

Reacquainting

by RachelW

Over a decade after the war's end, Hermione Granger and Severus Snape have a chance encounter in Knockturn Alley, and discuss their mutual history. Inspired by fic request from Snapesforte.

Reacquainting. One-Shot.

Chapter 1 of 1

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Snape pulled his hood well over his face as he turned to leave the filthy shop. He'd delivered a potion. Before stepping out into the street, he took a swig from a flask reminding himself again of that crazy fool Moody, and the one who'd been his impostor so long another lifetime ago, as he did so and felt the waves of nausea pass over him as his features morphed. This batch had been made from the hairs of a Muggle he'd bumped into a few days previous. No one would see any resemblance. His pale features no longer pale, but instead a deep brown... his hair was no longer lank and greasy, instead it fell in dreads around his face. His eyes remained the same colour, but the shape changed, his lips were fuller, and his body more toned, slightly shorter, too, than his normal shape. No one would recognise him like this. No one had recognised him in nearly ten years.

He had three more stops to make. Sometimes, those he delivered to would try to question him about the nature of the brewer; he would put on the persona of an uneducated delivery-person, and generally tried to nip hair from younger men, teenage boys, to fit the part better. His current guise was in his mid-twenties, but it would work.

Into the next shop, this one smelling of rotten eggs and an undertone of cannabis, he searched out the proprietor. Snape found him quickly enough; only he was in a meeting with a cloaked figure beside a precariously stacked collection of dusty mummy fingers. It was likely a woman judging by height and the way the proprietor was actually making an attempt at being polite for a change.

He glanced up as the woman turned, and his heart nearly stopped for a moment. *She* was the last person he would expect to see here. He nearly turned, ready to find a place to duck and hide where he could cast a Disillusionment Charm on himself, before he realised soon enough that she wouldn't be able to know it was he. He would be safe.

However, she slowed as she approached him and looked at him intently, with a challenge, and he felt a cold stab of fear that she'd recognised him, even through his guise. Why was she looking at him? Why had she stopped?

Moments like these, when he saw someone who would recognise him were he not disguised, he wondered why it was he'd stayed in England, why he still came to the central wizarding conclaves, why he flirted with fate, risking discovery, imprisonment, and the worst of all punishments the wizarding world could inflict upon a criminal. This woman, above any others though, would have a greater chance of recognising him.

"Excuse me, but I need to leave, and you're standing in front of the door," she informed him curtly, though not without a note of humour. He'd been staring. How could he

be such an idiot?

He stepped aside, looking away for a moment. But he looked back. Now, more than any other time, he longed to reach out and tell her. She was the last person who had known him, had known him well, but he knew well enough that she would likely single-handedly turn him over to the Azkaban guards if he were to let her know. But could it be possible that she might not turn him in?

"Who are you?" she demanded in an icy voice. He remembered that icy voice. He'd been staring again, raising her suspicions; she was nearly as paranoid as he was.

"No-one," he muttered. Thinking of a new plan, he leered at the neckline of Hermione's robe. "Seen you in the papers, I 'ave. You care for a little 'get to know ye' meetin' at the pub up the way? Seems unfair an' all, what with you in the papers and ye don't know a thin' abou' me," said Snape in a slimy yet clipped accent. That should turn her off any scent of recognition... either that, or make her more suspicious. Judging by the suddenly determined, angry expression, he'd unintentionally-intentionally come under her detailed scrutiny.

"Legilimens," she whispered, looking directly into his eyes.

He wasn't fast enough. Oh, he got his Occlumency shields up, but not before she got a glimpse of his true self. Hiding your identity could be a bit more difficult than simply hiding your intentions or emotions, especially since he was out of practice. Now, they both watched each other in a growing horror. Her face turned pale, and her mouth began to work. She was going to scream in a moment, he just knew it.

"Hermione, hush," he hissed. "Come with me." He held out a hand as a half invitation, half demand that she take it.

"Snape," she hissed. "I should-"

He cut her off quickly by grabbing her hand. "Please, don't. Don't, Hermione. I'll not beg, but there can be no point to any capture of me now; they all think I'm dead, and you know our world would rather not think there are still loose ends left after all that.... Come with me; we can talk about whatever you may want."

"What makes you think I want to talk to you?" She looked him up and down as if she thought the idea of being around him was offensive.

Snape glanced around the shop, checking to be sure no one was looking at them. "You could have turned me in long ago, but you didn't."

"I needed y-" she paused mid-word, took a breath, then began again, "I needed *the information* you were giving *us*. You used me."

"Oh? Is that how it was... funny, that's not quite what I remember...." Snape smirked at her, now beginning to feel confident that she wasn't going to turn him in, despite her obviously revised memories of their past, and his pounding heart. "I have business to attend to now. If you'll meet me three streets north of The Leaky Cauldron in an hour, I'll tell you whatever it is you'd like to know." With a lurch in his stomach that he was sure was entirely because of the danger of possible exposure of his true identity, he turned and walked to the back of the shop to talk to the proprietor about the potions he'd brought.

The youngish-looking man standing in front of the exit didn't alarm Hermione at first. Generally, when she had business in this notorious part of the wizarding village in the centre of London, she had her share of a few odd looks, and a few people who recognised her. This particular man watched her approach the door, staring at her as if somehow stunned. Well, it wasn't as if she was the type to garner those sorts of stunned expressions; still, it was mildly amusing.

"Excuse me, but I need to leave, and you're standing in front of the door," said Hermione, not rudely, but firmly. His eyes widened and he seemed momentarily surprised before he looked away as he moved aside to allow her to pass. Her eyes followed him, noting the flaring of his nostrils and an odd hitch of his breath before he met her eyes again. Chills ran down her spine and her breath stopped.

She'd never seen his face before in her life, but in the wizarding world, the face one wore didn't mean all that much. At any rate, his face didn't seem right, somehow he didn't fit.

"Who are you?" she hissed.

"No-one." He leered at the neckline of Hermione's robe, making her feel uncomfortable, almost slimy. "Seen you in the papers, I 'ave. You care for a little 'get to know ye' meetin' at the pub up the way? Seems unfair an' all, what with you in the papers and ye don't know a thin' abou' me," said the stranger, tilting his head. The dreadlocks shook slightly. Something was wrong, though... something wasn't right.

"Legilimens," she whispered. The image, which assaulted her once she peeked into his mind, even if it was only for a second, was enough. She felt a cold fear wash over her. *Not him*. The man she'd thought of, tried not to think of, who haunted both her nightmares and her dreams in so many ways.

"Hermione, hush," he hissed. "Come with me." He held out a dark hand as a half invitation, half demand that she take it. She made no move to accept.

"Snape," she hissed. "I should-"

He cut her off quickly by grabbing her hand. "Please, don't. Don't, Hermione. I'll not beg, but there can be no point to any capture of me now; they all think I'm dead, and you know our world would rather not think there are still loose ends left after all that.... Come with me; we can talk about whatever you may want."

"What makes you think I want to talk to you?" This time she wasn't so confident. This moment, a chance meeting, had played over and over in her mind for the last ten years. Sometimes she imagined she would turn him over to the authorities and stand by as he was sentenced, sometimes she imagined she would take justice into her own hands, and sometimes she imagined something altogether different....

"You could have turned me in long ago, but you didn't," said the Polyjuiced Snape. She met his eyes for a moment.

"I needed y-" she stopped, not wanting to say that she needed *him*; she didn't want him getting ideas, then continued, "I needed the information you were giving us. You used me." Yes, Hermione, tell him you were used. Tell him you hate him for what he did to you, for how he made you feel, for how he took advantage of the situation.

"Oh? Is that how it was... funny, that's not quite what I remember...." His smirk, even though it wasn't his face, was too clear, and it made her feel like crumpling inside. "I have business to attend to now. If you'll meet me three streets north of The Leaky Cauldron in an hour, I'll tell you whatever it is you'd like to know."

And then he brushed past her. She turned and looked at his back for a moment, infuriated that he could be so cool and collected like this, and then stormed out of the shop. An hour. Meet him in an hour? She barely noticed the occupants of the crowded alley moving aside as she strode at a near-run through the twists and turns, her shoes ringing loudly on the damp cobblestones. Well, an hour was plenty of time to gather together the Aurors who would no doubt be glad to learn that Severus Snape was still alive and that he was right here in London under their noses, not abroad or dead as it had been rumoured.

She wanted to make him pay for what he'd done. But as she reached Diagon Alley, and her steps slowed, she wondered if it was right to do that. He seemed so confident and it was infuriating, but it also reminded her that what had happened oh it was easy sometimes to make it out to have been her doing what she had to do in order to get the information he held, to believe that he wouldn't have given it to her had she not prostituted herself but she knew the truth. She'd wanted it and she'd been just as willing a participant as he had been. Not only that, but, and this was the part she *really* hated to remember, it had been more than a hurried fuck for both of them.

She stopped outside a shop window and pretended to look at the display, but had anyone asked her what she thought of the contents, she wouldn't have been able to say. Her blurred and light reflection, bushy hair blowing in the slight breeze she saw somewhat. It would serve him right if she got the Aurors' conceited bastard. Even if it had

been his information that had allowed the Order to go on functioning after he'd murdered Dumbledore, he really had been in it for himself, to play both sides so he wouldn't end up on the losing side.

She checked her watch, mentally calculating how much time she had left before he would be at the place he'd told her if he wasn't lying, that is. She had forty-five minutes. Plenty of time to notify the authorities. Severus Snape was still a wanted man, even if he had been presumed dead seven years earlier when the clean-up and tallying of the war had been going on. His capture would make headlines.

He could barely breathe as he watched from a distance. She was there, but had she brought anyone? After a few moments, he decided that she was truly alone. He would take the chance. Oh, how he wanted to simply Disapparate, to not worry about this, about what she might do now. After so many years, was she even the same? She'd put on a few pounds, perhaps two stone, softening her jaw line and features, but he thought it was better than how she'd been during the war, far too thin. He couldn't help but wonder how she would feel under him now softer, surely. Her arse would be fuller, her thighs thicker as they wrapped around him, her breasts heavier now... but he dismissed those images, enticing as they were.

Why was he doing this? He started to walk towards her in a shuffling manor, looking aside as she looked around, trying to locate him. He'd taken another form, his bag of purchases had been camouflaged with a local plastic store bag, and he blended with the pedestrians. He was getting closer now, and glanced her direction. She looked nervous, and was pinching the leg of her trousers. He stood beside her at the bus stop, then sat on the bench, giving a convincing groan as if arthritic joints plagued him, and looked ahead. So close... she was so close he could reach out and touch her and, aside from a brief glance, she had paid him no mind. Now that he'd time to expect her, he would make no mistakes that would reveal his identity until he was certain she was alone.

After a good twenty minutes of pacing back and forth, peering about up and down the streets, and taking a few false starts as if she wanted to leave, she sat down with a sigh, closed her eyes, scowling.

"Someone forget a meeting, young lady?" he asked.

"Wha- oh, yes. I was supposed to meet someone here. Probably best that it didn't happen, really." She turned towards him and smiled briefly a generic polite smile for the unknown man, then her gaze turned inward as she turned from him.

He sat until the bus came to a stop before the stoplight; he was nearly taken by surprise from the silence of it. It almost made him feel as old as his current guise. At least London didn't have the stench of burning fuels now; the Muggles' technology had finally made their expansion not so terribly hard on the environment a good thing for potions ingredients, overall.

"Which bus are you waiting for?" he asked next.

"I'm not, actually. I should go it was a mistake to wait for that person, anyway."

"So then, you've come alone after all, Hermione," he said, finally revealing himself. She jumped to her feet and spun, looking down at him in disbelief. "Don't you think I've become careful after so many years? Or did you think I would leave our world altogether, that I would live as a Muggle forever?" He almost felt like chuckling. A short, arthritic, portly, bald man wearing a nearly threadbare shamrock-print shirt was the last disguise she would have expected of him.

Hermione sat down stiffly, self-consciously, suddenly appearing much less at-ease.

"The next bus will be here in twenty minutes. Take it with me, and we'll go somewhere more private. As you can imagine, I don't Apparate often."

She sat beside him gingerly, and addressed him without looking at him, "And now you want me to get on the bus with you? Snape... you... oh! I still haven't forgiven you. You didn't have to have this life; you could have-

"Could have what, Hermione? Could have turned myself over to the mercy of the ministry and their insanity? After seeing dozens of innocents imprisoned wrongly along with the guilty, do you think they would have believed me, even if you had corroborated my story? Potter would never have allowed me to live in peace, if he'd allowed me to live at all."

"I could have convinced him. But I rather think you liked that. If you'd really wanted, you could have stayed..." she trailed off with a sigh. "But you aren't like that."

"Did you think it could ever be any more than that? What, did you believe I would marry you and settle down, that we could have had children together? Perhaps run a potions research firm between the two of us?" Snape gave a derisive snort.

"So instead you just used me for a convenient lay because you knew I wanted to find the Horcruxes." Her voice was bitter and cold, but with just a hint of underlying quaver. Snape studied her profile, the hard set of her mouth, the hint of little lines forming at the corners of her eyes she would be about thirty-two now, he realised.

Snape laughed, and she turned to him with a look of pure venom as he spoke. "You're so damned righteous, aren't you? I remember the way you used to take me, like you wanted to devour me..."

"Shut up!" she hissed, snapping back to look straight ahead, her spine ramrod straight.

"You don't want to remember? Oh, there was the time remember we both tried to be quiet when your beau came looking for you; it was you who whispered the Disillusionment Charm while you were against the wall impaled on my cock. He walked right by us not three feet away, I couldn't believe even with the charm he didn't notice, the smell of sex was overwhelming..."

"Don't you dare talk about him!"

Snape waited; she was getting upset and that wasn't a good thing. However, he did notice something that gave him some hope not that he was actually 'hoping' for anything.... "I don't see a ring, so I suppose that didn't work, did it?" he asked conversationally.

"He found out... he couldn't, wouldn't... understand; he didn't believe me."

"Didn't believe you? What did you try to tell him to garner his sympathy? I'd forced you? Coerced you? Nasty, greasy Snape had been so evil... was that it?"

"No..." she said, but he could tell she was lying to him now.

"I'm sure a court would have convicted me. Your word against mine." He sighed sadly this time. "You know there are times I regret this life, when I lie awake at night and think about how it could have gone..."

"Stop. I don't want to hear this. You had your chance. You didn't want it then. It's too late now; I can't... I have a life now."

They both quieted as the bus came along. Snape stood slowly, leaning forward, just like a fat old arthritic man would. "We could have a chance again, Hermione. He held out his hand; to anyone on the street it could look like an exchange between a grandfather and a granddaughter, perhaps after a family estrangement. "Come, we'll talk somewhere more private."

The doors of the bus opened. Hermione looked to his hand, and then stood, not taking it.

"I left that path long ago," she said stiffly, turning and walking away. Her hair bounced much as it always had, though there was now a sort of bounce in her posterior that

hadn't been there in years past. What was he doing looking at her posterior anyway?

"You gettin' on, sir?" the driver asked. Snape turned towards the bus, then back to watch Hermione, who was going as quickly as she could without running.

Hermione walked but wasn't sure where she was going. She didn't notice the strangers who glanced at her oh, she was sure she was quite a sight by now. She would have reached up to wipe the tears, but that would only smear her sparsely applied makeup and look worse than what she looked now.

She heard the air brakes of the bus hiss. She would not look. No, she would not look. There had been a time that she would have leapt to hear Snape say that a time when, in the middle of a war, having someone to cling to, especially Snape, had been not only exciting, but the only thing that held her together. Dumbledore's murderer who had still supplied information, who had made her believe that it wasn't through malicious intent that he'd killed the old Headmaster. And then Ron had discovered it. Ron had never understood, and then when she tried to say she'd only done it for the information, that Snape had made it part of the deal, he didn't believe her. Ron had become rather perceptive.

Of course, Snape may have tried to imply he'd trade more information for her cooperation, for a few moments of carnal pleasure he wanted but rarely got the chance to indulge in, but the decision had been hers; she'd known very well that whether she slept with him or not would have no bearing on the information she received. Only the delivery had changed; there had been something incredible about having him whisper the movements of the Death Eaters and of Voldemort's plans and the possible locations of the Horcruxes in her ear between thrusts of his cock into her quivering body. Part of her had immaturely enjoyed playing out a scenario that seemed like something out of a James Bond film. Two spies, nearly enemies, clandestine assignments to get the information *by any means necessary*. She giggled to herself, at her old, young and silly self. Not that she'd ever really been silly; perhaps that was why she had allowed a few odd indulgences along the way.

He'd been right, though; she had once taken his cock in her mouth as if she wanted to devour him, digging her nails into his thighs while he would hold her hair, even verbally taunting her at times, but he'd known how far to go, when to stop, never crossing the line that would truly offend her.

And afterwards laying with him, each wanting those moments of peaceful respite with another. They'd never really spoken of it, of those times that he'd clung to her like a drowning man to a life preserver, of the times she'd leave his shoulder wet with her tears always shed only in complete silence or with the cries of a climax. They'd always pretended it was just a fuck. Just a fuck. She'd felt like she repeated that mantra at times to keep herself sane *...just a fuck...* keep herself from begging him to run away with her after the war *...just a fuck...* or even during the war when the pressures seemed too much to bear *..just a fuck...* That mantra had restrained her, had restrained them both from ever expressing more than was safe. Sex became their expression, one they could pretend meant nothing.

And then, only after it was all over, had they sought each other out again. And at the one point in her life when she would have been willing to go with him wherever he would, he'd repeated their mantra to them, inviting her for a repeat. She'd slapped him, then left.

She was going to cry outright for sure now, and realised that she was near an Apparation point in the nearby public park. She hadn't looked back; she didn't want to see if he'd gotten on the bus or not, but she reached the concealed (to Muggles) Apparation point and stopped long enough to collect herself, then Disapparated.

She hadn't looked back because she'd known what she would have seen and she couldn't bear it.

Snape was glad he had followed her. Glad he'd cast the Tracking Charm before she Disapparated. Glad she had Apparated directly to her flat. He knew, too, that the fact that she *had* Apparated directly was a sign. She knew he could track her. She'd chosen to allow him the chance to do so; there was no other explanation for her carelessness.

It was dark now, a quarter-moon peeked through the cloud-cover intermittently, the mist, which had fallen earlier, had abated. The street was quiet it was a Muggle neighbourhood of middle-class. The cars parked in the driveways were of newer models. He wore his own form now as he walked noiselessly up the street. Her wards were up, and they were strong, but he wouldn't go in, not yet.

He stood there for a long moment, watching and wondering. A shadow moved inside, backlit against the curtains. He would return, and he would confront her again, but not tonight. Tonight he felt it was enough that he knew she still could be influenced, and he could take his time to plan how he might go about it.