

If Only I Could Turn Back Time

by debjunk

Severus Snape regrets not becoming romantically involved with Hermione Granger in his past. Will a trip back in time solve all of his problems?

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 11

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Chapter One

Severus Snape appeared in front of the Weasley Burrow and frowned. He heard a great commotion coming from the backyard and stalked toward the large rose-covered entryway that had been placed at the front of the yard. He scowled as a young, red-headed chap handed him a program and motioned for him to follow. Grumpily, he walked behind the young man, hoping to reach his seat without an incident, but his desires were not heeded. Molly Weasley came rushing toward him at alarming speed. She was dressed in a light green robe and had a frilly hat with a dark green ribbon around it. The ends of the ribbon hung at the back of the hat, flowing to her mid-back.

"Severus!" Molly cried. "I'm so glad you came!"

Molly linked her arm in his and led him to a white folding chair near the front of the grouping.

"Molly, I'd rather sit towards the back," Severus argued.

"Nonsense! You will have a prominent place, Severus. Hermione would have it no other way."

Severus frowned, but allowed himself to be led closer to the front. He stopped at the fourth row, unwilling to move up any further among the seating arrangements. Molly frowned a bit, but gave in.

"Very well," she mumbled. Seeing that he was seated, she turned to attend to the other guests. "Uncle Howard!" she cried as she sped off to help with another partygoer.

Severus looked around the yard. White roses floated in the air on dark green leaf beds. A beautiful arch covered with the same roses stood at the front of the grouping. A nervous Ronald Weasley wandered up and stood under the trellis, moving from one foot to the other. Harry Potter meandered up after a minute and placed a relaxing hand on Ron. Ron smiled at his friend and stopped his bobbling.

Suddenly, the wedding march sounded in the air. Everyone stood and turned to watch the bride walk down the aisle. Severus caught his breath as he saw her. She was utterly breathtaking. Her lush curls had been swept into a French twist, her veil cascaded around her. She was a vision in the white, princess-style wedding gown that was covered in bead-work. Even the queen herself had never looked more elegant or beautiful than the woman who walked down the aisle, beaming at Ronald Weasley.

Severus grimaced. His eyes followed her every move, afraid to look away for fear that she would disappear. This was the last time he would see her as a single woman. It was the last time he could indulge in fantasies about her. She would be wed to Ronald Weasley in a matter of minutes... lost to him forever. His eyes never left her face.

Admiring the beautiful curve of her cheek and the softness of her lips, he gasped as she glanced at him and bestowed a smile upon him. His heart leapt to his throat. If only

she could always smile at him like that. Unfortunately, he had lost the opportunity to have her smile like that a long time ago. He stared at her mutely as she continued down the aisle and drew her gaze away from him. Her eyes danced as she glanced at Ron. Severus' heart crumpled as he noted the love in her eyes. She could be looking at *him* like that, but he'd let her get away without even doing anything about it. Now, he was left to watch her go to the arms of another, to be his forever.

The bride clasped the hand of her groom as they turned their attention to the vicar. He began his speech about the wonders of matrimony, gave the couple counsel, and eventually got around to performing the ceremony.

"Do you, Hermione Jane Granger, take Ronald Bilius Weasley to be your lawfully wedded husband from this day forth, for as long as ye both shall live?"

Hermione beamed at Ron. "I do!"

"Do you, Ronald Bilius Weasley, take Hermione Jane Granger to be your lawfully wedded wife from this day forth, for as long as ye both shall live?"

Ron grinned a toothy grin. "I do," he said excitedly.

Everything around Severus turned black. He heard the vicar pronounce them wizard and wife but did not see them anymore. Things came back slowly, first fuzzy, then conforming to normal. His vision cleared just in time for him to see Ron and Hermione in an impassioned kiss. His stomach turned at the sight.

Bells rang, the music began to play again, and still, the kiss went on. Finally, the newlyweds broke apart and smiled lovingly at each other. They turned and proceeded down the aisle, hand in hand, as a symbol of their union. Severus wanted to be sick. Why had he even come? Oh, yes, because Hermione had invited him. He could deny her nothing, even if it meant his eternal despair.

He'd seen enough. He'd witnessed the union of the brightest witch of her age to the dullest knife in the drawer. He envied that knife. Oh, how he envied him. Ronald Weasley was the luckiest man alive, as far as Severus Snape was concerned.

His mind went to another wedding he had been to... secretly. He'd watched Lily marry Potter as he'd hidden behind a bush. He had to admit, he felt worse about this union than he'd ever had about Lily's. Maybe it was because he knew he'd lost Hermione Granger because of inactivity and had he done something, surely it would be him enjoying her embrace right now instead of Weasley.

For two years, they'd flirted with each other. No, that wasn't right... she had flirted with him. He had been reluctant to do anything about it, so he'd done nothing. He could almost pinpoint the day she gave up on him. They had been sitting in the Great Hall, side by side, as always. Hermione was speaking of the latest hijinks in her Transfiguration class. Severus had been listening but trying not to appear too interested in what she had to say. Secretly, he'd hung onto her every word.

"So, I assigned the whole lot of them detention," she finished.

Severus smiled thinly at her.

Hermione leaned in toward him. "You know, Severus, after I'm done with detentions, all I have to do is mark some essays. I get pretty lonesome at night."

Severus swallowed hard. "Maybe you should call one of the house-elves to keep you company, Hermione," he said with a scowl.

Hermione's smile dropped from her face, and she sat back in her chair. Disappointment flooded her eyes. He heard her murmur something that sounded like 'if only you did like me...' Severus stared at her as he watched the disappointment disappear, and a determined look come over the young witch. She didn't say another word to him for the entire meal.

Over the next week, she'd become more professional in her dealings with Severus. She'd still sat next to him, but only really conversed if there was something clinical to discuss. The following week, he'd caught her arm in arm with Weasley. She had glanced tentatively at him as the couple had waltzed by. He'd thought he'd seen hope in her eyes, but the look disappeared as quickly as it had come. He scowled at the two, but said nothing.

Hermione and Weasley were inseparable after that, so it was no surprise when they'd announced their engagement. Severus had flirted with the idea of telling Hermione that he'd had feelings for her, but could never do it. If she'd found happiness in Weasley, then he would not spoil that.

During the long months of their engagement, however, Severus had come to the conclusion that he'd made a grave error. His inaction had thrown Hermione into Weasley's arms. His fear of rejection had caused him to miss out on something that had had the potential to be a lifelong commitment. He'd lost her because he'd never taken the time to seek her out. In hindsight, of course, it was easy to see that she had liked him. Why had he just sat back and taken for granted that she'd always be there, flirting with him, whether he acknowledged her or not? How daft could he have been? The answer was a resounding 'certifiably insane.'

Severus had reached the entryway once again, and glanced back at what his actions had reaped. Hermione and Weasley were arm in arm, laughing at something Potter was saying. The happiness that should have been his was now Weasley's. Severus frowned at them and walked to the Apparition point.

A bigger fool had never lived than the man who dejectedly Disapparated away from the festive wedding that day.

Severus stormed into his room and slammed the door behind him. He wished he still roomed in the dungeons, but as the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, his quarters had been relocated to one closer to the classroom from where he taught. The room was completely too bright. Normally, it didn't bother him, but he wanted to be in the dark right now. With a flick of his wand, the thick forest-green curtains closed tightly, efficiently cutting the sunlight from the room. Severus flicked the wand again and a single candle lit. It flickered forlornly atop a small table. The table stood next to his destination... a dark brown, leather recliner. Severus hurled himself into it and tapped his fingers on the armrest. His mood was foul. His inaction became the catalyst for the self-loathing that came so easily to him.

Why do I set myself up for failure? I wish I could go back and do it all over again!

Severus stopped drumming his fingers. He arched an eyebrow in the dark. Maybe that was the answer! He could do it all over again. This time, he wouldn't be so aloof. He'd win the girl instead of drive her away. She would be his! He would make sure of it this time.

Severus rose quickly from his seat and swept into his bedroom. He went over to his dresser and waved his wand to unlock the lowest drawer. Opening the drawer, he pulled out a long, golden chain. A round object hung from the chain. He eyed the Time-Turner as he placed it in his palm. He'd found this little trinket in Knockturn Alley. Time-Turners weren't considered Dark objects, but they were much rarer than they had been before the Ministry's supply of them had been destroyed. This one had certain *special* properties. It let the traveler travel by years instead of hours, and the amount of time spent in the past could be set into the unit, so that the traveler would automatically be returned to their time after the allotted setting had elapsed.

Severus ran a finger over the Time-Turner. This was his answer. He'd go back and set things straight! His brilliant mind turned as he debated how long he would need in the past to accomplish his goal. *I should go back in time two years and stay in the past for two weeks* He frowned. Staying too long could expose him and his plot. *Maybe staying just one week would be better.*

With a quick nod, he decided on one week. He adjusted the small beads that rimmed the Time-Turner, setting it so that he would stay in the past for one week. He slipped the chain around his neck and spun the device back two times. Severus Snape disappeared.

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given.

PROMPT: #9. Hello, It's Me

a. Snape has a Time-Turner, and he 'bumps' into a later/earlier self as he's going about his day-to-day business. What happens next? What do they get up to? Does one Snape get the option to rest and have fun? Or do they share in the pains and struggles? Do they offer each other moral support? Does Snape become far too reliant upon this illegal Time-Turner activity, and does another Order member have to help 'wean him off' himself? Do they do other... more lascivious things? Does Snape use this function to save himself in the Shrieking Shack? etc.

Chapter 2

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Severus Snape regrets not becoming romantically involved with Hermione Granger in his past. Will a trip back in time solve all of his problems?

Chapter Two

Severus Snape appeared in exactly the same place where he had been standing. He blinked. Everything looked the same two years in the past as it had in his present. Was he really that unvaried and... predictable? *Haven't I moved a single item in these quarters in two entire years? No wonder I'm single and lonely, I can't stand change!*

Glancing around, he didn't see a trace of himself anywhere. The clock by his bedside told him it was about half an hour before dinner. *The front room is the obvious place to find myself*, he mused.

He waltzed out of the bedroom and saw his other self sitting at the desk near the back of the room. His double was grading papers. He was bent over an exam, and his hair formed a curtain that hid his features. Severus approached Severus.

"Ahem," he said, to get Severus' attention.

Snape looked up from his grading and dropped his quill. His mouth dropped open while he stared unbecomingly at his doppelganger, who was standing in front of him with a smirk on his face.

"What the devil?" Snape exclaimed as he quickly stood and pulled his wand out.

Severus put up a hand to stop him. "I assure you, I am not a Polyjuiced enemy. I have come from the future to speak with you."

Snape pushed his wand into his double's chest. "Prove it!" he demanded.

Severus rolled his eyes. He had anticipated his own disbelief prior to his time travel. He looked to himself with a bored look. "As a child, I used to sleep with a tattered stuffed hippogriff. When mother threatened to take it away from me, I ran away. She found me huddled under the porch, clinging to the stuffed animal an hour later."

Snape lowered his wand slowly. "Why have you come here? You know the dangers of being seen when time traveling! Why would you risk our sanity?"

"I've come to warn you that you are heading down the wrong road."

"Perhaps you could have done that about twenty years ago, *before* I took the Dark Mark," Snape replied dryly.

Severus smirked. "This is a much more serious matter than that."

Snape regarded Severus curiously. "What are you on about?"

"You are about to lose the most important thing in your life, Severus. I'm here to knock some sense into you."

"Most important thing... what are you speaking of? My wand? I assure you, it never leaves my side."

Severus rounded the desk and stood nose to nose with himself. "I'm speaking of Hermione, you obtuse git. I really didn't think I'd have to explain this to you. You know you have feelings for her!"

Snape's eyes widened. "Hermione? Is she in danger?"

Severus stepped back. "Yes. She's in danger of marrying that Weasley whelp."

Snape sat down heavily. "She's going to marry? Weasley, no less?" His eyes snapped up at his twin for confirmation.

"I just left her wedding. Do you know what the worst part is? You could have stopped it!"

"Well, why didn't you?" Snape asked caustically. "Why didn't you stand and shout that their bonding was a mistake?"

"I said *you* could have stopped it. By the time I got to the point that they were to be married, it was too late. She is in love with him."

Snape put his head in his hands. "I knew it was too good to be true. She could never have feelings for me."

Severus grabbed his twin and shook him. "That's just it, you dunderhead, she *did* have feelings for you! Think about it! She sits next to you at dinner and talks to you endlessly."

"Minerva assigned her seat to be there, she has no choice."

"She has feelings for you; you are just too self-absorbed to see it. You think that no one could ever care enough for you to be attracted to you, but I assure you, she does!"

"How do you know this?" Snape asked curiously. His eyebrow arched speculatively at Severus.

Severus stood and glared at his counterpart. "I have had a long time to evaluate my past history with Hermione. I was blind not to see that she had feelings for me. She practically threw herself at me, but I was too dimwitted to acknowledge her. She finally gave up on me, probably thinking that I had no interest in her. She couldn't have been further from the truth." Severus bent low and placed his hands on the arm of Snape's chair. "She never knew that I dreamed of the two of us together, to the point that I thought of nothing else for a very long time."

Snape swallowed and pushed himself back into his chair, trying to distance himself from his doppelganger. "I'm at that point right now," he admitted.

"Then you must do something about it!" Severus cried.

Snape pulled himself closer to Severus. "I don't know what to do!" He glared at Severus, challenging him to find a solution to his problem.

Severus stood again and began to pace. "If you don't do something, she will assume there is no future for us. She will throw herself at Weasley and fall in love with him. They will marry and history will have repeated itself." Severus stopped and glared at himself. "Is that what you want?"

Snape stood now and closed the distance between himself and the other Severus. "Of course I don't want that! He's not worthy of her. He's a cretin! She'd have to spoon feed information to him just to make him understand her. What kind of future would that be for her?"

Severus' face fell. "I know. I've worried about that myself. Once the spark and newness of their joining has faded, she will realize what she has done. How can she ever be truly happy with him? They have little in common."

"Not like Hermione and me... we have so much in common, sometimes it makes me pause. I never thought I would meet someone as close in interests as her... especially after Lily."

Severus arched an eyebrow. "Lily was suited to me also, but not like Hermione. There is something—unique—about her. She has combined compassion with brilliance. It is an intoxicating combination."

Snape snarled. "It doesn't matter how well-suited we are, she'll marry another."

"Have you not been listening to me?" Severus snapped. "You can change all of this!"

"How?"

Severus put his hand up to his nose and let his fingers squeeze it as he began to pace again. "You need to make a move, sir. Unless you show some interest, she will continue on this path of destruction."

Snape's shoulders fell. "Then I have lost already."

Severus' eyes snapped to Snape's. "Whatever are you going on about?"

"I have tried to do something. I cannot bring myself to say anything."

"Don't you think I know that?" Severus growled. "Don't you think I have your memories? That's why I'm here. She cares for you. You cannot fail!"

Snape's eyes narrowed. "How can you be so sure?"

"I told you, for the past seven months I have been lost in the memory of her flirting with me. I assure you, she will not reject you."

Snape frowned. "I suppose if I do not try, I will lose more than my pride." He gave Severus a determined look. "I will do it."

Severus clapped himself on the back and smiled for the first time in a long while. "You will be magnificent."

"I highly doubt that," Snape murmured under his breath.

"You should ask her to stop by your room after dinner tonight. The sooner you start the more secure I'll feel about our future."

"And what will you be doing during all of this?"

"She must not see me. I will Disillusion myself, so I might observe. Is that agreeable?"

Snape gave a curt nod.

Severus rapped himself on the head with his wand and suddenly took on the characteristics of his surroundings. Snape smiled.

"That was always one of my best abilities," he told himself.

"Yes," Severus answered. He looked himself over, noting that he matched his surroundings flawlessly. "I think this will do quite nicely."

"Shall we?" Snape asked.

Severus nodded before realizing his twin couldn't see him. "Indeed," he said finally.

Snape and Severus left the room and headed for the Great Hall and Snape's first attempt at a pick-up.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 of 11

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Disclaimer: Not mine. No money.

Chapter Three

Snape entered the Great Hall, his robes billowing behind him. Oh, he loved to make an entrance! Glancing at the Head table, he noted Hermione's absence. His heart sank a bit within him. No matter, she would arrive shortly. He billowed up to his seat and settled himself in. The only hint that he had of Severus' whereabouts was a soft breeze that passed him as he sat. He assumed Severus was standing at his side, between his chair and Professor Sprout's.

He began to fill his plate, glancing nervously at the entryway he knew Hermione would eventually come through. At long last, he saw her enter. She wandered to her seat and gave Severus a warm smile.

"Good evening, Severus. How was your day off?"

"Mrmph," Snape muttered.

Severus rolled his Disillusioned eyes. The way his counterpart was progressing, the next ice age would be upon them before he got up the nerve to make a move.

"Well, I had a wonderful day. I slept in, took a relaxing bath, and read a good book. The only thing that was missing was someone to give me a backrub."

Snape furrowed his brow and made a grunting noise.

Come on, man, she's practically throwing herself at you! Severus thought. *I'd forgotten how stiff I was.*

Hermione gave up and changed the subject. Soon she had lured Snape into a conversation about the proper preparation of porcupine quills. They ate and debated until both of their plates were empty. The two sat back and continued to expound on the finer points of the quills until Hermione noticed the ceiling was quite dark.

"I'd best get back to my room and my book," she mused.

"Umm..." Snape mumbled.

Hermione turned her attention back to him.

Staring at her, he struggled to speak. "Have a nice evening, Hermione," Snape said at last.

Hermione seemed slightly disappointed but plastered a fake smile upon her lips.

"You too," she said as she rose and left the table.

Snape followed suit and quickly descended into the dungeons. He entered his rooms and left the door open so his double would be able to enter at will. The door slammed suddenly before Severus appeared out of thin air.

"What in Merlin's name was that? You were supposed to entice her, not shy away from her as if she had the plague! How on earth do you expect to win her affections if you don't even speak to her outside of mundane work topics?"

Snape glowered at Severus. "It's not as easy as it looks, you know!"

"I understand that. That's why I'm here, you idiot. You need to do something though, or my trip will have been in vain!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Shut up?"

"Yes... shut up. Who do you think you are coming into my home and telling me what to do?"

Severus narrowed his eyes at Snape. "I think I'm you. You see, I'm an even more miserable version of you." He pointed to Snape with his finger. "I'm the one who is lonely and hopelessly in love with someone who now doesn't return those feelings. I explained all of this to you. Do you really want to wind up being me?"

Snape shrugged and looked to the floor.

Severus stepped closer to himself. "Look... I'm you. I know what you feel. I know what you desire."

"I've given up on having desires. I've been driven by others for too long to get to think about myself."

Severus grabbed Snape's arm. "Yet you still dream, Severus. Even I still dream. You want what everyone wants... a companion. We all want to have someone to share our life with, someone to love, and someone who'll see us as we really are. Right now, you're hoping that's Hermione. Well, if you don't act, it won't be, and I fear she's your last chance."

Snape looked into his own eyes, which were staring back at him. "It's just that... even you're not sure that things will work out." He began to pace and put his hands in his hair, running his fingers through it until he grasped a large fistful on each side. "Why would she ever choose me over Weasley?"

He turned and gave Severus a pleading look. "What can I offer that Weasley can't?"

Severus folded his arms in front of him and began to pace too. The two men walked past each other, turned, and passed each other again. Severus stopped and grabbed at Snape. Both of his hands grasped Snape's arms as he stilled the other man.

"You can offer her a worthy companion, someone who is an equal," Severus offered.

"Someone who could be her father," Snape countered.

"Someone who can stimulate her mind," Severus suggested.

"Someone who is a grumpy old man," Snape said in exasperation.

"Someone who she obviously is attracted to now. She's not interested in Weasley now. She won't be either, if you show her some interest." Severus gritted his teeth. "You saw her at dinner. She practically invited you to give her a back rub, and all you could do was grunt at her. All you had to do was coily tell her you were available if she'd like that back rub after dinner."

Snape's eyes widened. "I... I couldn't say something so forward!"

Severus released him and turned away in disgust. "Then we've lost already," he stated in defeat.

Snape closed the distance between them. "How is it that you are me, yet you can think to do such things?"

Severus glared at him. "I have had time to see what life is like without her. I have had time to go over every little encounter and see where I could have done or said something to encourage her. I'm desperate. I recognize the need to step out of my box."

"Maybe you should do the courting, then."

Severus' eyes lit up. "That's not a bad idea! I could pose as you and woo her. You could be the Disillusioned one, and when you feel brave enough, you could take over."

"You could show me how to do what I need to so that she'll be mine." Snape's eyes were glimmering with hope now.

"We have one week, then I will go back to my own time."

"Will that be enough time?"

"It will have to be."

"Where do we start?" Snape asked anxiously.

"We need to go to the greenhouse," Severus said as he tapped his chin.

"What's there?"

"Flowers, of course."

"Ah."

Severus and a Disillusioned Snape had made their way to the greenhouses and had picked an elegant bouquet of white roses for Hermione. Now they stood in front of her door. Snape stood behind Severus and prodded him to knock on the door.

"Patience, Severus!" Severus told himself as he lifted his hand and rapped on the door.

A moment later, the door opened to reveal Hermione in a thick robe, seemingly ready for bed.

"Oh, Severus! I'm glad you stopped by. You... Those are beautiful flowers."

"I was in the greenhouse, collecting some belladonna when I saw these roses and thought of you."

Hermione's mouth dropped open. She stared down at the bouquet in disbelief. She then looked up at Severus as her eyes went wide.

"Oh, where are my manners? Please... come in," she stammered.

She opened the door wide. Severus paused in the doorway to give her the bouquet, thus giving Snape time to sneak into her room as well. Hermione smelled the roses.

"They're beautiful, Severus. Thank you very much." She beamed at him as she conjured up a vase and arranged the roses into it. She carried it over to the table that sat in front of her couch.

"Come in and sit down. I won't bite."

Severus moved to the couch and settled down into it. Hermione sat next to him. She eyed the flowers before turning to him.

"That was so thoughtful of you, Severus, thank you again."

"As I said, their purity and beauty made me think of you the instant I saw them."

Hermione swallowed hard and looked down into her lap.

"Have I been misreading you, Hermione?" Severus asked bluntly.

Hermione's head snapped up, and she looked into Severus' eyes. "What do you mean?"

"The little hints, the coy flirting. Would you like to deepen our relationship?" Severus held his breath. Normally, he would never be so forward, but he needed to get this relationship going.

Hermione gave a giggle that sounded more like a gasp. "I didn't think you were interested, actually."

Severus slid closer to Hermione. "I'm sorry if I gave you the wrong impression. I'm incredibly interested. It's just that I didn't think it was possible that you would be interested in me."

Hermione gave Severus a puzzled look. "Why would you say that?"

"If you were interested in me, that would make me the luckiest man alive, and I know I'm not the luckiest man alive."

Hermione looked at Severus tentatively. Suddenly, she grinned widely. "I beg to differ, Severus. You are the luckiest man alive, and I must be the luckiest woman if you share my feelings."

Severus placed a hand on her neck and rubbed his thumb under her ear. "I can't convey to you how much I do share them. Maybe this will give you some idea..."

His lips closed in on hers as he softly and reverently kissed her. His heart leapt within him. If nothing came of their endeavor to win Hermione Granger, at least he would know that he shared this one, blissfully perfect kiss with her.

Severus felt her sigh and lean into him. He'd been right all along. She'd had feelings for him, and from the passion behind her kiss, those feelings had been quite strong. His heart filled with hope for the future. His mind filled with happiness as she affected him in ways that no other woman ever had. His hand came up, and his fingers ran through her hair. He could stay like this forever.

She was the first to pull away. Hermione gazed at Severus, her eyes filled with desire. "Yes, I am the luckiest woman alive."

Severus pulled her into an embrace. Hermione settled into him, resting her head on his chest. Severus closed his eyes as he rested his chin on her head. Breathing in the scent of her, he reveled in her closeness. He hoped that things would work out for them.

"You don't know how long I have wanted you to do this," Hermione admitted to him.

"You've no idea how long I've wanted more between us," Severus told her.

They sat together quietly for a while, just enjoying their closeness. Finally, Severus sighed.

"I should go," he said.

Hermione placed her hand on his chest. "Do you have to? I could make us some hot chocolate."

Severus smiled. "No, Hermione, it's getting late. To be completely honest with you, I want to take this slowly. I don't want anything to mess up what we've found in one another. Does that make any sense?"

Hermione nodded. "Yes, it does. I don't want to rush things either, Severus. I think if we take our time, we might create something long lasting."

Severus took his hand and ran his fingers along her jaw line. "I hope so," he said. He smiled and rose from the sofa. Hermione followed suit and saw him to the door. Severus turned and kissed her again.

"How about dinner in Hogsmeade tomorrow?" he asked.

Hermione put her arms around Severus' neck. "I'd love to," she told him before kissing him again.

He finally pulled away, giving her a look of longing. "Until tomorrow, then," he said with a bow of his head.

Severus waited for Snape to open his door. He swept in once the door swung open. Snape appeared in front of him, glowering.

"You weren't supposed to fall all over her like a lovesick puppy!" he snarled.

Severus raised an eyebrow. "I hardly acted like a lovesick puppy," he retorted.

"I thought you were just going to flirt with her! I wanted to be the first one to kiss her."

"As I am you, and you are me, you technically did kiss her."

"And I'll have to wait two years to bloody remember it!"

Severus smiled. "I'll keep the memory warm for you."

Snape sneered at Severus, causing Severus to laugh. "I'm sorry, then," he offered finally. "Things were progressing nicely. I thought I'd get them to a more significant state. Now that I've done all the groundwork, you can have the date tomorrow night."

An intense look of fear crossed over Snape's face. "What will I say to her?"

"Good heavens, man, I've set the groundwork for you. Just talk to her! Talk about work. That will lead to other things." He glanced at Snape, who looked to be hyperventilating. "Calm down! It's just a date!"

"Just a date? You come bursting into my home, bemoaning the fact that your life is over because you don't have Hermione in it, then you make it sound as if this date is just a simple lark. I could muck everything up!"

Severus laughed. "She likes you already, what are you afraid of?"

"We're talking about me, here. When it comes to women, if it's possible to muck it up, I'll do it."

"I just had a very pleasant encounter with her without incident. We are one in the same! For Merlin's sake, have confidence in yourself."

Snape glared at Severus for a minute. At long last, his face softened. "You're right. She and I have already expressed our feelings for one another, that was the hard part, right? The rest should be easy."

"Precisely."

Snape looked doubtful. "Precisely," he said wanly.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 of 11

Severus Snape regrets not becoming romantically involved with Hermione Granger in his past. Will a trip back in time solve all of his problems?

Chapter Four

Snape and Hermione were sitting in the Hogsmeade Café. He had requested they be seated in the back room so they could have some privacy. They were the only two in this part of the café, and Severus was thankful that no one else was seated near them.

Snape could feel Severus' presence nearby. It was a bit disconcerting to have a chaperone on this date, but he knew that Severus wanted to watch. He looked nervously at Hermione, who was nursing a butterbeer and staring at him. He cleared his throat. Opening his mouth to attempt speech, he was thwarted by the hostess' appearance.

"Professor Snape, Professor Granger, how nice to see the two of you!" the hostess gushed.

Snape sneered, but Hermione smiled up at her.

"It's nice to see you too, Elaine, especially when there aren't a gaggle of students about."

Elaine laughed. "Do you know what you'd like?"

"I'll have the fish and chips," Hermione said.

"I'll have the same," Snape said, not looking up at the hostess.

"All right," Elaine commented as the order appeared on her notepad. "I'll have those up for you in a few minutes." She turned and went back into the kitchen to place their order.

Snape shifted in his chair. Hermione eyed him curiously.

"Is something wrong?" she asked.

"What?" Snape asked with a surprised tone.

"You seem a bit flustered. Did you have some problems with classes today?"

Snape sat back and crossed his arms. "As a matter of fact, Jacob Goodfellow exploded a cauldron and soaked half the class in burn paste."

"Oh, no!" Hermione cried. "Did you get doused too?"

Snape scowled. "No, I was one of the 'lucky ones.'" He accentuated his last words with his fingers forming quotation marks in the air.

Hermione giggled. Sobering, she looked at Snape lustfully. "I've been thinking about you all day," she said sultrily.

"You... you have?" Snape asked incredulously.

"Mmm hmm. I kept thinking of you kissing me. I was hoping we could continue where we left off last night."

Snape's mouth dropped open. He snapped it shut as his eyes widened. "Umm... uhh... yeah."

Severus felt a swift kick at his leg from an invisible source on his left.

Hermione's eyebrows knit together. "Are you upset with me?" she asked.

"Why would you say that?"

"You seem a bit hesitant. Do you regret what happened last night?" Hermione's gaze showed some fear as her lip pouted out.

"No... no... of course not. I'm just... I'm just not used to discussing such things in public."

Hermione relaxed. She gazed around the empty room and stifled a giggle. "Oh, I suppose you wouldn't be. I'm sorry. We should talk about something else."

"What do you suggest?"

Hermione shrugged. "I have no idea."

They stared at each other, neither one coming up with something scintillating to speak on.

"Oh, Severus, what's wrong with us? We can normally talk for hours about nothing in particular. Put a little romance into the mix, and we clam up and can't say two words to each other."

Snape leaned forward and rested his elbows on the table. "I'm sorry. This is all very new to me. As you know, the only other woman I cared about had no interest in me. I'm a bit awed that you deem me worth the time."

Hermione gazed at Severus for a while. Snape thought he saw a deep sadness within her eyes.

"Severus," Hermione said measuredly. "I have always deemed you worth the time. I wish that Harry's mother hadn't hurt you so. I wish you could recognize how wonderful you truly are."

Snape's eyes widened in amazement. Once again, he was interrupted by Elaine, who now arrived with their food. Severus was forced to straighten up as the plates were set down in front of them. Elaine asked if they needed anything else. As both parties shook their heads, Severus waved her off impatiently. Elaine shook her head, fully aware of the impatience of the male part of this couple, and left to attend to her other customers.

"You think I'm wonderful?" Snape asked as he leaned in toward her again. "I think you've lost all sense of perspective, if that's what you think!" Severus whispered to her.

Hermione narrowed an eye at him and tilted her head in a provocative way. "I think, sir, that you were forced to do so many terrible things during the war that you won't give yourself a break and find happiness. You're constantly waiting for the walls to come crashing down around you. Sometimes, Severus, good things happen, and they're not flukes, or things that should be happening to someone else. You deserve as much happiness as any other person in the world."

"You do realize I've spent most of my life as a Death Eater, doing horrible things?" Snape asked caustically. He felt another kick to his leg, but chose to ignore it.

Hermione sighed and looked to her plate. She grabbed a chip and took a bite out of it. Chewing, she eyed Severus in exasperation.

"Really?" she exclaimed finally. "I didn't realize that, actually. I've been living in a bubble all my life and had no idea that you were a Death Eater." She lifted her hands, feigning shock. "I didn't know you killed Albus Dumbledore either. I thought you were a saint... perfect in every way."

Placing her hands back in her lap, she continued. "Here I thought you were the kindest man on the planet who never gets annoyed or frustrated with anyone. How could you shatter my image of you like that?" That last bit had been punctuated with a cock of her head and furrowed eyebrows.

"Hermione," Snape said through gritted teeth.

"No, honestly, Severus, do you not think that I'm aware of everything you've done in your past? I'm well aware of it. I'm also aware that you are a git to most people on the earth. For some reason, I don't seem to annoy you like I used to as a student. I'm thrilled about that. I'm thrilled that you are attracted to me. I don't care what you were before. With the end of the war, you had a chance to live your life as you would see fit. Since then, I haven't noticed you on any Death Eater raids, nor have you struck anyone down in the name of the Dark Lord. Give yourself a break and put your past behind you." With that, she took a bite of her fish fillet and sat back with folded arms to await Severus' response to her rant.

Snape shifted in his seat uncomfortably. He kept his eyes on his plate, and his teeth ground together. At long length, he looked up to Hermione.

"You are trying to tell me that you are going into this relationship with your eyes open to who I used to be?"

She nodded curtly.

"And the things I've done don't bother you in the least?"

Hermione closed her eyes and lowered her head slightly. "The things you did when you first joined the Death Eaters do bother me, but you have more than repaid your debt for them." She leaned in toward the table. "Severus, you did what you had to do, and what you did do was phenomenal. You made it possible for Voldemort to be defeated."

Snape leaned in toward her. "I just don't want you to wake up one day and truly realize you are in a relationship with a murderer."

Hermione cocked her head at him. "How many people have you killed, anyway?" she asked as if it were a simple question about the weather.

Snape's shoulders sagged. "More than I would like to admit."

"Severus, tell me. If this is bothering you, I might as well know right off about it. Then you won't have to worry that I'll leave you when I do find out."

"You really want to know?"

Hermione reached her hand out to Snape. He tentatively placed his hand in hers, and she squeezed it reassuringly. "I do."

He looked down at the table and his plate again. "I killed one right after my initiation into the Death Eaters. I was part of a raiding party. We ambushed a family. They left the teenage daughter for last. I was certain they would do horrible things to her, so I killed her before the others could. I was so horrified by my actions that I couldn't sleep for weeks. When I did, I had horrible nightmares about it."

He gave a wry chuckle. "You would think that would have been enough to make me realize that I had picked the wrong side. No, it took the threatening of someone dear to me for me to understand what I had done to myself." Severus swallowed hard and stopped speaking.

Hermione squeezed his hand again, urging him to go on.

"I never killed again until the Dark Lord returned. Then, when I did, it was to save others from suffering worse fates from my colleagues."

"How many, including Dumbledore?" Hermione asked softly.

Snape winced and fixed his eyes onto his plate. "Five," he confided.

Snape didn't dare look up. If he did, he would see the horror in her face. He would see how his revelation would drive any respect for him right out of her. He would see her derision for his inability to do anything but kill.

"Severus?"

He didn't look up.

"Severus, look at me... please."

He shook his head tersely.

"Severus, please... look at me."

Slowly, his eyes met hers. The things he feared seeing were...not...plastered all over her face. Hermione looked at him seriously, but with no contempt.

"You did what you had to do. Those people would have been killed in any case, correct?"

Snape nodded.

"If you hadn't done it quickly, they would have been terrorized, right?"

Snape nodded again.

"Then you did the right thing."

His eyes went wide before he pulled his hand from hers. "How could you say that?" he spat.

Hermione gave him a determined look. "If I were in the same situation, I would have done exactly what you did."

"No, what I did was unconscionable. Instead of keeping my place amongst the Death Eaters, I should have saved at least one of those people."

"If you had, you would be dead and we would still be fighting this war. Don't you see, Severus, everything you did, from saving Harry's life umpteen times, to mercifully killing those hostages, moved the war to its close."

Horrified eyes met Hermione's. "How can you not think of me as a monster after learning that I killed five people?"

Hermione got up, moved around the table to him, and sat on his lap. She took her fingers and pushed his hair back.

"I have had a long time to come to grips with the fact that you probably killed people during the war, Severus. I can't fault you for easing suffering. I can't, and I won't."

"Hermione..."

His argument was silenced by her lips descending on his. His arms wrapped around her as she kissed him. He felt her passion for him. He could barely contain himself, but he pushed her away nonetheless.

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

"I am, and always will be."

This time he pulled her to him and kissed her. Her lips felt like satin as his pressed up against them. Groaning inwardly, he pulled her in closer. His fingers snaked through her hair. He felt her arm move around his neck. Pulling back a little, he saw that she was eager for him to kiss her more. He didn't disappoint.

Severus sat comfortably on the recliner. His legs were stretched out and crossed in front of him with his arms folded across his chest. He eyed Snape up and down. His twin sat in the middle of the sofa, glaring back at him. Severus mused that he was truly a disagreeable person. He'd have to do something about that.

"All in all, the date went well. Do you feel better about the whole situation?" Severus asked.

Snape gave him a curt nod.

Severus looked sheepishly at Snape. "Would you mind if I had one more date with her?"

Snape cocked an eyebrow at him.

"I know that things are going well, but if something doesn't work out... I would like to spend more time with her that I can truly remember, not just have memories of things that I wasn't even here for."

"I beg your pardon?" Snape asked in befuddlement.

"You know... time travel. I've come back to the past. When I return to my present, the memories that happen between now and then should come to me... but they will be like someone else's memories in relation to Hermione, I would suppose. All that you do with her will be new to me." He uncrossed his legs and sat at the edge of his seat, leaning toward Severus with an intense look on his face. "I would like to have at least one memory of a date where I was actually present."

"Technically, you'll be present for all of them."

Severus put his hands up to his head and scrunched up his hair. "You know what I mean!" he groaned.

Snape smirked at him. "So, the mighty one with all the answers has a favor to ask of me."

Severus glared at him. He knew himself too well to think that he wasn't in trouble. "What is it you want of me in return?" he asked in resignation.

Snape folded his arms and put his finger up to his temple. He tapped it for a moment. "Hmm, what could I ask of myself from the future. Ahh... you must tell me if I become Headmaster in the next two years."

Severus smirked at him. "What do you really want to know?"

"Nothing, actually. I doubt that knowing would make me feel any better or worse about anything. You have already told me how miserable I'll be without Hermione. I understand miserable. I live that every day."

"This is your chance to forgo feeling miserable and to find some happiness."

Snape rose and closed the gap between them. "Why do you think I'm doing this? Do you think I enjoy being lonely?"

"You forget that I am you. Everyone else may think you get off on your solitude, but I know better." He grasped Snape's arms. "We are close! We can do this."

"We are doing this."

"Yes, and if we can succeed, she'll never look to Weasley." Severus squeezed Snape's arm. "We will have won!"

Snape stared at Severus for a while. "You may have your date on the condition that you never tell Hermione that you came back here to change history."

Severus' eyebrows came together in puzzlement. "Why?"

"I don't want her to know, all right? I don't want her to understand what a fool I was before. She will lose all respect for me."

Severus thought for a moment. "Perhaps you're right. It might drive her away." He stuck his hand out to offer a handshake. "Agreed," he said as he pumped Snape's hand up and down.

Snape gave him a curt nod.

"One other thing... can we be alone?" Severus asked with a raised brow.

Snape cocked an eyebrow back at him. "What do you intend to do?"

Severus shrugged. "Nothing like what you're thinking. I just want a quiet and private night with her."

Snape's eyes narrowed. "The last time I left you with her, you went way past what we'd planned, and I was standing right there!"

"Then you should know that anything I decide to do, you wouldn't be able to stop it anyway."

"You will make a wand oath that you will be a gentleman." Snape pulled out his wand.

"You trust me so little?"

"I'm you, remember? Slytherin guile? Swear it, or we have no deal."

Severus huffed and pulled his wand out. He touched it to Snape's. "I swear that I will be the perfect gentleman on my date with Hermione. May my word be bound by these wands."

The wand tips glowed before the two men removed them from each other and stored them back up their sleeves.

"You may have your private date," Snape acquiesced.

Severus gave Snape a slight bow of his head. They spent the rest of the night planning what Severus would do for a date with Hermione.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 of 11

Severus Snape regrets not becoming romantically involved with Hermione Granger in his past. Will a trip back in time solve all of his problems?

Chapter 5

The younger Snape sat next to Hermione the next day at breakfast. She turned and smiled warmly at him. He smirked at her. Hermione blushed.

"What are you doing tonight?" he asked her.

Hermione sighed. "I am supervising three detentions."

Snape moved closer to her. "Can you cancel them?"

Hermione's eyes grew wide. Severus Snape never cancelled a detention. Who was this man who had swept her off her feet so quickly these past few days?

"I can't," she answered regretfully. "I postponed it yesterday. If I postpone again, the students will think I'm a pushover."

Snape looked disappointed. "Tomorrow, then?" Anger crept into his voice. "Do you have a bloody detention to sit through tomorrow?"

Hermione felt her anger rise within her. She couldn't help it if her students needed discipline.

Snape clutched at his lower leg suddenly, and Hermione gave him a puzzled look. He winced and rubbed his leg, then sneered over his shoulder. Hermione wasn't quite sure that Severus was 'all there' this morning. Maybe he'd been hitting the firewhiskey?

Snape turned back to her, looking a bit sheepish. "Sorry, I didn't mean to snap at you," he offered.

Hermione felt something hard drop in her stomach. She gaped at Snape incredulously. An apology? That was the last thing she expected from Severus Snape, especially in regards to a simple, snarky comment. Casting her astonishment away, she smiled at him. He was trying, and he deserved to be rewarded for that.

"I have no plans," she confided.

"Would you like to go dancing?" he asked.

Hermione leaned forward, unsure that she heard Severus right. "Did you just ask me to go dancing?"

Severus huffed. "Yes, is there a problem with wanting to go dancing?"

Hermione sat back and folded her arms in front of her. "I didn't think you danced."

Snape looked at her smugly. "I don't dance with a bunch of children at Hogwarts parties. I assure you, I enjoy a good dance just as well as anybody."

Hermione smiled. "I would love to go dancing with you, Severus. You're actually fulfilling one of my fantasies."

"You have a fantasy about going dancing?" Severus asked with a frown.

"No, I have a fantasy about dancing with *you*." She placed a hand on his leg. "I have the feeling that you are an amazing dancer."

Snape arched an eyebrow at her. He placed his hand over hers, but otherwise did not acknowledge her flirting. "Dress formally, we won't be going to a normal club."

"Where will we be going?"

Snape smirked again. "You'll see."

Severus raised his fist to knock on Hermione's door. He tried to calm himself before seeing her. He didn't think he'd ever been so excited... about anything. His attempt at changing the past was working, and now he had the opportunity to spend an entire evening with the woman he'd been longing for. Reality and trepidation sunk in as he realized that anything could happen in the next two years. All his hard work might be for naught.

Shut up, you fool! Just enjoy the evening with her. It may be the only one you get!

Severus mentally shook himself. The little voice within his head was right. This was the opportunity of a lifetime, and he would not waste one minute of it worrying about what the future might hold. He would enjoy Hermione Granger in the here-and-now, and the future would take care of itself.

His excitement returned as he gently rapped on the door. When Hermione opened it, Severus thought he would simply forgo the dancing and just spend the evening nestled in her arms. His eyes swept over her as she turned for him to view her entire ensemble. Her hair was swept up in a French knot. Her dress was a floor-length, black masterpiece that was cinched in front by a hollowed-out, oval, rhinestone buckle. The buckle pulled the fabric in from every angle, making the dress hug her curves and accentuate her lovely form. It had a v-neck, and the sleeves fell from the shoulders in soft wisps.

"Is this formal enough, Severus?" Hermione asked.

Severus reached out and grasped her hand, placing a kiss on it. "You look perfect," he told her with a bit of awe in his voice.

Hermione smiled brilliantly at him. "Let me just get my shawl, then we can go."

She turned and grabbed a cream colored shawl from the back of the chair and placed it around her shoulders. Her long, rhinestone earrings glimmered as she moved to place the shawl around her. He noticed a beautiful necklace that matched the earrings gracing her neck. She simply took his breath away.

Hermione came back over to Severus. "You look wonderful, Severus," she commented.

He had chosen black robes that resembled a tuxedo. The suit coat was long, as he preferred. Gone were the myriad of buttons. The coat lay open to reveal a white ribbed shirt and black bow tie. Severus had spent at least an hour on his hair, yet it still fell in curtains around his face. He really felt hopeless when it came to the troublesome head of hair he'd been forced to live with all his life. No matter how he treated it, it always looked the same... limp. Hermione, in any case, hadn't seemed to notice.

"Shall we?" Severus asked as he grasped her hand once again.

"Yes," Hermione said breathlessly.

Severus led her out of her room and down the hall.

Hermione stared at the old abandoned building, a look of utter disbelief on her face.

"You made me get dressed like this to take me to an old, abandoned warehouse, Severus?" she griped.

"Patience, Hermione. You forget we live in a magical world." He opened the door and let her pass through, following closely behind her. When she finally got a look at her surroundings she let out a great gasp.

"Oh, Severus, this is beautiful!" she cried.

"I see something more beautiful," he observed.

Hermione blushed, but continued to look around the ornate room. The room wasn't large, but it was big enough for a dance floor. A candle-lit table sat at the far end, awaiting their arrival. Severus had transfigured the warehouse into a 17th century ballroom. A cream-colored, square pattern with gold trim was plastered into the walls and ceiling. The dimly lit room displayed various sculpted fruits carved into the pattern along the ceiling. A huge crystal chandelier hung from the center of the room, its beads draping down and around, meeting with the candles that surrounded the edges of it. The light from the candles, although not overly bright, made the chandelier sparkle. Large, enchanted windows lined all four walls, draped with thick, golden draperies that were pulled back so one could see outside. The windows had been enchanted to show a beautiful, moonlit night by a lake. Mountains stood tall in the distance. Hermione gazed out onto them. Severus came up behind her and nuzzled her neck.

"You like it then? I wanted us to have a private evening... just the two of us."

Hermione turned and put her arms around his neck. "Severus, it's breathtaking!"

He grinned at her enthusiasm. "Good, that means the surroundings fit the beautiful lady in my arms."

Hermione blushed and looked down.

"Would you like to dance?" Severus asked her.

She looked up at him and nodded her head. He guided her to the center of the room as a waltz began to play. Soon they were twirling around the dance floor, arm in arm, unable to take their eyes off one another. They moved as one and seemed to float along. For Hermione, it was as if time had stopped. His black eyes pierced through her as she felt herself falling into them, becoming one with him. It was a place she never wanted to leave.

All too soon, the dance was over. Severus leaned in and whispered in her ear.

"Do you know the tango?"

He felt Hermione tense up before she told him that she did. Pulling back, he smiled seductively as the first strains of the dance began to play. Hermione gasped as Severus spun her, then pulled her tightly to him and began the intricate dance. He caressed her neck as he held it and dipped her, pulling her back up into the safety of his arms. He looked into her eyes intensely as they moved about the dance floor, arm in arm. Grasping her shoulders, he spun her so her back was pressed up against him. His hands caressed her arms, traveling down them seductively. He felt Hermione shiver as he caressed her, which caused him to involuntarily shiver also. He moved his head closer to hers and rubbed his face in her hair as they continued to dance. His eyes closed as he breathed in the smell of honeysuckle. Burying his nose in her hair, he grasped her around her front as they moved along.

Hermione turned in his arms and pressed her front against him now. She pushed him along, as they moved in turn, almost side by side in their motions. His hand lay at her waist, urging her on as they twirled and moved to the music. Grasping her hand, he pushed her away from him and then pulled her back roughly.

Hermione's eyes widened as she was thrust against his body again. Her hand automatically went to his neck as they moved backward and forward. Pulling his head forward, she tilted hers back. He kissed her neck seductively before he spun her around again. Once again they were moving along with her back pressed against his chest. He ran his hands around her waist and to her front. The rhythm of the dance was now lost on him. He reveled in her closeness, caressing her body as it moved with his. He bent and kissed her neck again as she leaned back into him.

Hermione turned into him again and let her head fall back. Severus' hands grasped at her back as his face caressed hers. He drew down along her cheekbone all the way down to her neck. His eyes closed as he reveled in her body. He nuzzled her neck with his nose and felt her hands tightening on his arms. He circled her neck with his lips, placing light kisses all along the edge of the necklace that graced it. Hermione moaned and pulled his head up even with hers. They swayed back and forth, not realizing the music had long since ended. Severus let her pull him to her and felt her lips on his, demanding entrance. He let her explore his mouth while he played with her tongue with his own.

They had stopped swaying now and just stood there, arm in arm, devouring each other. Severus couldn't believe that this goddess was letting him touch her. His hand came up, and he tangled it in her hair, caressing it as his lips moved against hers.

The current that was running through the both of them was electrifying. He had never felt this for anyone. Hermione made him feel things he never thought himself capable of feeling. The joy he felt at her attention was overwhelming. Her affection was the balm he needed to be able to heal after years of solitude and rejection. If she would only just keep feeling this for him, he could do anything. Just knowing that she cared for him, made all of his problems seem immaterial. He could overcome anything with her at his side.

Hermione pulled back then and hugged him to her. Her lips were close to his ear.

"Severus," she gasped. "That was simply amazing." Her hands were clutching his arms tightly, and she was still pressed up against him.

"Yes, you were definitely amazing," Severus murmured into her ear as he grasped her back.

She pulled back a bit and looked into his eyes. "I can't believe how amazing *you* are," she confided.

Severus smirked. "I'm glad you feel that way," he confessed.

She kissed him again, furiously. Pulling back, she smirked back at him. "That was so you never forget how wonderful I think you are."

Severus closed his eyes. His emotions were threatening to escape from him. He fought to keep control over himself. It would not do for him to show how much her words had affected him. It was too soon for him to declare his undying love for her... it would scare her off. He couldn't let her see how vulnerable he was in her arms... how completely lost he was over her. He cleared his throat. "Are you hungry?" he asked finally.

Hermione tilted her head. "I suppose. I'd much rather stay here in your arms."

Finally himself once again, he decided to answer coyly. "But then you would waste away to nothing, and so would I, as we stared into each others' eyes while wasting away."

Hermione giggled. "Okay, what's for dinner?"

"Come and see."

He led her to the table, and soon they were settled in over a tasty plate of prime rib and mashed potatoes. They chatted amiably, the seeming awkwardness of their last date having been forgotten. Severus decided he would suggest a calming draught for Snape for their next date. The man needed to learn to ease up. He knew that just one successful date without Snape having serious feelings of inadequacy would go a long way to loosening him up. Banishing all thoughts of his counterpart, he went back to

admiring his date.

The evening passed quickly. Soon Severus found himself in front of Hermione's door with his date wrapped in his arms.

"Thank you so much, Severus. That was probably the best date I've ever had."

He looked down with worry. "Well, how am I supposed to top that, then?" he mused.

Hermione grinned at him. "Look, I enjoy your company. I don't really care where we are or what we do. I do appreciate the extra effort you took for tonight, though."

She stood on tiptoe and kissed his cheek. Severus arched an eyebrow at her.

"That's it? After all of those passionate kisses in the ballroom, you leave me hanging with a peck on the cheek?"

Hermione shrugged. "Chalk those kisses up to losing my head over you." She got up close to his face. "I've recovered from your sexy charm now, Severus."

"Bugger my sexy charm..." His lips crashed down on hers as he gave her a 'real' goodnight kiss.

They didn't surface from each other for quite some time. The only reason they did pull apart was that Minerva had rounded the corner and caught them in the act.

"Goodness!" she cried.

Hermione and Severus pulled apart quickly and turned simultaneously to the Headmistress.

"Good evening... Minerva... I expect you're well?" Severus asked awkwardly.

Minerva eyed Severus. "I am," she answered simply.

"We... we were just... saying goodnight," Hermione stammered.

"I could see that, Professor Granger. So could any other soul who decided to come down this hall. Please keep your affections behind closed doors! This is a school for minors, you know!"

"Sorry, Headmistress," Hermione said.

Severus only scowled at her.

Minerva softened her stance. "Now that my berating in an official capacity is over, I'd like to congratulate the both of you for finding one another. You've both been tiptoeing around one another for so long that I was beginning to think you both were hopeless!"

Severus arched an eyebrow at Minerva. "Hopeless? I may be many things, but hopeless is not one of them."

"Of course not, Severus," Minerva said with a roll of her eyes. "You two have a nice evening, and take your kissing inside, where it belongs, please."

She went off down the hall to whatever her destination was.

"Goodnight, Severus," Hermione said as he gazed after Minerva's disappearing form.

His head snapped back to Hermione. "Oh... goodnight... Hermione."

She pecked him on the cheek again and then was gone, her door closing gently behind her. Severus put his hand on the door and stood there for a minute. He closed his eyes and rested his forehead against the door as well before pulling himself erect and walking proudly down the hall toward his room.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 of 11

Severus Snape regrets not becoming romantically involved with Hermione Granger in his past. Will a trip back in time solve all of his problems?

Chapter 6

Disclaimer: These aren't my characters. For clarification: Severus = Future Severus. Snape = present day Severus.

When Severus entered Snape's room after his date, he found his doppelganger seated at the desk, staring into a Pensieve. Severus arched an eyebrow at him as the other man looked up at his visitor.

"Place your memories in the Pensieve. I want to see everything," Snape instructed.

"Pardon?"

"I need to see what happened, in case Hermione says something. I need to see your memories."

Severus snorted. "You just want to see what I did to her."

"Naturally..." Snape admitted.

Severus went up to the Pensieve and extracted the memories that he shared with Hermione that evening. "Did you want me to join you?" he asked Snape as he placed the silvery threads into the bowl.

"That won't be necessary," Snape told him before plunging into the Pensieve himself. A few minutes later, he emerged, looking livid.

"You practically made love to her on the dance floor. What about your oath?!"

Severus huffed. "I kept the oath I swore. You never said I couldn't kiss her. I don't know what you expected."

"I expected you to be the gentleman you said you would be. You acted like a hormone driven teenager!"

"Just because you can't be seductive doesn't mean that I can't either!" Severus yelled.

"I suppose you've practiced on some cheap whore!"

Severus' eyes narrowed. "I do not associate with such women... you know that!"

"Then explain yourself! How can I, in two years, turn into that Casanova?" Snape gestured pointedly to the memories still swirling in the Pensieve. "That's not me! I don't even know how to act like that. I wouldn't know the first thing to do to be so provocative."

Severus looked down at the ground. He ground his toe into the floor and frowned. Moving about, he refused to make eye contact with Snape.

"I rdit inabk," he mumbled.

"Enunciation has always been a strongpoint with me. It seems that with all you've gained, you've lost that stringent method."

Severus' cheeks were now red. "I said... I. read. It. In. a. Book."

Snape snorted. "You read it in a book? What book was that? *How to Woo Witches*?"

Severus looked cross, but he didn't raise his head, nor say a word.

More snorting came from Snape. He began to laugh and bent over in a fit of chuckles. "You did! You read that infernal book to be able to hit on Hermione."

"I didn't *hit* on her. I... well... I woo'd her."

Snape straightened. Unfortunately, he couldn't keep from bursting into more fits of laughter. "Damn, I've gone soft! I'm a flipping, emotional waste."

Severus' head snapped up, and he glared at Snape. "At least I have won Hermione over. If I had left it to you, we would be waiting until Hogwarts crumbled to the ground before you made a move!"

Snape stopped laughing.

Severus reached into his pocket and extracted a miniaturized book. He waved his wand over it until it returned to its normal size. He handed it to Snape.

"Here," he demanded. "Maybe you can learn something so you can keep her long enough for me to return to my time and enjoy her."

Snape grabbed the book and glowered at Severus. "We are one in the same, are we not? I should have no problem keeping her for you," he answered caustically.

"Look at how you act around her! It's like you're walking on eggshells." Severus took a step closer to Snape. "Look, I know how you feel. I have felt the same way for most of the two years in the future. But I knew that if I were to get Hermione, I would need help." He pointed at the book in Snape's hands. "That book helped. If nothing else, it can help you not to be so nervous around her!"

Snape looked from Severus to the book and back to Severus. His shoulders sagged. "Maybe you're right."

"Severus," Severus said. "I know you, and I know how you think. I know that without the help in that book, I wouldn't know what to say to Hermione. I'm not trying to anger you; I'm trying to help you. Read the book. Give yourself a chance to succeed."

Snape sighed. "I suppose I have no choice. You have spoiled her with your silver tongue."

Severus smirked at him. "I'll leave you to your reading, then." He turned and headed into the bedroom where his transfigured bed awaited him. He thought he heard a muttered 'thank you' as he closed the door behind him.

Snape had spent the entire night reading the book. He was just finishing it as Severus opened the door that next morning. He looked up at his twin and grimaced.

"How did you stand reading this tripe?" he asked.

"It's not Shakespeare, but it teaches you what you need to know," Severus said simply.

"Yes, and includes a bunch of drivel along with it."

Severus chuckled. "Yes. I especially liked the part where it advises to shower her with compliments about every part of her body, including her painted toenails."

Snape laughed out loud. "I read that twice. I couldn't believe it actually said that! *Oh, by the way, Hermione, that is a lovely shade of purple on your toes!*"

Severus nodded his head. "As you said... drivel." He changed the subject quickly. "I'm famished. Do you mind if I take breakfast today in the Hall?"

Snape shook his head. "No, go ahead. I'm going back to bed. I'll have the house-elves bring me something later."

"I'll set up something with Hermione for you."

Snape nodded to him. Severus gave him a quick nod and left the room.

Hermione had skipped breakfast, much to Severus' dismay. He had hoped to get in some early morning romance, but that was not to be. He only had two days left in this time period. His stomach lurched. What if his younger self blew it? He hadn't a minute to waste. Snape needed all the work he could get! Hurrying back to his room, he burst through the door, sprinted through the front room, and stormed into the bedroom.

"Get up!" he demanded of Snape.

Snape turned his head and looked to Severus groggily. "Mmph?"

"Get up! I will be gone in two days so we must practice."

Snape's eyebrows seemed to become one. "Practice what?"

"Practice your dealing with Hermione, of course! I don't want you screwing things up."

Snape sat up. "A little confidence would go a long way," he muttered.

"Prove yourself, and I will have the utmost confidence in you."

Snape rolled his eyes. "Have I ever told you that you are a giant git?"

"Every time you look in the mirror."

"Then you won't mind me saying it again?"

"I live to hear your insults," Severus drolled.

Snape smirked and got up. "You do realize that I have gotten little sleep? Maybe you could have waited an hour or two before bursting in here?"

"We haven't the time, man! We need to practice. I'll be Hermione, you come on to me."

Snape made some gagging motions. "I beg your pardon?"

"Come on to me! Say something seductive! Don't you know what to say to a girl?"

"Yes, I do, it's what to say to a girl that looks like an old, ugly bat that I'm having a problem with."

"I'm not old, and you know it."

"Despite the long hair, you will never pass as a woman, Severus Snape."

"Have you no imagination?" Severus said as he rolled his eyes.

Snape got within inches of Severus' face. "I've got a great imagination. It's just that I can't get past your ugly mug to begin to use that imagination."

Severus pulled back a couple of feet. "Well, looking at you is no picnic either."

"Why don't you be me, and I'll be Hermione?" Snape asked slyly.

"Because, you dolt, I'm not the one who will spend the next two years building a relationship with her."

Snape's smug look disappeared. "Point taken," he responded sulkily.

"Now, get on with it!" Severus snapped.

"It's hard to get into a romantic mood when you're so terse."

Severus raised an eyebrow at him. Immediately his demeanor softened as he got closer to Snape. "Is this better?" he purred.

Snape blanched. "No, I think I prefer you as the ogre you usually are."

Severus grinned evilly but didn't let off on the sweetness. "Oh, Severus, what should we do tonight? Hmm?" His usual deep baritone had gone up two octaves, and he'd picked up his hands daintily and pulled them in toward his chest. "Maybe we could mark some papers together."

"Umm," Snape said as he backed away slowly. "If that's what you'd like, Hermione."

Severus stood ramrod straight as his fists clenched into tight balls. "No! No! No! That's not the right response! What should you have said?"

Snape thought about it for a minute. "We can do that anytime, Hermione. Let's go see the latest Muggle movie."

"Yes! Use things that you know she enjoys! Perfect!" Severus clapped Snape on the back, causing him to stumble forward. Snape grimaced and turned back to Severus.

"Are we done yet?"

"We've only just begun!" Severus said with excitement. "Okay, we're at the movies... what do you do?"

"I don't know! I've never been to a Muggle movie with a woman before!"

"Think, man! It was all in the book!"

Severus looked down as he thought. "Well, I'm next to her," he mumbled before looking up. "I slowly put my arm around her shoulder."

"Right! Then what?"

"We watch the movie together."

Severus put his head into his hands. "This is useless. I should just go back and accept my fate!"

Snape scowled at him. "Oh, shut up! Give me some credit, all right? I may not be as smooth as you, but we enjoyed ourselves the other evening. She knows I'm not used to this sort of thing. She'll give me a chance."

Severus looked off to the side. "Perhaps you're right. Okay, let's move on. You get back to her place, and she says what a wonderful time she had. What's a good thing to say?"

Snape put his finger to his lips and tapped them. He quickly pointed at Severus. "It was only wonderful for me because you were there."

Severus thought on that. "Good enough," he said. He quickly continued. "She asks you in."

Snape's hand went off to his side. "I go in with her, of course."

"Then what?"

"She'll offer a drink, or we'll get comfortable by the fire. "

"Let's act that out," Severus commanded.

"I will not." Snape said defiantly.

Severus looked back at him curiously.

"Look," Snape said. "You think you have all the answers. I read your stupid book, I can read it again. I'm not going to sit arm in arm with you on the couch. Do you understand me?"

Severus frowned. He walked out of the bedroom and looked to the couch and then back to Snape. An image of the two of them, arm in arm on the couch, flashed through his mind. He had his head on Snape's shoulders, and he was rubbing his chest. The image almost made him gag.

"All right, fine. You'll be okay. We don't need to practice anymore."

Snape sighed in relief. "I knew you'd see reason eventually." He walked out of the bedroom to stand next to Severus.

"Just don't blow it with her, okay?" Severus begged. "I'd hate to get back to my future and find that she won't even look at me because I said too many stupid things to her."

Snape's eyebrow rose. "Yes, and of course, you will never say anything stupid to her in the future, nor will you ever get terse with her, right?"

"By that time, she'll be used to me."

Snape shook his head. "You can't have it both ways. Either you promise not to muck up the future, or I will not go one step further with this relationship."

Severus sat down dejectedly on the couch. "I can't promise you that."

"Then you are a fool. Stop telling me what to do and work on what you have to do."

Severus glowered at his twin. "I was hoping you would do all of the lay work."

Snape smirked. "I plan on it. Nonetheless, you must remain the man I make myself when you get back."

"I already am the man you make yourself."

"I beg to differ," Snape said as he sat beside Severus. "You became this naturally, without doing anything to change yourself. I will be actively improving myself. You may be surprised by the man you find when you return."

"I hadn't thought about that."

"Well, you must. I don't want some internal struggle with myself when you join me in the future."

Severus looked to Snape. They both stared into each other's black eyes. An understanding settled with both of them.

"I will do as you ask," Severus said.

"Good," Snape replied. He stood then. "Now, I'm going back to bed."

In a flash, he had left the front room and closed the door to his bedroom behind him. Severus smirked at his departure.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 of 11

Severus Snape regrets not becoming romantically involved with Hermione Granger in his past. Will a trip back in time solve all of his problems?

Chapter 7

Hours had passed, yet Snape still slept. Severus had wanted to search out Hermione with him, but his younger self would not rouse himself from the bed. Severus had waited impatiently. He had read a book and brewed two potions while waiting. Would his double ever awaken?

Severus looked to the bedroom door for the fiftieth time. No movement. He frowned deeply. If you wanted something done, you just had to do it yourself. He puzzled out how that phrase worked in this situation. How could he not trust himself to do something? This trip back in time was messing with his mind. No wonder time travelers were warned not to interact with themselves. He could feel the duality of the situation messing with him. Shaking his head, he donned his cape and swept from the room.

Severus had taken a quick walk by the lake and felt infinitely better. He was thankful that he would return to his own time soon. He was eager to find out what had changed in his future. Tomorrow couldn't come soon enough.

He lifted his head and bound up the stairs to Hermione's room. He was surprised to bump into her coming from the library. She smiled at him.

"Hi there!" she said. "I was just going to look for you. You've been rather hidden today."

Severus arched an eyebrow at her. "Whatever do you mean?"

"I usually find you in the library marking essays on a day like today."

Severus recalled his penchant for escaping his room on the weekends. "Ah, well, I needed to clear my head, so I went for a walk."

Hermione nodded. She stood there looking expectantly at Severus.

"Would you like to go flying later today?" Severus asked.

Hermione grimaced. "Severus, you know I don't like to fly."

Oh, right! Severus thought quickly. "We don't have to use a broom."

Hermione laughed loudly. "What do you suggest we use then?"

He took a step closer to her. "I can fly without a broom, you know..."

"You can fly like that with someone else?"

"You would have to hold on to me very tightly," Severus told her seductively.

She put her arms around his waist. "Like this?"

"Tighter."

Her arms grasped him tightly. "How's this?"

"Better."

She smiled and pulled her arms away from him.

Tease! he thought.

"What time do you want to meet?" she asked coyly.

"Meet me on top of the Astronomy tower at eight. It's easier to travel when it's dark. We won't be stared at."

Hermione smiled. "All right, I'll see you then."

With a curt nod, Severus turned and went the way he'd come. Hermione continued to walk to her room. She hadn't gone very far when she turned the corner and almost slammed into Severus. She stopped quickly and turned back to look behind her. Severus was nowhere to be seen.

"Ah, Hermione, I was looking for you," Snape said.

"But... we just."

"What are you doing tonight?"

Hermione's mouth dropped open. She looked behind her again and then back to Severus with a puzzled look. "You told me to meet you on top of the Astronomy tower at eight tonight!"

Severus gave her a quizzical look. "When did I say that?"

Hermione pointed behind her. "Just two minutes ago, before you went that way."

Severus looked past her to where she pointed. Realization came to him, and he cleared his throat nervously.

"Ah," he said. "That's right. Sorry, I've been really tired today. I spent most of the day asleep."

Hermione cocked an eyebrow at him. "I thought you said you just went for a walk."

"Oh... yes... I did... after I woke up. I spent most of the day *before that* sleeping."

Hermione slowly raised her head and lowered it. "Oh, I see," she said slowly.

"I'll see you tonight, then?" Severus asked.

She nodded slowly again. Severus' tipped his head at her and hurried past her. Hermione watched him disappear from sight again. She shook her head and continued to her room.

"Good heavens! Why didn't you tell me you were going to be wandering around?" Snape griped at Severus.

"I thought you were asleep! How was I to know that we would both seek out Hermione at almost the exact same time?"

"Tell me what you arranged. She said we were to meet tonight at eight."

"I'm taking her flying... without a broom."

Snape arched an eyebrow at him. "You mean I'm taking her flying."

Severus waved his hand flippantly at Snape. "Right. You should have quite a lot of fun. She already knows to hold you tightly."

Snape guffawed. "I bet you enjoyed that."

"I did. You'll get to enjoy it for much longer."

"Thanks. I'm looking forward to it," Snape told him.

"Anything for you," Severus said with a roll of his eyes.

Snape awaited Hermione's arrival on the roof. His back was against the stone battlement that circled around it. His arms were crossed in front of him. He kept a careful eye on the doorway as his stomach did flip-flops. His insides were a mess. This was his first official date with Hermione without his future self standing watch. *Don't say something stupid. Don't say something stupid*, he chanted to himself. *Be complimentary, don't be nervous, and don't get frustrated*. The list went on and on. By the time Hermione poked her head through the door, Severus was a ball of tension waiting to explode.

"Hi!" Hermione said as she grinned at him.

"Hi," Severus said. Even that one word took all the effort he had to say.

"How far are we flying tonight?" Hermione asked.

"As far as you'd like to go," Severus said. A bit of his anxiety was slowly... very slowly, ebbing away.

"Severus, I'm still a bit scared. I know you'll keep me safe, but there's just something about flying that makes me really nervous."

Severus sighed in relief. She was nervous too. Not for the same reasons, but it made her human again. He had been building her up to be some perfect goddess of which he was unworthy. It was nice to see that she wasn't perfect, and she certainly had feelings and emotions that could possibly take hold of her and make her say something silly, just as he knew he would probably do at some point this evening.

He gave her a quick smile and pulled her to him. "Don't worry, Hermione. All you need to do is hold on to me, and you will be fine. I have done this enough to know what I'm doing. I won't do any crazy stunts. We'll just float above the ground for a while."

"You make it sound so simple," she said breathily.

"It is. Just trust me."

"Okay," she said as she looked up into his ebony eyes. Her eyes were big, and she seemed scared, despite her agreement.

Snape pulled her closer into him. "I will keep you safe, Hermione."

Hermione relaxed. "I know. I trust you," she said over his shoulder.

He pushed her away and looked at her quizzically. "If you don't want to do this, we don't have to."

Hermione reached up and kissed him. "Thank you, Severus, for giving me that option. I want to do it, and I trust you. Let's just go."

He smiled at her. He stood upon the battlement wall and reached down to her. Grasping her hand, he lifted her up. They stood together, looking at one another.

"All you have to do is put your arms around my waist," he instructed.

Hermione closed the gap between them. She put her arms around his waist. "Like this?"

"Tighter."

Her arms grasped him tightly. "How's this?"

"Better."

She laughed as their conversation earlier repeated itself. Snape gave her a curious look.

"That's just what you said earlier. Don't you remember?"

"Oh," Snape said.

Hermione pulled herself even closer and rested her head on Severus' chest while she placed her feet lightly upon his. He took in a deep breath at her touch.

"Is this okay?" she asked.

His hand came up, and he caressed her hair. "Perfect," he managed to mutter. His heart was beating so loudly. He knew that she didn't have to have her head resting on his chest to hear it.

"Are you ready?" he asked her.

"Yes," she answered and tensed herself, tightening her grip even more.

"Relax, I've got you. On the count of three, I'm going to walk off the edge. One... two... three."

Severus stepped off the wall. Hermione shrieked as he dropped down a bit. He dipped a bit lower than usual with Hermione's added weight, but soon they were gliding along at the same height of the tower. Hermione kept her face hidden in Severus' chest. One of his arms wrapped around her protectively as he used the other as a ballast, steadying them and moving them in the desired direction.

"You can look around, you know," he told her after several minutes.

Hermione picked up her head and looked down. She gasped loudly. They were at least two-hundred feet in the air.

"Oh, gosh, Severus, we're so high, we're so high!"

"Relax. I've got you, and there's no chance of falling."

She gripped him like a cat about to fall from a tree. He could almost feel her nails digging into him.

"Do you want to stop?" he asked.

"Give me a minute to adjust."

He kissed her neck. "You are doing very well."

Hermione pulled her head back and glared at him. "Liar."

He smirked at her as he turned to the left. The sudden change of direction made Hermione shout out as she once again pasted herself to his body.

I can definitely get used to this. Maybe we should fly more often.

"Come now, relax. You're in no danger."

Hermione was gasping for breath. She looked at Severus again. Immediately she quieted. Severus was surprised when she looked back down, and a smile came across her face.

"I'll admit this is better than a broom."

"Much," Severus agreed. They flew on in silence for a few minutes. "Can I try something?" Severus asked finally.

"What?"

"Now that you're finally relaxed, would you place both feet on my right foot. I want to turn you, so you're facing forward."

Hermione's eyes went wide. "Why would I want to turn forward?"

Severus chuckled. "I want you to see where you're going, witch. Are you a magical being or not?"

Hermione scowled and nodded.

"Then you should calm down and enjoy yourself. Witches were meant to fly, you know."

"Not this witch!"

"Please?"

Hermione's mouth dropped open.

Severus supposed this was the first time she'd ever heard him say please. He shrugged at her.

"All right," she answered finally.

"Okay, we might lose a little altitude, but we're high enough not to have it be dangerous."

In an instant, Severus had shifted Hermione to his side. He gripped her waist as she balanced on his foot. She had actually let go with one of her arms, but her other laced itself around Severus' waist in a vise-like grip. Severus laughed. Lifting her arm finally, she maneuvered herself around, grasping Severus' arm for dear life, and replaced her foot back on his other one.

"That wasn't so bad, was it?"

Hermione looked around her. "No," she sighed. "It wasn't."

They flew along like that for a while. Snape reveled in her closeness. Having her so near was like a dream come true. His arm rested around her waist, and his face was even with hers. He caught her smile out of the corner of his eye. She was clearly enjoying herself.

They flew over the lake, which was quite dark, and even flew over the Forbidden Forest. Severus turned them in circles around Hogsmeade a few times so they could look at the small village with its pretty lights. Hermione pointed to a small figure hurrying along the street. It was Hagrid. She marveled that he could appear so small, even from that height. Severus chuckled in her ear.

"Severus, this is beautiful!" Hermione exclaimed.

Severus smiled as he nuzzled her neck. "Having you with me makes this even more beautiful." He smiled to himself. It hadn't been so hard for him to come up with something romantic to say to her. Maybe their courtship wouldn't be as hard as he was anticipating.

He lowered their altitude slowly, and soon they had floated to the ground once again. The castle glimmered nearby.

Severus eased Hermione off his feet and turned her around. He smiled at her lovingly. "Thank you for coming with me," he told her.

She smiled up at him. His heart felt as if it would burst.

"Now," she said as she stroked a finger along his jawbone. "Do you want to tell me why you've been using a Time-Turner?"

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 of 11

Severus Snape regrets not becoming romantically involved with Hermione Granger in his past. Will a trip back in time solve all of his problems?

Chapter 8

"Now," she said as she stroked a finger along his jawbone. "Do you want to tell me why you've been using a Time-Turner?"

Severus' eyes went wide. "I beg your pardon?"

Hermione smirked. "Don't try to deny it. It's the only explanation for seeing two of you this afternoon. You had no idea I had just spoken to you a minute earlier. You're using a Time-Turner for something, Severus Snape."

"I'm doing no such thing!" he denied. Fear raced through him. What was he to do? She had figured him out in an encounter that couldn't have lasted more than five minutes. She certainly was quick-thinking. That, of course, was one of the reasons he loved her.

Hermione arched a brow at him. "Severus, as you know, I have extensive experience with Time-Turners. All the evidence is there. You were sloppy and got caught. Now, tell me what's going on."

She'll be angry. She'll not want anything to do with me. Merlin, what can I tell her? He argued with himself for a minute before deciding the closest thing to the truth would be the best way to go.

"I am using a Time-Turner, but it's not what you think. My future self came back to warn me about a choice I would make that would be detrimental to my future."

Hermione gave Severus a surprised look. "How far back did he travel?"

"Two years."

Excitement filled Hermione's voice. "Is he still here? Can I see him?"

Severus cringed. "I'm not sure if that's a good idea."

"Oh, come on, Severus! I already know about him. What damage could be done?"

"Hermione..."

"Please?" She looked at him with big, pleading eyes.

Severus scowled. "Do not give me that face, witch. I will not fall for it!"

She started to rub his arm. "But, Severus, I just want to see him. It will only take a minute. Please?"

Insufferable woman with her irresistible eyes! She knows she's got me wrapped around her finger.

"All right, but just for a minute!"

"Thank you," she said as she kissed him on the cheek.

Severus looked down at her, narrowing his eyes in mock annoyance. He grabbed her arm and linked his with hers before they set off for the castle.

"So, tell me why he came back..." Hermione said as they walked.

"I'll tell you when we're all together," Severus replied, frowning and gritting his teeth with worry.

The door opened, and Hermione stepped into Severus' room. Her eyes fell upon an almost exact replica of Severus Snape sitting on the couch, reading. The man looked up, snapped his book shut, and rose to a standing position, his fists clenched.

"What the devil have you done?!" he growled at Snape.

"She figured out we were using a Time-Turner and wanted to see you," Snape explained.

Severus' lips thinned to a slim line. "A word, please... privately?" he croaked out to Snape.

The younger man followed his twin into the bedroom. The door quickly slammed behind him. Severus wheeled around and glowered at Snape.

"You were adamant about her not knowing about us. Why did you bring her here?"

Snape waved his wand, casting a silencing spell before answering Severus. "She badgered me about the Time-Turner until I had no choice but to tell her about you. I just said you'd come back, but not why. She wanted to see you... insisted on it, even."

Severus' eyes narrowed. "So, you just waltzed her in here. Now what do we do?"

"She wants to know why you're here. I told her we'd explain when we were all together."

"You can't tell her the truth! What if she takes it badly? Everything we have done will be for nothing. Make up something... anything... just to get her off the track."

"No," Snape said with finality.

"No? Do you really want to lose her?"

"Of course not. We don't know how she'll react. One thing I do know is that a relationship is built on truth. I will not sabotage this relationship with lies. She has figured us out, she will learn the truth, whether we are the ones to tell her or not. It will be far worse if we lie now."

Severus' glare softened while he exhaled slowly. "You're right. Now that she knows part of the truth, we cannot hide the rest from her." He began to wring his hands together. "She will think we are trying to manipulate her."

"We are, aren't we?"

"Not like that, and you know it!"

"She may find the idea of a relationship with Weasley enticing," Snape said softly.

"I don't think so," Severus murmured. "She did only turn to him after she realized we were hopeless. We can only hope that she'll see us as wanting to fix this."

"Yes, our track record with women is so wonderful, we're bound to be lucky this time," Snape snapped. His shoulders sagged. "Let's just get this over with." He turned and exited the bedroom, closely followed by Severus.

Hermione looked to both men. "I can barely tell the two of you apart," she commented.

"I am only two years older. We should be virtually identical," Severus explained.

"Why are you here?" she asked Severus.

"I needed to warn myself of a possible problem in my future."

"What was that?"

"I'd rather not go into it," Severus said nonchalantly. He hoped she would just let this drop.

Hermione studied him for a minute. "Is there anything I can do?"

Severus scoffed. "You're already doing it."

Hermione looked puzzled. She looked into Severus' eyes. She could read nothing in them. The master spy was hiding his emotions well. She looked toward Snape. He too was hiding whatever he was thinking. She sighed. What was she doing already? Her head snapped up, and she made eye contact with Severus again.

"Do you mean this relationship?" she asked curiously.

Severus closed his eyes and nodded.

Hermione's mouth dropped open. "You came back to get him to ask me out?" Now she'd heard everything.

"I did."

A look of amazement crossed Hermione's face. "I'm flattered, but why?"

"Must you know?" Severus asked, his voice pointed.

"Well, this concerns my future, too! Yes, I must know."

Severus looked to Snape. He gave him a small nod. Looking back to Hermione he explained everything.

"You see, at this point in time, I was so blind that I let you slip away from me. I should have acknowledged your interest and pursued you, but I didn't know how, nor did I believe that you were interested at the time. After numerous attempts to get me to notice you, you finally gave up and turned your interest to Ronald Weasley." Severus rolled his eyes. "You fell in love with each other and were married the day I came here."

Hermione's mouth dropped open again. "I marry Ron? Really?"

Severus gave her a curt nod. Snape rolled his eyes.

"And you say that I love him, and he loves me?"

Severus nodded again. Snape looked sick.

"So, you have come back to... what?"

Severus came to Hermione's side. "I was a fool, Hermione. If I had just shown a little interest in you, none of that would have happened."

"How do you know that? How do you know that we won't break up and I'll wind up marrying Ron anyway?"

Severus' shoulders sagged. "I don't." He looked down to the floor. "In any case, I had to try. My life is empty without you in it. I have been suffering ever since you announced your engagement, knowing that it could have been us instead of you and him. I had to try and set things right."

"Are you sure that this is what's right?" Hermione asked. Her eyes flashed with anger.

"I... yes... I..."

"You just thought you'd go ahead and mess with my life. You had your chance, Severus. You blew it. What gives you the right to meddle now?"

"Hermione, I love you."

Hermione's anger still swirled around in her, but his words caught her off guard. How she had longed to hear those words from him, but now they were tainted with his deception.

"Wait," she gasped. "Just which one of you have I been dating?"

Severus looked to Snape. Snape straightened a little before saying, "The both of us."

Hermione's eyes widened. "What?"

"I was with you today, obviously." He pointed to his doppelganger. "He was with you the night you danced."

Hermione felt her anger swell again within her. "Is this all a game to you?" she cried. Her hands began to wave around in front of her as she imitated Severus' voice. *"Let's see who can win Hermione. I'll throw myself in the mix and we'll ambush her together, then we'll see how she really feels about Ron."*

"Hermione, I never..." Severus began.

"I am not some prize to be won by the man who can sweep me off my feet the hardest. Shame on you, Severus Snape!" She turned to Snape. "And you too!" Turning back to Severus, she poked him in the chest. "If you loved me so much, why couldn't you have just done something about it the first time around?!" She was shouting as tears began to stream down her cheeks. Her fists balled themselves up as Severus pulled her to him. She beat against his chest in frustration. "Why?"

"Because I am a fool! I could never see how someone like you could be attracted to me. I let you slip away without even trying! I badger myself every day for not saying or doing something before. Hermione, I just want a chance with you. If we come to the decision that this isn't going to work out, I will gladly back away and let you find happiness elsewhere. Even if elsewhere is with Ronald Weasley. I just want the chance that I threw away before."

Hermione searched Severus' face. He seemed sincere, but the fact that he was playing with her future kept her from forgiving him. "I need to think about all of this. When, and how, do you return to your time?"

"The Time-Turner I have is unique. It can be set to keep a person in a certain time for a set period. I will return tomorrow in the early afternoon."

Hermione's jaw clenched. "Tomorrow. I have until tomorrow to figure out whether I want to continue this or not?"

Severus looked down. His shoulders sagged. "You should take all the time you need. I will find out your decision one way or another."

Hermione pulled away from him. She looked to Snape, who was frowning. She frowned back at him. Straightening up, she looked Severus in the eye.

"I will come by tomorrow. I'm not sure if I'll have an answer for you, but I will come by in either case."

Severus gave a curt nod. She nodded back to both Severuses and left.

"That went famously," Snape groaned after the door had slammed behind Hermione.

"We can only hope she works it out in our favor."

"Given our track record, we should just admit defeat now."

Severus met Snape's eyes. "Lily chose another, that doesn't mean that Hermione will."

"When has love ever worked out for us, Severus?"

Severus looked to his twin. "Never up until now. I'm hoping for a lucky break."

Snape raised an eyebrow. "I didn't think we believed in luck."

"Neither did I, until I kissed Hermione."

Snape smirked. "Let's hope our luck doesn't run out then."

"Indeed."

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 of 11

Severus Snape regrets not becoming romantically involved with Hermione Granger in his past. Will a trip back in time solve all of his problems?

Chapter 9

Hermione slammed her door and stalked over to the couch. She threw herself into it and tapped her foot. Pulling her wand from her robe, she lit a fire in the fireplace. As she tossed her wand down next to her in frustration, her foot continued to tap furiously on the floor. Eyeing the flames, she let them take over her thoughts. She stilled her body and stared at the crackling fire, not moving, until she became lost in the depth of the flames. Her mind thought of nothing but the licking swirls and the snapping that came from the burning wood. Her thoughts calmed, her frustration seeped from her. She let all of it wash away. The flames hypnotized her, and it was a long while before she came back to herself.

Having calmed herself, she was able to look back on the previous conversation with the Snapes more objectively. The anger still welled in her, though.

She felt like a yo-yo. Unwittingly, she'd been tossed to and fro by both Snapes. They had shared her without her even knowing it. Like she'd told them, this whole thing appeared to be a game to them. She was not some ball to be tossed around a court. She was not some prize to be bandied about. She was a woman. A woman... who was madly in love with an infuriating man!

She thought of Severus and her dancing together. She pictured herself with the younger Snape as they flew about Hogsmeade. Thinking about the two of them, she noticed some slight differences in their actions toward her. The older Snape seemed a bit more assured of himself, the younger, a bit more tentative.

She groaned inwardly. They were both so appealing. In a moment of clarity, she could see the progression of their relationship. The Severus of now, with his endearing tentativeness would eventually become the incredibly sure-of-himself, older man who had traveled back to try and win her heart. But did she want her heart to be won? Hadn't the future already been determined with a different outcome? Hermione frowned.

How can he do such a thing? How can he mess with time simply because he doesn't like the first outcome? Why am I so upset about it anyway? Shouldn't I be flattered? He came back just for me. But how can he know what is the best outcome? It was a selfish reason for returning.

"Who am I kidding?" she muttered to herself. "That was one of the most romantic things I've ever heard."

Truly, mustn't he love her to return to the past for her? Her heart soared at the thought that someone would care enough about her to try to right his perceived wrongs. She grimaced and beat the feeling down. *The man is messing with time. He knows better. Why didn't he do something before, when he was back in this time?*

Hermione threw her hands up in resignation. "What is my problem? Do I really want a relationship with Ron?"

Ron. Her friendship with Ron had always had its ups and downs. From infatuation practically all through school, to the searing kiss they had given each other at the end of the war, there had always been tension between the two of them. Once everything resulting from the war had calmed down, Ron and she had begun a tentative relationship. Things had been good for the most part. She'd loved Ron dearly, and he'd loved her. They still did. Unfortunately, there had always been a lack of spark with them. They had both noticed, but had chosen to ignore it for a while. After about two months of passionless kisses, they had admitted that their love for one another could only go so far. They weren't 'in' love.

Each had moved on happily. Both had dated others. Hermione had dated several men who were attracted to her. She had spent a good deal of time with all of them, but most had not held any spark for her either. Then her eye had fallen on Severus. Even without a romantic relationship, he'd electrified her. She'd done all she could to attract his attention... to no avail. She had been about to give up when he'd finally acknowledged his attraction to her.

"But that was all a ruse, right?" Hermione had a habit of talking to herself when she was reasoning something out.

Hermione's lip pursed. *He said he loved you.*

"But does he really?" She frowned. "Is he serious?" Her hand came up to her face, and she tapped her finger on her lips. She put her hand down again and shook her head. Her thoughts were everywhere. "Has he confused obsession with love? Is this more than just a game to him? What about Ron? . . . Could we possibly work things out?"

She arched an eyebrow. "Was I just settling when I married Ron in the future?"

She bent her head low and massaged her temples. *How will I ever know what to do?*

Sitting back, she folded her arms in front of her. "Do you want to start up with Ron again? What good will it do? You've already established that there's no spark. We're too different."

Their interests were polar opposites. He loved Quidditch and did nothing but talk about it. She enjoyed watching a good game, but didn't believe the world revolved around the sport. Ron had always been appreciative and supportive of her interests, but he shared none of them, and found it difficult to converse with her about them. She bored him, and she knew it. He bored her, too.

Do you really think you'd be better off going back to that situation?

"What was I thinking to even reconsider dating Ron?"

She thought back to before this wonderful week with Severus. What had been her mental state? She'd been depressed. She'd wondered if maybe being seen with another man would jog Severus into making an advance at her.

"So, that's where that brilliant idea came from. I must have paraded Ron in front of Severus to make him jealous." She chuckled. "I should have known better."

Some time after that, Ron and she must have fallen in love. She'd have never thought it possible.

Wonders really never cease, do they?

Falling in love with Ron was not something she would have foreseen for herself in a million years.

Do I want that future? she asked herself. *Would that make me happy? Wouldn't I be happier with Severus?*

It was as if Severus' mouth was on her. His kiss seared into her lips. No kiss with Ron had ever felt like that. Could it ever?

Who am I kidding? If Severus had shown interest in me in his reality, I don't think I would have ever given Ronald Weasley a second thought. I settled. I must have. I saw no future for Severus and me, so I settled for loving a man who is a good man, but doesn't set my heart on fire.

She glanced at the fire crackling in the hearth. "Don't I deserve more happiness than that?" she said aloud. "I suppose that's the real question, isn't it?" She paused and let the flames captivate her once again. "Come on, Hermione, you know you deserve to be happy. We all deserve to be happy. Who will make you happier? Do you even have to ask such a question?"

But he's trying to run your life.

"He's trying to fix his own. He said himself that he'd back away if we didn't work out."

Shouldn't he have left well enough alone?

"Probably, but he didn't. Shouldn't I be thankful that he didn't? Shouldn't I be kissing his feet for saving me from Ron?"

You're letting him win.

Hermione grimaced. Realization dawned on her. Her stupid pride was trying to force her to give up on Severus. She was so consumed with being independent that she was risking throwing him away so her independent thought would not suffer a blow.

"Relationships are about sharing things and making decisions together."

But he made this decision all on his own.

"He had no choice."

He's a Slytherin. They have agendas.

Hermione smirked. "True, but it seems that our agendas agree in this circumstance."

You're letting him win.

"Maybe I want him to win."

Her inner voice shut up for once. Who could argue with that? Hermione lay down on the couch and thought of the last few days. How wonderful they had been! Did she really want to give that up because her sensitivities had been bruised? Was she really that shallow?

She imagined Severus' lips touching hers again, and she groaned with the thought of his kiss. Then he was pulling her to him as they danced. Their bodies were pressed together, and she marveled at how wonderful he felt against her. She had known with that dance that she would never find another man who excited her like Severus. Snape excited her. Why would she want to throw that away?

Pulling herself up, she rose from the couch and wandered into the bedroom. After changing for bed, she gazed at her reflection in the mirror.

"Hermione Weasley," she muttered as she looked at herself. Her face scrunched up. It just didn't sound right.

"Hermione Snape," she said more forcefully. She smiled. That was much better.

She thoughtfully went over to the bed and slid under the covers. She would talk to Severus and Severus tomorrow. She had made her decision.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 of 11

Severus Snape regrets not becoming romantically involved with Hermione Granger in his past. Will a trip back in time solve all of his problems?

Chapter 10

It had been a sleepless night for both Severuses. They had settled on playing chess to occupy their time while they awaited the dawn. All the games had wound up in stalemates. They glowered at each other over the chessboard as the pieces reset themselves for the tenth time.

"I would have won that one if you hadn't cheated!" Severus growled.

"I don't cheat. You were the one who cheated. That's why I didn't win."

Their quarrel was interrupted by a knock at the door.

"You don't suppose that's her, do you?" Snape asked.

"It's possible, but I didn't expect her to come by this early."

"Maybe she couldn't sleep either," Snape mused as he got up to answer the door.

He opened it to find Hermione in the hallway, her arms crossed in front of her. He stepped aside and let her pass into the room. Both men leveled unemotional, blank faces at her. It was their only defense against what they feared was to come.

Hermione looked at the two men. They both looked paler than usual and had dark circles under their eyes. "Have either of you even slept? You both look horrible!" Hermione mused.

Both men looked to the floor. Hermione chuckled. "You're both incredibly cute when you do that, you know."

She saw the scowls appear in unison. She frowned, too. "May I sit down? No, forget it, I'll stand." She began to wring her hands together. The two Snapes looked at her curiously.

"I wanted to apologize for last night," she said nervously. "I overreacted." She was having a hard time knowing which one of them to look at, so she decided to look at the floor instead. "I'm used to making my own decisions, and the thought of having that taken away from me didn't sit well."

"Hermione," Snape said. "We're not trying to run your life."

She looked up at him. "I know that. I just needed to think things through. I'm sorry."

"Why are you apologizing?" Severus asked. "We are the ones who are at fault."

She shook her head. "No, you're not. You..." She looked up to Severus. "You said you love me. Is that true?"

"More than anything," both Severus' replied in unison.

"I... I love you too." Her eyes flitted between the two of them. "I don't know who to look at here!" she exclaimed.

Snape walked over to her and turned her toward him. "Look at me. I'm the one who belongs here."

She gave him a shy smile. "I love you too."

Snape looked deeply into her eyes. He searched her face. "You have chosen?" he asked.

"There really wasn't much of a choice to make, Severus. My life would be nothing without you in it. I want us to try and make this work."

Snape gave a quick laugh. You could hear the relief in it. He glanced up at Severus, who nodded back at him. Not needing any other cues, he pulled Hermione to him and kissed her.

Hope coursed through Snape as his lips pressed against Hermione's. For the first time in his life he felt he had a future to look forward to. Reveling in the woman he loved, he wrapped his arms around her and cradled her to him. Her arms went around his back encouragingly. He couldn't help but smile. Hermione pulled back and circled his lips with her finger.

"What are you thinking that's making you smile like that?" she asked Snape.

"I'm thinking that my life has just gotten exponentially better."

Hermione tilted her head and regarded Snape thoughtfully. "I think my life has too."

Snape's heart soared when he heard her words. She truly cared for him. His secret yearning to have someone love him despite his shortcomings had finally come to pass. He cupped her face in his hands.

"You're sure about me... about us?" he asked tentatively. Despite his happiness, his disposition would not let him believe it was real.

Hermione reached up and grasped his wrist. "I've never been surer about anything, Severus. I'm excited to see where this relationship leads."

Snape looked at her longingly as he drew her close and reverently kissed her. He vowed right then and there not to ruin this. He would fight to keep her with him. He would never let her get away.

They had wiled the morning away in Severus' room. The three had enjoyed a leisurely breakfast together. Hermione peppered Severus with questions about the future. He declined to answer anything, making Hermione pout. Severus found it completely endearing.

They now sat on the couch, Hermione in the middle of the two Severuses, one arm around each of them. She turned her head back and forth, looking at both of them curiously.

Severus arched a questioning eyebrow at her.

Hermione smirked. "I thought that just one of you was challenging to have around."

Snape's face fell. So did Severus'. He looked to his twin. "I think she needs to be shown just how beneficial it is to have two of us here."

Snape's eyebrow rose as Hermione looked between the two in trepidation. "What are you going to do?"

"First," replied Severus. "You'll have to be taught a lesson about being so derogatory toward us."

Hermione bit her lip and began to squirm, trying to get up and away before it was too late.

"Not so fast," Snape whispered in her ear as his hand clenched around her arm.

Before she knew it, she was being attacked from both sides. The two men tickled her mercilessly. Hermione did all she could to break free of them, but they were both too

strong for her.

"No!" she gasped. "Please! Stop!"

The tickling continued as Hermione pled with the men to be merciful. Finally, they gave her a break. Hermione doubled over and gasped for breath. "Don't... do... that... again!" she cried between the gasps that were still coming out of her mouth.

Snape looked to Severus. "Do you think she's learned her lesson?"

"I don't think she has."

Hermione sat straight back up and cried out.

"But," Severus continued, "I think we'll have to save more punishment for another day."

"What do you suggest, then?" Snape asked.

"I think you already know," Severus said as he eyed Hermione's neck.

The two men came in as Hermione squealed. Suddenly, two sets of lips were kissing her neck. Hermione moaned as she felt Severus caress her back and Snape turn her face toward him. His lips soon left her neck and covered her lips. Severus continued to shower her neck with affection. Hermione's hand came up, and she ran it through Snape's hair. Then she felt her head being turned toward Severus. It was his turn now to explore her mouth as Snape returned to her neck. The sheer electricity of two of the same man bestowing such affection on her was too much for Hermione. She felt as if she were on sensory overload. The feeling was exhilarating. She fell into it completely and kissed Severus with abandon.

At long last, the three broke apart. The two men eyed their woman lovingly. Hermione glanced between the two. She turned to Severus.

"You're sure you don't want to stay?"

Severus smirked. "I wish I could."

"Maybe you could visit now and then?"

Severus laughed, but Snape pulled her to him. "I will make up for his absence, I promise you."

Hermione gazed into his eyes. "I'll hold you to that."

Too soon, the time for Severus to return to his time was upon them. He rose to prepare himself to leave. Going over to his twin, he pulled him into the bedroom.

"Now, don't blow it!" he advised.

Snape rolled his eyes. "Do you ever stop?"

"At least one of us is worried about our future!"

Snape scoffed. "I'm worried too, but the future will only come one day at a time." He looked to Severus seriously. "I will do all I can to keep her. I cannot imagine being without her."

Severus gave Snape a quick nod. "That's all I can ask, but if you blow this, I will not withhold my hex... whether it hurts me or not."

Snape smirked. "If I blow this, I will deserve your hex."

Severus smirked back at him. "I hope for a better outcome than that."

"You have given me something to hope for as well. It's a refreshing change."

Severus nodded. "I would say goodbye to Hermione before my time is up."

Snape extended his arm, motioning for Severus to step back into the other room. Severus did, but Snape did not follow, giving his older self some privacy with his witch. Severus approached Hermione with a small smile on his face.

"It's almost time for me to go," he told her.

"Severus, I look forward to seeing you in the future."

"I feel the same way. Thank you for giving us another chance."

"I would be a fool not to," Hermione admitted.

Severus looked her over from head to toe. He studied her face, trying to memorize the look in it. She was looking at him with such affection. It was something he wanted to remember forever.

"May I kiss you before I go?" Severus asked. "Just in case things don't work out."

"Such a defeatist!" Hermione admonished.

"A realist," Severus corrected.

"A real dunderhead, if you ask me."

Severus reached up and slid his hand to her neck. He pulled her gently to him. Keeping eye contact with her, he slowly lowered himself so that his lips were even with hers. Finally, his eyes closed as he carefully pressed his lips up against hers. He kissed her as if she were the most precious thing in the world. All too soon, it was time for him to leave. He reluctantly pulled away from Hermione. Giving her a winsome look, he placed a kiss on her forehead.

"I hope to see you when I return."

Hermione smiled at him. "I'm sure you will."

"If we're not..."

Hermione put a finger to his lips. "No defeatist thoughts!" she counseled. "Think positively. Things will work out fine."

Severus smirked at her. "I will see you soon, then."

"Yes, you will," Hermione said as she smirked herself.

Severus drank in every inch of her beautiful face. His possible future with Hermione was now a blank page. He had no idea what he would find when he returned to his present. He only hoped that his life would hold Hermione within it.

"I love you... please remember that, especially when I'm unbearable."

Hermione laughed. "So, I should remember it every minute of the day?"

"Yes, that would be best," Severus acquiesced with a smirk.

"Well, I love you too, even when you're unbearable."

"Thank you for that." Severus looked to Hermione with intensity. Suddenly, his vision seemed to get hazy.

"Good-bye, Hermione," he said in a choked voice.

In an instant he was gone.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 of 11

Severus Snape regrets not becoming romantically involved with Hermione Granger in his past. Will a trip back in time solve all of his problems?

Chapter 11

When Severus arrived in his own time, he stumbled forward slightly. He found himself standing outside. There were many people seated in front of him. Looking around he noticed their fine dress. His heart sank. He was at the wedding. Potter sat in front with his wife, Ginevra. The boy was smiling like an idiot. Across from them, Molly Weasley was blowing her nose into a handkerchief. Tears were running down her cheeks. Arthur's arm was supportively around her shoulders.

Bugger, it hadn't worked. She had chosen Weasley after all. He felt his chest tighten as his eyes wandered farther down the front aisle where Molly boo-hoo'd loudly. Weasley was sitting right there next to Arthur. Severus' eyebrows knit together. Ronald Wesley turned and smiled at the witch seated next to him. Luna Lovegood looked at him with her dreamy look as he leaned into her and kissed her. His wife, his mind told him. Severus sputtered.

"You're back, aren't you?" he heard from beside him.

His head snapped around, and he saw Hermione standing next to him in a beautiful wedding dress. He was holding her wrist, and she was holding his. He realized they weren't at the Burrow at all, but on the Hogwarts grounds. Suddenly, the memories from the last two years came flooding into his mind. Endless evenings spent in each other's company. A relationship that solidified and a love that deepened as the days, months, and years passed on. He watched the sharpness of his personality slowly calm to acceptable levels and felt a peace within himself that he never thought possible.

He knelt in front of Hermione and asked her to marry him. Her eyes filled with tears as she accepted. He reveled in the feel of her arms around him as she threw herself down to kiss him passionately.

The last two years were restored to him in a flash, and now he knew exactly what was happening. He glanced down at himself and saw he was dressed in fine black dress robes. Glancing back at Hermione, he smirked at her.

"I am," he answered finally.

"I've been waiting for you," she whispered. "I'd hoped you'd get here before we were wed. Do you remember anything?"

Severus leaned into Hermione and gave her a smoldering look. "I remember everything."

Hermione blushed as she smiled adoringly at him.

"Mr. Snape?" the vicar queried. "Are you all right?"

Severus straightened up and looked at the vicar. The vicar leaned in toward him. "You seem to be a bit out of sorts, Professor."

"No, I'm all right. I just wandered off for a minute."

The vicar frowned. "You are supposed to be exchanging vows, sir, not off in your own world."

Severus frowned too, but gave the vicar a small bow. "I am ready."

The vicar cleared his throat and repeated his previous words. "You may now exchange the vows you have prepared."

Severus looked into Hermione's eyes. "Hermione, you have been a bright light in what had been a lifetime of darkness for me. You have shown me a love that is endless and have helped me to become more than I'd ever thought possible. I now bind myself to you for eternity. May our union forever be blessed with happiness and love."

The vicar waved his wand over their clasped wrists. A golden chain wrapped itself around their wrists.

"Severus," Hermione began. "You have shown me a side of yourself that few have ever seen. I feel honored to have your love and to be a part of your life. I am eager for us to build our life together because I know it will be a partnership filled with respect and devotion. I now bind myself to you for eternity. May our union forever be blessed with happiness and love."

The vicar once again waved his wand, and another golden chain weaved itself in with the first.

The vicar now pronounced the binding done. "I now seal this binding with my magical power and authority. May you find that you love each other a little more each day as the years pass by."

He tapped their wrists, and the two golden chains glowed brightly before being absorbed into Severus and Hermione's wrists.

"I now pronounce you wizard and wife," the vicar finished.

Hermione and Severus smiled warmly at each other. "You may kiss the bride," the vicar advised.

Severus laughed and pulled his wife towards him. *My wife... Hermione is now my wife.* His lips came down on hers, and he kissed his *wife*. Even though he had just kissed Hermione a few minutes ago, or so it seemed, this kiss was even more wonderful than their first. Innocent as this kiss was, it held the promise of dreams fulfilled for Severus.

The couple pulled apart, and each gazed into the other's eyes. The love that Severus saw in Hermione's eyes took his breath away. She had loved him before, when he was in the past, but this gaze was indescribable. No woman had ever looked to her husband with such devotion, Severus was sure of it. They held the gaze for a moment and then turned to their guests. Everyone stood and applauded as Severus and Hermione walked back down the aisle hand in hand. They stopped at the end of the aisle and turned to greet the well-wishers.

After some time, everyone had filed past, and the guests were moving into the castle for the reception. Hermione held Severus back. He turned and looked at her with an arched eyebrow.

"Penny for your thoughts," Hermione said.

"I am overwhelmed," Severus said. Emotion filled his voice. "This is more than I could have hoped for."

Hermione smirked at him. "You have a knack for expecting the worst, Severus Snape. Have you ever expected the best?" she asked.

"I am learning, Hermione Snape, that when it comes to you, I can probably count on it." He pulled her close. "Hermione, thank you for giving me this chance. I find that in my absence these past two years my feelings for you have only intensified." He kissed her softly, yet fervently. "Thank you, my love, for becoming mine."

Hermione smiled brightly up at him. "I would have had it no other way."

Severus fondled her hair. "When I left, I hoped that our relationship would last. I couldn't have dreamed that this would be the result when I returned."

"Always the defeatist," Hermione teased.

"Not anymore. Not now that you are mine."

"I will always be yours, Severus."

"Then it was all worth it."

His hand snaked to her face, and he lovingly tilted her head towards his. "I am yours forever," he whispered before his lips touched hers. Severus' kiss conveyed what escaped him with words. He had found the most treasured gift he could ever lay hands on. Having almost missed out on this opportunity, he treasured her even more. Her ardent kisses proved to him that his journey to the past had been well worth it. He'd found the love he'd been searching for. He'd finally found happiness.

The End