

Secret

by Hanagasume

Hermione Granger has a secret that could ruin her forever...

One Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Hermione Granger had a secret.

It was not that she had married Ronald Weasley shortly after graduating from Hogwarts. One had only to glance at the *Daily Prophet* to attain that knowledge. It wasn't that she had decided to keep her maiden name after marrying. Molly Weasley had made certain to ensure that everyone, wizard or Muggle, knew that Hermione had not taken the Weasley name. It was not the fact that she had gone on to the wizarding college in London to study Charms and Arithmancy. No, that was rather well known throughout the world of Academics also. It wasn't even that she had taken on the job of teaching Charms at Hogwarts upon Filius Flitwick's retirement.

No. Hermione Granger had a far more serious secret than any of those things.

Unfortunately, as a married woman for the better part of ten years, her secret was one that would ruin her completely. It was a secret she had protected for approximately seven out of those ten years.

She was in love.

It was not the cliché "love at first sight" kind of love. Nor was it one that was based on a silly schoolgirl crush or superficial attraction. None of those things could ever find any place with the man she loved. *He* was far too complicated for any of those. The worst part about the whole thing was that she was not in love with her husband. She had not been in love with Ronald Weasley for eight out of the ten years of her marriage.

It was not that he had ever really done anything to her. He hadn't. It was simply that she had fallen out of love with him. Their relationship at Hogwarts had been based on their long-standing friendship with each other. They had been comfortable with each other, and after the Final Battle, it just seemed to make sense that they remain with each other and get married just as everyone was expecting.

Ron was sweet to her. She lived at Hogwarts during the week teaching and, on weekends, would return to London to spend time with him when she did not have Hogsmeade duties. Every Friday night there would be flowers waiting for her in a vase on the set of drawers beside the coat closet near the door. But as sweet as it was that he was consistent, her heart couldn't help but to feel only a sisterly affection for him.

After that, it had only been a matter of time before she fell in love with Severus Snape.

He was not the sort of man that any woman would fall in love with regularly, if at all. He was snarky, solitary and antisocial. He was not ugly, but he certainly wasn't the kind of man one chose for looks. His nose was too long and hooked, his skin too pale, and his height too intimidating. But Hermione was not repulsed by any of these things.

His long, nimble fingers were amazingly quick and adept for Potion-making, his obsidian eyes were captivating, and his voice was like smooth, silky velvet, commanding without having to ever raise it.

She had not known exactly when it was that she had begun having feelings for him. It might have been in her first year of teaching when one week he offered to relieve her of her weekend Hogsmeade duties so that she could go to her mother's birthday party. It might have been on a Monday morning when she entered the Great Hall for breakfast a little later than she usually did, and ended up seated beside him, and he poured her a cup of coffee and reminded her that she would need to eat to be able to teach her students properly.

It could have been any of the times when he had been the least bit considerate to her over the seven years she had spent teaching at Hogwarts. She didn't really care to ponder it too much. It mattered little *when* she had fallen in love with this tall, dark and mysterious man. What mattered was that it was ~~she~~ that she was in love with instead of her husband. This was the secret that she dared not tell a soul. Molly's enraged expression was enough to make her keep things to herself.

Everything always got back to Molly, one way or another. She was still on the outs with her mother-in-law over the issue of her and Ron having children. Hermione was simply not ready to have children. Ron didn't mind. So she hadn't planned to give birth until she was absolutely certain that the child would be wanted instead of forced on her. That, however, did not matter to Molly. And while she had not spoken of it to anyone, that still did not prevent her from feeling like Albus Dumbledore knew more than he let on.

Even at that very moment, sitting two seats down from the Headmaster, she felt as though he knew everything that was going on inside her head. She knew he would never use Legilimancy without her permission, but she couldn't help but to wonder if he did it subconsciously. Shaking that thought from her mind, she stared down at her bland breakfast of porridge and honey. She probably could have varied her choice a little, but it hardly mattered to her those days.

'Hermione, dear, you look a little out of sorts,' said a kindly voice beside her.

She looked to her right at Minerva and smiled.

'I'm fine,' she answered, trying to look reassuring. 'Just a little bit tired is all.'

'Well, eat your breakfast you will need all the energy you can get to teach classes,' Minerva informed her kindly. 'It's the first day back after the summer break, after all, and you know how unruly they are after they've been home for three months.'

'I know, Minerva, thank you,' she replied, eating her food, while gazing out over the hall, trying to keep her eyes occupied.

She would look at anything to avoid staring at Snape during breakfast. He only sat on just the other side of Albus, and from her position on the other side of Minerva, she could see most of him, especially his hands. She loved to watch his hands as he toyed with his food or cut at things precisely as if he were going to brew a potion at the dinner table. It was so oddly enticing. Shaking her head, she set down her spoon and stood from her seat, excusing herself from her half-eaten breakfast and the Head table before leaving the Great Hall.

Once the staff entry door was closed behind her, she walked along the hall, willing her heart to calm down. It was beating so fast, she was sure it would explode from her chest and back into the hall before throwing itself into Severus Snape's lap as a sacrifice. She smirked at the ridiculousness of her thoughts and moved more briskly along the hall before beginning the slow climb up the stairs to fourth floor where her office and classroom were located. Her students were due for class in half an hour.

Once inside her office, she let out a deep sigh and sank into the chair behind her oak desk. She really needed to compose herself. She was turning into a wreck, and it was becoming quite noticeable to her peers, and that was never a good sign. Snape would likely notice, as very little escaped his attention. If he ever found out about it, she wouldn't be able to look him in the eye, let alone work with him again.

It wasn't long before her first class of students began to arrive. She left her office and went through the door to her classroom so that she could let her students inside and greet them properly. Once everyone was seated, she pointed her wand at the board and murmured the incantation to reveal the notes for that class. She was lucky to have her third-years that morning.

'Alright, now, everyone, the notes on the board will be the instructions for a more advanced levitation charm. The incantation is *Levicorpus* and the wand movements are here,' she said, indicating with the tip of her wand against the black slate of the board. 'Your movements are supposed to be precise and require a sharp flick of the wrist followed by a flourish.'

The eager students up the front were already beginning to try and mimic her wand movements, and she smiled. It was nice to have enthusiastic young people in her class. It reminded her of her first few years at Hogwarts and what an overeager young know-it-all she had been. By the end of the class, a few of them had actually mastered the charm, and after Hermione had cast a cushioning charm over the entire classroom, she allowed them to attempt at levitating one of the smallest students. Thankfully for her, nobody got hurt.

Before she could dismiss her class after the end of the double period, there was a knock on the door. Frowning, she left the front of the classroom and walked through the middle row to see what it was all about. Classes were never usually interrupted unless something was wrong, and she hated to think something had gone wrong. When she opened it, the Head Girl, Jillian Bones, was standing there looking expectant.

'What can I do for you, Miss Bones?' she asked.

'Well, Professor, as you can imagine, I wouldn't interrupt your class if it weren't important, but I'm afraid no one else can do it except for you,' Jillian answered hesitantly. 'You see, Peeves let loose on the third floor again, and now the whole floor is totally flooded and nobody knows quite what to do with it all.'

'Surely Professor Dumbledore would be more qualified,' Hermione murmured softly, looking over her shoulder at her third-years.

'Professor McGonagall said that the Headmaster is away on business for the day, and she wasn't sure how to deal with it, so we need you,' the younger woman said with a trace of urgency in her voice. 'The rest of the professors let their classes out early to try and help, but only Professor Snape has managed to contain it so far.'

Hermione sighed and turned back to her class. 'You are all dismissed early for the day, and your homework is to write a detailed, two-foot essay on the safety precautions one must take when using the *Levicorpus* charm,' she told them before turning back to the Head Girl. 'I suppose I will have to deal with it then.'

Nodding, Jillian led the way from the classroom, down to the floor below. They stopped a third of the way from the bottom of the staircase, which was where the water started, and Hermione looked a little way down the hall to the girl's bathroom, to see that a few of the other teachers were waist-deep in water, trying to figure out a way to stop it. Madam Hooch was on her broom from above them, barking out instructions, which was just making the rest of them less cooperative. Sighing, she walked into the water and thanked the gods that she was quite tall for a woman.

'Stay right here and make sure that none of the students can attempt to get to the water,' she told Jillian before beginning to wade through the water towards the other teachers.

'Ah, finally the Charms mistress graces us with her presence,' Rolanda drawled from her perch above.

'Well, she's going to be a good sight more useful than you have been so far, Rolanda,' Snape said curtly as he waded towards the door to the girl's bathroom. 'I'm going to try and get to the source of this mess.'

'I'll help you,' Hermione said, pushing her way to the front of the group with Snape and half-swimming into the flooded room.

'If I were Albus, I would have had Peeves turned from the castle,' Snape grumbled as they made their way towards the last faucet in the line of basins in the bathroom.

The whole basin was completely ripped from the wall, as was the faucet, and there was water shooting in most directions. Rolling his eyes, Snape cast a charm in front of his to stop the water from hitting him in the face as he made his way closer and got close enough to the source of water to see that pipe was completely broken. Hermione stood behind him and looked around to see the wall. She smiled, realizing what Peeves had done. She cast a quick spell, and suddenly the water stopped.

'It was just ghost pipe,' she murmured when Snape looked over his shoulder at her.

'A ghost pipe?' he asked, brow furrowed in confusion.

'Ummm, well, when pipes aren't used for a while, they sort of "die" or become dormant, so that when they finally are turned on, the pipe is too old and damaged and breaks from the pressure. Peeves must have just turned on the faucet as far as it could go, and the pipe just exploded,' she answered with a small grin.

Snape's eyebrow went up. 'What I am curious to know is why you know so much about plumbing,' he said before beginning to make his way out of the bathroom once more.

She felt her heart skip a beat. There was just something about that man...

Soon after, with the help of all the other teachers, Hermione banished all of the water from the third floor while everyone else applied drying charms just as quickly to avoid leaving watermarks. By the time it was all done, it was about time for lunch in the Great Hall, so everyone headed down there instead, completely forgetting about the two class periods that were missed because of it. In the hall, Hermione was surprised when Snape sat down beside her at the staff table.

She looked at him curiously. 'Did you miss classes because of the flooding?'

'I had a free double period that I had planned to use for marking essays and the like, but that will have to wait until tomorrow now, instead,' he answered quietly.

'Oh, that's a shame,' she replied, looking down at her food.

'I have a question to ask you,' he said suddenly, causing her to look back up at him abruptly.

'Oh?'

'I was wondering if you would like to dine with me in my chambers tonight,' he asked, his voice hushed so that only she could hear him.

'Oh, I suppose I could do that,' she answered, stammering a little as she replied, her cheeks beginning to feel a little bit warm.

That night, Hermione found herself making her way towards the dungeons shortly after dinner time in the Great Hall. She had attended dinner, but had not bothered to eat anything, noticing that Severus was not at all present at the staff table. She was still very much confused about why he had asked her to have dinner with him. She was almost certain that he didn't really like her. He had never indicated having any sort of fondness for her previously he had just been really helpful to her when she needed it.

Her stomach was a riot of knots and butterflies by the time she reached his door. She tapped her wand against the frame of the painting guarding the entrance to Snape's chamber timidly. Immediately, the man in the portrait opened his eyes and sneered at her, his blue eyes flashing.

'My, my,' the portrait man said coolly. 'Now, what is a little Gryffindor doing all the way down in the dungeons this evening?'

'My business down here is my own, sir,' she said crisply, tapping her foot nervously against the stone floor as she waited for Severus to open the door for her.

She didn't have to wait long, as the portrait swung open, and she was hastily ushered inside by a slightly flustered-looking Snape. Having never really seen him looking like that, Hermione was slightly taken aback, which made her feel a little more uneasy. She was left in his sitting room alone for a moment after he had helped her out of her teaching robes and hung them on a coat hook near the door. Most of the walls were lined with bookshelves. There were a few things on the mantle and something that looked like a photo there too, and in front of his fire were a long lounge and two leather armchairs.

It was nothing like what she would have imagined Severus Snape's chambers to look like.

'Please feel free to take a seat anywhere you like,' he told her as he came back into the room from what she assumed was his kitchen. 'Do you have a preference for your wine?'

'I like white,' she answered with a nervous smile.

'I shall be right back,' he said, retreating to the kitchen.

He returned moments later and handed her a glass of wine before joining her on the lounge where she was perched. She was feeling rather awkward, and seeing Snape in only trousers and a black shirt that he hadn't buttoned at the neck was extremely unnerving. He asked her about the plumbing situation earlier in the day, and their conversation went from there. He had made dinner himself, which she found out soon after was something he enjoyed to do on occasion. Hermione confessed to not being a very good cook at all, which surprised him.

She left his chambers at around eleven that night. The conversation, food and wine had been lovely, and she had not smiled as much in three years as she had in those few hours of companionship. Although she was no closer to figuring out the reason for his invitation, she was glad he had invited her and that she had not hesitated in accepting. She slept very well that night.

On Friday afternoon, she returned home to Ron to find that there were no flowers in the vase. It was the first time since she had started teaching at Hogwarts that the vase had been empty, and the first time that he had not been home waiting for her. She left her briefcase by the door and went looking around the house to see if she could find a trace of her husband's presence. The last place she looked was the kitchen. She found a note stuck to the refrigerator and hastily grabbed it and unfolded it to read. Her heart stopped in her chest for a long moment, and her breath held.

Ron had left her. He had met someone else. They were going to have a child together, and he was going to be living in Russia near her family. The tears never came, but the empty feeling in her stomach, coupled with the numbness, conveyed her true feelings. She was upset. A few years back, she would not have been surprised by something like that, but she had thought her imagination has just been running wild. Apparently, all of her paranoia has been justified.

The week that followed this event was a long and very hard one for her to endure. Their divorce was all over the papers. The press had been insatiable for knowledge of how this had come about. Her name was slurred, and she was soon labeled the "Ice Queen" of Gryffindor. The Weasleys, including Molly, had been very supportive of her. In actual fact, Molly had possibly been more supportive of her in this than she ever had been before, and she was grateful for it.

Even though Hermione had not been in love with Ron anymore, his betrayal, when she had been fastidiously loyal to him despite her feelings for Severus, hurt her more than anything he had ever done to her. She didn't go back to Hogwarts for two weeks after the event had occurred. She didn't think she would be able to handle the looks of pity she knew would be aimed at her. When she finally owed Albus saying she would return, he tried to convince her to take more time away.

She returned anyway.

For Christmas, most of the staff came together to organize a masquerade ball for the students. Hermione declined her invitation to the ball and also begged off having to do chaperoning. She hated what balls represented, as Ron had proposed to her at a ball all those years ago. Just because she had not been in love with Ron when he had left, it still did not stop the resentment that welled within her.

'Hermione, you really have to let go of it,' Ginny Potter told her one day when they were sitting together on a park bench in Godric's Hollow, watching Harry run around with the couple's three children.

'I don't know what you mean,' Hermione answered quietly.

'You know perfectly well that I am talking about my idiot brother,' the redhead said with a slight frown. 'It's not healthy to be so resentful. I know you loved him, but you two were drifting apart...'

'I haven't loved him the way you love Harry for years, Ginny,' she said in a dull voice. 'I just didn't want to leave him because he always told me that he loved me and that he wanted us to be together forever. I couldn't bear to leave him because of that. And now, he has betrayed me in the worst way.'

'You stayed married out of guilt?' Ginny exclaimed loudly before clapping a hand over her mouth.

'I know it sounds terribly silly, but I didn't want to lose him as a friend, and I felt that might happen if I left him,' Hermione explained. 'I realize now it was a terrible idea and that it might have been better if I had left long ago.'

'I had never suspected anything like this,' Ginny said softly. 'You always looked like you were in love, and whenever you came over and had a moment to yourself, you always still had that dreamy smile on your face like you were in love even a month ago you looked like that!'

Hermione flushed red then. 'I haven't been totally honest with you,' she whispered, barely loud enough for her friend to hear.

Ginny's eyes widened. 'You're in love with someone else,' she said in surprise.

Nodding, Hermione looked at her hands in her lap. 'I've been in love with someone else for about seven years now,' she said a little hoarsely, tears welling up in her eyes. 'But I had never thought of leaving Ron for a moment during that time.'

The younger woman smiled. 'I won't ask you to name him,' she said, moving closer to her best friend and hugging her tightly. 'But I am glad that you aren't mourning Ron. I know you would never be unfaithful to anyone, but I am glad that you have found someone to love. Life is terribly lonely without it.'

Hermione sniffed and nodded, hugging her friend tightly. She needed the support.

Now that she was back teaching, her routine returned to the way it had been before Ron had left. The only difference was that she had sold the house, and the two of them had split everything equally, and instead of returning home to Ron and flowers on weekends, she occasionally went to her new, empty townhouse apartment in London when she had a weekend free of duties at Hogwarts. It was nice and much easier to live in than a big house that reminded her of the good times she had with her former husband and friend. She didn't want to remember anything.

Christmas and New Year's passed without ceremony, and Hermione became distracted. The students and other professors noticed it and talked about it. The gossip and rumors about her divorce did not end after they had stopped printing her on the front page of the *Daily Prophet*. Snape, however, she had seen less and less of since her divorce. He seemed to have withdrawn from her entirely, and she had barely spoken more than two words to him before he would need to go off somewhere. She had been under the impression that they had formed some sort of friendship. Perhaps she had been mistaken in her assumption.

'Hermione, are you well, dear?' Minerva asked out of the blue one day during dinner in hushed tones.

Hermione turned to her and smiled; this was a very familiar conversation. 'I think I will be okay, Minerva,' she answered politely. 'Thank you for your concern though.'

Minerva nodded, not entirely convinced, but she decided to let it go for the time being. It was not proper to bring up subjects of a personal nature in public. 'We shall have to have tea in my chambers one day, if you have time.'

Nodding, the younger witch smiled. She knew that was Minerva's way of saying 'you're off the hook for now, but I expect you to tell me something in the near future, or I may have to take drastic action.' She was relieved to be perfectly honest. Ginny was the only one who knew even a little bit about her issues, and even then, the younger witch did not know everything. She wasn't really ready to share everything with anyone. Ron had only divorced her three months beforehand.

She left the hall that morning, feeling in a bit of a daze. Her mind was the embodiment of confusion. She was already in her office before she realised that she had left her morning post at the breakfast table. Standing, Hermione moved to go back to the hall to retrieve it when the door opened as she reached for the handle, and Severus Snape, in all his intimidating glory, was revealed. Her breath caught in her throat the way it always did when she saw him.

'Oh, Severus... I I...' she stammered out uselessly.

He pressed her letters and paper into her hand. 'You forgot your post,' he said simply, walking into her office when she stood aside to allow him passage.

'Thank you for bringing it up,' she replied. 'It was unnecessary, but I appreciate it all the same. I'd just remembered it myself and was on the way back down.'

'Well, then I am glad I saved you the trouble,' he said softly.

Hermione looked at his face in that moment and realised that he had a strange expression on it. He looked like he was confused or having some sort of internal battle with himself. His posture was stiff and his fists were clenched. It was lucky for her that it was a Saturday and they didn't have classes, or handling this would have been beyond her. She touched his shoulder lightly in question.

'Severus?' she asked, her voice trembling a little.

He seemed to suddenly snap out of his trance and looked at her, his eyes wide in surprise, but his face told nothing else.

'I I apologise, Hermione, I do not mean to frighten you,' he said seriously. 'I just... I wanted to say something to you, and I think it's important that you hear it.'

'Yes?' she pressed in her confused state.

'I just wanted to tell you that...' he began before he finally snapped. 'Oh, fuck it all!'

He walked right up close to her and dragged her into his arms, pressing his mouth to hers roughly and claiming a kiss from her very surprised lips. She was too stunned to respond initially, but after a few moments, the warmth of his lips on hers was as impossible to ignore as the beating of her heart in her chest and the warmth spreading between her legs. She moved her lips against his, wrapping her arms around his neck and moving closer to him. His grasp had to tighten to keep her standing.

After seven minutes of the most delightful and heated snogging she had ever experienced, they pulled apart, lightheaded and breathless. His brow was pressed to hers, and she could feel as he exhaled against the side of her face through his mouth. One of his hands travelled down her back to her hip, which he cupped through the layers of her teaching robes. They remained standing that way until their breathing had returned to normal and Hermione's heart had calmed.

'I'm sorry,' he said meekly. 'I had not intended to assault you when I came up here this morning.'

'Trust me when I say that I do not mind in the least,' she murmured in response, pulling back to see his face properly.

The small smile that lifted the corner of his mouth was precious.

'I wanted to tell you that I was worried about you,' he said quietly, averting his eyes from hers. 'I wanted to tell you that you mean a lot to me, and it was hurting me and everyone who cares about you to see you looking so forlorn. I did not expect for you to have reacted so strongly to your husband's betrayal.'

'I didn't either, if I'm to be honest,' Hermione answered with a small smile. 'I thank you for being so open and honest with me this morning. I have feelings for you also, that I had been unable to act on in a long time...'

Hermione felt and heard his sigh of relief and the strain that disappeared as she spoke those words to him. Her own burden lessened within her significantly. He didn't remove his arms from around her, and she liked the feeling of all of his strength surrounding her that way. She looked up into his eyes, and seeing warmth in the black depths, she leaned in for another kiss.

The kiss drew on for an age, and where one ended, another began, until they moved from her office to the lounge in her chambers, and from there to her bedroom, shedding their many layers of clothing along the way. Hermione typically wasn't the type to just hop into bed with anyone, but this was a man that she had loved and worked with for seven years of her life. This was a man she trusted.

And when she saw the smooth porcelain of his unclothed skin, she swore she had never seen a man more beautiful. His hands, as they travelled over her naked flesh, were magic. His tongue and lips, as they traced every curve, plain and crevice of her body, produced the most amazing sensations and reactions from her. His gasps as she explored his body were music to her ears. His length, as he slid into her snug, warm, wet flesh, was possibly the most intimate thing she had felt apart from his kisses. They climaxed as one and slept in the aftermath.

And when Hermione woke later that day, finding him next to her, his breathing, quiet in his sleep, was bliss.

She never turned back after that morning. The months that followed were the best in her entire life. They saw each other secretly for a few months before they finally decided to come out into the open. When this happened, Molly Weasley, to everyone's great surprise, was one of their strongest supporters. Exactly one year after Ron had divorced Hermione, Severus proposed to her, and they were married on Christmas Eve that same year.

While Hermione Granger had kept many secrets in her life, Hermione Snape was not a woman who kept secrets.

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This story is a response to Something Blue, #6. The Other Man: Hermione is engaged/married to Ron but is in love with Severus Snape.