

The Truth Shall Set Him Free

by GeminiScorp

Hermione, Severus and Veritaserum. A short AU drabble series complete in three chapters.

The Facts

Chapter 1 of 3

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This is the first part of an AU drabble series, starring SS/HG. (Complete in three chapters.)

Enjoy!

1

"Harry, I don't think I can take much more of this!" she said, her head in the Floo. "I only have a few more days of my apprenticeship, and this isn't the ending I envisioned. He's treating me worse than he did when we were in school."

Standing in the doorway of his office, Snape stared at the girl's jean-clad bum, eavesdropping on her conversation, his stomach tightening into knots at her words.

"I know it's only a few more days, but I just wish he'd go back to treating me the way he was before. Like I actually existed."

2

Hermione's shoulders drooped, and her bottom sank, resting unhappily on her heels.

He fought the overwhelming urge to comfort her.

No. He wouldn't allow his feelings to interfere with his decision. He had to distance himself before she left. It would never do to let her know of his true feelings for her. Having her gone would be painful enough.

"I don't know what I did," she sighed. "About two weeks ago, he changed. It's like he's furious with me. It makes me very sad; this isn't how I wanted things to end between us."

Her dejected tone confused him.

3

"I know, Harry, but he won't be my instructor for much longer. I had wanted us to be... Well, I had hoped we could be... friends," she said, sounding wistful.

She laughed suddenly, a throaty chuckle that made his chest tighten and his spine stiffen.

Enough of this nonsense, he thought.

But before he could so much as clear his throat, she continued, "I am not 'moonin' over him, Harry. I respect him, and yes, I do like him."

He frowned at the witch in front of him. As the words sunk in, he gulped.

Had he heard her correctly?

4

"I guess I read more into his actions than I should have. I just... well, I thought he sort of fancied me."

Her small giggle made him scowl. "Come on, Harry, of course he can fancy someone, after all he is a man."

Indeed. That he was.

He gulped again.

"Look I'd better go. He's usually in the lab by now." Another giggle. "Don't worry, I'll be fine. It's not like I haven't dealt with worse."

At this, he began to ease his way to the door, a plan formulating in his mind.

"Of course I'm packed. See you soon!"

5

SLAM!

He watched as she jumped back—nearly hitting her head on the brick—and stumbled to her feet.

"Master Snape." She tensed at the sight of him, and her hands flew to her head, attempting to tie her hair into a bun.

He watched as her long fingers deftly twisted and clipped her unruly curls. As she tamed her hair, the angle of her arms caused her chest to come forward enticingly, the thin material of her t-shirt doing nothing to conceal her nipples hardened by the cool dungeon air.

Glancing up at her face, his control almost shattered.

6

"Master Snape?" she questioned. "Is everything all right?"

He gulped again. What had she done to him? Gulping like a school boy, how undignified.

"I was just... Flooing Harry. He'll be helping me move my things," she said awkwardly, trying to fill the silence.

"Are you in such a rush to finish, Ms Granger?" he retorted caustically. "I believe you to be overconfident in your abilities if you just assume you will pass your final practical. Perhaps I should test you now, and then you may leave immediately."

He raised a disdainful eyebrow and sneered. "*That is, if you pass.*"

7

She gaped up at him for a moment before steely determination replaced the look of confusion and hurt. Lifting her head proudly, she turned on her heels and stormed off to the lab.

He had no choice but to follow in her wake.

She was standing, eyes closed, and taking deep, calming breaths when he entered.

He stared at her longingly, hoping it wasn't for the last time.

If his plan worked, she'd no longer be his apprentice by afternoon. If his plan worked, his feelings would no longer be secret.

Renewing his resolve, he set her to her task.

8

The hands of his watch crept slowly around the dial as he watched Hermione expertly prepare the difficult potion.

He had chosen Veritaserum for a multitude of reasons.

It certainly wasn't the most difficult potion academically, but it was particular. One had to read the mixture and improvise accordingly. The ingredients would react differently depending on the brewer's intent.

He knew Hermione relied on her intellect but not always her intuition, and *that* was a vital component in the difference between a mere potions brewer and that of a master.

The other reasons had to do with his own cowardice.

9

He began to perspire as she funneled the crystal-clear liquid into the dosage vials that he had set out. The brew should produce exactly fifteen individual doses of Veritaserum, no more and no less.

She placed the small corks in each phial, and his hands began to tremble slightly.

Would she ask the right questions of him? Would she dare to be that personal? Would he be brave enough to be forthcoming if she didn't?

She finished dripping the sealing wax over eleven of the vials. Twelve. Thirteen.

It was now or never.

"Ms Granger, leave one dose unsealed."

10

Hermione's head shot up. Her eyes narrowed defiantly, glaring at him.

He didn't bother to suppress his chuckle. "Don't worry, Ms Granger. I will not be testing it on you. Now bring me the last vial."

The room grew smaller as she approached his desk.

When she handed him the truth serum and her fingers grazed his, he tried to resist gulping—he failed miserably.

He uncorked the flask, sniffing as he held it to his nose. "No perceptible odor."

He twisted it between his thumb and forefinger. "No apparent sediment."

"All that remains is for it to be tested."

A/N: Thank you, deemichelle, for looking this over.

The Nitty-Gritty

Chapter 2 of 3

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11

"Tested? On whom?" she asked indignantly. "It's not like you're going to take it." She paused and folded her arms over her chest. "And I absolutely refuse to give it to a house-elf!"

"A house-elf." He snorted. "It would have no effect on a house-elf. It's not the least bit compatible with their biological make-up. Here I thought you were *an expert* on house-elves, Ms Granger," he said snidely.

Her hands flew to her hips, but before she could begin to argue, he continued, "No, I will be taking this," he held up the small vial to the light, "myself."

12

"You?" she asked, shocked. Her hand flew to her mouth suppressing a giggle, and she lowered her eyes to the floor.

He scowled. This was never going to work.

Tossing the corked vial carelessly on his desk and standing to his full height, he looked down at his apprentice. "Ms Granger, do you find this amusing? Why should I not be the one to test your potion? After all, it is my signature that will be gracing the parchment heralding you a Potions Mistress."

"I'm sorry, sir." She looked up at him, a cunning glint in her eyes.

He gulped.

13

She held his gaze, her expression blank except for the twinkling in her eyes.

He was suddenly reminded of Albus.

Shit!

There were so many questions with which to torment him; he only hoped she would use this opportunity to ask him the *right* ones.

Taking a deep breath, he forged on. "You will be allowed to ask me three questions, *and only three*. After answering the allotted number, I will immediately take the Veritaserum antidote." He paused, gathering his courage while looking pointedly into her eyes. "And I do hope, Ms Gran—Hermione, that you choose your questions wisely."

14

He sat down heavily in his chair and reached across the desk for the vial.

"Sir, wait. I have a few questions to ask first," she said, placing her small hand upon his.

Of course she does. He swallowed hard and snatched his hand away. "Well? Get on with it."

She leaned forward in her chair a little too eagerly. "You're saying that I may ask *any* three questions that I want?"

"Yes, anything you wish."

"And nothing I ask will be held against me, even if I were to make you angry?"

He merely nodded and glared at her.

15

"So I could ask about your experiences as a Death Eater." She stood and began pacing nervously. "Or ask if you still harbored feelings for Harry's mum. You'd willingly answer without seeking retribution later?"

"Ms Granger, I have already stated—"

"And if I were to ask if it's a charm that makes your robes billow like they do, or perhaps whether you prefer wearing boxers, briefs or going commando? Even ~~those~~ types of questions are allowed?"

"Ms Granger!" he sputtered, color rising to his cheeks. "Are you finished? You've three questions; you may squander them any way you wish."

16

He grabbed the serum, uncorking and swallowing before she could interrupt again, or worse—before he could change his mind.

Overhearing her conversation with Potter, he had anticipated she would take advantage of such an unusual situation—there were those who would pay large amounts of money to question him under the influence of Veritaserum. He was willingly setting himself up for humiliation, and she wanted to know about his underwear?

Unless he had misunderstood.

He gulped.

Hermione Granger had turned him into a love-sick fool.

Allowing his lank hair to hide his face, he muttered for her to begin.

17

She didn't hesitate. "Do I pass?"

He looked up, surprised at her bluntness, and said, "Yes, Ms Granger, your perpetual need for overachievement has paid off. You have passed with top marks. Did you honestly think you wouldn't?"

Leaning forward slightly, he continued, "You are a brilliant woman, Hermione, one who could accomplish anything. Why you wished to study Potions with me has had me utterly baffled for the past three years.

"Now all that remains is for me to sign your certificate and send it to the Ministry. You're no longer my apprentice, Mistress Granger. You are my equal."

18

He watched the emotions flit across her face: joy, pride... confusion.

"Equal! How could I ever be considered as—" She quickly snapped her mouth closed and narrowed her eyes. She stared at him for a long moment before quietly saying, more to herself than him, "No, I won't waste a question like that."

He took the certificate from his desk and signed the parchment without a word. Snapping his long fingers, the large crow that was his familiar leapt down from its nearby perch. Tying the scroll to the bird's leg, he murmured, "Ministry," and the crow flew away.

19

Hermione resumed her pacing, all the while chewing her lip and worrying the hem of her shirt. He used his time to study her. Memorizing each curve on the chance she would be gone by the evening. He had learned long ago to never hope for the best. Luck was not his friend.

Her expression changed suddenly, as did her demeanor, and she walked confidently back to his desk.

She leaned toward him, brushing his hair back behind his ears. "Forgive me for being so forward, but I want to see your eyes as I ask you my next question."

20

Her breath, sweet on his face, and the sensation of her smooth fingers as they brushed against his temples almost undid him. He longed to take her in his arms and kiss her passionately, never to release her. Instead, he gulped audibly. She was in control, and being the terrible coward that he was, he would follow her lead.

"So," she began smugly. "Why would you, a consummate Slytherin, relinquish your carefully crafted self-control and allow me, your lowly apprentice, the opportunity to ask of you any three questions I choose without restriction?" She smirked down at him, looking pleased.

A/N: Thanks to all my LJ friends that supplied me with questions to ask Severus. I tried to use as many as I could!

Revelation

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21

Taking a deep breath, he contemplated how to phrase his answer. Should he respond in riddles? Or lay his heart exposed at her feet? His experience had shown him that love was cruel, but he was growing old and tired of his lonely life. Hermione had somehow uncovered that last remaining piece of his being that wasn't twisted or broken, and for her—with her—he wanted to be whole.

Looking up into her eyes, he knew that she was worth any embarrassment he may experience. He would give her his heart, no matter how difficult a feat that was.

22

"First of all, Ms Granger... Hermione," he began. "I must praise you for your choice of questions. It's truly a credit to your brilliance that you were able to phrase your inquiry in such a way that I could not subtly avoid answering truthfully. You do realize I have talked my way out of interrogations by the most cunning of men."

Her brown eyes sparkled with delight at his praise, her smirk growing into a smile.

He gulped. This chit of a girl was sure to be the death of him.

"You are clearly more Slytherin than your friends appreciate."

23

He cleared his throat and forged ahead. "Before I go on, I think you should know that I overheard your Floo conversation with Potter this morning." The sparkle was gone, and her eyes were round with fear. Or was it anger?

"I admit that is what prompted your impromptu testing this afternoon." He stood abruptly and began pacing, no longer wanting to be subjected to the intensity of her gaze. "Your assessment of my recent behavior was all too accurate. I must apologize for my conduct. I never meant to hurt you." He paused. "I only wished to distance myself."

24

Hermione moved behind him, and he soon felt the warm pressure of her hand on his shoulder as she reached out to him. His heart raced, and his body betrayed him by trembling. Gulping... trembling... the mere physical presence of her made his body react like an adolescent. He willed himself to be still and control his emotions.

After a moment, she ran her hand down his arm and gently tugged at his sleeve, making him face her. "I accept your apology, Severus. But you still haven't answered my question." Reaching for his hands, she smiled up at him encouragingly.

25

Too nervous to meet her eyes, he stared down at the small, soft hands holding his. They looked so, so... child-like next to his large calloused ones.

"No you don't." Her grip tightened on his hands as he attempted to pull away. "I am not letting you retreat. I've spent the last three years watching you, Severus Snape, and I am quite fluent in your moods and actions.

"You allowed me to question you, so there has to be a reason; you do not do anything unless you have a reason. Now, tell me what you wanted me to know."

26

He was at a point where he could no longer procrastinate. It was time to lay his soul bare. "Hermione, three years ago when I was persuaded to take you as an apprentice, I assumed you would be nothing more than an annoyance. I'd planned to set you to your tasks and spend as little time with the Gryffindor Know-it-All as possible."

She laughed softly and smiled.

"I know I was gruff, and probably quite rude, but I soon found myself enjoying your company. You were much more than merely a regurgitator of facts as you were as a child."

27

"I came to admire your abilities and your mind. I found reasons to initiate conversations about subjects not pertaining to your apprenticeship, and I was never disappointed by your reaction. You are a knowledgeable woman, Hermione. Far brighter than any one I have ever met." He paused to take a deep breath. That had been the easy part.

"Before long I found myself wanting to know more about you; I wanted to be your friend. I knew that to have you as a friend I'd have to give of myself, and that is something that is rather difficult for me."

28

"Severus..."

"Hermione, please let me finish." He gently pulled his hands out of her grasp and started to pace in front of her.

"I began to let my guard down around you, allowing you a glimpse of the Severus Snape few people have ever had the pleasure to see. I grew to trust you." He stopped and looked at her. Her expression made his heart ache.

"Hermione, you have become much more to me than a friend. I do not want to lose you now that your apprenticeship has ended. I want to continue seeing you on a regular basis."

29

"I know I'm a difficult man, Hermione. Unfortunately, my life experiences have been harsh, and I have never been able to trust anyone fully. But with you I feel relaxed—hopeful. That maybe life isn't as cruel as I think." He turned away from her, afraid to see her expression, as he said his next words.

"What I am asking of you is a chance at more than friendship, more than just your companionship. I would like the opportunity, now that you are no longer my apprentice, to court you. To have a romantic relationship—if you would have me."

30

The silence from behind him was deafening.

"Turn around."

He began to speak, trying to give her an easy out, as he turned.

"Shh," she said, a finger on his lips. "I believe I still have one question I'm allowed to ask."

He gulped.

"Severus Snape, would you like to kiss me?"

Without thinking, he leaned in and chastely placed his lips upon hers.

When she deepened their kiss, he pulled her close, amazed at his good fortune.

He had finally found his place in the world right there by Hermione's side.

The truth had set him free.

The end