

Hermione's Odd Behaviour

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Not mine and all that.

Also, thanks to Annie for betaing this.

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It was in the weeks after Easter of the year following the war that Hermione Granger started acting oddly. After the defeat of Tom Riddle (as he was stubbornly dubbed after his demise, in order to erase all trace of his self-declared immortality) she, Harry and Ron had all returned to Hogwarts to finish their education.

Three times now her friends could have sworn that she'd deliberately landed herself in detention with Severus Snape, reinstated Potions master of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, and miraculous survivor of Nagini's bite. His new status as war-hero had done nothing to improve his sour mood. His Order of Merlin, First Class, had merely made him sneer contemptuously at Harry, who had received the same honour. In short, Severus Snape post-Voldemort was the same sour, point-deducting Professor they all knew and feared. Anyone believing his newfound freedom might change him (there *were* a few gullible souls out there) had been proved thoroughly wrong.

But as Hermione was not, nor had ever been, one to confront without dire consequences, neither Ron nor Harry dared ask her about the reason behind these peculiar detentions.

As a matter of fact, Ron forgot all about Hermione's behaviour when Luna earnestly invited him out for a moonlight stroll, wanting to search for a colony of Nargles that she was sure lived in the reeds down by the lake. The two of them found no Nargles, but Ron was ready to help her search again at any opportunity. His eagerness was invoked not so much by his belief in Nargles as by the way Luna had leant to his chest in the cold night air and in her own peculiar way declared that he kept her very warm and comfortable. Such sentiments flattered Ron immensely, and he soon found himself imagining her telling him how she loved to snuggle up to his strong, masculine chest at night, after he'd thoroughly shagged her brains out.

Harry, on the other hand, could not ignore Hermione's alarming tendency to break rules for no apparent reason. Different shocking scenarios of why she would willingly expose herself to the snarky git of the dungeons kept swirling around in his mind, until one evening he grabbed his invisibility cloak and followed her down to her scheduled detention.

On his way down Harry kept revising the possibilities in his head. Snape could, obviously, have slipped her a potion. Perhaps he had finally gone around the bend and followed up on his start-of-term speech of 'ensnaring the senses and bewitching the mind' and had slipped Hermione a love potion powerful enough to make her fall in love with the greasy-haired man? Maybe Hermione wasn't at all going to a detention, but to a secret rendezvous with the man she believed herself in love with? Harry shuddered at the idea.

Hermione reached the entrance hall and turned down towards the dungeon, Harry hurrying along in her wake as silently as he could.

Then there was the unlikely possibility that Snape had set her a task she found interesting. Harry could not imagine what task that might be, but he had long since resigned himself to the fact that Hermione actually liked to draw up timetables, make lists and read heavy books on obscure topics. Who knew what a girl of such fancies might find interesting?

And then, there was that last horrible possibility... After the war Severus Snape had received several love-letters. He could be seen incinerating a few every week at breakfast, a look of loathing distorting his features. What Harry could only assume was very lonely, misguided witches offering to marry Snape, and so finally (in their words) 'give a hard-working, brave man the happiness he's long deserved'. Hermione was one to always feel sorry for lost causes, and she could (Merlin forbid!) have taken it upon herself to give happiness to Severus Snape, whether the man liked that notion or not.

Hermione had finally reached the door to the Potions classroom, and Harry watched her stop and draw a deep breath before she lifted her arm to knock gently.

'Enter!' Snape's voice snapped from within and Harry inched closer, determined to slip inside with Hermione.

So it was that he pressed himself against the wall next to her and hurriedly ducked down to enter below her arm as Hermione opened the door and hesitated a beat before going inside.

'Miss Granger,' Snape hissed, and Harry was relieved to hear no seduction in his tone. Or to see any evidence of sexual props in the room, for that case. By the way some seventh-year girls had been speculating in the corners of the Gryffindor common room, Severus Snape's dungeons should be propped with whips, leather corsets and handcuffs, or perhaps with whipped cream and chocolate sauce. What they found even remotely attractive about the tall, thin man with yellow, uneven teeth, greasy hair and a hostile manner was beyond Harry, but, like with Hermione's preference for lists, he had learnt that the tastes of women would forever be a mystery to him.

'Professor,' Hermione replied politely. 'What do you want me to do today?' She stood straight up and down looking expectantly at Snape, who was still seated behind his desk.

'Let's see ...' he said, tapping his lips with a finger while thinking. 'I could have you scrubbing cauldrons. Surely that would be a fitting punishment for your impertinence?'

Hermione simply waited, as did Harry.

'But ... no. Skinning shrivelfigs, perhaps?' Snape smirked, seeming amused for some reason.

'Surely a man of your exceptional intelligence can think of something more ... rewarding for my time here?' Hermione hinted.

Harry clutched his fist over his mouth. There! That was the dreaded *flirty* tone. He used his free hand to pinch his arm hard and could only conclude by the way his arm hurt and his eyes watered over in pain that this wasn't, in fact, some dreadful nightmare but rather the horrible reality unfolding in front of his eyes.

Snape lifted an eyebrow. 'Like what, Miss Granger?' he drawled.

Hermione drew herself up, placing her hands to her sides in a posture of anger. Her hair bounced as she stared at Snape with cold fury.

'Severus Snape! Will you stop calling me that, you insufferable man?' she snapped.

Harry cringed, not wanting to see how the tightly wound, touchy Professor would react. He rather imagined Hermione would be lucky to escape alive after that comment.

'What, then, Hermione, would you have me call you?' Snape merely purred, rising to tower over Hermione.

'Wife, perhaps? Mrs Snape?' Hermione suggested softly. Harry's eyes bulged and he fought the urge to check if he'd been confounded. What the—?

'Hmm ...' Snape replied. 'Have you forgotten my rule already, Hermione? Miss Granger in class, Hermione when alone—?' He let the sentence hang, urging for Hermione to finish.

'Mrs Snape in bed, wife during orgasm,' she dutifully completed. 'Please, Severus? Call me "wife"?'

'I'll oblige,' Snape said, opening the door to his chambers. 'After you.'

Neither of the two noticed the rather loud thump as an invisible object hit the hard stone floor of the Potions classroom.

By the time Hermione exited the bedroom of the dour Potions Master, it was late and Harry had managed to scrape himself off the floor and somehow find his way back to Gryffindor tower. For days he would simply stare at Hermione as if she was one of Luna's non-existing creatures while muttering under his breath about peculiar desires. Ron left him alone, thinking his best mate was in love. Besides—there were outings to the lake to be planned.