

Dreamlover

by BrenaMarie

Hermione's visit to a fortune teller has interesting results.

One Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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"Dreamlover come rescue me

Take me up, take me down

Take me anywhere you want to baby now

I need you so desperately

Won't you please come around

'Cause I want to share forever with you baby."

- "Dreamlover" by Mariah Carey

Hermione Granger and her best friend, Ginny Potter, were walking along the Promenade in Whitley Bay with the beautiful summer breeze blowing their hair as it came off the water. The conversation shared by the two friends had mainly been mundane until Ginny asked the inevitable.

"So, what's really bothering you?"

"I just don't know what to do, Ginny. I'm so alone, and I'm not getting any younger. It's so hard for me not to feel that pang of jealousy when I see you with Harry or any of my other friends who are part of a couple," Hermione replied sadly.

"I know, sweetie. You need to see it just wasn't your time yet, like it was for us. There has been so much you wanted to do and accomplish with your life. It would have been so distracting for you if you had been in a relationship with someone at the same time as everything else you were doing. You would have ended up alienating the guy..."

"You're right... but I'm ready now!"

"Has anyone ever told you that you're incredibly impatient?"

"I may have heard it once or twice..." Hermione giggled and wrapped her arm around Ginny's shoulders. "Seriously though, Gin, I don't know where to start. It's not like there are any viable prospects at the school."

Ginny was looking up and down the row of storefronts, then started to smile.

"There's your answer, Hermione!" Ginny exclaimed as she pointed to a very small sign that read: **Fortune Teller, Palm Readings and Psychic Advisor. Walk-In's Welcome.**

"You've got to be kidding."

"Listen, you're taking this whole situation way too seriously. Why don't we have some fun with it the Muggle way? Who knows, you might get some ideas regardless."

"I don't know, Ginny. They're all fakes anyway. I would rather not waste the money."

"Bloody hell, Hermione! I'll pay for it! Let's go see what your fortune is."

Ginny didn't even give Hermione the opportunity to protest again. She simply grabbed her hand and started to pull her towards the fortune teller's door.

As Hermione lay in bed that night, she began recalling the strange meeting with Cassima, the fortune teller.

After Ginny made all the arrangements and paid the requisite amount for Cassima's time, Hermione was led to a room with a curtained door. Feeling extremely awkward, Hermione sat down in a comfortable looking armchair. She found an identical chair across from her with a small wooden table positioned between them. She also found the typical crystal ball located in the center of the table.

Cassima sat down in the other armchair, and Hermione finally found herself taking in the appearance of her soon-to-be fortune teller. The woman appeared to be in her early to mid-thirties with long, dark hair that cascaded around her shoulders in gentle waves. She wore many bracelets which jingled together constantly and large hoop earrings in each ear. When Hermione looked in her eyes, she found them to be a very calm light-blue color. Everything about the woman was extreme, except for her eyes, which had the ability to seep out some of the anxiety that she was feeling at the moment.

"So, what is troubling you, my dear? How can Cassima help you today?"

'In for a Knut, in for a Galleon...' Hermione thought to herself and heaved a huge sigh as she placed her interlocked hands on the table and leaned towards the crystal ball.

"You see... I'm lonely and beginning to fear I missed my chance at having a spouse, or even any kind of meaningful relationship, due to my focus on my career pursuits."

"Ooooh, I love these types of problems. I have just the thing for you, dearie."

Skeptically, Hermione glared at the woman sitting across from her and replied, "Okay..."

"This is what we're going to need to do. First you're going to need to relax. Let's make the room a little more comfortable."

Instantly, the lights in the room began to dim, and Hermione heard the quiet strums of a guitar emanating from the corner of the room.

"Now, Hermione, I'm going to need you to close your eyes and think about what qualities you'd need in your soulmate."

"Well, I'd..."

"You don't have to tell me, dear. Just close your eyes and think about him, your mystery man. He's out there, and I'm going to help you find him."

"I don't see how..."

"Hermione, please, just concentrate."

Hermione heard Cassima breathing and the possible rustling of her dress sleeves, but other than that, she couldn't hear a single word. In that moment, though, Hermione could feel something happening. Whether it was wishful thinking or not, something about this woman was changing her, and this feeling brought her a tiny sliver of hope.

"Hermione," Cassima said softly.

A quiet humming noise was the only response Hermione gave.

Cassima reached out and touched Hermione's hand.

"Sweetheart, it's time to open your eyes."

"Huh, what? Oh... well, then... ummm, do you need me to tell you what I could see or something?"

"No, dear, I'm going to give you a few instructions, and then you'll be on your way."

"All right then..."

"From this night forward, you will dream of your soulmate. He will have all the qualities you were just thinking of and more. Your heart's desire has been revealed, and you will call to him in your dreams. Every night the bond between the two of you will become stronger, until you finally come into contact with each other, and you'll know he is the one."

"It's that easy? Why didn't I think of that before? Just dream of him, and he will be known to me?" Hermione replied with a small amount of sarcasm returning to her tone. 'How silly is this? I can't believe I actually thought something was happening there for a second. Oh, whatever, it was nice thinking about this dream lover though.'

"You may not believe me now, Hermione. In a few days, you'll wish you had. Now, get going. Your friend is waiting for you."

"I'm sorry, Cassima. I didn't mean to insult you..."

"Don't worry about it, dear, I'm well acquainted with the art of sarcasm. Just let me know how this all works out for you, yes?"

"Sure, no problem."

Hermione gave Cassima a small smile, thanked her for her time, and left the shop, explaining to Ginny exactly what had transpired.

Hermione shook her head slightly as she snuggled down into her bed.

I can't believe I'm actually hoping this works...

With that thought, she drifted off to sleep...

Hermione found herself sitting at her vanity, brushing her hair. She looked down at her attire and thought, *I guess I'm getting ready for bed, since I'm wearing my bathrobe...*

While dragging the brush through her long curly locks, she felt a presence behind her, but when she looked into the mirror, all she could see was a shadowy figure, and her heart started to race.

"Shhhh, I'm not here to hurt you..." a masculine voice she couldn't place said from behind her.

She felt a hand reach out and stroke her cheek and couldn't help nuzzling the hand in response. Then the hand moved away from her face only to bury itself in her hair as talented fingers massaged her scalp. Any tension she may have been feeling began to leach away.

While his right hand was working magic on her scalp, his left hand reached around her and began to loosen the belt of her robe. As he slipped his hand in the opening of her robe to touch her soft skin, he leaned down and started to kiss her neck.

I haven't felt this good in ages. I don't think I've felt this good ever, come to think of it... Too bad this is only a dream... I might as well enjoy it.

The hand inside her robe lightly touched her right breast and grazed over her pebbled nipple. It didn't linger there too long before it traveled down to coax her legs apart and expose herself to his explorations.

His mouth strayed from her neck to nibble on the lobe of her ear, and the hand that was buried in her hair moved from massaging her scalp to caressing her breasts. Then she felt his talented fingers gently sliding between the damp folds of her sex.

"Look in the mirror, Hermione," he whispered in her ear.

"Look at what I make you feel."

Hermione gazed at her reflection, at how wantonly exposed she was to this dream lover of hers.

"Oh... I... I can't... please..."

"Please what?" he taunted her as he began to rub her clitoris just a little faster.

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

"Are you going to climax for me, sweet one? Let me hear it. Let me hear what I do to you."

With those final whispered words, Hermione experienced the most powerful orgasm she'd ever had. Her heavy breathing and very loud moans were the background noise to his parting words.

"You are mine now, Hermione. I have come for you, and we will be together, always."

While recovering from her orgasm, Hermione squinted into the mirror, trying to discern who the mystery man could be.

"But I don't even know who you are..."

"You know me. One day, when the time is right, you will touch my hand and know my identity."

Warm in her bed, Hermione Granger woke up, only to smile, heave a contented sigh of relief, then roll over and fall back to sleep again.

Many floors below her, in the dungeons of Hogwarts castle, Severus Snape woke up to find his hand wrapped around his flaccid penis and a sticky mess in his hand.

"Bloody hell..."

Hermione woke to find the bright summer sun streaming into her quarters and her best friend bellowing her name from the fireplace.

"Hermione! Damn, woman, wake up!"

"Ugh, she couldn't wait until after breakfast?" she groaned.

Only to cease Ginny's hollering, Hermione decided to get out of bed, throw her robe on, and make her way out to the living room.

"Good morning to you too, Gin."

"Did it work?"

"You aren't going to believe this..."

Ginny squealed with delight and said, "Get dressed. I'll be right there. You've got to tell me all about it!"

Hermione blushed, but before she could respond, Ginny's head had disappeared from the fireplace.

"And that's all he said, that you already know him and that if you touch his hand, you'll know it's him?"

"Those were the only clues I can remember."

"So, are you going to go around touching random men?"

"Now, you're just being silly. Honestly, this is very exciting, and I think I'm just going to enjoy the mystery of it for a while. I've waited this long for him. Just knowing that I have a soulmate, and that he even exists, is a huge relief."

"I can't believe you're going to make me wait like this."

"You! This is my future, Gin!"

Ginny simply smiled and shook her head.

"Fine, have it your way. But eventually the suspense is going to be too much for you, and then you'll be coming to me with all the clues you've got, just for me to help you

figure out who this man is..."

The two women shared a bit of laughter at the situation and then parted ways for Hermione to start her day.

Lunchtime found all the current staff members of Hogwarts gathered in the staff room for a pre-start-of-term meeting. The Headmistress wanted to introduce the new additions to the staff and discuss a few new changes to the curriculum handed down by the governors.

"So, after many years of study and private research, I'm proud to introduce our new Arithmancy professor, Hermione Granger."

Hermione stood up and gave a small wave and smile to her new colleagues. She looked around at the collection of familiar and unfamiliar smiling faces and realized that at the far end of the table, there was one face that was scowling and not clapping at all.

Great! Just wonderful. It's been fifteen years since I was a student, and he's still going to be the same snarky-pants towards me as he was when I was a student. This is just what I wanted...

"Severus, is there a problem?"

"You know me, Minerva, always happy to welcome a new staff member," he replied coolly.

Hermione stared at the Potions master.

You know me... Could it... No way! I'm losing my mind. I've got to tell Ginny to back off! I'm going to start thinking any available man is my mystery man.

"Fine then, moving on to the next order of business..."

I can't believe she's here! I have one of the most erotic wet dreams of my life about her, of all people, and now she's teaching here! What the hell am I going to do? Maybe it was just a one-off. Maybe I simply needed to have an orgasm, and she just so happened to be the one my brain decided to put in that position... Damn it all to hell.

Severus Snape continued his inner rant while storming around his quarters, desperately trying to figure out what could have caused the amazing dream that he'd had the night before.

I never have wet dreams anymore! Those foolish things are meant for hormonal, dunderheaded students who don't have a clue what self-control is! I have self-control! I know what is real and what is fantasy! And I sure as hell shouldn't be wanking off to the images of an orgasmic Hermione-bloody-Granger in my sleep!

"I'll just have to avoid her for a while. I don't need to give my over-active brain any more cannon-fodder."

While getting ready for a good night's rest after a busy day, Ginny decided to drop her head into Hermione's fireplace once again.

"Are you looking forward to falling asleep?" she called to Hermione from the living room.

I can't believe her!

"You are incorrigible, Ginny Potter!" Hermione called back from her bedroom.

Hermione could hear Ginny's signature laugh, which was then followed by a very suggestive, "Sweet dreams!"

She is such a riot! Well, I might as well get on with it. I wonder what it'll be tonight...

Hermione fell asleep on her stomach with her arms wrapped around her pillows, and this was the exact position her dream lover found her in.

She opened her eyes to be greeted by the pitch-black of her bedroom.

Oh, that's a shame. I was really hoping to have another encounter with my mystery man....

That was when she realized she wasn't alone in her bed. He was lying beside her, but her back was to him, and when she attempted to roll over to face him, he placed his hand on her shoulder to cease her movement.

"Oh, no you don't. You stay lying there just like that," he said quietly as he started running his hand along her bare back.

"You have the softest skin, Hermione. I could simply touch you like this for hours."

She let out a small whimper in response.

"Alas, I'm not here to just touch your beautiful skin. I need to continue to make my presence irresistible to you. I need you to know that what we have here in this dream world can be reality when you finally come to know my identity."

"It feels so real."

"It does, doesn't it? The way my hand feels traveling down your spine to cup the curve of your perfect buttocks." He did exactly what he was describing to her while placing interspersed light kisses along her neck and shoulder again.

"I know this is only our second night together, Hermione, and I'm sure this whole process is supposed to take a lot longer. I simply can't wait another minute to make you mine." As he was speaking, he shifted his already naked body so that he was straddling her legs.

He wants to have sex with me, right now. We're going to... and I don't even know who he is!

As she was lying there on her stomach, completely still, waiting for what this man was going to do next, she tried to relax and not be too anxious.

She could feel him lean over and place both of his hands on her shoulders, and he gently began to massage her skin. Then he continued rubbing her upper back, then lower back, relaxing her. By the time he worked his way down to her rear-end again, she knew she was already incredibly wet and ready for him.

"I want to make love to you now, sweet one. I'm going to make you mine in this realm, and then I will have no choice but to come to you in our waking hours."

Oh... oh, Merlin, he's so matter-of-fact, and it's so unbelievably sexy!

Hermione felt his hands wrap around her hips, and with a small amount of pressure, he began to pull her up from the prone position she was in on the bed.

"Just like that, Hermione. I'm going to take you just like that."

Before she knew it, she found herself on all fours and could feel him sliding his cock through her slick folds.

"Oh, yes, you're ready for me, aren't you? I want to hear your pleasure in my actions, Hermione. I want the sounds of your orgasm to be ringing in my ears when I wake up. Do you understand?"

"Yes!" she practically shouted at the man due to her impatience.

As soon as she vocalized her response, he pulled her body down onto his swollen cock.

"Oh, yes!"

"You love the feeling of being filled by me, don't you?" He answered her cry with a few slow strokes inside of her.

"Yes!"

If he keeps talking like that, I'm really not going to last very long.

"I've waited so long for you, Hermione," he said as he reached around to find her pleasure spot.

"Right there, oh, yes! Don't stop... please don't stop."

"That's it, sweet one, tell me how you love it. Tell me how you need me."

He was relentless in his movements, pushing and pulling his rock-solid cock in and out of her while rubbing her clitoris.

"I love the way you make me feel. I've never felt like this before..." She managed to answer his demand in between nonsensical moans.

I'm going to explode.

"I need to feel you come apart for me, Hermione. I need to know how it feels to have you quivering around me."

With that sentence from his lips, Hermione let go of all the pent up pleasure she had been holding onto.

"You. Are. Mine." His voice was commanding as he began to move inside of her frantically.

"I'm yours. I swear, I'm yours," she answered in the throes of passion.

The sounds of his release felt like music to her ears.

Following her dream lover's orgasm, their two bodies fell forward onto the bed. Only one landed there though, and Hermione found herself alone once more.

Alone in his bed, Severus Snape awoke to another mess.

"You've got to be kidding me. Again?" he muttered to himself while reaching for his wand from his bedside table.

"Evanesco!"

There has got to be another reason that this is happening now. I am not going to spend another morning cleaning up ejaculate from dreaming of that woman!

So, with that thought, Severus got out of bed to investigate possible causes for his night-time escapades.

The next morning, Hermione decided to beat Ginny to the punch and Floo-called the Potters' quarters after she had taken care of her morning routine.

"Ginny, are you there?"

"Of course I'm here, woman! What took you so long?"

"Never mind that. Is Harry around?"

"No, he's out on the Quidditch pitch with Ron. I told him he should be working on his lesson plans, but of course the opportunity to fly took precedence."

"Great, I'm just going to come through then."

Hermione arrived in Harry and Ginny's quarters in no time, and Ginny already had breakfast waiting for them.

"Oh, thank Merlin you thought of that. I'm so wound up, I surely would have forgotten to eat."

"Right then, spill it! What happened?"

"It was amazing..."

In no time, Ginny had all the details of the very intimate experience Hermione had had with her dream lover the previous night.

"Wow."

"Yeah."

"So, who is it?"

"I still don't know, Gin."

"What do you mean you don't know? You had sex with the man! Can't you remember anything?"

"It was dark, and he was behind me. I didn't even touch him!"

"It sounds like he was touching you plenty though."

"Ha, ha, very funny."

"No, seriously, Hermione, what did his hands feel like? Were they big or small? Were they rough or smooth?"

"I... I can't remember... All the details that could give any hint as to his identity are foggy."

"What about his voice? He was certainly talking enough..."

"His voice is like an itch I can't scratch. When I'm dreaming, I think I recognize him. When I wake up, I can't place it at all."

"Well, it sounds like whoever he is, he at least knows what's going on. Hopefully it won't take him too long to find you!"

"I know! After last night, I really want the real thing. I want to know whose name I should be calling out!"

Severus spent the entire day searching his private library, then made his way to the Restricted Section of the library in search of any type of love-spell or potion that would cause his symptoms.

"I can't find a single thing that matches what is happening exactly!" he growled while slamming yet another tome shut.

Why am I having these dreams about someone as insufferable as her? I can't understand why they are so vivid. I wonder if she's truly that amazing in reality... It's not like I'd even have a chance at finding out, though... Even if I could convince her to simply have dinner with me, would we even be able to get along? What if she's still the same knowledge-spouting bookworm that I remember? Is that why I'm suddenly dreaming about her? Has my subconscious decided that it's time for a companion who has a habit of reading as much as I do? None of my books can help me now, though. There's nothing for it then. I'm just going to have to confront the source.

While taking an evening stroll around the castle, Minerva McGonagall passed by what appeared to be a furious Professor Snape.

"Severus, what's wrong? Where are you off to at this hour?"

"I need to speak to Miss Granger, Minerva. It is of great importance."

"That's Professor Granger now, Severus. Really, man, it's almost midnight! Can't it wait until morning?"

"I daresay it can't," he responded curtly as he continued down the hallway in search of the Arithmancy professor's quarters.

Hermione was sitting at her vanity, brushing her hair when she heard a loud banging coming from the door of her quarters.

It's almost midnight! I hope everyone is okay...

.

When she opened the door, she found a furious Potions master glaring back at her.

Mildly shocked at his presence on her doorstep at this hour, she stammered, "Um... good evening, Professor Snape... how can I help you?"

"How can you help me? You can start by telling me what the bloody hell you've done to me?"

"What I've done to you? I've only been in the castle for three days, and I've only seen you once! How could I have done anything to you?"

"Don't lie to me!"

"Professor, it's almost midnight, and I honestly have no idea what you're on about. Maybe we can discuss this in the morning..."

"No, we're going to handle this right now. I'm not going to sleep one more minute until I know what you've done."

"I'm going to go and Floo the Headmistress. Maybe she'll be able to help us sort this misunderstanding out..."

Hermione started to turn away from the open door, but Severus reached out and grabbed her hand to stop her.

In that one simple action, he got the answer he had come to her for. Ultimately, she also received the answer to a completely different question.

They both stood there staring at each other and then looking down at their touching hands.

"It's you..." she said in quiet shock.

"You're certain you didn't do this?"

"No... I... well, you see... Ginny and I... and there was this fortune teller..."

Severus groaned at her answer. "Fortune teller..."

"Yes, there was this fortune teller in Whitley Bay and..."

"Don't tell me, she went by the name of Cassima."

"Well, yes... and... wait, how did you know that?"

"I need to go."

"Wait, please don't go. I'm sorry..."

"Hermione, don't. I'll be back. We can talk about this later."

Severus released his hold on her hand, turned around, and headed back the way he had come. There was a completely different witch in the castle that he needed to get answers from.

Instead of traipsing all over the castle, Severus decided to cast the locator spell and found his quarry up at the top of the Astronomy tower.

"Minerva."

"Severus, have you come to tell me why you needed to see Professor Granger in the middle of the night?"

"Indeed."

"What is on your mind?"

"I'd like to know what you did to Hermione."

"So, it's you, is it?"

"Minerva, please, just answer the question."

Minerva stared out across the darkened grounds of Hogwarts and thought about how beautiful it looked underneath the starry sky.

"He loved the view from up here, you know," she said with just a trace of sadness in her voice.

"Yes, I know. He and I shared many a discussion up here."

"He always wanted you to be happy. I know he never had the opportunity to tell you since he was always too busy using everyone as pawns in his war games. But, every once in a while, he would have a moment of clarity and tell me that you deserved happiness."

"Please, Minerva, what did you do? I know it was you because Albus told me of your summer escapades. I know you must have done something to her, and in some way I am now involved," Severus snapped out angrily.

"It was a spell, Severus. I guess you could call it a soulmate locator."

"So, this spell doesn't simply manufacture feelings that will ultimately diminish?"

"No, Severus, that is not the spell's intent. Hermione Granger is your soulmate."

Severus walked over to stand next to Minerva and joined her in appreciating the view.

"How did you find it?"

"Albus kept a small collection of ancient texts. When I mentioned to his portrait how upset she'd been over being alone, he told me where to look. Honestly, Severus, it's not a vicious spell, I promise you. You can walk away from this if you truly don't have any interest in pursuing a relationship with her."

He only nodded in response, then asked, "How did you get her to Whitley Bay?"

"Genevra."

"Of course."

"It was simple, really. It's all over her face all the time how much she regretted focusing on her schooling while all her friends were pairing off and getting married. She truly thought the opportunity for her to have that kind of connection had passed her by..."

After a few moments of silence, Minerva continued.

"How do you feel about this, Severus?"

"Honestly, confused. Maybe relieved in a small way also."

"Relieved?"

"Hermione Granger isn't the only person who thought that the opportunity for true companionship had escaped her."

"So, you're going to make an honest attempt then?"

"I... will."

"Good luck, Severus. I wish you both the best."

Severus stood there a few moments more before deciding he should return to Hermione's quarters.

Hermione couldn't imagine trying to go to sleep now. Not after finding out who her dream lover really was.

I guess it makes sense. I'm sure he never would have looked at me that way if it wasn't for an outside influence. I can't believe I'm thinking this, but I hope he meant what he said in the dreams. It felt so good being with him, so right. I need to know what is going on! How did he know of Cassima? What did she do to me? Is she really a witch? I hope he comes back soon. Hell, I hope he comes back at all... He said we would talk about it...

Hermione continued to fret over this situation for over an hour until there was a knock at her door for the second time that night. She practically ran across the room to open it.

The words were already out of her mouth before she could even look at him.

"What is going on?"

"Hermione, I think you should sit down. May I come in?"

Hermione quickly regained her manners and held the door wide open for Severus to enter. She then showed him to her living area and waited for him to seat himself first.

Well, he sat on the couch. I guess it would be okay if I sat next to him...

After they were both comfortably sitting, Severus turned to Hermione and began to relay the contents of the conversation he'd just had with Minerva...

"So, Cassima is Minerva then..."

"Yes."

"And she cast an ancient soulmate locator spell on me nonverbally, simply because she knows that I've been unhappy."

"That is what I said, yes."

Hermione shot Severus a dirty look for his sarcasm.

Seriously, the man could be a little more patient with me.

"So, it's real then?"

"Yes, it's real. Apparently, I am indeed your soulmate."

"Thank Merlin!" she exclaimed.

Hermione took that opportunity to launch to the other side of the couch and wrap her arms around him.

"You're happy about this?" he said as he pulled away from her slightly to look into her eyes.

"Of course I am. You were there, weren't you? You said those things... You made me feel... that way... The whole experience was amazing, and it was you."

"I... well... yes, I was there. I remember everything about both dreams. I just thought you'd be not only embarrassed, but afraid."

"Severus Snape, I'm thirty-two years old! It takes a lot more than a scowling Potions master to scare me."

"Well then, now that we've got that settled... What should we do now?"

Hermione took a moment to determine the best course of action.

Well, we've already kind of had sex anyway, and if he's convinced we're meant to be... Oh, why not? It wouldn't hurt to ask...

Hermione wrapped a hand around his neck and began to gently pull his face towards hers. "I'd like to finally share a kiss with my soulmate, if that's okay with you?"

"That is perfectly fine with me," he answered her with a small smile before their lips met for the first time.

In that moment Hermione shared the most passionate of kisses with the most unlikely of men.

"Would you... like to come to bed?" she asked breathily after they pulled apart.

"I... yes... but... Hermione, I don't want us to rush into this."

"I understand..."

"It's not that I don't want to, I do. It's just, now that we've found each other, I'd like to just take our time. I'm sure we'll get to the bedroom soon enough."

Okay, I know he's not turning me down because he doesn't want me. I just need to find some scrap of patience somewhere and just enjoy getting to know the man.

"I'll come by tomorrow afternoon then, if you don't have plans. We can have lunch?"

"Sure, that sounds great..."

"What is it, Hermione?"

"I was just wondering... No, it's silly."

"What? Please tell me."

"I was wondering if the dream connection will still work now that we know each other?"

Severus chuckled at her question, leaned over, and kissed her forehead. "You're adorable, you know that?"

Hermione looked at him, stunned at his statement.

"Did you just call me adorable?"

"I did. And now I will take my leave. Good night, Hermione."

He kissed her once more, softly on the lips, and stood up.

A few hours later, Severus and Hermione found out that as long as they weren't together physically, the dream connection did indeed still work.

Hermione had just completed writing Minerva McGonagall's name on the outside of a large parchment envelope when she realized what she was actually doing.

I'm dreaming about writing out Christmas cards? This is surely a switch... It's only August, what am I doing?

She stared down at the stacks of envelopes strewn across her kitchen table and started shaking her head.

I know I like to be prepared, but this is just ridiculous.

"Jumping the gun, don't you think?" Severus whispered in her ear.

Hermione shrieked and jumped up out of her chair.

"You're here!"

"Apparently."

She took in his dream-state apparel, and then she looked down at herself.

How cliché, we're in matching silk pajamas. I don't think I even own anything remotely similar to this... Oh, well, it is a dream after all.

"You look comfortable," Hermione said with the hint of a laugh.

"I could say the same to you," Severus responded with a small smirk.

"It's strange knowing just last night I had been dreaming about you, and you were naked. Now, you're... well... I don't know what I'm talking about."

"Come here," Severus said as he held his arms open to her.

Hermione crossed the few paces that separated them until she was enveloped in his strong embrace.

"This feels so good," she said quietly.

"Yes, it does," he responded as he began to stroke her hair while he held her tightly against his chest.

"Since we're dreaming, would you like to come to bed now?"

Severus gave a rich, hearty chuckle at her very blunt question.

"What?" Hermione asked, slightly hurt.

"I find it highly amusing that ever since you found out that I'm your dream lover, all you've wanted to do is get me into bed, whether we're awake or asleep."

"Oh, well... yes. Ummm... You see, last night... You really blew my mind. I've never felt that good, ever. I think the feeling is habit-forming. I might be addicted to your attentions."

"In that case, who am I to stand in the way of your fix?"

Hermione looked up and into his bottomless, onyx eyes and blushed.

"Seriously? No, don't answer that. You don't get to change your mind," she quickly said as she turned, grabbed his hand, and began dragging him off to her bedroom.

A few hours later, Hermione woke up naked in bed.

Since I didn't fall asleep naked, I must still be dreaming... I wonder if Severus woke up for real?

Then she noticed a shadow moving around in the living area of her dream quarters. She looked around the bed and couldn't find a robe to put on, so she decided to simply stroll out there naked.

Hermione found Severus leaning over her kitchen table, sifting through the stacks of envelopes she had been filling out when she emerged in this dream realm.

"Looking at my Christmas card list?"

Hermione watched as he turned his head and proceeded to stare at her bare body.

"You're beautiful. Have I mentioned that before?"

"I believe so, but I will never tire of hearing it from you."

"Do you seriously think we'll be able to sustain a true relationship when we are awake, Hermione?"

"I don't see why not, Severus. Are you already having second thoughts?"

"No! Nothing like that. It's just... this." Severus waved his hand over the envelopes on the table.

Hermione walked over to inspect what could be affecting him so much. She picked up a loose sheet of parchment with writing on it. Even though it appeared to be a list of her closest friends and family, which would make perfect sense, it was the heading of the list that caused her to gasp.

"Severus, I'm sorry! I didn't, I'm not trying to... damn my over-active imagination!"

"Hermione, shhhh... I'm not angry. A little perplexed, but not angry at all."

She heaved a great sigh of relief as he wrapped her in his embrace once more.

"This is something for us to work towards. Especially since I know how committed you are to making this relationship work."

Hermione nodded her head against his chest as she continued to relish the feeling of being in his embrace.

"I really should thank Minerva tomorrow," she finally said to break the comfortable silence that was stretching between them.

"I think I might join you. I'd like to have a word or two with a certain portrait in her office... Come, let's return to bed."

Hermione flashed him a brilliant smile as he turned her in the direction of her open bedroom door. She felt him wrap an arm around her waist. As they began to walk away, she glanced down at the parchments on the table once more. She could only smile as she read the list title again.

Guest List:

Our Wedding October 23rd

A/N: I'd like to give huge hugs, love and snuggles to *debjunk* for being the awesome source of support she's been for me. She beta'd this story, and it is because of her that we have the amazing end result that you have read here.

This was the first time I've ever written anything for a challenge and I have to admit I had a ton of fun. I also need to give shout out to *southern_witch_69* for all the work she put into this challenge and for the support she gave to me in submitting this. Thanks Southern, you rock!

Variety Challenge Prompt:

Dream Lover

a. When the lights go down, the dream lover comes for a visit. What the heck is really going on: Subconscious?

Magic? Nothing?