

Rhyme and Reason

by DawnEB

Very loosely based on Ladyofthemasque's 'Lost in a Book' challenge. Severus and Hermione have problems with a book in the Restricted Section. Will they ever get together and get home? Brief appearances by a number of HP characters, and a suggestion of slash. Rating for safety, nothing too graphic

Restricted Section

Chapter 1 of 8

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Hermione Granger leaned back from her hips as she balanced near the top of a ladder in the Restricted Section. Her hair was covered by a triangular folded headscarf, and she wore a worn out looking white lab coat that she'd snaffled off her dentist mother over some close fitting trousers and a t shirt. A layer of grey and somewhat sparkly dust had settled all over her as she worked.

After defeating the Dark Lord and finishing her NEWTs two years previously, Hermione had been in a series of dead end short term jobs until she came to realise that she was too restless to settle down into a regular lifestyle yet. She had spent the next year and a bit travelling the world at the suggestion and funding of her parents, but within a week of setting foot back on British soil Hermione had been contacted by Madam Pince at Hogwarts.

It seemed that the librarian had finally been able to persuade the governors that the Restricted Section really needed to be cleaned and recatalogued, as the build up of magical residue was reaching a critical point. Apparently, the final straw had been when Professor Flitwick had been found stranded on a table with a pack of the usually more tractable tomes circling beneath him in a menacing manner. It had taken nearly two days to rescue the diminutive teacher.

The mass threat to seek compensation for having to work in such a dangerous environment had resulted in enough funding being released into Madam Pince's administrative care that she could afford to take on an assistant to do most of the boring and dirty bits, and her mind settled on Miss Granger, whom she could rely on to take proper care of the books with little supervision. That it would be payback for all the times she hadn't been able to skive off due to the extended study habits of the overworking chit wasn't a factor in her decision, no *not at all*. As luck would have it, Minerva McGonagall had recently imparted the news that the girl was back from an extended vacation and would be looking for a job.

It had taken little to persuade Miss Granger to take up the position, even without tenure. Madam Pince even developed a soft spot for her when she realised the girl was more than willing to combine her usual chores with a little cover during the quiet shifts, allowing the older witch to enjoy some of the extended leisure time she'd missed out on due to Hermione's study habits as a student. Such was the situation tonight. Officially open to pupils and staff alike for another hour, Madam Pince had slipped out for 'a breath of fresh air', which probably meant the lung full she got going to and from the Hog's Head, leaving the younger woman in charge of the apparently empty library.

Hermione leaned across with her small badger hair brush and made a neat pile of the grey dust and peanut shells that had accumulated there. Reaching into her pocket for the little pan she used to collect the sweepings she spotted it on top of the pile of books she had previously removed. '*Bother, I've only this bit left to clear; it's a long way down, and my legs ache,*' she thought. Not wanting to mess up the stack she had already cleared, Hermione scooped the pile into her hand, and with a quick look to ensure no one was watching she threw it over the top of the stack into the next section. As she did so, she spotted a slim and colourful book that had been wedged firmly into a

gap at the back of the shelf. 'Funny, this doesn't look like it belongs here,' she thought as she struggled to free the book of Nursery Rhymes & Tales.

Severus Snape had been quietly perusing the shelves of Libidinal Charms in search of something to take down to the privacy of his rooms for a little bedtime reading. He often chose this time of the evening, as he was unlikely to run into any of the students with his selection. Just as he was leaning forward to pull a particularly interesting looking tome from the shelf he found himself covered in a shower of grey sparkly powder and peanut shells. Determining that the substance had no immediate harmful effects, the irate professor stormed around the stack in a billow of black robes.

Just as the library assistant gave a last freeing tug to the book as she leaned out at an angle from the top of the ladder, so Professor Snape charged around the end of the stack with a determination to catch the culprit responsible for his dusting. Precariously balanced as she was, the slight nudge of the ladder as he pulled up not quite fast enough was sufficient to send her flying, while her small noise of horrified shock as she fell gave enough warning for Snape to cast a hasty and only partially successful spell to impede her descent. However, there was not enough time for the dour man to escape, and so he found himself propelled over onto his back with the young woman across his chest. As his head made contact with the floor he noticed a book flutter open as it fell and hit Hermione at the base of her skull, and he had just enough time to think that at least he wouldn't be the only one with a headache before the world went black.

A/N All blame and acknowledgements at the end. This is complete in eight short chapters.

Lost in a Book Challenge Offered by Ladyofthemasque

Based upon the story "Lost in a (Not So) Good Book" by Bubblebunny (<http://ashwinder.sycophanthex.com/viewstory.php?sid=12466>)

Here's the Lost in A Book Challenge:

1. Hermione Granger and Severus Snape encounter a wizarding romance novel
2. They get sucked literally into the storyline, taking on the roles of the hero and heroine
3. They must complete the storyline of the novel in order to escape the book and return to the real world
4. They must fall in love with each other during the course of their adventure, though they don't have to start out that way, if you don't want. The main genre will therefore be Romance.
5. The sub-genre of the novel can be any category...Western, Sci-Fi, Fantasy, Regency, Contemporary, Horror, Medieval, Prehistorical, and so forth...but the MAIN category must remain focused on building some sort of romance between SS/HG (mildly romantic or downright smutty or some combination thereof).
6. The number of "chapters" should be at least 5, though the chapters can be as short as 100 words, or as long as 10,000. (There shall be no limit to the size of the story, but it would be really, really nice if you finished it, and didn't abandon it...)
7. Severus and Hermione must kiss at least 3 times, though it doesn't have to be voluntarily at first. Greater levels of passion are at the author's discretion, but nothing lesser will be accepted.
8. The Deadline for this Challenge (submitting the *first* chapter) will be February 17th, 2006, because it's my birthday, and I want to read some nice prezzies from all the fine writers here at WIKTT. If there's lots of enthusiasm, I'll definitely consider extending the deadline.
9. Feel free to use other HP characters to fill out the various supporting cast roles. CAVEAT: If you decide to place this into a specific genre, such as the Anita Blake series (by Laurell K. Hamilton...mmm, Severus as Jean-Claude...), please be mindful that some fanfic sites do not allow crossover-fics to be posted on their boards (for example, Ashwinder or RestrictedSection.org).
10. Suggested (but not required) phrases to be included in the story:
 - "You ripped my bodice!" "Well, it is a bodice ripper!"
 - "...I miss my cat." (because I like Crookshanks) OR "...I miss my pussy." Feel free to form jokes from this second line, if you like.
 - "You know, we are a witch and a wizard; we can cast anti-gravity charms back on the planet. We didn't have to go into outer space to just float around the room together."
 - "Why are you wearing neck-bolts?" "They go with my school tie!"
 - "You realize, of course, that the memory of you in makeup, high heels and tights will make an excellent Pensieve-based blackmail opportunity." "I would think you would realize that in this era, it is very manly to wear...makeup, high heels, and... look like a bloody ponce, don't I?" "A bloody ponce with kissable red lips and gorgeous, sexy legs. You really should wear heels and skintight pants more often." "I should?" "Yes; you have very lickable calves."
 - "Please, let this not be a Betty Neels plot! For once, I'd like to have the chance to actually shag the hero!" (Or "...shag the heroine!", depending on who is doing the pleading.)
 - "You can't fall in love with me! I'm supposed to be the villain! Don't you see my black clothes? The villain always wears the black clothes! I can't be the bloody hero!" "It's called an anti-hero, Severus, and they're very popular among the ladies, these days. You should know the type...the bad-boy who turns out to be good, deep down inside? You're practically the poster-boy!"
 - "Oh, dear god...it's a Mary Sue!" "A what?" "A Mary Sue! A super-character invented by hack writers to create a too-powerful, too-perfect fictional character. It's the sort of person the writer secretly wants to be, and yet no one else wants to read about! At least, not without feeling the urge to mangle the book!"
 - Anybody who can work in the line from that other WIKTT Challenge, "...You are unbelievable!" gets extra brownie points.
11. Authors: In order to conserve space on WIKTT, the powers that be have asked me to ask you the following favour: if you are planning on uploading your response to an offlist archive such as FF.net, Whispers, SnitchFiction, FanDomination, etc; rather than uploading it into the challenge folder as well, please upload a linking file that will direct readers to the offlist location. This is not a requirement - please don't deprive us of your work because you're concerned about space - only comply with the request if you are planning to post offlist. Thank you!

A/N I'm glad the phrases are suggested but not compulsory, I didn't come close to including one

A Peep Inside the Book

Chapter 2 of 8

Very loosely based on Ladyofthemasque's 'Lost in a Book' challenge. Severus and Hermione have problems with a book in the Restricted Section. Will they ever get together and get home? Brief appearances by a number of HP characters, and a suggestion of slash. Rating for safety, nothing too graphic

As Severus came to, he noticed several things. The first was the bright light that pierced his closed eyelids, then came the cheerful and totally unwarranted bird song that assaulted his ears, and finally the frizzy, woolly *something* that was weighing down his chest. Just as he was considering hexing the assailant and asking questions later, it started to stir and make noises.

"Whaa...? Where am I? How did I end up here?" The weight lifted from Snape's chest, and he sat up and opened his eyes now the light wasn't directly on them, just in time to see Miss Granger put her hand to her no doubt aching head and exclaim "**What the Hell's happened to my hair?**"

Startled, Snape took in the witch's appearance. Although he would never admit it, he had noticed the way she had been able to tame the locks that had been a frizzy mess during her school days and had often wondered how it would feel to run his fingers through it. Now her hair was, well, not so much frizzy as woolly in appearance, and had been twisted into curling flat horns over her ears. The dust she seemed to be habitually covered with during weekdays had settled into a mask over her forehead and down her nose, elongating and subtly altering her features.

Her clothes too seemed odd, now he took notice. He didn't recall her wearing a fleecy jacket before, or the way the tight black leggings and long sleeved t shirt she wore accentuated her shapely limbs. He was momentarily distracted. He had always appreciated a well-turned limb and had much more fun imagining what those limbs would be like wrapped around his own body than about the somewhat more passive charms of breasts or backside.

Noticing his eyes stray down her body, Hermione too noticed the change and jumped to her feet. As her weight left the prostrate man both were startled as something leapt up between them. As Snape started taking swipes at this new menace, Hermione took the time to let her brain take in all the details of the scene before her. There was no doubt about it; Snape's clothing had changed too, and quite dramatically. Trying hard to hold in the giggles unless she became hysterical, she watched Snape battle the skirt of a crinoline dress. What is more, a crinoline that Severus Snape was *wearing*.

Hermione ignored the curses from the man as the hoops kept springing up each time he tried to compress them and took in his whole appearance. Hooped crinoline in a floral fabric, complete with flounces and ribbons, although Hermione was somewhat glad to spot that the bodice was close fitting but not corseted. She would have had to be Obliviated if he'd had a wasp waist and cleavage. As it was, she had to add to the picture the flower bedecked ribbon holding his hair back and *Oh Merlin draws!* Snape's legs encased in white, calf length tiers of lace stuck out from under the dress, ending with what looked like Snape's usual black button up boots, except maybe slightly higher heeled.

It was all too much, and the wide-eyed witch started to titter. Snape had by now thrown himself forward, effectively flattening the hoops in front but causing them to stand out above him like a sail.

"What is the matter with you? I see nothing funny in this." sneered Snape. Hermione waved her hand loosely in his direction and managed to splutter.

"N..nn..nice knickers, Severus".

The wizard looked at her, appalled. Had she lost her mind? Then he finally took a look at himself as Hermione gave in to her laughter. She couldn't know it, but the clothing and her laughter opened up a festering wound in Snape's psyche, taking him right back to the bullying, taunting and jeers he'd been subjected to as a child and young adult, and he reacted as he'd always done. Leaping to his feet he'd advanced on the witch, a snarl on his lips and murder in his dark eyes.

"How dare you! How dare you laugh at me, you misbegotten chit!" Spittle flew from his mouth as he yelled at her. He raised his hand, and Hermione stepped back, the hysterical laughter stilled by his angry outburst. Grabbing the front of her jacket he shook her violently.

"I don't know what you've done, or what you think you will gain by humiliating me like this, but you'd better put an end to it now *or else*." This last was hissed in her face. Hermione hadn't seen Severus Snape this angry since her third year at Hogwarts, when Sirius Black had escaped.

"I don't know what you're talking about. I didn't do any of this." She looked down at herself and brought a hand to her bushy head. "Whoever did this, they got me too. The last I remember was cleaning shelves in the Library and pulling out a book that was stuck, then you knocking me off the ladder."

Snape's eyes narrowed as he listened to her explanation, then widened a little. From what she'd said, Hermione was the one to throw dust over him in a careless but not malicious act. It was the same dust he'd seen coating her every day for weeks. Dust that was heavily imbued with the magical residue that plagued the Restricted Section. Miss Granger hadn't realised he'd been there, hence her surprise and subsequent tumble. His mind's eye replayed the falling book. So this hadn't been a spiteful act. In that case, just what had happened?

"Look, over there. I see smoke and a chimney. Let's head over there, perhaps we can figure out where we are."

Severus looked up to where the witch was pointing and realised he still had her by the front of her jacket. He released her, and she stumbled back. Keeping a good two paces apart the unlikely couple moved up the rise towards the smoke.

Pop Go the Weasleys

Chapter 3 of 8

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"Oh, Gods, we died, and I'm in Hell"

Severus sank to his knees, the crinoline slowly deflating in a ring around him. Hermione, being shorter, had to climb further before she saw what had distressed the wizard. There in the distance was a most peculiar house, even by Wizarding standards. The clamour that could still be heard at this distance was caused by the several dozen children of all ages that ran, climbed, skipped, screamed, cried and yelled through the house and its environs. All of them had Weasley red hair, and a woman vaguely reminiscent of Molly was alternately yelling and swiping at the kids as they ran round her.

Hermione walked back to the despondent man. He'd been even more disturbed to find neither of them had their wands than he had been about his outfit, and the strain was showing. She stood there for a while, looking thoughtful. After a couple of minutes Severus seemed to pull himself together and stood up. As he did so, Hermione started talking.

"If it's any consolation I think I know where we are, and it's not Hell," Hermione said, then caught her bottom lip between her teeth. Snape looked at her expectantly, but said nothing.

"I also think I know why we are both in these... get ups. I suspect that we are somehow in the book I dropped."

Snape stood and stared off into the distance. Yes, her theory made sense; he'd once read of this sort of thing happening. The person involved was stuck in the book, but had found a way to get out. The witch beside him was still prattling on, and with his aching head Severus was finding it difficult to concentrate. He knew that there was a way to get yourself out, if only he could think...

"... so if I'm right, and I have little doubt I am, that was the Old Woman who lived in a shoe, and that would make you little Bo Peep!" Snape glared at her.

"So, what with your empty-headed bleating, we can safely assume that you are my *sheep*," he replied nastily. Hermione bristled.

"Hey, don't take it out on me because *chintz* doesn't suit you. This isn't my fault, you know."

Snape began to loom over Hermione. She started to worry at her lip nervously as he stepped closer to her, still somewhat scary even if the effect was lessened by his skirt rising up behind him as the front was pressed between them

"Isn't your fault? And just how do you figure that it *isn't your fault*? Firstly you douse me in a highly volatile and potent magical residue, secondly you were overreaching at the top of a ladder, a ladder I might add that should have had a stabilising charm applied while you were working up it, and lastly you drop a book that has been exposed to this wild magic for Merlin knows how long onto the pair of us. **Of course this is your fault, woman!**

They had been moving, Hermione taking small steps backwards and him advancing on her. As he shouted the last bit at her Hermione bolted and ran into the nearby woods. Snape watched her go, then turned on his heel and went back the way they had come. He refused to chase her, and he suspected that the close set trees would cause him no end of trouble with this damned skirt, which he had found impossible to remove.

A Roll in the Hay

Chapter 4 of 8

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Just beyond where he and Miss Granger had originally woken up Snape passed a fence. The gate was open, and the cattle had wandered into the neighbouring wheat field. From behind a haystack he heard snoring.

Struggling once more with his clothing he had an idea. *Hmm, I wonder if it would be possible that one of the inhabitants of this book would have better luck at divesting me of this monstrosity?* Severus thought. Coming round the stack he found a man asleep with a broad brimmed hat over his face. He wore jeans and a blue shirt and had an almost empty bottle of wine next to him.

"Excuse me." Snape raised his voice and kicked the booted foot closest him. "I said, excuse me, I need a little assistance here. I wonder if you could help me get this skirt loose, you see--"

"No problem, darling, I'm more than willing to help you with your little problem." The man pushed his hat back and waggled his eyebrows suggestively. Snape stood back in surprise.

"Black!" The other man stood, flexing his muscular chest as he stretched.

"No, Blue, but I won't hold it against you--unless you ask me to, that is," he finished with a leer and a wink.

"Now, why don't I help you off with your dress, and then I'll show you I'm no 'Little Boy' while you blow my horn?" Blue/Black made a grab for Severus, who darted out of reach.

"Stop it, I'll have you know that under this dress I'm as much a man as you are."

Blue looked Snape up and down before reaching for the bottle and taking a swig. Wiping the rim in what he obviously thought was a gentlemanly gesture he offered it across.

"Doesn't bother me either way. Do you want me to blow *your* horn first?"

Dumbstruck by the turn of events, Snape reacted just a little too late as Blue grabbed him and pulled him into a bear hug. Wet slobbery lips pressed drunkenly to his own, but when he felt a tongue pushing at them Severus came to his senses and did what he'd been wanting to do for far too many years.

Severus strode out of the field, leaving the barely conscious Blue under the haystack. He smirked somewhat smugly, then winced at the throb in his leg. Next time he needed to knee someone hard in the groin, he would remember to lift these damned steel hoops out of the way first.

A/N Sorry it's so short, and I can't promise the rest are much longer. Next up: What's Hermione up to?

My, What Big Eyes You Have

Chapter 5 of 8

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Hermione stumbled through the trees, putting as much distance between herself and Snape as possible. He had scared her badly, his temper slipping in and out apparently uncontrollably.

If she gave him enough time to come to terms with things, maybe then they could work on how to get out of here, wherever here was. Were they actually in the book, or perhaps transported to some kind of simulacrum, or possibly just their minds projected into an illusion?

Sitting down on a log, Hermione thought over what Snape had said. He was right of course. She'd been warned of the dangers whilst working in the Restricted Section and usually was so much more careful. It had been the end of a long day and she was tired, but it was still no excuse for her negligence. She sighed. She didn't want Severus to be angry with her, she had found that so long as she trod carefully around certain subjects he was quite enjoyable company and she had high hopes of furthering the tentative friendship. When she plucked up the courage to go back to him, she would apologise. If he had calmed down. Right now she felt safer here in this wood.

A few minutes later she began to regret her decision. Strange sounds seemed to surround her, and long shadows moved through the trees. Suddenly Hermione tensed as a shadow seemed to detach itself from the rest, creeping stealthily towards her. Steeling her courage, the witch leapt to her feet and spun around.

"Remus!" Hermione started to move towards her friend, then stopped in confusion. This man had a confident look on his face as he leaned nonchalantly against a tree, flipping a coin. He was dressed in a sharp suit with shiny shoes and had slicked back hair. His eyes looked her over in a way that made her slightly uncomfortable, but brought a flush to her cheeks. He caught the coin and slipped it into his trouser pocket, drawing her eye to his groin as he seemed to fumble around in there for a moment longer than necessary.

"You can call me whatever you like, babe, just call me," he intoned seductively. Hermione rolled her eyes at the line but felt herself getting hotter and reached down to loosen the top of her fleece. 'Remus' followed the movement with his eyes.

"Now, what is a *succulent* morsel such as yourself doing out here all alone, hmm?" He pushed himself away from the tree and slunk around her like a predator circling its prey. Hermione felt like she didn't mind being *this* beast's prey when suddenly he was holding her hand, his thumb making circles across the inside of her wrist.

"Come on, you can trust me. What sent you off into the woods all on your own like this?" His voice was soothing, his eyes were golden and hypnotic, and Hermione found herself confiding in him as he sat her back down on the log beside him.

"Severus, I mean Professor Snape, he lost his temper with me, and I thought it prudent to be elsewhere for a while..Oh!"

Hermione felt his lips touch the inside of her wrist where his thumb had been before, and she looked down into those big golden eyes which held hers unblinking as he traced a row of kisses up her inner forearm, the final one ending with a swirl of his tongue across the sensitive skin on the inside of her elbow. Hermione's eyes closed, and her head rolled back. She felt him breathing in her scent from just below her ear before blazing a trail down her neck and across her collarbone, sucking and nipping as he went. She moaned deeply. His hand slipped down her throat and into her fleece, and just when had he loosened it *that far?*

His breath fell on her lips, and she opened her eyes to find his staring down at her, his face moving in to close that gap...

"So *there* you are!"

The Wolf leapt to his feet, and Hermione fell backwards off the log. As she scrambled to her knees Hermione saw him placating the young woman who stood a few yards away with her arms folded across her chest and tapping her foot. Hermione noted a basket caught in one elbow, and the tight t shirt and short skirt worn under a red hooded cloak, which clashed horribly with her bubble gum pink hair.

"Come on, babe, you know I'm only kidding around. There's no one I'd rather chase through the woods than you. Now, you got something for old Wolfy here to sink his teeth into today?"

As the other woman allowed herself to be led away, Hermione saw the Wolf look back over his shoulder, wink and mouth 'later' at her. Shaking herself, she decided to head back to the meadow and Severus before any more trouble found her.

...And When They Were Down, They Were Down...

Chapter 6 of 8

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Severus Snape sat by the stream at the bottom of the meadow. He had been thinking about his reactions -- okay, overreactions -- to Hermione earlier. He was coming to the conclusion that she was the one witch he didn't want to scare off, but he'd probably already blown that.

Since her return to Hogwarts Severus had been noticing her and the way she had matured. She made a more than tolerable companion at mealtimes, she had spotted the dry if acerbic humour in his comments, she had almost always been respectful towards him, and even the few times he had caught her teasing him it had been in a gentle, good natured way he secretly enjoyed. What could he do to regain her trust?

Regardless of the way his skirts belled out over him, Severus lay back across the bank above the stream and drifted off to sleep. Perhaps after a nap his headache would ease, and he'd figure out a way to get them out of this situation. He could worry about his relationship with Miss Granger later.

Over on the other side of the meadow, where the woods thinned out, Hermione stepped into the sunshine. A noise further down made her pause, and she was treated to the sight of a rather ursine looking Crabbe, Goyle and Bulstrode chasing Draco Malfoy out of the woods. Goyle was waving a broken chair leg over his head while Millicent carried an empty bowl. Hermione's laughter pealed across the meadow as they ran out of sight.

Severus sat up quickly, shaking his head. He'd dreamed of Hermione, heard her light laughter as he'd held her in his arms and twirled her round, his heart bursting with the knowledge that she was happy to be with him. Looking around however proved that he was, as usual, alone.

Further upstream and hidden by a clump of bushes, Hermione sat and watched the water bubble over the rocks on the shallow bed. She wondered if Severus had calmed down yet. She missed him and knew he would be amused by the tale of the three 'bears' chasing Draco Goldilocks. Perhaps he would have been even more amused to have experienced it with her? Hermione's mind drifted with the stream and she found herself wondering how much of her other adventure she would have liked to share with Severus. She shivered as she remembered the touch of the Wolf, but when she replayed it in her mind the fingers that ran over her skin were longer and the eyes that held her captive were dark and sensual.

Where had *that* come from? Hermione smirked at the idea of Severus Snape turning some of the passion he displayed in his anger into seduction, especially on her. She'd be lucky if he went as far as tolerating her after her performance earlier. A sense of loss settled on the witch. When had she developed this need for the dark brooding man to be part of her life? More importantly, why did she yearn to be part of his, no matter in how small a capacity?

Standing, Hermione decided to try looking for Severus over the other side of the meadow. She tried to jump over the stream but slipped on the muddy bank opposite, falling back into the water. Spluttering and shaking the water from her hair Hermione dragged herself back up the bank. She was soaked to the skin. Looking around she smiled ruefully. Might as well strip and lay out her clothes to dry in the warm sun, her bra and briefs were probably more substantial than the bikini she'd worn to beaches she'd visited last year. With this thought in mind, Hermione lay back on the grass to enjoy the sun.

One, Two, *Un*buckle My Shoe

Chapter 7 of 8

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Snape found himself wandering morosely towards the woods. There was no chance of him finding Hermione while she remained in there, but if she didn't emerge soon he would just have to swallow his pride and start calling for her. He'd never forgive himself if she was lost, prey to who-knew-what, just because he'd chased her away. Sunk deep in his thoughts he almost missed the clothes draped over the bushes, but when he spotted them his heart leapt into his mouth. What did it mean? Had his Hermione been accosted by the likes of that Blue fellow? Wait a moment, when did she become *his* Hermione? Oh, no time for foolish questions; he had to find her and quickly.

Hermione opened her eyes as a shadow fell across her. Suddenly aware how underdressed she was if this was the Wolf come back for her she struggled to get up, only to find herself engulfed in a pair of strong arms and a meringue of a dress.

"Severus! I was just getting some sun while I waited for my clothes to dry then I was going to come and find you. Listen, I'm sorry about earlier, I--" Severus cut her off.

"Do you realise how worried I was? Anything could have happened to you. I thought you'd been assaulted by that pervert 'Big Boy' Blue or something." Seeing the unspoken question cross her face he gave her a brief description of his run in with Blue, until he noticed a twinkle in her eye. He held her at arms length and shook her gently.

"So you think it funny to be kissed by someone who disgusts you, do you? Well, let's see how *you* like it."

Severus leaned in to take Hermione's mouth firmly with a kiss, raw and strong and filled with relief that she was safe and well. Breaking away he waited for her to react.

When she failed to pull away, no doubt in shock at his presumption, he pulled her close again, pushing his tongue into her slightly parted mouth as his skirt rose up and covered them. After a few minutes he stopped to catch his breath and make sure she'd learned her lesson.

"Well, Hermione, what do you have to say now?" She quirked an eyebrow as she looked up at their impromptu parasol.

"I say it's about time we got rid of this bloody crinoline"

Severus sighed in relief as her nimble fingers found the fastenings, and he was finally able to lose the dress. It was quite heavy and cumbersome regardless of any other issues he had with it. He noticed Hermione was looking at him as he stood there naked to the waist and only the ridiculously frilled draws preserving his decency, if not his dignity. Only then did he realise that she was if anything more exposed, only a few scraps of satin and lace covering her most feminine charms.

"Perhaps it might be best if we check on the condition of the rest of *your* clothes."

Severus shifted uncomfortably as his natural reaction to this desirable and near naked woman tried to manifest itself. Instead of heeding his advice, she tapped her chin with a finger and ran a critical eye over him.

"You know, there's nothing wrong with your body that a little sun now and again wouldn't fix. Not much, just enough to boost your vitamin D levels. It can do wonders to improve your mood, too." Just as he was going to make a sharp comment about keeping her advice to herself, he felt Hermione's hand running up his arm.

"You have very good muscle tone, and you're not too thin, either." The hand brushed across his shoulders before trailing down and across his firm stomach. Severus bit hard into his tongue, willing his body into quiescence.

"I wonder how the rest of you compares?" Hermione tugged at the ribbon holding his draws up, and he batted her hand away.

"Don't play with me, Hermione. I'm not a child and neither are you. There are consequences to this type of game between adults."

Hermione looked him in the eye. His dark, near black eyes said more to her than the man could speak out loud. She knelt before him, loosened his boots and slipped them from his feet. She stood and pulled the ribbon from his head before curling an arm around his neck, pulling him forward until he felt her lips brush against his ear.

"You're the one who started this game, and in case you haven't figured it out, Severus, I find you far from disgusting." Hermione's whisper sent shivers down his spine, and he lost himself in her sweet kiss.

Happily Ever After?

Chapter 8 of 8

Very loosely based on Ladyofthemasque's 'Lost in a Book' challenge. Severus and Hermione have problems with a book in the Restricted Section. Will they ever get together and get home? Brief appearances by a number of HP characters, and a suggestion of slash. Rating for safety, nothing too graphic

Hermione lay back on the soft mossy bank with a huge grin on her face. Who would have thought Severus Snape had it in him? '*Come to that, yesterday I wouldn't have imagined I'd have that in me.*' She giggled at the thought, then sighed. She hadn't realised just how sensitive some spots on her arms and legs were, but Severus had spent time finding them to her unexpected pleasure. Not that he'd ignored the more usual pleasure points, either. She opened her eyes to see him gazing down on her face.

"I suppose that's something I'm going to have to get used to." Hermione raised her eyebrows in query. "Oh, not *this*," he said drawing a finger down her naked flesh, "I meant your laughter. You'll have to be patient; it will take a while for me to be comfortable with the idea that you laugh *because* of me, not *at* me." Hermione reached up and tucked his hair behind his ears so she could see his face.

"Don't worry, Severus. We have all the time in the world" He quickly looked away.

"A promise like that I would be glad to hear, once we are in the *real* world again, but I won't keep you to anything you say while we are stuck here together, Hermione." He sat up and looked across the meadow.

"I've remembered how to get out. It is a case of letting the story unfold to its conclusion, at which point the enchantment ends too, but I'm at a complete loss as to how that applies to the situation we are in." He got up and fetched her clothes. Throwing him the t shirt, she was about to pull on her fleece when a thought came to her. The rhyme was the reason they were here, but what exactly was the last verse?

Suddenly it came to her, and she looked down at her fleece with mixed feelings. If she was right, then it would only be a matter of moments before they would be back at Hogwarts. Could she convince Severus that what they had shared here was worth pursuing in real life? She watched him bend over to pick up his shoes, and the sight of his naked arse was all the encouragement she needed.

"Severus, help me with this will you?" He held out her jacket for her to put on, then smiled as he turned her and carefully did up the buttons. As she felt him slip the last one into place Hermione just had enough time to reach up and kiss him before the world went dark.

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Madam Pince had returned from Hogsmeade in a very merry mood, which she lost rapidly when she found the Library still unlocked and lit. Sweeping through the stacks her annoyance evaporated as she came across both Professor Snape and Miss Granger unconscious on the floor. She Floo'd Madam Pomfrey for assistance, but by the time the two witches made their way to the stricken pair there had been a change in their condition.

Madam Pomfrey stood to one side and cast diagnostic spells *just in case*, but apart from a few bumps, bruises and a little oxygen deprivation the oblivious couple that were rolling round the floor with their lips locked were fine. Nudging Irma, Poppy made a motion of tipping a glass and indicated the hearth. The librarian nodded, casting a locking spell on the doors before stepping through after her friend.

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A/N Here's where I spread the blame >:-) Ladyofthemasque set the 'Lost in a Book' challenge (details at the end of ch. 1). Liz Ayres (who was very pregnant at the time so can't be held responsible) and tubbles14 (who has no excuse) put forward the idea of Severus in a particular kids book over on the MoTWF group, which let loose the

rabid plot bunny.

The peanut shells are from Terry Pratchett's Wizard Librarian, courtesy of L-Space (Ook!).

The idea of Remus as a Tex Avery style Wolf, complete with zoot suit (which inspired Wolf's appearance), the Slytherin/Goldilocks and a whole bunch of really 'good' ideas involving things like the seven Warwick Davis's plus Sirius White (which I didn't include but may or may not expand on some time in the very near future) are from my husband, who also did a little light beta work, child wrangling and food/drink fetching for me.

The version of Little Bo Peep I used:

Little Bo peep has lost her sheep

And doesn't know where to find them.

Leave them alone and they'll come home,

Bringing their tails behind them.

Little Bo peep fell fast asleep

And dreamt she heard them bleating,

But when she awoke, she found it a joke,

For they were all still fleeing.

Then up she took her little crook

Determined for to find them.

She found them indeed, but it made her heart bleed,

For they left their tails behind them.

It happened one day, as Bo peep did stray

Into a meadow hard by,

There she espied their tails side by side

All hung on a tree to dry.

She heaved a sigh, and wiped her eye,

And over the hillocks went rambling,

And tried what she could,

As a shepherdess should,

To tack again each to its lambkin.

This whole thing has been written just so I can imagine Severus in frilly knickers.