

A Masked Beginning

by Saturn

When Hermione attends the Ministry's Masquerade, she gets more than she bargained for when she encounters a charming masked stranger. Is she ready to reveal everything, or will she run from the risk?

dejunk & BrenaMarie

Chapter 1 of 3

When Hermione attends the Ministry's Masquerade, she gets more than she bargained for when she encounters a charming masked stranger. Is she ready to reveal everything, or will she run from the risk?





Hermione donned her mask before Apparating to the Ministry. Tonight was a very special night. After ten years in office, Kingsley Shacklebolt had decided to step down as Minister. In the ensuing campaign, Arthur Weasley had come out the winner by a landslide victory. Arthur had been sworn in earlier that day and had declared that his celebratory ball was to be a masquerade.

Hermione was truly excited for Arthur. He had worked hard to gain respect, and this was the culmination of all his hard work. The masquerade affair, however, was something she wasn't sure about. She was uneasy about mingling with people who could turn out to be anyone. She shrugged. That was the fun of it, she supposed.

One thing she was very impressed with was the masks that had been supplied with the invitations. They had been furnished by Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes. Hers was silver and covered her upper face, but left her mouth exposed. The amazing thing about the seemingly innocuous mask was that it was charmed to place a glamour over the wearer. The mask changed the wearer's hair, eye color and voice so no one would guess who the partygoer was. Hermione had laughed when she'd tried out her mask and her voice had sunk to a low, sultry timbre. Then there was her glamoured hair and blue eyes. She ran her fingers through the long, blonde, *straight* locks as she readied herself to leave. What she wouldn't give to have straight hair like that!

Might as well enjoy it while I can, she thought. She grabbed her purse and Disapparated away.

Hermione sipped her punch as she surveyed the room. She was actually enjoying herself. She'd been swept off her feet by a brown-haired gentleman who had danced with her several times. She had also enjoyed conversations with several people, not having an inkling of whom they were. She had to hand it to Arthur, he really knew how to throw a party. She popped a shrimp into her mouth before she felt a tap on her shoulder. She turned to see a portly gentleman smiling at her. She eyed his golden mask before returning his smile.

"Would you care to dance?" the man asked, holding out his hand.

She accepted it readily, wondering who this mystery man might be. "Of course," she replied shyly.

The man led her to the dance floor as Hermione tried to decipher who it could be under the glamour. Like all the other men, he was wearing a tuxedo, and his build could fit several people she knew. His hair was black and slicked back, and as he turned to pull her close, she saw that he too had blue eyes.

"I'll tell you who I am if you tell me who you are!" the man whispered into her ear.

She giggled. "That's not the rules, sir!"

He pulled her even closer, making Hermione feel a bit uncomfortable.

"Have it your way." His hand tightened on her back. Hermione could smell alcohol on his breath.

"Sir, would you mind not holding me so tight?" she asked.

"C'mon, it's just a dance. I like feeling you close."

Hermione tried to pull away, but unbelievably, his grasp tightened even more. "Please!" she gasped and struggled to extricate herself from her captor.

"How about a little kiss?" the man demanded as he pulled her head close to his.

"No!" she cried as she struggled to get away from him. Just as his hand had grasped her hair, she felt another hand firmly grasping her shoulder.

"Might I cut in?" a voice asked from behind her.

Her dancing partner sneered and pushed Hermione away, glowering behind her before stalking off. She sighed in relief while turning to see who her savior was. As she gazed upon the man, she had the distinct impression that she'd just put on a pair of Spectrespecs. The man standing before her had on a mask that changed color with every movement, and his hair was long and rainbow colored. It was securely tied behind him to try and lessen the effect. She couldn't help but giggle as she looked at him. He scowled back in reply.

"I'm sorry for laughing," Hermione exclaimed. "It's just..."

"Yes, I am aware of my appearance, thank you," came the snide remark.

Hermione grabbed the man's arm before he could stalk off. "Wait. I want to thank you for rescuing me."

A curt nod was her reply.

"Really, I'm indebted to you. Can I at least repay you with a dance?"

The man stood before her, his green eyes boring into hers. "All right," he said finally.

He held her to him, and they began to waltz. He didn't look at her, so she took the time to examine him. His body was lean and lank, and looked quite fine in his well-tailored tuxedo. She found herself wondering just whom this knight in shining armor actually was.

"Are you enjoying the ball?" she asked.

His eyes locked onto hers. "As much as any Ministry function can be enjoyed."

Hermione giggled. "It's had its ups and downs for me as well."

His eyes lowered and examined her person, taking in the black, floor-length ball gown she was wearing. "That is a lovely dress."

All of a sudden, she was thrilled that she had chosen this more form-fitting cut than the Cinderella-style, silver gown she'd been thinking of purchasing. This gown was far sexier, hugging her curves and showing off her assets without being inelegant.

"Thank you, sir," she responded with a smile.

She felt his grip on her waist tighten slightly when she looked up at his masked face, but she didn't want to say anything that might ruin the moment. There was something about this man that made her feel completely at ease.

"I'm so happy Arthur ended up winning this election..."

"Yes, I would have to agree with you. This governing body should work very well with the Headmaster of Hogwarts."

"I didn't even think of that! It will be wonderful for Headmaster Snape to have Arthur as Minister," she said with another smile.

"Do you know the Headmaster?" he asked curiously.

"Yes, I do... Without going into much detail as to the nature of our relationship, you could say we worked very closely together in the past."

"Really? And how did you feel about working with him? I've heard he can be very trying, to say the least."

"Honestly, I wish I could get to know the man a little better. He doesn't really let people in, if you know what I mean."

"I see."

"He's extremely intelligent. There are times I've thought about asking him about different projects I've worked on, but I end up passing up on that Floo call in fear of his response..."

"That's a shame, madam... Would you care to take a walk with me?"

Hermione considered the request and decided that she didn't want to be without his company for the remainder of the evening.

"I'd love to."

Hermione and her companion spent a few hours walking the different floors of the Ministry, which concluded with them walking into the Atrium. The large area was pleasantly silent aside from the trickling of water coming from the fountain located in the center. She looked up at the newly enchanted ceiling and admired how the moonlight reflected beautifully in the fountain's water.

Hermione's heels clacked against the polished wood floor as she walked over towards the magical fountain, her pseudo-date following her. She sat on the ledge and started to run her fingers through the water collecting in the basin.

"Something on your mind, madam?"

"I'm so happy Kingsley didn't restore the old statues when he took over as Minister."

"The Dark Lord created a mockery; Kingsley couldn't have left it that way."

"No, no, I meant the original Magical Brethren homage. I never liked it. This is far more appropriate and truly beautiful."

They both gazed at the golden phoenix statue that now occupied the center of the fountain. Water, which came from nowhere specifically, gently poured down its back and across its large wings that were spread out wide. Jet streams were also placed at different positions around the perimeter of the fountain so the water crisscrossed above the phoenix's head.

Her companion reached down and gently picked up her hand, urging her to stand in front of him.

He bent over and whispered, "Not as beautiful as you are."

Hermione couldn't help shivering in response to his sensual words.

"You... you know I don't look like this normally..." she stammered.

"And you think I do?"

"No! Of course not! It's just... I'm not..."

"Hush now," he said as he wrapped his arms around her and lowered his lips to hers.

His lips were gently moving against hers in the most romantic kiss she had ever received. She moved her arms around him in an effort to get closer to him. Wordlessly, he requested entrance to her mouth, and she responded in kind.

When he ended their kiss, he rested his forehead against hers.

"Wow..." she said breathily.

"Yes, I have to agree... Would you care to continue exploring this feeling?"

"I... I haven't ever done anything like this with a stranger..."

"I'm not a stranger. You've spent the last few hours talking to me; therefore, we are acquaintances."

Hermione giggled in response, then throwing caution to the wind said, "Why not?"

Before she could comprehend what was happening, he had grasped her hand and was leading her to a dark corner of the Atrium where he promptly began to ravish her lips once more.

She was losing herself to his kisses and melting in his embrace. She could feel his long fingers gently touching the skin of her exposed back. He slid his hands up her back and into her hair, pulling her even closer. Her hands began roaming over every inch of his tuxedo-clad torso, wishing for further contact with his skin. He removed his lips from her mouth momentarily, only to replace them on the hollow of her neck. There he began nibbling and kissing her skin. This created an explosion of desire within Hermione so strong she immediately reached down to rub the exceptionally large bulge of his trousers. He groaned in response to her bold move and began kissing her lips again enthusiastically. Just as he removed his right hand from her long locks and placed it on the silken fabric covering her left breast, the clock began to chime.

Hermione startled out of her lust-filled haze only to ask, "What time is it?"

Her date turned around to gaze upon the large clock hands hanging above the fireplaces. "It looks like midnight..."

"Oh, NO!" she screeched as she pulled out of his embrace and turned to leave.

Shocked, he said "What? Wait! Where are you going?" He managed to catch her wrist before she could escape.

"Don't you know about these masks?" she cried in a panic. "They dissolve at midnight! I can't... you wouldn't want to know..."

She managed to extricate herself from his grasp and started to tear across the atrium. She turned her head around to look at him as the chimes continued to herald the witching hour.

"Thank you for a wonderful evening, sir!" she called out to him.

When she spun back around, she stumbled and ended up losing one of her heels, but didn't stop and pick it up.

Standing in front of a fireplace, she cast Muffliato so he couldn't hear her destination, then tearfully called into the flames...

"Hermione Granger's Flat!"

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If you think Saturn rocks, please vote for us in the weekly poll. You can do so easily by clicking [here!](#)

A/n: Thanks to Southern_Witch_69 for the beta work!

Prompt Words used: affair, explosion, Spectrespecs and shrimp

Elizabeth & beawesley2

Chapter 2 of 3

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Severus compiled a list of spells and charms in his head as he picked up the lone shoe. This mystery woman...his Cinderella...had left her black heel in her rush to hide her identity. *Why had she been ashamed to show herself?*

He'd enjoyed their evening more than she knew. The conversation had been titillating, her kisses divine. Best of all, they knew each other in real life. *She'd said she would like to get to know the Headmaster better.*

Well, here he was trying to find her. If he'd told her whom he was, maybe she might have stayed. He really had to find her. He felt more than a sexual connection with her. It had been ages since he'd enjoyed someone else's company so much. He devised a plan.

Plan A: He approached the recently vacated fireplace and constructed a sort of re-dial spell, hoping that would put him through the last-called fireplace.

Pocketing her shoe, he cast the spell and Flooed away. A woman was sitting at her vanity, brushing her long, blonde hair.

"Is that you, love?" she asked without turning. Her voice wasn't the same sultry timber as before. *The mask must have lost its power.*

Severus leaned in to kiss her.

She screamed.

He jerked back, alarmed. "Forgive me, madam," he said, recognizing her as Astoria Greengrass.

The Floo activated behind him and Draco entered. "Get off my wife!" Draco demanded and then scowled. "Severus? What's going on?"

After an awkward explanation, Severus left feeling like a lamebrain.

With the spell reconfigured, he tried again. This time he landed in the Improper Use of Magic Office. They were not pleased with his illegal tampering of the Floo network.

Angrily, he returned home. *Scratch that idea.*

Plan B: In his office, Severus tried the Pensieve. He watched Cinderella noiselessly pronounce her destination, but the charm on the mask was dissipating, distorting her entire face. It took several viewings before he thought he understood. Hoping he was wrong, he barked out, "Bulstrode's London Flat."

Millicent Bulstrode sat reading a romance novel. "Professor?"

"I apologize for the late-night intrusion. But..." With great relief, he realized she was too large to be his enchantress. "Never mind." He quickly showed himself out. *Well, that was a bad idea.*

Plan C: The next morning, he convinced George Weasley to provide a list of witches who'd received blonde-haired glamour masks. Most of the women didn't fit Cinderella's criteria, and they were easily crossed off his list. A few remained:

Miranda Goshawk, author of the *Standard Book of Spells* series, had worked with him several years ago, improving her latest edition. But she was currently in hospital with an unspecified ailment.

Andromeda Tonks was listed. She reminded him too much of Bella, although, reasonably nicer... *Perhaps her?* He spurned the notion. *No, the shoe doesn't fit. Neither does her personality.*

Aurora Sinistra had held feelings for Severus for years. *Can she be the one? She's somewhat attractive.* He apprehensively sought her out.

"Excuse me, Aurora," he implored softly at her chamber door. "But was it you whom I spent the evening with at the masquerade? You see..."

"You!" Aurora squealed, throwing herself at him. "It was you! Oh, Severus." She kissed him savagely, letting her hands roam.

Well, she certainly isn't shy now. He wrapped his arms around her waist, which seemed a bit wider than he remembered. *Finally I've found her. This is where I should feel relief, so why am I mildly disappointed at the outcome?* Despite her attempts through the years, she'd never caught his attention before. *Why had she seemed so different?*

"Why did you run off?" he managed to ask between kisses.

"Less talking...more kissing. And I didn't run off."

"But you left your shoe behind," he said perplexed, realizing she wasn't the right height and her perfume too strong.

She finally stopped long enough to look at him quizzically. "We made love in the broom closet, Severus. Of course, I took off my shoes. And you left first."

Oops... He sighed in exasperation. *Well, this is certainly awkward.*

There had to be a more practical approach than guesswork. This wayfarer method was not productive. The longer he took, the more aggravated he became. *Who am I overlooking?*

Plan D: He listed his clues pointing to Cinderella. First, she had worked with him. He listed all females whom he had worked with in the past including Order members and Hogwarts staff. Second, she would have to fit the sexy body he'd held in his arms. The mask hadn't changed body shape. Third, the shoe would fit her. *And maybe the old Atrium fountain statue is a clue. She'd disliked it.*

Hestia Jones slapped him. Perhaps he had been a bit rude.

Narcissa Malfoy claimed the shoe was too drab to be hers.

Rolanda refused to even put on the shoe, but she wasn't into men anyway.

Pomona was too plump.

He skipped Sybill altogether; it was not possible to have mistaken her for someone with intelligence.

"Minerva, would you kindly remove your shoe?"

She looked up confused. "Whatever for, Severus?"

"So I can sleep in peace," he pleaded.

She complied. Thank Merlin it didn't fit.

Severus had no idea what to do next; all his plans were rubbish and had failed. Miserably. He stared out his window contemplating his options.

In a way he was relieved none of those women had been her. *She's different...something to be treasured. Why can't I find my Cinderella? Am I not enough of a Prince Charming?*

Too late, he realized he could've used Polyjuice Potion if there had been a bit of her in the shoe. But he'd let countless women try it on. *What good is the shoe now?* It was nothing but a mocking reminder of the splendid witch he'd let slip through his fingers.

Resigning himself, Severus decided to go ask a woman's opinion on the matter.

Severus left the Burrow shaking his head at the obvious he'd overlooked.

"Grandma, I can't find my shoe!" the child screeched as she came down the stairs.

Molly tried to Summon it first, and then she used the Mate-Matching Charm. A thin, red 'thread' materialized between the shoe Molly held her wand to and the 'lost' one, quickly identifying the missing shoe's location. The errant shoe was stuck under the sofa. "It's really helpful for finding those missing socks, too," Molly said with a grin.

Then she'd fed him. She always fed him when he visited. She considered him 'peaky' and far too thin. Severus didn't mind; her onion soup was the best he'd ever had and her fresh homemade bread... heavenly.

He returned to the castle and picked up the shoe. *I can't believe that a simple 'mother's' charm can tell me what I want to know* He performed the spell. Immediately, a red thread shot from the shoe, out the window and across the Hogwarts Lake out of view. Grabbing his broom, Severus Disillusioned himself and followed the thread. He landed in Northampton in front of a two-story brick house with large bay windows and two blue doors in a row of similarly terraced homes.

He approached the door on the right and peered into the window, surprised by what he saw; Hermione Granger curled up by the fire, reading. It's Granger? Yeah, right. Axminster's Flying Carpets will become legal if she's my Cinderella!

Miss Granger had never shown the least bit of interest in him. They hadn't really 'worked' together all that much, as he could recall *Once in Grimmauld Place on a potion to counteract a particularly nasty curse... or identifying those cursed trinkets...* but that was all he could think of. *Unless she counted that day in the library at Grimmauld Place, identifying which of the Blacks' Dark Arts tomes were too dangerous to keep at headquarters.* Nevertheless, the thread passed through the door before him. The mate of the shoe was definitely inside.

He leaned over to look in the window again, but she was gone. He stood upright right when the door opened. He had just enough time to move before Miss Granger walked out onto the step. However, the thread continued into an adjoining room as she closed the door.

Curiosity got the better of him. Ending the Mate-Matching Charm, he followed her to a greengrocer and a pub, whose special for the day was Shepherd's Pie and Apple Crumble, and back to the house. Although the deceptive disguise of the glamour was gone, her walk was the same and her mannerisms... But he needed to be certain that she was the woman who'd bewitched him.

Luck was on his side. When she set down her bags to pick up her post before closing the door, he slipped inside and removed the Disillusion Charm.

"Hello, Hermione. I hope you don't mind my stopping by," he said in his softest timbre. He knew what the sound of his voice could do to a witch and hoped for the same reaction he'd gotten in the Atrium.

But he'd startled her, making her jump and her wand sputter. "What the?!" she exclaimed, whirling about-face as it started to rain on them.

He hardly noticed, mesmerized by her. Her lips were parted, eyes wide, breathing rapidly with her wand aimed at his chest. "But I just had to find you," he said smoothly, ignoring the downpour, and taking a huge chance, he kissed her.

She stiffened, but he pulled her closer, seeking to deepen the kiss and smiled inwardly as she sighed, allowing him access. Emboldened, he kissed her cheek, near her ear, the skin below her lobe, then trailed kisses down her neck to the curve of her shoulder and back while his hands explored the body he'd craved in his dreams since the party.

She nearly swooned into his embrace as he captured her lips. Her kisses were like an aphrodisiac ambrosia to his senses. She felt right in his arms, the smell of her *Oh, yes, she's the witch.* Her blouse was slick with water, but he could feel her warmth under his hands. However, when his fingers finally touched flesh, she stiffened, and Severus pulled back, disconcerted. *She'd been receptive, responded with a fiery desire, but she hadn't protested.*

Suddenly, as if just now aware that it was raining, she looked up at the ceiling. *Meteolojinx Recanto,* she said, soaking wet, her blouse slightly open and clinging to her body. She leaned away from him, catching her breath, and stumbling back against the wall. "What are you...? How did you...? Why?"

"I had to find you... to... talk," he said, hating that he didn't sound as suave as he'd practiced in his mind. However, his voice seemed to send a shiver through her, unless she was simply cold. He quickly dried her off in case. "You eluded me before I could discover who my enchantress was. You had to know I'd find you eventually."

He looked deeply into her eyes and wondered why she'd flinched, unless she'd just realized who she'd been kissing.

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A/N: Thanks to Southern_Witch_69 for the beta work!

Prompt Words used: lamebrain, wayfarer, Hogwarts Lake, Axminster's Flying Carpets (Axminster used in the plural), Apple Crumble, and Meteolojinx Recanto. (six out of seven! Whoo whoo!)

phoenix_writing & Southern_Witch_69

Chapter 3 of 3

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Hermione took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Severus Snape had just snogged the living daylights out of her. Again, apparently. He'd said he'd come to talk, but he looked more as though he wanted to finish what he'd started a moment ago and shag her senseless. Given that she was Hermione Granger and he was Severus Snape, this was more than a little unexpected.

He'd called her by name before he'd kissed her, though, so he seemed to be well aware of who she was. He'd clearly tracked her down as a result of the ball, but had he kissed her just now because of who she was or in spite of it?

Did he think that she would be interested solely in sex? Could she blame him if he did? She'd been all over him at the ball, and his actions just now suggested that he assumed that she'd be willing to take up where they'd left off.

But he'd said that he'd come to talk. Her mind was running a mile a minute as she tried to fit everything together, and she said the first thing that came into her head.

"I need to put the groceries away."

Snape...Severus, she told herself firmly, since she'd grabbed the man's erection...blinked at her. "I beg your pardon?"

She leaned down to pick up the bags that she was glad she had not been holding when he'd startled her; the post was scattered about the floor and rather damp. "I'm making bouillabaisse for Bill and Fleur's anniversary; there's seafood in here that needs to be refrigerated."

She'd made it across the living room before she saw that he was still standing at the entrance. "You said you wanted to talk. Come on."

As he passed the framed portrait of her, Ron, and Harry, Severus muttered, "Ah, the ever-present triadic powerhouse."

Hermione decided it would be better to pretend she hadn't heard him. If they were going to fight, it wouldn't be about that; she didn't want to behave like an immature schoolgirl now. She was nearing thirty, for heaven's sake.

By the time the food had been safely stowed, she was nodding to herself. "You called Voldemort the Dark Lord and Kingsley by his given name. And you were so damn interested in what I thought of the headmaster of Hogwarts. I should have realized it was you." She'd been trying not to think about the whole incident, to be honest. "Did you know it was me the whole time?"

He frowned faintly and shook his head. "I learnt today."

"How?"

Looking almost disgruntled, Severus removed an object from his pocket, un-Shrunk it, and held it out to her. It was her shoe.

"Mate-Matching Charm. Molly showed it to me."

Hermione's eyebrows rose. "Why did you have the shoe in the first place? A keepsake?"

"Well, I certainly didn't keep it with the intention of wearing it!" Severus snapped. "I wanted to find you, infuriating witch."

She snatched back her shoe. "Now you have done. Thanks for the shoe."

"Is that your version of talking?" he mocked.

"A sight better than your attempt at the door," she snarled back. "What do you want?"

"I thought I made that rather clear," he said dryly.

"I know I gave the impression of being completely wanton," she tried to explain, "but I'm not really...I don't want just...I..."

Severus interrupted her, sounding rather exasperated. "If all I'd wanted was sex, I would have given up in the arms of one of the many women that I've found while searching for you."

"What?"

Reluctantly, Severus described the hunt which had led him to what amounted to practically half of the women Hermione knew in the wizarding world. By the time he'd finished, she was in stitches of laughter and clutching at the counter to keep herself upright.

"I fail to see what is so amusing."

She looked up at him, taking in the eyes and hair that were so very dark and such a contrast to what she had seen at the Ministry ball. But they had laughed and chatted and enjoyed themselves thoroughly even before they had wound up in that secluded corner in the Atrium. Those masks had hidden their faces, but perhaps the anonymity really had permitted them to be more free than they usually were, to do things that they wanted to do but wouldn't normally dare.

Maybe Severus wouldn't ever have cut in and struck up a conversation if he'd known who she was, but she wouldn't have approached him, either. They hadn't known then, but thanks to Severus's persistence, this was their opportunity to do something about it. He'd come all this way, and he was still here even through her fit of the giggles.

"Severus," she chided, "that's possibly the most ludicrous tale I've heard in years." She smiled at him tentatively and admitted, "It's also the most trouble that anyone's ever gone to for me, and the ball was the best time I've had in ages."

"I suspect we could greatly improve upon that best if given the opportunity," Severus said smoothly.

Hermione felt her heart rate begin to increase. "Do you think so?"

Severus took a step closer. "Undoubtedly."

If Hermione was going to protest, this was the moment. But she felt a bit as she had in Slughorn's classroom back in sixth year the first time she'd smelled Amortentia. It was heady and arousing...and right here and right now, it was *real*.

She leaned up to meet Severus's kiss.

He couldn't believe it. She wanted him even though she now knew her secret beau had once been her dread Potions professor. Their shared rapport at the Ministry, both the conversation and sensual interlude, made so much sense now. Pushing those thoughts away, he gave all attention to the witch whose lips were pressed against his and slid his arms around her, drawing her closer. His tongue found hers, tangling and exploring; breath became something unnecessary.

At first, she wasn't as bold as she had been at the Ministry, the loss of her anonymity obviously the cause, but soon, her hands began to wander over his chest, then around his back to cup his arse, causing him to grind against her.

"Oh," she said, voice breathy, as she pulled back to gaze into his eyes. "It seems," she undulated her hips, "that you're quite excited already."

He appreciated her attempt to be at ease with him. "So it does."

"As you suggested, we should definitely take this moment to improve upon our last meeting." One hand moved around to his crotch, brazenly caressing the bulge tenting his trousers. She then grinned broadly, causing him to bristle.

How dare she toy with his affections? "What is so funny?" he demanded.

"I was thinking of a ridiculous joke."

"At this moment?"

"It has to do with a farrier and being hung like a horse. When I..." She stepped closer, becoming serious. "If I might be so bold, Severus," she squeezed him firmly, "this is quite impressive."

Pride filling him, he replied, "I am prepared to further inspire your appreciation." He quickly set about learning her body: his mouth once again exploring hers as his hands became acquainted with her breasts. Unable to help himself, he kissed a trail down her neck, over her collarbone and parted her blouse with his fingers, causing buttons to fly and land with small pings.

"Beautiful," he commented as he saw ivory, satin-covered breasts. An inviting row of lace curved over the top of her lush mounds; Severus dipped his head, his lips finding one hardened peak through the fabric, eliciting a moan from Hermione. The soft scent of her perfume was intoxicating, and he groaned in return. She was his... for the moment, for hopefully more. One of his hands slid beneath her skirt and traced the hem of her knickers.

"Not here," she said...even while she pulled his head closer to her breast. "The bedroom," she nodded to the left, "just there."

Needing no further explanation, he lifted her and hurried through the doorway, deftly placing her on the bed while hurriedly kicking off his shoes. As if reading his mind, she did the same. He was able to pull his trousers and underpants down just as she shed her knickers and tried to draw him closer by digging her heels into his thighs.

He paused to look down at her, feasting on her provocative appearance. Her blouse was completely open, her still-covered breasts heaving as she breathed, and her skirt was hiked up to her waist, revealing her slender, long legs and, more importantly, her neatly trimmed center.

Lust took over. Hands pushed the bra up as his lips and tongue assaulted her stomach and worked their way up to her breasts. He groaned as she took his cock in hand and began stroking him as her feet helped his trousers further down his legs to give him freedom...freedom to take her, to make her his. Needing to feel her, he slid a hand down her writhing flesh and traced her labia, enjoying the wet heat he felt there.

Yes, she wanted him. Badly, if her moving hips and pleas for fulfillment were any indication. Pushing one finger into her gave him the desired reaction: she bucked against his hand and tightened her inner-flesh around his exploring digit.

"More," she murmured.

His mouth moved to taste and savor what his hand had already claimed, and she began to pull at his hair, practically pressing his face against her. Only gifting her with a few swipes of his tongue over her bundle of excitement, he could wait no longer and thrust his hips closer, allowing her to guide him inside.

It was heaven. More.

"Yessss," he hissed, pushing deeper, and began the slow rhythm of lovemaking. The intensity that they'd shared at the Ministry returned full force, and he found the sight of the woman beneath him overpowering; mingled with her husky words of need, he rotated his hips as he pushed all the way in, wanting to stimulate her as much as possible. Faster. Harder. Deeper.

And then...

"Mmmhph... Severusss!"

He felt a tremor run through her body and settle in her core, pulsating around him with a rush of heat unlike anything he'd ever experienced. He could do nothing but follow.

The next thing he knew, he lay on his side as she nestled against his chest, both still half-dressed. He'd never had such a frantic encounter with anyone. And now... how to describe it?

"What's wrong?" she asked, tilting her head to look up at him.

"Ineffability is something new."

"Meaning?"

"Us... it's as though I can't find the proper words, that I shouldn't. I've never felt such a connection with anyone."

"Would you believe I feel the same?"

He nodded. How could he not? This was utterly unexpected, yet not unwanted.

"So, Severus, what were you doing with your time before searching for me?"

"Researching pairs of homologous chromosomes and the effects on a potion if one alters the traits of one magically."

She snuggled closer. "Tell me more."

Only Hermione Granger would truly be interested in such a subject, and he found that just as pleasing as their lovemaking. Well, almost. "Perhaps during a bath?" he asked, arching an eyebrow. After all, he still intended to show her exactly how impressive he could be. *To think I almost didn't go to the ball. I would have missed our masked beginning.*

Saturn's Notes: This is the final week of the Playoffs for the Intergalactic Quidditch Cup Tournament! We hope you've enjoyed this little tale! Please continue to review, we love hearing from you!!

If you think Saturn rocks, please vote for us in the final poll. You can do so easily by clicking [here](#).

Prompt Words Used: Bouillabaisse, Triadic, Keepsake, Amortentia, Ineffability, Farrier & Homologous. All 7 words were used!