

Want

by JTBAB

Hermione discovers the main reason why Severus married her...

Chapter One

Chapter 1 of 8

Hermione discovers the main reason why Severus married her...

Disclaimer: Potterverse is not mine. The plot and OCs, however, are.

Hermione paused in the doorway. His bedroom was far from what she had come to expect from everything she had experienced; it was light, airy and held such a welcoming feel that she had to swallow down a giggle at the thought.

She smiled as his arms slipped around her waist, coming to rest on her stomach. "I take it you approve?"

"Yes, I –" She groaned as his lips softly brushed against her neck.

He gave her a gentle push towards to the bed. "You'll be safe now." Attaching his mouth to her throat again, Hermione struggled to focus her thoughts.

What? Swallowing thickly, she pushed his hands away from her. Spinning round she faced a lust-drugged Severus Snape. "Excuse me?!" She planted her hands firmly on her hips and forced her breathing to calm.

"I can protect you now you're here. With me." He took a graceful step forward, reaching to pull her towards him again. His eyes were heavy-lidded, and his mouth was relaxed in a smirk. "I want what is now mine." Lowering his head to kiss her, he was unprepared for the hand that came in contact with his cheek with a resounding slap. "Never, ever lay a hand on me again, Madam!" Holding her wrist in a vice-like grip, he winced as he moved his jaw to check for damage.

"Let me go!" Wrenching herself free, she ran towards the door. "I can't believe you did that!" Tears running down her cheeks threatening to blind her, she stumbled through the door and down the hall.

She was unused to her heels, and as she launched herself down the stairs, she stumbled and twisted her ankle. Pulling them off, she continued on her hurried journey. Finally making it to the main entrance, she paused for a second when she heard her name.

"Hermione! Wait!"

Shaking herself, she moved forwards again, and when he uttered her maiden name, 'Granger', she found her throat choked with sobs. He hadn't married her for love after all.

AN: Thank you for reading! I look forward to reading your reviews!

Chapter Two

Chapter 2 of 8

Severus finds Hermione and tries to get her to come back to him...

Disclaimer: Potterverse is not mine. The plot, however, is.

Hermione shielded her face from the sun. Her trek up through the hills had been enjoyable, though she was eager to return to her mount. Max had become tired whilst on their way up, and she was concerned he was becoming too old for her to go on long rides with him. Giving him a rest, she had continued on the climb herself. Sitting on a rock jutting over a drop, she readied herself for the sunset she had eagerly come to see.

The locals had told her the sunsets were beautiful at this time of year, and she had been eager to witness them for herself, since she had first arrived three months ago.

Pulling out a small package, she enlarged it and pulled out her ham sandwiches.

As the sun dipped behind a hill in the distance and the fields were washed out with deep shadow, Hermione slowly rose to her feet. The locals had been right. The bright colours that had washed and blended in the sky and the way the shadows had danced and played before taking over... it was simply amazing.

Turning to make her way down the hill and back towards Max, she walked into something solid and with a shriek fell back. Two strong hands reached out and grabbed her arms, pulling her back towards him. "I have found you. And I am not losing you again."

"Severus," she sighed and, for a moment, let herself relax in his hold.

"I have been looking for you. You did well to hide yourself." He chuckled as she let him draw her closer to him.

Suddenly she pushed back against his chest. "I am still mad at you. You lied to me. You said you loved me. You said..."

"And you never let me explain anything. Hermione, you are too hot-headed for anyone to say anything without you taking some double meaning from it."

Pulling herself free, she pushed past him. "Leave me alone, Severus. If you have been watching me that closely, you'd know that I've found someone who really cares for me." She continued on down the hill, her pace quickening until she reached Max, where she let out a resigned sigh. If he'd found her, she'd have to move on again.

Untying Max, she gripped the reins in her left hand and, placing her left foot in the stirrup, she bounced on her right, ready to swing herself up and into the saddle, only to find her body ripped away from her horse. "Professor Snape, release me this instant!"

"My dear, if you had truly found someone who cared for you as you say, would he not have escorted you up here to watch the sunset? I would have assumed it would be quite a romantic thing to do. Would you not?"

"Urgh! Let me go!" She swung her legs, trying to kick him, but found his hold around her torso and the grip on her arms kept her too still to do any real damage.

"Hermione, I love you."

"You have said that before." Hanging her head, she took a deep breath and made to scream. Only to find herself dropped to her feet with one arm tightly wrapped around her torso, his other around her arms, with his hand at her mouth.

"Stop this behaviour at once. I do not like to repeat myself." Waiting for her to relax, he slowly lowered his hand from her mouth. "I love you and have since that day you sat in Headmaster Dumbledore's office and demanded to be allowed to participate in the war. I love the way your eyes light up with each new challenge and the way your nose crinkles when you're concentrating. I love you." Lowering his head to her neck, he inhaled her scent. "I love you so much, and I want what is mine. I married you, Hermione. Yes, to protect you, but also because I want you near me. Please. Let me love you."

"Severus..." Her voice was breathy as he continued to speak to her neck, his hands now caressing her sides.

"Let me hold you at night; let me hold you all day. Let me be your husband." His tongue shot out to taste her neck and he groaned. "Let me taste you. Let me be your first." Suddenly his grip tightened again. "You haven't... I will still be your first, will I not?"

His voice was tight with pleading and Hermione could have cried had it not made her angry again.

"Severus, let me go. You have to let me go."

"No." His grip tightened again, and Hermione coughed as she struggled to draw breath into her lungs. "I will lock you away, Hermione, if you won't listen to me."

"Stop it. If this is how you show your love, then I really hope you are not in love with me!" His grip was now really starting to hurt, and she couldn't help the tears now coursing their way down her cheeks. "Severus. Let me go."

"Answer me. Answer my question first." He nipped at her throat before licking it. "Answer me, Hermione. My love."

"No. You will not be my first."

He sank down to the ground, releasing his hold on her.

"But not because of my actions with another. Rather because I refuse to be with someone who doesn't listen. And who lies."

Max, who had moved away with the commotion, whinnied at her and stepped forward. "Good boy." Gently stroking his muzzle, Hermione turned to look at Snape. "Please don't follow me, Severus." Not waiting for an answer, she quickly swung herself up into the saddle and made her way down the hill and away, leaving Snape holding his head in his hands and rocking back and forth.

AN: I hope you enjoyed the chapter!

Chapter Three

Chapter 3 of 8

Severus forces Hermione to listen to him...

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Hermione settled back into Philip's arms. "Thank you for dinner; it was delicious."

"You are most welcome, my dear." He turned her head, his fingers gently touching her chin. "Hermione, may I kiss you?"

She nodded. "Of course you may." She smiled as he lowered his head. Their lips only just touched before Hermione sprang away. Covering her mouth as if burned, she turned away from Philip. "I'll see you tomorrow."

"What? Hermione, we've been together for a long time now, and you never let me stay the night... in one of your other rooms, of course. We barely even touch!" Getting no response, he stood up and placed his hands on her shoulders. "Hermione?" Pulling her back against his body, he slid his hands down her side, letting them come to rest on her hips, pulling her against him. "See what you do to me." He listened to her breath quickening and smiled. "Let me touch you. Let me hold you."

Hermione burst into tears. "No. I can't."

"Why ever not?" Philip gently turned her in his arms and looked intently into her eyes. "Hermione, tell me what is wrong!"

"I'm... I'm... I'm..."

"She's married."

Both Hermione and Philip spun around to look at the door to her living room. There, in what had been his Death Eater robes, stood Professor Severus Snape, one hand thrown out holding the door open, and the other, holding his wand, pointed towards Philip.

"Now, step away from my wife."

Philip gulped. "Wife?" Looking down at Hermione, he searched her face imploringly. "Hermione, please, tell me that you are not betrothed to another!"

"*Accio* Hermione!"

Philip didn't get a chance to hear her answer as it was quickly turned into a scream when she was ripped from his arms and her body hurtled across the room and into Snape's.

"She is my wife. And you will *never* touch her again." Slipping an arm around Hermione's waist, he smirked. "I will be the only one to touch her now." Ignoring her struggles, he backed through the door before spinning in Apparition.

Halfway across the country from where Hermione had been living, Severus Snape was pacing in front of his wife.

Hermione sat in an overstuffed armchair, her arms crossed defensively across her chest. "No."

"Hermione. You are mine."

"I may be yours in name, but I am not your possession. You made me believe that you loved me. That you wanted to be with me. You lied."

Severus stopped in front of her. "Look at me." He reached out to touch her, but dropped his hand when she flinched away from him. "I do love you. I am sorry that you found out about things like you did. It was arranged for me to marry and protect you, but I fell in love with you days before we were to seal our vow to each other."

"Why did I not know of this agreement? Why did you not inform me?"

"I wanted to. But I was sworn to secrecy... unable to tell you till the Dark Lord was dead. Till it was safe. You have to understand, I was under orders, and I was afraid that someone would find out... somebody like Bellatrix. She was waiting for me to stumble with something. Even our papers were sealed. It was for your own good. We had to keep you safe and show that you were not something that was of great importance to Harry. Ginny would have had to do the same if she hadn't gone off with Longbottom anyway." He spun away from her, stalking towards the window. "I do not want to force you to stay here... but you seemed to have the same feelings as I do. I wish for us to reconcile our differences. Move on."

Hermione sat in deep thought. She ignored his presence and thought back on how much it had hurt to find out about the agreement. They had been getting on so well together till then. "I cannot just forget everything."

Severus spun on his heel, his face, although not betraying much, held a glimmer of hope. "I understand."

"I loved you."

"I thought so."

"I love you. You became a fairytale to me."

"I figured as much."

"Severus, you hurt me. You could have told me. You could have taught me to hide the information." She jumped to her feet. "Gods, you could have taught me that and then told me! I would have understood. I would have listened."

"I am sorry."

"And understand that I am only accepting the apology because you are who you are. I know you mean it."

"Thank you." He stepped towards her till she held up her hand.

"However, your behaviour recently is inexcusable."

"You have to—"

"No, Severus, you have to understand. I am NOT something you own. I am a free being." She tilted her head to one side, observing his body language. "I will send message of my change in circumstance in the morning. But... I need you to understand, I am not forgetting what happened. I am moving on. Letting us try again. I want my own rooms, and I need for us to begin again."

"Anything."

"And I want my freedom."

His face was stricken, and his eyes darted side to side. His arms folded, and his hands clenching convulsively.

"You need to trust me." Hermione stepped towards him. "If you don't trust me, this cannot work. I am not saying I will even bother leaving any time soon. But I need to know that if I want to, I can."

"I will see what I can do."

"Severus, unless you do that, I do not think that this is going to work."

If it was at all possible, his lips seemed to thin even more, his upper one curling slightly. "Fine."

"Perhaps you could show me where my rooms are to be?" Gesturing towards the door, she made to move towards it.

"Riply will show you your room."

"Riply?"

"I know you dislike the use of house-elves, however, I feel that I must warn you; the house is filled with them. You will not attempt to free them. You will not try to get them to go against my wishes. And you will not use them to go behind my back. Understood?"

But before she could even mutter a note of response, he had slunk away, and Hermione was left there, her mouth slightly ajar, trying to figure out what had just happened.

Rolling her eyes, she cleared her throat. "Riply?" She glanced around, and when nobody appeared, she scowled. "Riply, your master's wishes were for you to escort me to my rooms. You will do so this instant." A loud sharp pop startled her, and she stumbled backwards till she fell back into her seat.

"You called?" The house-elf standing before her bowed like he should in his duty, but yet she knew that it was not sincere. His nose had barely had a chance to meet the floor before he bounced back up with a straight back, his brow aloof. "I do not wish to repeat myself, and neither does my Master. But, 'you called', Miss."

"Yes, yes." Gathering herself up, she stood. "Severus wished for you to take me to my rooms."

"Indeed." And with one eye opened a fraction wider than the other, he turned his back to her and started towards the door. She supposed that it was in some way an impression of Severus.

"Thank you." Taking a deep breath, she followed the limping house-elf.

AN: I hope you enjoyed the chapter! I look forward to reading your reviews!

Chapter Four

Chapter 4 of 8

Hermione demonstrates her double standards...

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Hermione looked around her room and took in all the furniture. There was a large double bed against the wall facing the window. It was more luxurious than she could have imagined he would have provided for her. But then, if he really did love her, then this was to be expected.

"Maybe he is telling the truth."

"Master does not have a habit of lying. You would do well to remember that."

"I know he does not like to lie. I know he will do his best to tell the truth whenever he possibly can. I was talking to myself about a private matter. I would like you to remember that!" Hermione snapped. Her patience had been stretched on the way up to her room, with Riply making several comments about her heritage and about how unbecoming it was of her to leave her husband, unescorted and without any thoughts of his well-being.

"Master will not appreciate you being rude. He likes those around him to carry themselves well and have good manners. Perhaps you are the trash that—" And just like that, he stopped talking. His green lips were moving furiously, and his eyes shot accusingly towards Hermione.

"I think you'll find that your Master also requires his staff to respect those whom he has invited in and not to be rude to his guests." With a smirk, she put one hand on her

hip. "Perhaps you should go and see him; I'm sure he is the only one that can lift whatever hex has been placed upon you."

She watched in amusement as the house-elf stormed out of the room, the door slamming behind him and a loud pop echoing in the hallway outside.

"Excuse me, Miss."

Hermione looked down at her ankle, where a young house-elf stood quivering. "I'm sorry about Riply, Miss. And it was me that hexed him. You are right; he should not have been rude to you, and I do not think that the Master of the house would be happy with his service."

"Thank you. I'm glad to see that not all of his help are as rude as he can be."

"Oh, I'm not strictly attached to the Master of the house, Miss. I'm not really of service to anyone. Perhaps you would like me to help you whilst you stay here. I would not want you to have to put up with the rudeness that you may encounter. The others were not happy with your behaviour, and when they found out you had gone, there was a group that got together and tried to hinder his search for you."

Hermione smiled at the creature and stepped around her, perching on the edge of the bed. "And what might your name be, then?"

"Leafer, Miss. And would you like me to be of service to you?"

"I think that would be perfectly acceptable. As long as you are sure that Severus won't mind."

"I'm sure that he will be happy for the arrangement to take place."

"Thank you then, Leafer. I would like to accept your services." Hermione smiled as the small green creature in front of her jumped up and down, clapping her hands in excitement.

"My first, Miss!" she screeched, before becoming very still and looking at her seriously. "Right then, just stay still, Miss."

"Excuse me, what?" Hermione gasped as Leafer snapped her fingers before wiggling her fingers and letting a large, warm, golden bubble form, shooting it towards Hermione.

Leafer began giggling excitedly and watched with a grin as the bubble encased Hermione and began to have a silver hue before snapping out and shooting back towards her small green body.

Hermione quickly checked herself all over before looking back at the house-elf. "Leafer... what just happened?"

"I bonded us, Mistress. You are now officially my charge. And I will only obey you, unless you command me to do otherwise. I am loyal to you, and you only."

"But what about Severus?"

"Mistress, he was never my Master. You do not need to worry yourself." The young green house-elf bowed, her nose brushing the floor for more than a second before she sprang up. "Would the Mistress like to have a bath to refresh herself from her travels?"

Hermione had been sitting there gawping, her mouth opening and closing like a fish, and she snapped to, her eyes glancing towards the door at the far side of the room. "I suppose that would be acceptable, Leafer. Perhaps with some Lavender incense, as I am feeling particularly stressed this evening."

"As you wish, Mistress."

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Chapter Five

Chapter 5 of 8

Hermione goes down to breakfast...

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Hermione stood in front of the dining room doors. They were slightly ajar, and she could just hear the argument that Severus was having with one of his house-elves.

"I do not wish to hear of this kind of behaviour again. I do not care for your feelings on this matter. If Hermione is what I want, then that is what I want you to help me in succeeding in getting. I do not want to hear of anything that negatively affects her affections in staying here. Do I make myself clear?"

She could hear some mumblings in reply, and she could just imagine Severus hissing his response. It was definitely not something that she wished to barge in on, however, so she waited a few more moments before making her presence known.

Taking a deep breath, and pushing the door as she walked through, she muttered her greetings. "Good morning, Severus."

"I take it you slept well?"

"Yes, thank you. The rooms you gave me were very pleasant."

"I'm glad to hear it. They were not, however, the rooms that I had wished you to have inhabited. I would have preferred a set of rooms closer to me. However, others had it fixed in their mind that we should be separated. I hope to have this fixed this afternoon."

Hermione scowled. "I'd prefer to stay where I am, Severus. You have a lovely home here, but it is large, and I do not want to be traipsing up and down the halls just because I have forgotten which rooms I am to inhabit on any particular night. I'd prefer it if you could just leave everything as it is."

"Fine."

"And I think you should know that a house-elf bonded with me last night."

He finally looked up, his gaze focussing on her face. "Excuse me?"

"A house-elf bonded herself to me last night." Hermione innocently reached across the table to get herself some toast and so was marginally startled when his hand closed around her wrist.

She looked up to see his face clouded over. "Which house-elf?"

"Leafer. She said that it wouldn't matter, and that she would protect me from the others, as they were not happy at my being here." Hermione flashed him a smile. "She did say that you were not her master. Not that I even knew what she was doing until it was too late, anyway. I'm not overly happy with the outcome of our conversation, but at least it will mean that my time here will at least be comfortable."

Severus released her arm, and let out a chuckle. "You, my dear, are a true hypocrite."

"Excuse me?"

"Whatever happened to 'spew'?" His right eyebrow raised, and his eyes were bright with amusement.

"It was not 'spew', it was S.P.E.W. There is a difference. And I will of course be looking after Leafer. I want her to be happy. I also know that it was completely her own choice to be of service to me. So I do not feel that it is like some of the house-elves that I have come across."

"And you know that they did not originally join their families in the same way, do you?"

"Well..."

"Do not presume that you know more than you do."

"I did a lot of research when I was setting up S.P.E.W."

"Ah yes, the photos of Malfoy."

"And Dobby, he had a lot to say on the matter."

"And you don't think that it could just have been one house-elf, and one opinion?"

"Severus..."

"Sometimes things are bigger than they appear, Hermione. And you need to research it from all the angles, and not just the ones that you first think exist."

"|—"

"Enough." Folding the *Daily Prophet* that he had been reading, he placed it atop of his plate and pushed his chair back. "I've made arrangements for us to go to lunch. You will be dressed to go out. I'm sure Leafer will be able to inform you of where to wait and what to wear." And with that, he swooped out of the room, still managing to appear as if he was billowing, even though he wasn't wearing his robes.

AN: Sorry about the delay in updating... RL turned up and messed things around.

Chapter Six

Chapter 6 of 8

Leafer helps Hermione to figure out her feelings...

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"Mistress, he is getting impatient."

"Well, he'll just have to be patient, Leafer. If he wants me to be perfect, then he should have given me more warning. I didn't expect him to start this early on."

"Are you sure about that?"

Hermione dropped her hands from where they had been frantically battling with her long hair. "What?"

"Well, you say that he loves you. That he's been following you, ever since you left him on your wedding night..."

"Yes...?"

"Well, surely that means that he has strong feelings for you."

"Or that he is extremely possessive and doesn't want anyone else to have his toy."

Leafer shook her head so hard her ears flapped back and forth. "I don't think so, Mistress. I think that he truly loves you. Otherwise, I think he would have been trying to break through my wards already to get to you."

"You have wards set up?"

"I have to protect your innocence, Mistress. I don't want you to do more than you want to do. He shouldn't force you to do more than you wish to partake in."

Hermione looked at her house-elf, her eyes widened in shock. "You did all that without me having to tell you?"

"Of course. It is my duty to protect you, Mistress. Whether you tell me to or not." Leafer bowed, glancing up through the peak her ears made.

Hermione smiled. As much as she had once hated the thought of using house-elves, she could see how one could get addicted to them, possibly how they could mistreat them. If the owners came to see them as just objects for everyday use, like a kettle, or saucepan, which at first they disliked the thought of it getting scratched or marked, and then throwing it around anywhere and everywhere.

"Thank you. Can you please inform Severus, Leafer, that I will be down in just one moment."

Waiting 'til the house-elf had dutifully left the room, Hermione sank down onto the mattress. She had barely spent any time in Severus' company, or even in his house, and yet she was already coming to the conclusion that he was telling the truth. Or that he at least *thought* he was telling the truth.

"Perhaps... perhaps the way I felt about him was really how he felt about me." Sighing, she glanced into the mirror one last time, curled up the last strand, and nodded. It was time to try stepping back into the snake pit. She only hoped that this time, there wouldn't be any bite.

AN: Yay, another chapter! :D Short, I know... but hopefully with the way things are right now, I should manage to get up the rest of the story a.s.a.p! Thank you for reading!

Chapter Seven

Chapter 7 of 8

Hermione starts to understand Severus...

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Severus paced up and down the entrance hall. Leafer had informed him of Hermione's predicament. He thought it was more than amusing that the elf had let it slip the way she had, pretending she had just been muttering too loudly so that she wouldn't have to go and punish herself.

He had been angry at first when Hermione had told him that a house-elf had bonded itself to her, but the match had already proved to be beneficial to him. She had managed to gain herself a smart elf, and that in itself made him chuckle. Only Hermione, who didn't want to believe that house-elves chose to enslave themselves, would find a smart elf that wanted her as a Mistress.

Shaking his head, he looked up at the stairs. He could hear her footsteps coming along the hall, and he wished Riply hadn't housed her so far back in the house. As she rounded the top of the stairs and started to make her descent, he took a deep breath. Restraining himself and letting her make the choices was going to be hard.

Waiting for her was going to be one of the biggest challenges he was going to have to face. Possibly even harder and more challenging than going to face the Dark Lord, or doing some of his work in the Muggle world.

"Hermione."

"Severus." She smiled, and although she hesitated to take his offered arm, she quickly slipped hers through and gave it a squeeze.

"I thought I would take us into the village for lunch. I have made us reservations." He cleared his throat. "I feel I should warn you, Hermione. Things are different for me now. I am a free man, and I do as I please."

"I know that, Severus."

"I have a different status here... a different way of living. I'm treated well. And mostly I am liked and respected. Perhaps feared, because of how the Manor looms over them. But you need to be prepared for how they will react to you."

Hermione shook her head and looked towards the door. "Shall we go? We do not want to be late."

"Indeed." He patted her hand before guiding her towards the door. He could already tell that this meal was going to be a sweet form of torture.

Hermione had not even finished recovering from the ride to the restaurant before she was being asked to step down from the carriage. She sat there dumbly as Severus held his hand out towards her.

"I told you things were different, Hermione." He smiled faintly and reached further in with his hand. "Come along, you are beginning to make a scene. I am not known for my patience; I would rather it stayed that way."

She quietly took his hand and was just making her first step out when the first flash went off.

"Would you like to make a statement about your date, Lord Snape?" A reporter had pushed his way through the crowd like a rabid dog after a kill. "What about your missing wife? How do you think she would feel now you are moving on?"

Severus slammed the door to the carriage shut, knocking Hermione back into her seat. But she knew better than to object, and so stayed where she was whilst he dealt with the situation.

"I do not believe that my lunch dates are of any concern to a dunderhead like you. Now if you would kindly retreat back to whatever pond scum you wiggled free from, I would rather like to continue with my plans in peace."

The reporter had been taking minute steps back for every word that was hissed from Severus' mouth. And he gasped as he felt the crowd grab his arms and pull him back.

"If I see another flash, you will discover just how painful a camera can really be to its owner." Turning back to the carriage, he quickly opened the door and reached for Hermione. She knew better than to hesitate this time; he was trying to make a statement, and although she was not overly happy about his presumption that things would work out, it appeared to be something that had to happen if they were to have any peace at all.

Pasting a smile onto her face, she stepped down from the carriage, one hand in Severus' and the other holding up an edge of her skirt. She held her head high and kept her eyes focussed above everyone's head. She didn't feel she could cope with any negative comments at the moment, and she thought that they truly thought she was missing was like a punch to the stomach. Severus was right: she really didn't understand the greater implications of her disappearance. And with a jolt, she realised that even if everything did work out, any thoughts of the future and producing an heir would cause great controversy unless they waited. There would have to be some proof that it was his. Letting her gaze wander to Severus as she made her first step on the ground, she saw how closely he was watching her. And although to everyone else, it would appear like he was blank-faced, she could see the smile of approval in his eyes.

As she came to a stop at his side, he leant down to her ear. "Well done, Hermione." Straightening up, he tugged her on to follow. "Let us eat."

The owner of the restaurant came rushing out, just before they reached the doors. "I'm so sorry, Lord Snape. We did not expect that many people to know that you had returned, or that you would be eating here. I will have a full enquiry of the staff to see who let it slip. I will have them fired immediately."

"Oh, no!" Hermione shook her head. "Please don't. I'm sure they just saw the carriage coming through the village. It would not do to assume things." She glanced quickly at Severus and then returned her gaze to their host.

"As the lady says," Severus muttered. "I would appreciate you showing us to our table, however. I do not wish to be stood out here being gawked at any longer."

"Of course, of course," their host stuttered and quickly moved back to open the door. "Your usual table is ready for you. And I've made sure that you have the requested privacy for your meal."

As their host moved to pull a chair out for Hermione, Severus waved him away. "I'm sure we can see to ourselves from here." Nodding, their host quickly trotted away.

Hermione accepted the seat that he offered her and sank into it gratefully. The stress from being outside with the press was something that had been unexpected and so doubly shocking. She watched as Severus sat down and poured himself a some water. She was so focussed on watching his hands as they held onto the delicate glass that she didn't notice him offer her a glass.

"Hermione? Are you listening?"

Hermione blushed as she met his gaze. "Sorry, I got a little distracted." She blushed more at his knowing smirk. "What was it you were asking me?"

Severus chuckled. "I had asked if you would like a glass of water or not. Are you thirsty?"

She cleared her throat. "Yes, please. Thank you." Holding out her glass, she shuddered as his fingers brushed hers to take it. It felt like sparks had ignited her skin, burning her hand and sending tingles down her arm.

She could feel her face getting redder and redder.

"Hermione?" Her eyes refocussed to find a glass hovering in front of her face. "Are you feeling quite all right? If you are unwell, I will not take offence if you wish to return home."

Home. He kept using that word. He was definitely determined to have her stay. Smiling, she plucked the glass out of thin air. "Thank you. I think it is just a little hot in here. Nothing else." Taking a gulp of water, she swallowed it down quickly. "Is there anything on the menu that you would particularly recommend?"

"I think I would like to see what you would choose, and then I will advise you on your choice. I do not wish to influence your final decision." Smirking, he raised his glass of water in cheers and took a sip.

Looking at the menu helplessly, she couldn't help but feel that this was some kind of test. For what, she wasn't quite sure. Things had been so easy before they had gotten married. Before she discovered why their relationship had begun in the first place. They had been so comfortable in each other's presence. Snuggling up on the couch whilst reading, the fire crackling away. A blanket over their legs, and their feet entwined. It made a lovely picture in her mind, and she would have given anything to have that back. But she couldn't just forgive him for not telling her of Dumbledore's plans. She couldn't forgive the things that she knew must have been said in the Order. How nobody had told her of what was going on. And she was sure that Harry and Ron had known what the plan was; they had been too accepting of their relationship for them not to have known. Especially Ron. He had seemed so sour-faced, his lips pursed together when she had told them, but all he had done was give her a tight hug and that had been the end of it. He hadn't even thrown a tantrum or thrown his relationship in her face. Nothing.

At the time it had seemed so simple, she had just been too happy to notice those around her. But Harry had smiled at her, he hadn't even grimaced. There was nothing that would have ordinarily been their reaction.

Now she wasn't sure who she was more angry at: Severus, Dumbledore, the Order or Harry and Ron? If they were meant to be the Golden Trio, the closest friends seen in a generation of students at Hogwarts, then why had they not been able to tell each other of the plans? Why had they not told her what was going on? Did they really care more about what Dumbledore thought than what she thought? What about her welfare? What would they have done if she had been unhappy about the situation? Would they have said something? Would they have intervened? Would Ron have offered to take Severus' position? Marry and protect her?

And what about Ginny? Her response seemed to be the most real. But then Molly was steadfast in not letting her join the Order, so that wasn't really all that surprising. Finally, she looked back up at Severus.

"Sorry, I was miles away. I am not quite sure of my decision. Perhaps you could help me make it." And all of a sudden she knew that his comment had more depth to it than just menu choices. Smiling, she listened to which choices he was listing for her and what wines he would choose for each.

Sitting in the carriage, her eyes partially closed, she listened to Severus as he told her what he had been up to, both during the war and just after it. His work within the Muggle world he only told her minute details on, but it was still incredibly fascinating, and she listened with great rapture at tales which reminded her of the 007 films she had watched as a child.

When they arrived back at the Manor, the carriage was pulled right up to the steps because of the rapidly gathering, dark, menacing clouds above them. They practically ran up the marble steps and rushed through the front doors, Hermione giggling at his childish behaviour, and she gasped as Severus suddenly pulled her closer to him.

He wrapped his arms around her and held her tightly. "I have missed this, Hermione. I have missed feeling your breasts rise and fall with each breath. I've missed sensing when you have fallen asleep. I miss you." Lifting one hand, he cupped her chin, stroking softly at her cheek with his thumb. "I have missed being able to touch you, love. To hold you close."

Hermione's eyes darted between his eyes and his lips. She wanted to taste him again so badly, but she also did not want to give in to him so easily. She wanted him to know that she was in charge of her emotions and that he could not walk all over her. She was her own person.

Her breath was starting to come in shallow pants as his other hand rubbed her lower back, holding her close to him as he slowly lowered his lips to hers.

Closing her eyes, she slightly opened her mouth and waited for his lips to descend on hers. Trying to hold herself back and not let herself give in to the feelings that he was

evoking was like trying to stay standing as a 6ft wave hit her. And as his lips brushed against hers, she moaned and leant into him.

Encouraged by her enthusiastic response, he pulled her closer and lifted her slightly off the floor, his lips working away at hers, meeting hers in a dance that made the world begin to spin. And just as she lifted her legs to wrap around his waist, thinking that nothing was worth rejecting these kinds of feelings any longer, he stopped.

Pulling her from him, as if it had been her idea to begin kissing, he placed her feet firmly on the floor. Keeping his hands on her shoulders, an arm length away, he looked her steadily in the eye. "We cannot do this. If we were to continue and then you were to scorn me and try and turn me away, it would be too late. I have told you I love you, Hermione. I can tell you do, too. Our touch still means something to each other, and you cannot deny that." Stepping back quickly, he ignored the glazed look in her eyes and the way that she wavered in the air. "I will see you tomorrow." Swooping off in the direction of the kitchens, she couldn't help but wish that her legs would turn into something other than jelly so she could chase after him.

"Leafer, I need help."

A small pop to her left almost startled her off balance. "Mistress?"

Hermione shook her head; she needed to get a grip on herself. Doing something rash now would ruin everything that she had tried to achieve. "I need to get to my rooms. I am afraid I am not quite able to walk there myself."

"Are you unwell, Mistress? Would Mistress like Leafer to run her a bath?"

"Yes, Mistress would. I mean I would. Thank you, Leafer. I think that would help me clear my head."

AN: I hope you enjoyed the chapter!

Chapter Eight

Chapter 8 of 8

Hermione decides to speed things along...

Disclaimer: Potterverse is not mine. The plot, however, is.

The week after their kiss had been quite tortuous for Hermione, and she was sure it had been for him, too. Every mealtime, no matter how early she reached the dining room, he was always just preparing to leave. And every time she entered the library his research would always have just been finished.

Finally, one night when she had had enough tossing and turning in bed, she decided a walk through the Manor would be the perfect way to relax her mind into sleeping. Grabbing her dressing gown, she wrapped it around her and slipped her wand into her pocket.

The halls were dark and the portraits – although their inhabitants were mostly asleep – still gave off a dark aura and Hermione shuddered as she walked past them. Making her way towards the library, she started to walk faster as she noticed that the lights were on. Crouching low, and going onto tip-toes, she held her breath and slipped through the open door. Moving quickly and silently, she crept towards the fireplace and reading seats. If he was up, that would definitely be where he would be seated. Peeking through the nearest shelves, she saw exactly what she was looking for.

But what she saw shocked her.

In all the times that they had read together and talked to each other... she had never seen Severus Snape wearing a pair of glasses. Ever. And yet here he was, a thin-rimmed pair – in what looked like black – resting elegantly on the bridge of his nose.

Swallowing a moan, she licked her dry lips. She had never thought he could look so good with his hair hanging loose and a pair of glasses resting on his face.

"You may have been quiet when you came in, Hermione. But if you must insist on making those delicious sounds I must ask you to leave or be quiet immediately."

Hermione slunk around the edge of the shelves, moving so he could see her. "Sounds?"

"Yes, mewling noises, with little moans and groans." He turned a page in his book. "They are most distracting and I was just getting to an exciting part."

"Really?" She walked slowly towards him, her hips swaying. "I didn't think I was making a sound at all. Are you sure you weren't just... *hoping* I was making those noises?"

He looked up and almost choked, having to clear his throat several times before he could speak again. "Yes. I am quite sure it was you that was making those noises." His eyes seemed to burn into hers, and she could feel a blush raising up her neck to her cheeks.

She came to a stand, licking her lips and waiting for him to make the next move. And when he stood, she bit her lip expectantly, waiting for him to come to her. So she was shocked into a growling protest when he side-stepped her, grabbed a handful of Floo powder and jumped through, and away from her.

"Bastard."

AN: Short, I know... but sometimes that is the way it has to be! ;p A big thank you to my beta!!!