was cast aside, he continued with removing her pale blue camisole, leaving her in only her jeans and the white satin bra.

He unbuttoned and unzipped the jeans, drawing them down her legs, and she stepped out of them as he stood back up to full height. Her arms were wrapped around herself nervously, feeling self-conscious about how he thought she looked. She was a little on the thin side, and always had been because of her height. She was quite tall for a woman, and had modest curves there was nothing voluptuous about her in the least. Severus found her irresistible, and gently coaxed her to move her hands to her sides, leaning in to kiss her swiftly on the lips in reassurance. Her bra was the next thing to go, revealing her dusky pink nipples to him in the centre of her milky-skinned breasts.

'You are perfect,' he told her, before pulling her firmly against him, and kissing her soundly, snaking his tongue into her mouth and drinking in the taste of her. She tasted of Christmas spices and warm mead. 'And I will ruin you...'

Hermione shook her head. 'I don't care in the least,' she admitted, all thoughts of Charlie pushed aside by the now overwhelming desire to jump the man wrapped around her. 'I want you I don't care about anything else.'

He kissed her again, sliding his thumbs into the band of her white knickers, and with a nod from her, he skimmed them down her legs and off her, tossing them aside. As he stood back up, he noted that the curls at the apex of her thighs were neatly groomed and glistened with her arousal. He could smell her scent in the air. Hermione looked at him shyly from beneath her lashes, which sent a jolt of arousal through him. He immediately drew his sweater and shirt off in one motion, and unbuttoned and kicked his jeans away, presenting himself to her.

His chest was well-defined and there were sparse black hairs sprinkled over it. His shoulders were broad and waist and hips small just as a man should be in her opinion. His wiry muscles could be seen rippling slightly from arousal, and while he was toned, he was not overly muscular. Her attention then went to the tenting in his shorts far larger than anything she had ever had experience with. Entranced, she reached out and touched his erection through the pants and stroked. He sucked in a sharp breath, and Hermione immediately skimmed his shorts off him, tossing them aside, and staring at his fully erect penis, jutting out from the thatch of black curls at the base.

'Let's take that bath,' she suggested, taking his hand and leading him over to the large tub, stepping into the hot water and pulling him to follow.

He obliged and joined her, settling between her legs and resting his back against her. He could feel her breasts crushed against his chest, and her curls brushing his lower back. Hugging her arms around him, she took a washcloth and lazily rubbed down his chest with soapy water. After ten minutes, and his entire body had been washed by her, he turned around and returned the favor, washing her slowly, and lingering at her breasts and between her legs.

By this point, she was too aroused for too much more foreplay, and she wrapped her legs around his hips, urging him to enter her. He rubbed against her opening, pressing into her just a little, before withdrawing teasing her just a little more. She moaned and grabbed his bum, pulling and forcing him to slide fully within. He groaned loudly, resisting the urge to come then and there. He held still in her for a moment before she eagerly clenched around him just the tiniest bit, urging him to move. He

pulled out of her most of the way, before pushing back in, establishing a slow, deep pace. Eventually, it became too much to hold back, and his thrusts sped up, encouraged by her very vocal responses to him.

When he felt her walls trembling and fluttering around him, he sped up more, going faster as he pushed her over the edge into orgasm. His followed soon after, and he shouted her name in ecstasy. His breathing harsh, they came slowly down from their highs, and he slumped against her in the tub, his flaccid member still buried within her, and her legs slack around his hips.

'You can now consider yourself a tainted woman,' he murmured against her neck, pressing a kiss there.

Hermione turned her head and gently cupped his face between her hands, leaning in and giving him a passion-filled kiss. 'No, Severus, my love,' she whispered. 'I am the luckiest woman alive.'

A/N Okay, so that was my response to the challenge prompt. I probably went off track a little with it, and the romance aspect over-took the Christmas one, but I tried anyway! So please leave me a *review* and let me know what you think!