

Just For Now

by Hanagasume

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N - Ok well, this story was originally posted here some time earlier this year, and I may have accidentally deleted it, so now I am reposting it. In any case, Alliean is the beta I need to thank for correcting my many mistakes!

Brandy the drink of men and kings alike. It was the fuel for the alcoholic's flame and the dignified after dinner drink of gentlemen, all at the same time. The same tall, dark-haired man would walk into the bar at exactly nine o'clock every Friday night, order a brandy, and knock it back quickly, before leaving immediately afterward. At first, the bar keeper had thought his behaviour strange, but had soon become accustomed to it, and about three months after the man had started going there, he set up a tab for him that he simply paid at the end of the month.

Little did the barkeeper know, this tall, dark man was different. Nobody in the bar ever suspected that he might have strange abilities that were so fantastic that they were hard to imagine. Nobody would ever suspect that this man was, in fact, a wizard. Then again, nobody in the wizarding world would have expected Severus Snape to go to a bar in Muggle London. Neither would anyone have suspected that the reclusive Potions master of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry was returning there every Friday evening because of a woman.

But that was exactly the reason why he did.

She was not a woman that he knew or had even spoken to. He just felt as though he recognized her vaguely from somewhere, but had been unable to pinpoint exactly where he had seen her before. So he had taken to watching her as she walked through the park across the road from the bar every Friday evening. Now Severus Snape was not a stalker, and he never attempted to touch her he simply watched as she walked around the small lake, holding a baby in her arms and feeding the ducks.

There was always a little light from the sunset left when he saw her, and from his position in the shadows, she had always looked a bit like an angel with the halo-like glow behind her that the sun created. The child, as expected, looked a lot like the woman herself, although Severus was quite sure it was a boy. But he had never seen a father or any other man, no matter how many times he had followed behind her to make sure that she got safely to her townhouse apartment just down the block from the park.

Sometimes he would pull out a cigarette and light it with a Muggle lighter, sucking in the tobacco and toxins, letting it fill his lungs before puffing it out, the smoke barely visible in the dusk light. He never smoked on the Hogwarts grounds. It had been a promise he had made Minerva when he had become her Deputy Headmaster. The last thing she needed was for him to be a bad influence on the students by promoting the inhalation of the toxins at an early age. It mattered little to Severus, however, as he was not an addict and did not need to smoke if he didn't feel like it. He was, if nothing else, a man of great self-control.

One night, six months after Severus had begun watching and following the woman with her child, he again touched on another thing that was familiar about her. She had brown curls that fell to her waist which reminded him of someone he certainly had to have known from somewhere in the wizarding world. He had followed a little too closely behind her that night and had come close to being discovered, but had managed to duck out of sight before she caught sight of a strange man who appeared to be practically stalking her. The last thing he needed was to be arrested, or to have to Obliviate her.

He watched her as she walked up the stairs of the townhouse as usual, seating himself on a bench that was situated under a Canadian Maple on the other side of the street. She unlocked the door and ducked inside with her baby, the two of them swathed in warm clothes to ward off the chill of the air outside. It was late autumn with winter lingering just around the corner. He pulled out a cigarette that night, simply because it was cold and he felt like he wanted one.

He was just bringing his hands up to his mouth to light the cigarette stuck between his lips, when the door to the townhouse had opened again, and the woman slipped outside without her child in her arms. Then, to his immense surprise, she began to cross the road, heading straight for him. He thought about getting up and making a run for it, but he supposed he should stay to give her an explanation at the very least. He was, after all, following her around without permission.

As she came closer, Severus had seen her features better than he had ever glimpsed them before, considering the distance at which he had observed and followed. She had a pretty, heart-shaped face, with large, inquisitive eyes framed by dark, thick lashes, a button nose that was slightly longer than the average button, and a few freckles that crossed her nose and cheekbones. She was also a lot taller and more slender than he was ever able to tell. She would have almost reached up as far as his nose. But what shocked him the most about her appearance was that knowing look in her eyes that he knew so well.

'Professor Snape,' she had stated simply on reaching him.

He looked up at her, almost dumbfounded, before plucking the cigarette from his mouth, tucking the things into his pocket and standing before her.

'Would you like an explanation?' he asked gruffly.

'I don't need an explanation,' she said simply. 'It's cold out here. Come inside for a cup of tea and we can talk about things there. It would not do to talk here we're in a Muggle neighborhood after all.'

Severus had followed her into her house and, on entering, found it to be perfectly tidy and decorated tastefully. Bookshelves lined the walls of her sitting room, and he noted that while there were a great deal of Muggle authors on her shelves, he had been right when he figured he must know her from the wizarding world. He had fallen so out of touch with recognizing former students from before the war. The only one he saw on a regular basis was Neville Longbottom, who had taken over Herbology at Hogwarts, and of course, Harry Potter Minerva's little pet.

She disappeared into the room he assumed must be the kitchen, leaving him alone in the room. He shrugged out of his long black winter coat, hanging it up on the hooks near the door. The room was warm enough from the fire crackling in the fireplace that he even unbuttoned his frock coat. The pretty woman returned with a pot of tea and two tea cups, directing him to one of the armchairs in front of the fire. Placing the tea things on the coffee table between her armchair and his, she poured, and he accepted it with a short word of thanks.

'I can't imagine you would even remember me, Professor,' she said finally, after sitting in silence for a few moments.

'I'd say you were right on the mark with that one,' he replied quietly, not bothering to try and be any more pleasant than he was. If she had been his student, she obviously knew that this was an improvement on how he had been before.

She smiled and let loose a small tinkling laugh that Severus found he did not mind.

'I suppose not being mentioned in the *Daily Prophet* every other day does tend to aid people in forgetting you,' she said, taking a sip of her tea.

He nodded, finding himself even more intrigued by this woman.

'I don't mean to be rude, and I know I am likely going to continue being so, but who exactly are you? I feel like I should know who you are,' he asked curiously, his eyes narrowed a little in question.

She smiled then, and he noted how perfect and straight her teeth were.

'Why, Professor, I should be offended that you don't even recognize the infamous Gryffindor know-it-all who enjoyed taunting you so with her hand-waving in class,' she said in a teasing voice.

To say he had been shocked was putting it lightly. Hermione Granger, member of the Gryffindor Trio, and one of the people he had worked alongside with to bring down the Dark Lord seven years earlier, was sitting across from him. And if he was perfectly honest with himself, she had become rather a pretty woman. So pretty that he had been drawn to her and had followed her around to make sure she did not come into harm's way. He had thought she was some unremarkable person, but it was the singularly most gifted woman to have ever graced Hogwarts' halls.

Seven years earlier, Severus would have been reluctant to even think that she was exceptional in any way. But now that he had been freed from the life of a spy and the burden of having two masters he found it was different. She had disappeared from the papers and the public eye shortly after the war when she moved to Canada to study at a wizarding college there, and apparently she had finished and returned, all without causing some sort of ruckus in the papers. Likely it was because the paper wanted excitement, and she just didn't cut it.

'What are you doing with yourself?' he blurted out, his curiosity getting the better of him. 'I had heard that you travelled to Canada to study further but was not aware of your return.'

'I studied for about three years and Apprenticed for one year following that. After graduation, I was a certified Potions mistress, and I began working at a school in Massachusetts. I returned to England seven months ago when my father passed away from cancer. He had a deadly form of Leukaemia, and both of my parents decided not to tell me because they did not want me leaving my life over there,' she explained. As she spoke, Severus couldn't help but notice the tears in her eyes. 'I resigned from my job and moved into this house, and I've been working as the Head of the Potions Research and Development department at Aberdeen College.'

'I had not heard about this,' he said simply, shocked that she was working so close by to Hogwarts, yet lived all the way in London. 'Why do you live in London when you work all the way out there?'

'My mother is still alive and lives alone now. She sold the dentist's surgery that my parents owned together. She gets so lonely, it's easier to live here to take care of her when she gets down.'

Severus nodded, finishing off the last of his tea. 'You have a child?' he asked slowly, trying to be sensitive; Merlin only knew why.

'His name is Andrei,' Hermione told him, smiling fondly at the thought of her son. 'He is only nine months old, and before you ask, no, I am not married. His father, Erik, was a boyfriend of mine he was a Muggle. When I found out I was pregnant and decided to keep him, Erik left.'

'You're likely better off without him,' Severus commented, unable to be untrue to his snarky nature.

Hermione smiled, indifferent to his snark.

'You're probably right,' she agreed. 'In any case, I am happy to have him, and my mother is thrilled to have a grandchild to spoil. He is such a little joy.'

Severus had nodded then and looked at his pocket watch, noting that it was some time after nine. Had he really been there that long? He stood up then, placing the cup and saucer back on the table.

'I should probably head back to Hogwarts. I have the hallway shift at ten,' he said with a frown. 'Little blighters are lucky that I had tea tonight instead of Firewhisky.'

Hermione walked him to the door that night and wished him a pleasant week, all without asking him once why he had been following her. By the end of the night, Severus had suspected that she had noticed him for quite some time, but had only just confronted him that night. For a Gryffindor, she had been particularly Slytherin about keeping her knowledge of his presence to herself. Severus had Apparated from a thicket of trees in the park and had returned to Hogwarts just in time for his patrol. That night, none of the houses lost any points because of the mood he was in.

Severus did not return to the bar again after that night he had spent drinking tea with Hermione Granger. But not returning to the bar did not mean that he did not return at all. In fact, instead of knocking back alcohol like he used to, he went on the walks with Hermione and her son, Andrei. He even fed bread to the ducks one time, after about a month of simply walking with them and watching Hermione and Andrei do it. She managed to con him into it, and Merlin only knew why he did.

The first time Severus had seen Andrei up close, he had been startled to find that the little baby boy did not look exactly like Hermione as he had thought. While his hair was the same dark brown, it was not curly at all, and his face was entirely free of freckles. But the nose had definitely come from his mother. Severus had learned to carry the boy and often took him from the witch to let her rest her arms every now and again. The boy was a little small for his age, but was already crawling, standing and saying words like 'Ma' and 'Da' all the time.

Hermione had even taught him how to say 'Sev', which often came out as 'Sew' because he couldn't pronounce it properly.

He even had two little teeth poking through, with more on the way. Hermione was unsure as to whether or not he was going to be magical. There had already been a few unexplained incidences in the house, and each time, little Andrei had been around, smiling and gurgling innocently. In her opinion, Hermione felt that it had happened too many times for it to have been a coincidence.

After their walks, it became habit for the three of them to return to Hermione's townhouse apartment, and for Hermione to make dinner, while Severus would feed Andrei his evening bottle and put him to bed. One time, Hermione had walked in on Severus walking around the room with Andrei cradled against his chest as he murmured softly, bouncing him softly as he willed him to sleep. It had been such a tender sight, she had almost cried.

In her opinion, she and Severus had become friends. They no longer referred to each other formally and had settled on Severus and Hermione by the third time he had returned to her place for tea. Hermione was very fond of the man he had become in the seven years she had been away. While she had never hated him, she was just glad that some of the edges had been smoothed away, while not totally diminishing the man he would always be. Her attraction had grown over the two months they had been friends with one another.

She could still remember the Christmas and New Years she had spent at Hogwarts at Severus' invitation like it was yesterday. He had given her a set of personalized blank Potions journals for her research, which had been one of the loveliest gifts she had ever received. He had also gifted Andrei with a magical, stuffed dragon, which her son had become very much attached to. In return, she had given him a set of crystal vials for his special Potions with unbreakable charms on them and jewel stoppers. He had been in silent shock before thanking her.

'Severus?' she asked him one day, as they were walking through the snow around the frozen lake in the park.

'Yes?' he replied gruffly as usual.

'What are your plans for the week break at Easter?' she asked him. This, of course, had immediately jump-started his curiosity.

'I have no immediate plans,' he answered, shifting the sleeping Andrei in his arms so that the little one was covered better by the thick blanket they had wrapped him in before walking out into the cold. 'Why do you ask?'

'I was invited to a Potions convention in Berlin that goes for the week of the Easter break, as I imagine you would have been too,' she began, swallowing visibly. 'My mother offered to take care of Andrei for the week, but I wasn't going to go unless you were going to be there. I don't really know the people in the Potions field well, seeing as I am still reasonably new to it.'

'How would my presence there aid you in any way?' he asked, frowning a little as they continued to walk back towards her house.

'It would be nice to see a familiar face there are going to be thousands of people there, Severus,' she pressed, touching his forearm lightly in plea.

'I'll give it some thought,' he answered in typical Snape fashion. He was as unwilling as ever to make a promise that he might not be able to keep.

They returned to her house that evening and had dinner that Severus made, before having coffee, and then he had returned to Hogwarts for his usual rounds. Gryffindor had borne the brunt of the Potion master's mood that night, losing ninety points in total. His feelings for the witch had changed in the time that they had been friends. He found himself impossibly drawn to her, and knew that they were greater than anything he had ever felt for Lily Evans. If he was honest with himself, Severus was falling for Hermione Granger.

He had stopped drinking alcohol, and had locked up anything he had in his chambers in a cabinet that he had no plans of opening. He didn't even smoke any more, simply because Hermione didn't like the smell it left on his clothes, and because he didn't even want to chance harming Andrei. His attachment to Hermione rested just as much with her little boy. His dislike for children was easily overcome when faced with the prospect of having to sit on the floor and play with him. For his part, Andrei did so enjoy snuggling into Severus' chest, and throwing small plush animals at him.

By the time Easter break was only one week away and the spring had well and truly started, Severus had made his mind up and had replied to the Potion masters' committee in the affirmative. He would go to the convention, keep Hermione company, and watch over her as he always did. No man would ever think of taking advantage of her while he was around to stop it. Even though he was sure he would never be able to call her his own, it didn't mean he couldn't stop her from being someone else's too. Severus was of a very jealous and protective nature.

When he had told Hermione that he would be attending the convention for her sake, she had thrown her arms around his neck and hugged him, before dashing off to her office to reply to the committee herself, leaving Andrei with him. Severus sat in one of the armchairs, his frock coat hanging on the hooks by the door, and the top buttons of his shirt undone with the sleeves rolled to his elbows. He was, by that point, very comfortable and relaxed around Hermione's home.

'Looks as though you will be spending a week with your grandmother, young man,' he told the boy, who blinked up at him innocently.

'Na?' Andrei asked with wide eyes.

'Certainly,' Severus agreed.

By this point, Andrei had already turned one, and Hermione, along with Ginny Weasley, had thrown him a birthday party at Hermione's mother's house. Severus had not spoken to Arthur Weasley in such a long time, that he had almost been able to overlook the fact that both Harry Potter and Ronald Weasley had glared daggers at his back the entire day. It was no secret that both Potter and Weasley hated him, but that he was a friend of Hermione's made him almost unbearable.

'Okay!' Hermione announced on her return from sending off her convention response. 'I am really excited about Berlin! I haven't been there before.'

'And yet you speak fluent German?' Severus questioned, with his infamous eyebrow raised.

Hermione grinned. 'You don't need to go to a country to speak their language, Mr. I-know-seven-other-languages-including-Scottish-Gaelic' she said, plopping down into the armchair across from him. 'You know, I don't think you've ever come to see me during the middle of the week before.'

'I usually don't have spare time during the middle of the week to come,' Severus replied, with the unspoken words 'otherwise I would' lingering in the back of his mind.

He left about half an hour later and arrived back at the castle at eight, weary and wondering how on earth he had become so soft. As he went to walk down the stairs to the dungeons, he heard his name called and back-tracked a little to see Minerva coming down the stairs to talk to him. He groaned inwardly. Minerva was always nagging at him about something. She reached him in reasonable time, wearing a look that said she had many questions for him.

'Severus, I want to talk to you about Hermione Granger,' she said, not bothering to beat about the bush.

'What about Hermione Granger?' he asked curtly, unable to see how the witch was any of the Headmistress's business.

'You have been seeing her quite a lot, Severus,' Minerva said patiently. 'I have always been fond of her, and I just want to make sure that whatever it is that you are doing... well, I just hope you know what you are doing and that you are not leading the dear girl on. She deserves better.'

Severus would have gaped in shock if he had been a man of lesser control. As it was, he managed to summon a fairly lethal glare in response.

'Minerva, when have I ever given you the indication that I am the sort of man who preys on women in such a way?' he asked, feeling a little wounded at her lack of trust. 'Not only that, but what makes you even think that anything would possibly be going on between Hermione and myself other than mere friendship?'

'I was at Andrei's birthday too, you know,' Minerva said in a clipped tone. 'I saw the way you were looking at her. I know that you are not the type of man who would treat a woman badly; I just want you to be aware that you could unintentionally hurt her by treating her coldly. Don't be a fool and pass up this chance at love, Severus. Only a fool could not see how she admires you.'

'You are mistaken, Minerva,' Severus said, before turning on his heel and walking back down to the dungeons, hiding away in his chambers.

A little over a week later saw Severus walking into the lobby of one of the most prestigious wizarding hotels in Europe. He went straight to the reception desk and checked in, acquiring his room "key", which was some sort of silly Muggle invention that resembled a Muggle credit card. He was just about to head towards the elevator to go up to his room, when he spotted Hermione talking to an older woman over near the outskirts of the room. He changed his direction then and walked towards her.

On seeing him, her eyes had lit up, and she paused in her conversation to beckon him over to them.

'Severus, I would like you to meet Agnes Burges. Agnes, this is Severus Snape,' she introduced quickly. 'Agnes was the Mistress under which I apprenticed in Canada.'

Severus bowed customarily over the old witch's hand.

'It is a pleasure to meet you,' he said politely.

'It is nice to meet you also, young man,' the old witch said in reply. 'From what I've heard, you were one of the reasons why Hermione chose to continue her study of Potions after Hogwarts.'

Severus looked at Hermione then, taking note of the pretty blush that had settled across her cheekbones at this bit of information. Apparently she had not expected her former master to have told him that. He smirked inwardly, revelling in the fact that he now had something on her. Ever the consummate Slytherin. After standing and idly chatting for a few minutes, Master Burges left to talk to another new arrival, and Severus murmured something about going up to his room to deposit his belongings. He had started towards the elevator, but when he did not feel her following, he looked around and saw that she was still standing there by herself. With a long-suffering sigh, he walked back to her and took one of her hands in his own, pulling her along with him.

'I thought you were following,' he said, not unkindly.

From then on, the week progressed in a rather structured fashion. In the morning, there was a banquet breakfast held in the large functions room at the hotel, and then everyone would go back to their respective rooms for a while, or linger in the lobby or the smaller function room. During that time, the cleaning staff would go through and clean before rearranging the room so that there was a stage and seating area for the audience. Everyone would then spend the rest of the day listening to talks and lectures about the latest in Potions Research and Development. Severus himself had been asked to give a talk, but he had declined. His work simply was not complete enough to talk about in front of the finest in Potions.

The afternoon was more relaxed and people were given free time to explore, talk some more or sleep, and in the evening, their dinner was held in the functions room once more. It was a good routine, and it allowed Severus some time to wander around the city with Hermione, showing her the places that most Muggle tourists were fond of going to. Severus was reluctant to admit that his time spent with her there had made him realize the depth of his feelings for her, but he knew it was true.

He had fallen very much in love with Hermione Granger.

On the last night of the conference, Severus took Hermione out to dinner at his favourite restaurant in Berlin, which also happened to be one of the most expensive. He didn't mind though; he had all the money in the world, and still it did not make him happy until he was able to do and buy nice things for Hermione. She had looked so beautiful that night in a classically cut black dress that fell to her knees, and her curls pinned up in an elegant knot at the back of her head. He, in turn, had worn his best black Muggle suit, with a jewel green silk shirt beneath the dinner jacket.

It had not been intended as a romantic outing, but at some point during the night, the two of them had acknowledged their continually growing feelings for each other, and as they walked back to the hotel after taking in a late movie afterwards, Severus had his arm wrapped around her shoulders, and she was snuggled tight to his side. Hermione was definitely in love with him, and she didn't intend to spend the night alone in her room at the hotel. He, being the gentleman that he was, escorted her to her room two floors below his room, walking her to her door.

At the door, she reached up and wrapped her arms around his neck, pulling him into a kiss before he could even think of resisting. His mind spun away at the feeling of her soft lips pressed to his before their kisses became less restrained and more passionate. He was lost to her by this point, and when she opened the door to her room and pulled him inside with her, he did not bother resisting. His instincts told him to go ahead and show her how much he loved her.

Hours later, after having made love intermittently during the night, with small naps in between, the dawn light was filtering in through a few gaps in the blinds on the windows, sending slivers of light over their bodies covered by the white sheets. Hermione was curled up against him, and he had his arms wrapped tightly around her, unwilling to let her go lest she slip away. He watched her as she slept, the light making her look almost ethereal. He could not believe that she felt something for him.

'Severus?' she murmured softly, as her eyes flickered open slowly.

'Yes?' he replied, his stomach beginning to rise into his throat from nervousness. Perhaps she would think it was a mistake?

'I love you,' she said, leaning up to kiss him fully on the mouth.

Severus kissed her back, his relief flavoring the kiss. They made love once more before they lay back sated, both breathing harshly from the exertion. As they rested there together, his arms wrapped around her like steel bands, Severus wondered how it was that he was going to be able to go back to being without her and only seeing her occasionally. It was going to be near impossible now that they had slept together. And then it hit him - his family on his mother's side had left him a decent-sized property just outside of Hogsmeade. The house was large, fully furnished, and he had a house-elf there. He had not gone there in years, preferring to stay at either Hogwarts or his house in London, but now it seemed ideal.

'Come live with me,' he said suddenly, startling Hermione.

She moved into a sitting position with his arms wrapped around her hips still, and looked down at him questioningly.

'Severus, you live at Hogwarts and my mother...' she said softly.

'I have a large house just outside of Hogsmeade. Your mother could live there with us there is a house-elf that can help with everything, and we can both Apparate short distances to work,' he said, his voice sounding near desperate.

Hermione had never seen him like that before, almost pleading her. 'And what would happen to my mother's house?' she asked.

'Sell it or keep it. I have more than enough space in other family estates to store things, and she would be more than welcome to bring anything to the house near Hogsmeade that she wants,' he replied swiftly, suddenly pleased at his good fortune.

'Why?' she asked after a few minutes of silence.

'I'm in love with you,' he admitted, his heart clenching in his chest. 'I'm not asking you to marry me, but just for now, I would like to see how well we can stand to live with each other first. I don't want to be away from you.'

'You want to marry me one day?' she asked, tears forming in her eyes.

'I will marry you one day, if you don't get sick of me first,' he said with a smile, for which he received a very watery kiss.

'Just for now?' she asked.

He nodded and kissed her again.

A/N That's the end of this one-shot. I was listening to the song "Just for Now" by Imogen Heap at the time, and trizfores had been talking to me about one-shots which inspired me to write one of my own. Please review!