

# Snow Day

by OpalJade

A snowstorm forecast changes the dynamics between Professor Granger and Professor Snape forever.

## The Forecast

Chapter 1 of 5

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That Wednesday morning, near the end of a dreary and wet February, a slightly out of breath Pomona Sprout appeared to *skid* into the staffroom, one slippery black shoe sliding a good half meter before coming to an abrupt stop right in front of the large staff table, and announced importantly, "Everybody, they're forecasting a snowstorm for Friday. It's apparently going to be a BIG one."

The atmosphere in the Hogwarts staffroom suddenly became charged with feverish excitement and something akin to potential energy. Even the serious looking Arithmancy teachers in the paintings on the far wall gasped and clapped at the announcement.

Hermione, who was busy planning next term's lesson plans, looked up, puzzled. She noticed Madam Hooch (she still felt weird calling her new colleagues by their first names) spill her coffee on the file folder in front of her as she turned brusquely to make eye contact with Argus Filch. Professor Flitwick (Filius) grinned widely, twirling his long moustache a few times, reminding Hermione of Crookshanks the time she had accidentally fed him twice. Both Sybill and Madam Pince seemed to be *peering* at each other over the rims of their glasses, blushing, while Professor Slughorn cast nervous, inquiring glances toward Headmistress McGonagall. The only person who didn't seem to be affected by this benign (in Hermione's opinion) news was Professor Snape. He hadn't looked up from where he sat in the large sofa chair in the corner of the staffroom, reading his newspaper.

Hermione was completely puzzled at the reaction this weather forecast was having on her former teachers.

A snowstorm. What was the big deal? She knew for a fact that regular Muggle teachers prayed for them in the winter, but they were rather rare occurrences, even in the Highlands. Her mother's sister, aunt Meaghan, was a primary school teacher, and she had once overheard her claim that there was nothing better than having school cancelled due to snow. But Hogwarts would never cancel school, would it?

Hermione was about to inquire about the significance of a snowstorm when one taught in *boarding* school when Professor McGonagall stood up to address the staff.

"Now, I don't want you all to get your hopes up for nothing. This is still a very early forecast," she reminded her staff sternly, all the while trying to hide her own jubilation.

"Minerva is, of course, wise to remind of us that," said Horace Slughorn, uncharacteristically supporting his superior. "It is pretty rare to get a significant enough amount of precipitation to be able to..."

The large wizard was interrupted by the first period bell, indicating the beginning of classes for the day. Hermione stared at her colleagues as they exited the staffroom like a bunch of first years at their first school dance.

What had everyone so excited?

"Professor Snape, do you know what is going on?" inquired Hermione across the staffroom once they were alone.

"Yes, that was the first period bell indicating the commencement of classes," said Snape dismissively. "Not that that particular sound has ever meant anything to you or your friends."

"I didn't mean the bell, and besides I'm a teacher now, and I have first period off on Thursdays," explained Hermione, exasperated. "What has the rest of the staff so out of character?"

Hermione gathered up her notes and lesson plans from the table and quickly walked over to the large sofa next to Snape's chair. She sat down on the very edge and leaned in towards him.

"Why is everyone so excited about a bit of snow? It just doesn't make sense to me!"

It was obvious that there was something special about the white precipitation, and she didn't like the feeling of being out of the loop. If there was one thing that hadn't changed after the war, it was her need to be in the know.

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Snape stopped reading but didn't put down his *Wizarding Times*. He sighed resignedly... of course, he would have to be the privileged one left in the staffroom to explain to Granger what a "snow day" was all about. When it came to being singled out for unpleasant tasks, the odds were always in his favour, were they not?

Finally, he folded his newspaper in two and set it on the oval coffee table in front of them. He looked at his former student's annoyingly keen eyes and pondered briefly how much detail he should go into. Perhaps he should let someone else describe what a "snow day" fully entailed, but that meant listening to Granger's non-stop questioning during his only free period of the day. As if to prove his conclusion, the girl started yapping away again.

"Is all this excitement due to the forecast? This just does not make sense! Why would they want a snow day? The only thing snow could provide at this point is..."

"It is not the snow *day* they are excited about: it is the snow*night*," interrupted Snape.

"Snow night?" repeated Hermione slowly. "So, something special happens during the night if a snow day occurs?"

"Eureka," replied Snape drily, getting up to exit the staffroom. He had changed his mind. It was certainly not up *to him* to explain what happened during the nine hours following a snowstorm.

"Wait, sir, the last snow day at Hogwarts was during my fourth year, and nothing special happened on that day. No classes were cancelled, thank God."

Snape paused, briefly remembering that particular night eight years ago. Finally, he replied in a hurried tone, "Nothing for the students."

He managed to control the heat creeping up his neck, and hoped Granger would just let it go. Unlikely, since from the expression on her face, it seemed the pieces of the puzzle were slowly snapping into place for her as she began shooting rapid-fire questions at him.

"So, if there's an abundant amount of snow, there is something special for the teachers?" asked Hermione without waiting for his reply. "Something at night? Why? And more importantly, what?"

As much as he would like to see the expression on Miss Granger's face when she found out *what this* was all about, he wasn't saying one more word on the topic.

"Granger, your non-stop chatter is not an effective use of the oxygen in this room. Kindly go interrogate the Headmistress; she's the one who thought your loquaciousness was *adorable* when she hired you."

It must have become evident to her that he would not answer her questions, because she stood and smiled sweetly. "She also said that I was the perfect addition to the staff to average out the surliness level."

She once again gathered her pile of lesson plans and folders and stood up to leave. She cast one last glance his way as she exited the staff room. "I guess I will see you at lunch, then."

Snape pretended to be reading until the last of her shadow exited the doorway. *Insolent little twit*. The fact that he had ended up being colleagues with Hermione Granger as a reward for surviving the war only served to demonstrate that his luck had not changed at all.

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Hermione sat in the large orange velvet chair in front of the headmistress's cluttered desk. Minerva was taking a rather long time explaining what a snow night was. She had already served tea twice and had recited in detail what isobars were, and how it was impossible to magically compact them together to create a greater area of low pressure in order to increase snow levels. There were only twelve minutes left until the start of the next period, and Hermione was no closer to getting an answer than she had been with Snape earlier. To make matters worse, Dumbledore had just entered his frame and was grinning boyishly (well, as boyishly as a 110 year old possibly could) as if he were enjoying his former colleague's discomfort tremendously.

Finally, even the headmistress seemed to get impatient with herself and just blurted out, "It's all about sex, all right. No need to get flustered; we're all adults here."

The idea had briefly entered Hermione's mind when Snape had gotten so brisk with her earlier, and that certainly explained why Minerva was discomfited... but still, it was hard to imagine the entire staff getting excited about sex. They were all so... asexual. Goodness, it was rather difficult imagining the likes of Irma Pince *touching* anyone, let alone having sex!

"I suspected as much, but I still don't understand what this has to do with snow," replied the younger witch, feeling both curious and awkward at the same time. It wasn't everyday that one got to witness common-sense-McGonagall acting so off kilter.

"Snow, yes, snow is important. Here it is in a nutshell: if there's a snow day, meaning over fifty centimetres of snow accumulate, and *Muggle* school is cancelled, an enchantment is triggered, and... hmm, incredibly intense, almost tantric-like sex ensues for the members of the staff that night."

"You're joking!"

Minerva gave Hermione a half smile. "Do you really think/ would fabricate such a story?"

Hermione blushed a soft pink. No, Minerva wouldn't make this up.

"How did such a thing even come about?" inquired Hermione curiously.

"Well, like most of the history surrounding Hogwarts, this one goes back to its founders. Apparently Salazar Slytherin was jealous of Muggle instructors getting days off teaching just because of snow accumulating on the ground." Minerva paused, still clearly uncomfortable discussing this sensitive subject with the newest member of staff.

"Anyway, to prove his point--in a rather childish manner, if you ask me--Master Slytherin refused to teach classes when it was snowing outside. This, of course became a great nuisance to the other teachers who had to constantly cover for him during the winter."

Hermione shook her head in understanding. She had only been teaching for five months but already knew what a pain it was to babysit somebody else's class, especially when they left only half-thought-out lesson plans behind.

Minerva, now feeling more at ease with the topic of discussion, continued with her explanation.

"Finally, it was Rowena Ravenclaw who suggested setting up some kind of magical reward for the Hogwarts staff, so that her colleague wouldn't feel cheated by the Muggle way of doing things."

Hermione had always been fascinated by the history of Hogwarts, but this story had her completely flabbergasted. And to think that if she had not become a teacher, she would've missed out on ever finding out about this incredible bit of information. *This* wasn't the kind of material that made it into *Hogwarts: A History*.

Professor McGonagall rose, pushed her chair back, and turned to cover Albus's frame before sharing the rest of the details with the young witch.

"Hermione, there is no charm forcing anyone to do this if they do not want to, but I would be doing you a disservice by not stressing what an incredible bit of magic that Snow Charm is," she concluded.

Hermione was so fascinated by what she had just learned that she forgot to be embarrassed.

"Oh, trust me, I plan on experiencing this, but how does one go about finding a partner?"

"You must be quick, my dear. It's a bit like musical chairs."

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Snape sat at the head table in the Great Hall, waiting for Minerva to stop lecturing students about throwing snowballs and the dangers of magically altering their speed and density. Personally, point deduction from a few select culprits had always worked better than long speeches to the masses, but, thank Merlin, he was no longer Headmaster, therefore this was no longer his problem.

He caught sight of Hermione Granger mouthing something to him from two spots down. He deliberately shifted his body so she would no longer be in his field of vision. Her perky efforts at collegiality still had the ability to get under his skin. Unfortunately, the young witch was more adept at reading books than she was at reading body language. She still managed to appear at his side when they were exiting the Great Hall.

"Do you have a minute?" she asked shyly.

"I doubt very much that anything that you have to say could be said within a sixty second time frame," said Snape, walking away from her.

She followed him out of the Great Hall, her footsteps clattering rapidly behind him as she sought to catch up. Once they were alone in front of the large window overlooking the courtyard, she blurted out, "I think we should pair up if there's a snow night."

Snape stopped abruptly in his tracks, warning bells ringing so loudly in his ears that he wondered if he had heard correctly after all. Had Hermione Granger just propositioned *him*? After her disgusting, trappy displays of flirtation with her young colleague during the staff meeting last week, it was obvious that she was playing some sort of a game.

"Over my dead body," he snarled without trying to hide his disgust.

He saw her eyes widen in surprise and then fill with a spark of indignation.

"Well, as it turns out, I *have* been over your dead body," she replied, clearly piqued about being turned down so quickly.

As soon as she said it, she gasped and put a hand to her mouth. He observed the remorse travel across her features as she tried to apologize, "I'm so sorry, Severus, I..."

Snape winced and glared at the gasping wizard couple in the picture frame above their heads.

*Joy of Joys!* Now he would have to cast a Dilluviate to prevent the paintings from spreading the juicy news that Granger had proposed they have sex.

"Stupid witch!" he hissed, "What makes you think that the hallway off the Great Hall is the perfect venue to hold a conversation of this nature?"

He wandlessly opened a small, arched door to the left that Hermione had never noticed before. They went down three narrow, circular flights of stairs and walked past the Quidditch changing rooms, where Snape stopped in front of a second wooden door labelled Broom Cupboard. He murmured a three-word spell that unlocked the door. He turned the handle, stepped in and pulled her in by the sleeve of her blouse.

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Hermione peered around the storage area in dismay. This was indeed a broom cupboard--a Quidditch broom cupboard. The walls were covered with brooms hanging upside down according to shape and size. Maintenance equipment, consisting of brushes, cleaning cloths and splinter remover files, were organized neatly on her right. Directly in front of her was a small, rectangular oak table with a tool that she didn't recognize attached to it.

Snape gestured for her to sit on the stool next to the table, and she complied promptly, mostly because she was still stunned at his obvious disdain and still felt bad about her earlier comments.

It was unfair that she had lashed out at him just because he was obviously unable to look at her in the way she looked at him, and it had been particularly unnecessary to bring up that horrible night. She'd made it sound as if she weren't glad that he survived, when nothing could be further from the truth.

Couldn't she have held her tongue a bit longer for once?

Snape looked furious despite the fact that he had not said anything so far.

Hermione tried to apologize again. "Severus, it was rude of me to bring up..."

"My temporary death? Yes, I will undoubtedly sob into my pillow all night due to your insensitivity."

"Still, I'm sorry," said Hermione, ignoring his usual sarcasm. "Not a very good way to convince you to pair up with me if there's a snow night," she added with a nervous laugh.

Snape crossed his arms over his chest and stared at her hard.

"Do not attempt to mock me, Granger," he warned icily. "I have the ability to make your life a living hell if you choose to take on this little game."

Hermione's brows furrowed indignantly. "I'm not trying to mock you! Must you always be so prickly?! Really, you know that wasn't my intention."

Hermione transfigured a broken broom into another tall stool and gestured an invitation to Snape to sit down.

"Severus, I'm not asking you to cover my afternoon classes so I can take off early for the weekend... I'm proposing an arrangement for sex!"

Hermione felt like she was going to dissolve in her own sweat. This whole proposal thing had gone wrong right from the start. She should've prepared more, written down exactly what she was going to say to Snape, prioritize it, and even perhaps run a series of Arithmancy equations to consider all possible outcomes. But Minerva had said she needed to hurry if she didn't want to be left out.

He looked like he was about to simply walk out but then he suddenly turned and sat down, both dark eyes boring into hers.

"Tell me, Granger, as succinctly as possible, *why*, if you are not trying to mock me, you would choose your ex-professor over, let's say, your new Muggle Studies colleague, Mr Jackson? And what makes you think that *you* are a good candidate for me?" he added with a sneer.

Hermione frowned while closing her eyes slightly. She would need to answer this like a seasoned politician. Any misplaced word could send this potential arrangement into orbit.

"Well, the truth of the matter is, we are not exactly close, so there's nothing to screw up if we have sex. Severus, you have known me for years. Through school, through the war... now, as your colleague. Nothing that I have ever done has impressed you. To you, I have never been the golden child or the war hero. To you, I am just Hermione Granger with her hand in the air, taking up your time and making a nuisance of herself." She exhaled something like a laugh. "You have no idea how refreshing that can be. It's why you are the only person I could imagine doing this with...because it could not possibly change anything. Jeremy Jackson, I like. But if I had... a snow night... things would be different. I'd have to start making decisions about where to sit at the staffroom table. I'd have to *wonder* all the time if it meant something and what he was thinking and whether we were..." She looked up at him. "Well, I wouldn't have to worry about these things with you."

Snape's face remained impassive, and she decided to add one last argument to clarify her position.

"Notice how everyone who pairs up is not romantically involved? Better keep the sex and the relationships separate."

Deep down, Hermione had many more reasons why she specifically wished to experience this incredible Snow Day charm with Snape. He was, in fact, the first person who had come to mind when Minerva had advised her on scrambling to find a partner. Jeremy Jackson could pair up with Hagrid for all she cared; she wanted Snape.

Severus Snape, she knew, trusted, admired, and yes, *even liked*. He was certainly interesting to talk to and for some unknown reason, debating with him always left her energized and... *stimulated*. Of course, he acted like she got on his very last nerve, but she suspected that he didn't dislike her as much as his professor persona indicated, because, really, they were starting to be friends of sorts. Weren't they? Now, she wasn't so sure at all. Not at all.

But still, what she had said in her argument was true. Snape would never treat her differently and at the end of the day, that's what mattered most. During their many heated exchanges, she had observed other emotions than just annoyance and anger in his eyes. She could've sworn she had also seen admiration (albeit given grudgingly), amusement, and even once, a spark of desire. She had obviously been wrong, for wouldn't he have accepted the offer if he wished to capitalize on it?

Snape's eyes narrowed but he remained silent.

"As for the second part of your question," she continued carefully, "I think I'm a good candidate because, frankly, I'm your only candidate. I've done some research, and I'm the only unpaired female right now." She had not, in fact, verified that fact, but she was getting somewhat impatient. "So, unless YOU want Jackson for yourself, I don't think you have much of a choice. Unless, of course, you don't want a night of amazing, incredible sex?"

Crap. Was he really going to turn her down? She had not expected that at all. In a remote part of her mind, she had always thought there might be something more to their banter than just an intellectual battle of the wits.

Still, she was *not* going to miss out!

Was she too late to seek out Jeremy Jackson? Oh, gosh, what if she had to pair up with Filius, or worse, Professor Binns? Intercourse with a ghost couldn't be that satisfying, charm or not. Really, her last few relationships had been anaemic enough, and she had been with someone who was actually alive.

"Isn't there any way we can work something out? I really want to experience this, Severus. Have you had a chance to in the past?" she inquired.

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Had he experienced the charm before?

Sinistra's face appeared in his mind as she had been that night. The mood had been like nothing, *nothing* he had experienced before. It had been a nearly complete tantric experience physically. The lack of inhibition, the Aphrodisiac Charm flowing in his bloodstream, seducing his senses... but he had been Summoned before they had even *touched*.

"No...I was called away before... never mind." He wasn't about to divulge the details of what he had experienced in the past. And he certainly was not going to share the time he'd waited too long and had ended up with no partner and had lain in bed by himself knowing what the rest of the staff was up to.

"So, that was what... eight years ago? You know, Severus, global warming is a very ugly truth. This may very well be the last snowstorm large enough to trigger the charm."

Trust Granger to bring the *environment* into it.

To his amazement, it looked like she was trying to find more arguments to have him sleep with her. The idea made him uneasy to the core, and for reasons unknown to him, his instincts told him never to let his guard down with this particular witch.

He studied the young woman closely, still wondering about the possibility of a hidden agenda.

Her earlier reasoning had been naive, yet genuine. Perhaps he had been too harsh in his refusal, but past experience had shown him that, when in doubt, defence was *always* the best offence.

He appraised his young colleague once more.

She was wearing a dark burgundy teaching cloak over a white blouse and skirt. Her crazy hair was already trying to get free from the tight knot at the base of her long, graceful neck. Her brown eyes were intent on his face, but the sharp angle of her brows indicated that she was not exactly pleased with him. Still, she was not unpleasant to look at.

He had gotten used to her presence on staff, and she was, in fact, a very good teacher. Much more suited to the profession than he was or had ever been. However, she had seen him at his most vulnerable, and he had no desire to ever know her in *that* context. Well, almost no desire.

Of course, were they to form this kind of partnership, *he* would have no problems treating her as per usual, but he doubted very much that she would have the ability to

keep her mouth shut and never discuss the night in question afterwards.

"As lovely as it would be to spend nine consecutive hours with you," said Snape with a fake cough, "I'm not convinced it is worth it. The snow enchantment will increase your senses and alter your mood, but it will not change your personality."

"What's wrong with *my* personality?" she inquired, the implication clear that it was his they should be worrying about.

"Precisely. You are not fond of me, and the feeling is entirely mutual," he said with a smirk.

"You know that I don't dislike you, and despite what I said earlier about your death, I'm really glad you're alive. I often think about how happy I am that I sent Arthur Weasley to save your life that night."

His smugness quickly evaporated. Why the hell was she bringing this up? Did she think he had to repay her *fointerfering* in his plans, or was she trying to blackmail him?

"Are you implying that I owe you a life debt?" inquired Snape defensively. "Miss Granger, I believe I have already *paid* for my sins."

"If you've already paid for them, why not take advantage?" she blurted out.

*Take advantage.*

The words echoed all the way down to his groin and all the way back up to his brain, where his dormant Slytherin neurons were apparently located.

*Take advantage.*

Seriously, who deserved a night of mind-blowing sex with an attractive witch more than he did?

Certainly not Jackson, who had just strolled into Hogwarts after the unpleasant business of war was all over.

Slughorn, who had made his Slytherins look like cowards?

Filius, who thought an apology and a glass of Firewhisky fixed all things?

Was he truly going to let someone else have Granger?

He was glad he had chosen this broom cupboard so no framed individual could report to Phineus or Salazar what a disgrace he was to his own House. (Though, after spending nearly six months camping with Granger, he suspected Phineus might understand why he had been reluctant to grasp the opportunity.)

If Hermione Granger wanted him to have sex with her, he would no longer fight it. Seriously, he could do worse *Had* done worse, and he'd had to pay for it too.

No, he did not really want to miss out. At least there was no chance he could be summoned by Voldemort this time--well, almost no chance; Voldemort could always piece himself another body just to interfere in his life. And it was true, snow storms of that magnitude were rather rare.

Also, the charm was designed so that no one could discuss it with anyone else outside the school. So it would be impossible for Granger to host games night with Potter and friends and share the details of their encounter while serving wine and canapés.

And truth be told, he desperately needed new material to wank to. After the war ended and he had fully recovered *ia*ll capacities, he had discovered that he couldn't quite use Lily's face anymore to make his blood flow. Every time, it would interchange with Harry Potter's face and it became somehow difficult to finish. Now, Lily's image was blurry, and it certainly didn't have the same power over him as before.

Granger, on the other hand, had definite potential. To finally silence that mouth with his cock...

A heaviness settled in his groin at the thought.

Merlin, she was worth the nine hours after all! He just needed to ensure that most of his time would not be spent listening to her endless chatter...

Really, he had all the bargaining chips for she seemed determined to pair up with him. He could not have been in the business of espionage for so many years and not have noticed the obvious bluff when Miss Goody-Two-Shoes had lied about her being his only available choice.

Whatever her motives, he was sure he could easily find a way to keep the upper hand at all times and get the night he deserved.

"Indeed. Why not take advantage?" Snape conceded with a calculating glint in his eyes. "Are you ready to discuss conditions, Professor Granger?"

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A/N: A huge thank you to my truly wonderful betas, Lariope and lulabelle72. Their help, advice, patience, and hand holding has been invaluable. \*smooches\*

In case you were wondering, Dilluviate is a spell which dilutes the paint of magical portraits so the occupant(s) cannot move to a different painting in order to gossip. Yes, it's made up! ;D

Thanks for reading! The next chapter should be up in a 4-5 days.

## The Conditions

*Chapter 2 of 5*

Hermione and Snape discuss the terms of their potential 'snow night'.

Hermione stared at Snape for a long moment, hoping that she had managed to school her features into something resembling nonchalance. Inside, she was a nervous wreck. She didn't make it a habit to practically beg her former teachers to have intercourse with her.

She honestly couldn't say if she was pleased that Snape had finally agreed to be her Snow Charm partner or not. One part of her was infinitely intrigued by the prospect of getting to know her colleague in *that* particular context. Another part, the one that was annoyed by his attitude, wanted to tell him he could go to hell with his smug look and conditions.

It was worth remembering, however, that Snape was, perhaps, the world's biggest control freak. He was incredibly selective about who to trust and with what. She supposed he'd had to be, spying on Voldemort all those years. So maybe it wasn't such a big surprise that he'd want to set up some ground rules for the night.

So, what exactly did he have in mind? Was he really expecting them to actually negotiate *all* aspects of the night in question?

The way Minerva had explained it to her, the Snow Day charm removed all inhibitions and increased the amount and the flow of all sexual hormones, creating a long lasting aphrodisiac effect. It didn't really matter *who* your partner was... just as long as you had one, but the rest was up to the individuals in question. She had expected that they would just go with the flow and that whatever else they wanted to experience during that night would take care of itself.

But, this was perhaps a once in a lifetime opportunity (depending on global warming). She supposed that if she were to have only one night of the most amazing sex of her life, wouldn't she want to make sure that all her fantasies were fulfilled? Well, not that she had a secret stash of fantasies stored away somewhere, but it would be nice to ask for things she really wanted without hurting anyone's feelings.

Maybe conditions were a not a bad idea after all!

"Yes, absolutely, we could *compromise* the terms of the night in question," she finally answered.

She wished she could perform Legilimency to see what he was thinking about. Not that Snape would ever let her in.

Hermione ventured a brief study of Severus's profile. His nose was even more prominent when observed from this angle, and his cheekbones were high and severe; his black hair was still long and tucked behind his ear. He had nice ears...shell-like, she decided...and she wondered if he had ever been kissed there.

Snape looked up, and despite the fact that he was looking at her with an arrogant air, there was something in his stiff posture that indicated that he was still perhaps a bit *uncomfortable* with the entire notion of discussing intercourse with her.

It occurred to her that it would take a mighty powerful charm to loosen this man up.

"Once you are done cataloguing my features, perhaps you could concentrate on the task at hand? Or perhaps your inspection has made you change your mind?" Snape asked.

Hermione ignored the bait. "Shall I write down the conditions?"

Snape shrugged his shoulders. "As you wish."

She conjured an ink pot, a quill and a piece of parchment, which landed on the table between them with a *softhump*. She pulled it towards her and unrolled it flat with her left hand while her right hand was busy dabbing excess ink off her quill. She looked up at Snape expectantly, curious to see what kind of conditions he wished to negotiate.

"Are you planning on writing your living will as well?" He sneered at the long parchment dangling off the table.

Hermione harrumphed and muttered a command to shorten the parchment by half. "Happy?"

"Overjoyed."

Snape crossed his arms over his chest and started dictating his thoughts before she even had time to think of an appropriate title for the document. Not that there was a title that could be considered acceptable under these circumstances.

"First, if the events *do* take place, it will be in my quarters," he started.

She drew a line straight down the middle, labelled the first column SS, and wrote *Venue: S's quarters*.

Hermione was surprised that this would be his first stipulation. She had envisioned them tentatively sharing their secret sexual wishes, not the practical aspects of the night. Her instincts told her not to question him at this point, and besides, she had no objection. She was dying to see his private quarters.

"What else?" she asked nonchalantly, despite the fact that she was giddy thinking about being privy to his private library. Would he let her browse through it?

"As you undoubtedly know, Miss Granger, while the Snow Day Charm lasts for nine hours, the individuals involved do need to take a... break. Do not expect me to entertain you during this time."

"What exactly to you mean by *entertain*?" inquired Hermione.

"I do not intend to satisfy your insatiable curiosity on everything from my rearing of lacewing flies to their use in Pepperup Potion." When he saw her raise her eyebrows questioningly, he clarified, "I would rather not use the time at our disposal for a question-and-answer period."

"Fine, no questions. In fact, I'll make it simple for you and just bring a book."

Goodness! Her fantasy night did not really include having sex and then retiring to another room to read. (Well, at least not for this particular night!)

She made a mental note to ask him about the rearing of lacewing flies at a later time.

Hermione glanced up from her scroll to see if Severus was going to add anything else to his list. She certainly hoped so, for she was already compiling a much longer list in her head.

During this brief pause, it felt like the surreality of the situation was catching up with her. She was making plans, on paper, no less, to sleep with her former professor. Yes, the very same one that she had disliked because of his outrageous unfairness, the one that she had admired for his brilliant intellect, the one that she had pitied because of his devotion to a dead woman, and the man she considered to be the bravest and most *skilled* wizard she knew.

She had not realized it before, but sleeping with such a gifted wizard was a big turn on; it was also a bit intimidating but in a sort of... exciting way. Goodness, the entirety of the war had hinged upon this man. He'd spent years doing a kind of silent battle with the most powerful Dark wizard in history, and he'd won. Love him or hate him, he was going to be *remembered*. And she was going to see him naked.

*God, what does Snape's face look like when he comes?*

It didn't matter that his greasy hair was cut unevenly and that he had a rather prominent nose, or that his bottom teeth were crooked; Severus Snape had an undeniable kind of bizarre sex appeal.

The idea of sleeping with him was becoming more and more appealing, Snow Charm or not.

He was still staring at her, arms crossed. His dark eyes were measuring her again, and his mouth was set in a firm line. He looked rather intense, and Hermione wondered if he was also thinking in a sexual way about her, too.

He resumed his list as if the long pause had not taken place.

"You will come to me without any undergarment on," he said softly, as if this was a particular kink of his. "I do not want to waste time disrobing you during the preliminaries."

*Not a kink after all. Preliminaries? Who calls foreplay 'preliminaries'?*

"That's ridiculous! I'm not going to walk around without any underwear on all day just in case it snows! And besides, we have nine hours, there's no need to worry about wasting time."

"Miss Granger, as per usual, you are missing the point. What I am saying is that I will not take part in overdrawn foreplay, as it will be completely unnecessary. You will be *ready* without any help and vice versa."

"Can't we just play it by ear?"

"The last time I played something 'by ear,' I ended up dead."

"I'm not planning on *killing* you, Severus," she sighed, rolling her eyes.

He peered down at the scroll. "If you have nothing specific that *you* would like to request, I still have a few stipulations to add."

Hermione looked at the wooden clock above the door of the maintenance cupboard to determine how much time she had to share her stipulations. They still had approximately an hour until they had to go teach their afternoon classes. She wondered how she would even be able to execute her lesson plan after such a conversation. In her OWL-level Arithmancy class, they were set to calculate the probability of getting that enormous snowstorm in two days. Hell! She would not be able to keep herself from blushing during the entire lesson.

"I never imagined I would ever need to say this to *you*, Professor Granger, but, by all means, speak up," said Snape, seemingly annoyed at her long pause.

"Yes, right. Well, my first condition is that you call me by my first name, *Hermione*." She pronounced it slowly, just like she had done with Viktor Krum all those years ago. Without waiting for a reply, she added it to her list of conditions on the right hand side of the parchment. "Also, I will not tolerate any rude remarks."

"Perhaps you should have *solicited* Jackson instead," he said. She ignored his deliberately unkind choice of words.

"Severus," she started, exasperated, "I would not have chosen you if I did not think you capable of civility."

She should've known he would make this extra difficult for her. Severus Snape was a touchy bastard, and she would be wise to remember that as they sat down to negotiate the rest of the terms of the night in question.

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Despite this exchange being completely of a different nature than their usual debates, Snape and Hermione undertook the task at hand in much the same way. That is to say that they argued and tried to outwit each other.

After an hour of intense deliberations, they had agreed on the following conditions:

Robie, the House Elf, would serve the meals, but that they didn't necessarily need to eat together.

Snape made sure that Hermione understood that he would not be responsible for the decor nor creating an ambiance; therefore, no candles, no silk sheets, and there would certainly be no rose petals strewn about his quarters.

They decided that they would both take their own birth control potions, and that they would shower individually after each "session". (It was Hermione who had labelled it a session, preferring it to Snape's 'episode'.)

They would take care of their own undressing, and there would be no cuddling post-coitus.

They agreed that no feelings would be hurt by the lack of endearments and romance.

Snape warned Hermione that she was not to give him a treatise on the appearance of the skin graft on his neck. Or even mention the war for that matter.

Also, neither would comment on each other's infamous hair.

The details of the night in question would never be mentioned afterwards.

Snape admitted to being extremely ticklish at the waist area and insisted that she not touch him there, for he would not be responsible if he hexed her.

Hermione required that Severus trim his fingernails very short (he never asked why, and Hermione was glad that he had read between the lines). Hermione pushed her luck and asked that he keep his socks on if he suffered from chronic cold feet.

Snape hinted that if she insisted on wearing underwear, he was partial to the colour blue. Hermione agreed to accommodate the blue if she could browse through his books.

Snape, who wanted to make sure that he would at least get the minimum for his troubles, asked subtly if her mouth could, in fact, do other things than just regurgitate facts. Hermione, not to be outdone, retorted if he used *his* mouth for other things than insults, then, yes, absolutely, she would use hers for activities having nothing to do with facts.

To keep the list neatly itemized, Hermione just wrote *oral sex* on both side of the parchment, unconsciously underlining it twice.

As a result of the previous condition, Hermione mumbled that a close shave would be extremely appreciated. Snape replied that a not-so-close shave on her part would be appreciated as well. (In the end, he was forced to clarify that he did not mean her legs but that he just did not want her to look like a schoolgirl in that... area.)

Hermione casually brought up the topic of positioning, and Snape immediately made clear that he was not an acrobat in the circus and would not be expected to perform as one. This image was so incongruous that it set Hermione to giggling, and although Snape did not laugh himself, there was a suspicious light in his eyes.

As they became more at ease with each other, many more personal preferences were bargained for, and added to the list.

And finally, consensus was reached on the details of their sleeping arrangement, for it was agreed by both parties that they would, indeed, need to sleep at some point.

As their lunch hour drew to an end, and more than enough conditions had been agreed upon, they decided to call an end to their meeting.

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Snape watched as she carefully proofread the final draft of their agreement. He fixated on her bending figure and saw the brown coloured curls that fell on each side of her neck. The top three buttons of her white blouse were unbuttoned, and he noticed a thin white scar at the base of her throat. A survivor of the war too.

She straightened and smiled at him as if they had just shared tea instead of creating a list of conditions on which to make the most out of their encounter.

There was a new found awareness between them, and Snape begrudgingly had to admit that things had already changed between them. How else could he explain why he was now wondering about her undergarments and whether she would continue to sit next to him during staff meetings?

Both tension and anticipation mingled in the air around them while Hermione held out the document for him to take.

"Surely you are not expecting me to grade it?" he asked.

She smirked. "No, I just want you to double check the agreement before I cast a Duplicatis Charm on it."

He read through every single condition again, and it was difficult for him to mask the effect that her written words were having on his libido. Oral sex. Yes! Damn, he needed a good wank, but of course, he was scheduled to teach for the rest of the day.

This was almost too good to be true, and consequently, he automatically concluded that either it would never snow again in the Highlands or that Granger would change her mind as soon as she walked out the door.

Finally, she got up from her stool quietly, walked around the table to where he was sitting, and extended her hand to him.

"So, we are in agreement?"

He looked at Granger's outstretched hand, small and feminine, but also, he knew, deceptively powerful.

It would not be wise to underestimate this young woman. He stood, if only to remind himself of that fact.

She looked up at him expectantly with a hint of challenge in her eyes. Snape wondered briefly if perhaps he had missed an important stipulation or if there was a loophole somewhere that he had not considered.

Finally, he took her hand to finalize the deal. Her grip felt strong and sure, but her skin was warm and soft and pliant.

He felt her heartbeat in his palm. Or was it his?

He stood there with the surging realization of what this handclasp revealed and suddenly had a feeling that perhaps this was a huge mistake. He should've paired up with Vector, for he was positive that simple hand contact with her would not have the same effect on him.

She cast her eyes down on their joined hands and exclaimed with a small laugh, "God, I hope it snows!"

He let go of her hand abruptly as if her words burned through his skin.

"I mean, I wouldn't want this whole bargaining session to be for nothing," she said, her cheeks turning the colour of cooked beet roots.

"Professor Granger, you would do well to control yourself. This agreement means absolutely nothing without the storm," he said defensively before stalking out of the cupboard to go teach his afternoon classes.

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A/N: Thanks, once again, to Lariope and lulabelle72, my wonderful betas. They are generous, thorough and encouraging. I would be lost without them!

Sorry this was such a short chapter. I wanted to stop before the snow started falling! The next chapter will be much longer. ;D

Thank you for reading!

## The Snow

### Chapter 3 of 5

In which we find out if the forecast was accurate.

Two days after their agreement, Friday morning, Snape arrived at the Great Hall for breakfast before his colleague, former student, and now Snow Day partner, Hermione Granger.

The atmosphere in the dining room was almost out of control. The students were beyond excited due to the weather warnings issued by the Ministry of Magic. The trip to Hogsmeade village had been postponed until the following week as a precaution, and no classes were to be taught outside for the safety of the student body.

As a result, the young witches and wizards were skittish and restless as they constantly stared out the window, looking for the impending snow with eagerness. Despite the fact that these students saw miracles everyday by simply pointing their wands and whispering incantations, there was a sense that this storm was immensely *powerful* since it could not be controlled by magic.

Minerva looked frazzled, as the potential for mischief always increased when something out of the ordinary altered the routine at Hogwarts. Severus knew that teaching would be exponentially worse than usual. He sat beside Filius, who winked at him as he pointed to the rowdy students. "It will be all worth it in a few hours, Severus!" Snape made no reply and let his mind shield him from the commotion around him as he ate his eggs, bacon and toast. Though he would never have admitted it, a small



portion of his mind insisted that he eat well enough to sustain him should the... extra-curricular activities take place that evening.

He had managed to put the Snow Day Charm out of his mind almost completely. He was gifted at compartmentalisation and blocking out the potential positive or negative outcomes of different events. It was a survival tool. How else would he have been able to teach second year DADA students something as trivial and ironically simple as an Expelliarmus hours before killing Dumbledore?

But it was not to say that he had not thought of the potential storm at all. The past two nights, in the privacy of his chambers, he had let his mind, and other parts of his anatomy, explore what sex with Granger might be like.

Overall, it was good. Very good. Miss Granger had exceeded his expectations as potential wanking material. Every single time he had taken himself in hand, he had been surprised at the intensity of his fantasies. Fantasy sex with Lily was different. It never had the same urgency. Perhaps because there was no need to rush when you had been masturbating to the same images for nearly twenty-five years. Professor Granger was a completely different matter.

The first night, the night they had drawn up the conditions, he had entered his chambers, shrugged out of his cloak and collapsed on the sofa, legs sprawled wide, his cock jutting out of his too-rushed-to-pull-all-the-way-down trousers. He had been so goddamn hard, and after just three strokes up and down his rigid shaft, he had been ready to come as he pictured himself pounding into Granger from behind.

His fantasies of Lily were tinged with anxiety, as if he were still certain, after all these years, that if he performed perfectly, if he took notice of every detail, then she would be convinced once and for all that she loved him. Every lick, every thrust, was measured against fantasy-Lily's response, and only the fact of her, bare and perfect, was allowed to contribute to his own arousal. He would never have dreamed of taking Lily from behind, or of any of the wild and somehow wildly disturbing things that he could say to fantasy-Granger in his mind.

Sex with fantasy-Granger was a bit more competitive, a bit more playful. He imagined the sound of his balls slapping against her, the patchy pink of her neck and shoulders where his mouth had been, the sweaty tendrils of hair clinging to her cheeks.

*Is this what you meant by civility?* he asked fantasy-Granger in a growl.

And he very nearly laughed when she shifted her weight to one hand, lifted the other and raised two fingers, giving him, in no uncertain terms, her definition of civility. She grinned over her shoulder as she did it, and he sunk deeper into her in response...

Snape forced his mind to refocus on the business of eating breakfast before he found himself with a raging hard-on that would surely make Filius wink at him again. He exited the Great Hall without making eye contact with any of the staff, as was customary for him. In the periphery, his eye did, however, catch Granger entering the dining room as he was marching out. Her head snapped up brusquely as she tried to make eye contact with him. He purposely ignored her as per their agreement, but internally, he was acutely aware of the way the fabric of her teaching robes clung to her body, how her hair was pulled back from her face with an ornate pewter clip, and the pink colour in her cheeks when she almost missed her chair while sitting down.

Once in the hallway, he paused in front of the same large window where the foolish young witch had first suggested they partner up. The sky was overcast, dull and grey, and to the west, it even looked like the sun was trying to pierce through the thick clouds. There was not one snowflake on the horizon.

*Typical.*

He would have to endure the hell of trying to keep the students focused on the lesson, and there would be no reward at the end of the day.

But it was just as well, he concluded. Miss Granger had looked so nervous and withdrawn that she had just barely managed to say good morning to her colleagues. The head table had been eerily quiet, especially in comparison to the nonsense going in the rest of the dining room.

He wondered if Granger, like him, had gone over the details of their encounter. She probably had changed her mind. Come to her senses. As he took the stairway down to his dungeons, Severus was glad that he had insisted that the possible snow night occur in his chambers. At least, this way, if she had changed her mind, he would not be humiliated by her locked door.

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Hermione pushed her unfinished breakfast plate away, stood up, and muttered a quick goodbye to Pomona, who winked at her jovially before resuming her annoying humming of *'Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow!'*

To say that she was in a bad mood would be an understatement. Her students had been rowdy and excitable ever since the snowstorm had been upgraded to a blizzard, and she'd assigned more detentions in those two days than in her previous five months of teaching. She felt more like Auror Granger than Professor Granger.

Also, she had been sleeping poorly. Ever since her meeting with Severus, she had been suffering from some sort of insomnia. She had tried meditation, relaxation techniques, and visualization, but the nervous mass in her belly insisted on communicating with her brain, and in the end, there was nothing that could help her to slow her thoughts down and fall asleep. She found herself worrying about an impressively diverse list of items:

*Were her lesson plans long enough to keep the fifth-years busy the entire period? Had she remembered to book the library? What shade of blue did Snape like? When would she know when the charm was triggered? Would there be enough snow? Snow was kind of interesting really, not one snowflake the same, and how come she had never taken the time to cast an Engorgio on one to examine it closely? Gosh, had she remembered to return Brian Thomas's wand after it was confiscated for enlarging a mouse to scare his sister? Would she need her wand on snow night? Yes, she would surely need it! It wasn't as if she was serving a detention and he would forbid her from using it. Was Snape thinking of her?*

Last evening, in order to stop this nonsense, she had paid Madam Pomfrey a visit to see if perhaps she could get her hands on some Dreamless Sleep. (There was no way she was going to Snape to ask him for a sleeping aid.) The Mediwitch had given her a sample of the potion in a small vial, and finally Hermione had been able to fall asleep without the constant questions spinning in her head like a hamster on its exercise wheel.

The Dreamless Sleep had stopped the non-stop questions from entering her mind, but had not prevented her from dreaming. The dreams, however, had been pleasant, and even though she could not remember all the details, images of Snape, passion, desire and an overwhelming feeling of well-being and warmth had stayed with her throughout the night, at least until her next dream.

Her final dream had occurred at dawn after she had decided to sleep for an extra five minutes; exhaustion had weighed heavily on the thin flesh of her eyelids.

This one, like the others, involved Snape, but this time the images were clearer, more vivid and real. She dreamt that she was kneeling on the floor, nestled between Severus's thighs, fulfilling condition number nine. She had no clear picture of his cock, just that it filled her mouth and that it was very hard. His hands were buried in her hair, and he was groaning appreciatively. She remembered beaming inside that she was finally able to please the man. But that feeling had quickly evaporated when dream Snape started talking to her in his usual sneering tone.

"Miss Granger, were you not the one to write the conditions? The instructions called for two strokes vertically and *then* six swirls of your tongue clockwise, followed by three counterclockwise. Obviously you have not come prepared. You will never reach NEWT level in this task."

Well, she certainly didn't need a psychoanalyst to interpret what that dream meant. It was obvious that, unconsciously, she still really wanted to impress this man intellectually and win his approval. The fact that the dream had manifested itself in a sexual context was obviously due to the fact that they had become Snow Day partners, and not because she had a deep desire to be the best lover Snape had ever had. She did not mind that people found her bossy and over intellectual--it was who she was--

but for Snape to recognize that she was more than a walking dictionary meant a lot to her.

Now, Friday morning, the day of the potential Snow Day, Hermione felt tired, cranky and insecure. It hadn't helped that her brief encounter with Snape earlier had left no indication of his feelings for her. He had not even glanced her way! Just as well since she had nearly landed on her arse trying to sit down.

Well, she was glad she had prepared the famous 'Friday Special' every teacher pulled once in a while when they felt they--er, the students--needed a break. She had booked the library for independent research in the morning, and in the afternoon she had scheduled educational movies for every single class.

Hermione reached the library where her rambunctious students had been instructed to meet her. Thankfully, only two students had arrived ahead of her. She would need to remind them of the library rules as soon as they walked in, or else Madam Pince would surely send her a Howler later.

While waiting for the remainder of her students to arrive, Hermione ventured over to the large windows to see if the impending storm had started or not. The horizon looked gloomy, but it looked like rain clouds were coming instead of the blizzard of the century. She seriously had no idea which way she wanted the weather to go. Two days ago, she had been positive she wanted this, but now as the time approached, she wondered if this were the context in which she desired to know Severus Snape better.

"Hello, Professor Granger! Are you excited about the snow too?"

The young Ravenclaw's voice snapped her out of her musings quickly. She was glad that she had the library booked all morning, for she doubted she would've had the concentration to keep a neutral face on all day.

By the end of her second period in the library, she had changed her mind. The students were far too distracted by the lure of the huge windows surrounding the periphery of the library to focus on their research project. They kept getting up from their seats, pretending to need *just one more reference*, and taking a peek. Hermione wondered if there was some sort of Snow Charm on them too. She had tried to use a Concealment Charm on the windows, but Madam Pince had insisted that the natural light was needed for the plants. Hermione thought that the librarian was secretly enjoying seeing her trying to control this wild bunch, even though her eyes were shooting bullets at her.

She walked to the window. Still no snow.

*All this commotion for nothing.*

When she turned around, she was shocked to see Severus standing at the circulation desk returning two manuscripts. On any other day, she would've been infinitely curious as to what kind of books Snape needed to borrow from the library. But today, her curiosity was trumped by the fact that she had an untitled document in her quarters that said she would sleep with this man if it snowed.

She had to remind herself to continue breathing as per usual.

*Relax, Hermione!*

He was obviously just returning books and would be gone in a second. No big deal. She just had to keep her mind off the fact that she was to give him a blow job if the forecast was accurate, that was all.

But to her surprise, he did not immediately vacate the premises but walked towards the *Magical Creatures* shelving section with a piece of parchment in hand. From a distance, their eyes locked, and he acknowledged her with a small nod of his head. She swallowed in reply.

For a moment she took him in as if he was someone that she had never seen before. Her eyes followed his attire downward all the way to his feet.

He was so goddamn layered. It was hard to picture his body underneath all the fabric and the buttons. Was he hairy? Lean, for sure. Oh, and what about his neck? It would be hard not to stare at his wounds, to touch the flesh that had scarred, and to block out the flashbacks of that day. Well, surely the aphrodisiac aspect of the Charm would help to shunt images of these past events.

She was still openly staring his way when she noticed that the shy Francis March had raised his hand and was waiting patiently for her assistance at a small cubicle in close proximity to where Snape was still standing, leafing through a heavy atlas of some sort. She had to walk past Snape to get to her student. She squared her shoulders. Hadn't they agreed that their behaviour should not deviate from its usual pattern? "Excuse me, Professor Snape; I need to get by to go help Mr March."

Snape took a brisk step in to let her go by. He did so without looking up at her, his eyes still scanning the book he was immersed in. She had a crazy urge to casually touch his hip as she shuffled past him. See if could ignore her then!

It still made her want to laugh whenever she thought of Snape's sensitive, ticklish hips, but her internal laughter died quickly as she approached her student. She noticed his chin quivering and his eyes on the brink of tears. She knelt beside him. "Would you like to go in the hallway to tell me what's wrong?" She knew that boys and girls alike did not like to be seen crying in class.

Francis nodded his head vigorously. Above the boy's head, she met Snape's eyes; his lips were compressed into a thin line. She hated to ask, and she hated that he was witnessing her chaotic classroom atmosphere, but it wasn't in her nature to watch idly when it was obvious that this boy had been the recipient of a nasty prank.

"Can you supervise my class for a minute while I take care of this?"

"Certainly," he said in a neutral tone, though there was a strange expression in his eyes.

She turned back towards Francis. Discreetly, she took out her wand and whispered, "Here, let me clean your face."

They stood and exited the library. Once in the hallway, she found out that, indeed, Francis had been the recipient of repetitive pranks whereby every time he wrote something with his quill, it automatically erased what he had previously written. Consequently, he kept getting into trouble for not having completed his homework properly. His roommates obviously needed to learn the distinction between a practical joke, a prank, and bullying. She would have to make sure that Filius took this matter seriously as their head of house.

Hermione promised that it would end, and told him that if ever he was bullied again, to come to find her immediately and she would take care of it.

When they went back in, Madam Pince was standing next to Snape and had a sour expression on her face. Hermione overheard the last part of their exchange.

"...she is letting the students intimidate her too," the librarian was complaining with a scowl worthy of a Hippogriff.

"Yes, Professor Granger is so malleable and *easily* intimidated. It must have been the *other* Hermione Granger who held her own in front of Lestranger and the Darkest wizard in history in order to help us win the war," Snape replied coolly as he walked away from his stunned, older colleague.

Hermione had no idea if he knew she had heard his sarcastic retort to the librarian, and frankly, it did not matter. She didn't need anyone to defend her to the cranky librarian, but still, the underlying message behind his snide remark filled her with something warm that resembled pride and elation.

Suddenly, Hermione's earlier doubts vanished. She had been right all along; Severus was her friend. And if that were true, perhaps she had also been right when she imagined a spark of something... interesting... behind their arguments.

She scanned the library, and it seemed that her students were still considering this a free period, even though they had stopped migrating to the windows to look for snow.

She would have to remember that planning quiet, independent research on a Friday when a snowstorm was in the forecast was a bad idea.

She still needed to go thank Severus, if he hadn't left already, for covering for her while she handled the Ravenclaw House situation. She found him helping Christophus Crowley with a set of calculations.

"I assure you, Mr Crowley, that it is quite impossible to get a negative yield in this particular situation. Unless, of course, you have cleverly found a way to make the sum of forty-eight and sixteen add up to *less* than zero?" he said as he handed the young Gryffindor his assignment back.

Christopher frowned for a minute, scanned the long set of numbers and symbols, found his mistake and exclaimed, "Oh, yeah. Thank you, sir."

Hermione had an irresistible urge to laugh. Snape's teaching methods had not changed at all since her student days. With a grin on her face, she started to express her gratitude for helping her out when suddenly Esmeralda Easingwood gasped loudly and yelled, "Look, it's the snow!!!!"

Twenty students' heads (plus two teachers') snapped towards the window in unison.

Yes, it was snow, but like nothing Hermione had ever seen before. The storm had started so suddenly, and yet it wasn't made up of the usual fat, fluffy snowflakes that tended to pirouette across the horizon at the beginning of a snowfall. No, this snow was compact, dense and angry. It seemed to appear out of nowhere to attack the grounds of Hogwarts like tight diagonal arrows determined to go through the earth instead of just covering it.

Everyone stared at the spectacle in awe.

"Wow! Professor Granger, it looks like we're going to get the huge storm we were all hoping for!" exclaimed the usually quiet Esmeralda who was now standing on a chair leaning against the window.

*Goodness, it's going to happen!*

"Esmeralda! It is highly inappropriate to discuss snow amounts in class!"

Hermione blushed at the absurdity of her own statement. She couldn't bring herself to make eye contact with Snape, despite the fact that he was now addressing her.

Snape's gaze seemed to take in the students and the mayhem at the window. "If you no longer need my help, Professor Granger," he said somewhat dubiously, "I will be on my way now."

"Yes, thanks again; I will see you later, I imagine," she said, blushing exponentially at the double meaning behind her goodbye.

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By dinner time, the fascination with the snow had died down for the students. An impressive amount of precipitation had already fallen, and the novelty had worn off. It was a different matter altogether at the Head Table, and any perceptive individual would have noticed the complete role reversal from this morning's meals. The teachers were excited and loud, while the students were subdued and quiet, probably from having been assigned so many detentions throughout the day. Curiously, no one noticed that none of those had been scheduled for tonight. Slughorn was being boisterous and loud, making inside jokes about 'his first snowfall' and the 'duration of it.'

Snape sat stiffly in his chair, wondering why Minerva was allowing this foolishness to go on right in front of the student body. Everyone seemed to be making deliberate eye contact with each other and asking for food items that had double meaning. "Oh, Sybill, could you pass me the gravy; you know I like it extra juicy."

His partner was sitting at the end of the long table, next to Jackson. She seemed to be sketching something for him on a piece of parchment. *Probably a map to her private quarters.*

He pushed his chair back, stood, and rolled his eyes when Filius called out, *Goodnight, Severus! Hope you have no time for sweet dreams!*"

He exited the Great Hall and went straight to his chambers to pour himself a generous glass of Firewhisky. He still planned on doing a bit of reading for his independent research, for that was nothing that would be affected by the consumption of alcohol. He stopped in front of a window with a ledge before taking the steps down to his private quarters. The snow was still falling heavily as it gathered in the corners of the window in thick prisms of white. He noticed two Slytherins with a glint in their eyes that could only mean one thing; they were up to no good. He decided to do an impromptu inspection of the common room. It was obvious that the rest of the staff had given up on discipline for the rest of the night, but he wasn't about to be disturbed later on by their shenanigans.

He gave his house a stern warning and finally made his way back to his private quarters. As he walked by the same window again, he unconsciously noticed that the velocity of the falling snow had not slowed down at all. When he turned back, he saw Granger coming his way down the deserted hallway to his quarters.

"Severus," she said when she was close enough for him to see the bright pink spots on her cheeks, "It's obvious that the charm is going to be triggered, and I'm going crazy waiting in my chambers by myself. I noticed that everyone else is meeting up early for wine and such, and I was wondering if I could just wait here with you."

Something in her tone made his insides feel hollow. She looked nervous, yet absolutely confident at the same time.

His first instinct was to turn her away. He was not prepared mentally or physically to play host to Granger without the assistance of the Snow Day Charm. It wasn't that he needed the effects of the aphrodisiac flowing through his blood stream to make him want her, quite the contrary, he already desired her deeply, but there was no way he was going to let her know that.

And wasn't she already breaking the rules? Had he not made it clear that there would be no entertaining?

Yet, he was powerless to send her away. How was it that his young colleague could make him feel so off-kilter when he had taken every precaution to keep the upper hand at all times?

"Did you bring your book?" he inquired.

"Yes, of course."

He sighed heavily to indicate the depth of her imposition. "Come in, then."

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A/N: My eternal gratitude to Lariope for the beta. Your support and friendship means the world to me!

# The Charm

## Chapter 4 of 5

Snape and Hermione enjoy the effects of the "Snow Charm".

Snape unwarded his quarters and took one heavy step into his living room. The sensation that gripped his insides was similar to that of falling off a precipice. All afternoon, as the snow covered the ground in a thick, crisp layer of cool insulation, he had been thinking about being with her alone in his room. Now that she was on his threshold, he was gripped with a mixture of annoyance and something similar to the jittery feeling he had experienced the night Yaxley's sister, Dominique, had insinuated herself into his dorm room and hijacked his virginity on his seventeenth birthday. Just like that night, he had no desire to send her away, but would have liked to have been more *prepared*. His quarters were tidy, but there were a few items he would have preferred to be hidden from curious brown eyes.

He glanced over his shoulder and noticed his young colleague still standing on his doorstep, immobile.

"What are you waiting for, an engraved invitation?" he inquired with a tinge of impatience and dread. He was not ready to play host. Were his living quarters not up to her superior, war hero standards?

She sighed, and her eyes looked upwards as if summoning the archway of his door for strength. "Perhaps now would be a good time for you to dilute the sarcasm."

"The conditions do not come into effect until the charm is activated. There is no need for me to dilute anything until then."

She followed him inside, and he suspected that she might have been rolling her eyes, but he had already turned back towards his quarters before that particular fact could be confirmed. He needed a drink...one containing alcohol...if he were to endure over an hour of her presence before the charm activated.

He heard the sound of her heels clattering behind him as he drank a quick, sharp mouthful of Firewhisky.

"I'll have one of the same," she said quickly, obviously not entirely at ease with the situation either.

They both let the golden liquid warm up their throats and ease the tension. He watched her quietly walk to his sofa and drop her brown, beaded bag onto the floor close to the armrest and the lamp. Their eyes caught, and her cheeks seemed to be a warm, blotchy red. He wondered if that was the result of the liquor or the realization of the upcoming activities.

"Perhaps you could show me around?" she suggested while her eyes scanned the periphery of his living room. "I will need to know where your bathroom is and..." she hesitated before continuing, "well, the sleeping arrangements we discussed as well."

He suddenly felt violated. How dare she invade his privacy this way? He should not have let her in early, before the charm was triggered, before her nosy brain transcribed the details of his apartment in her mind to share with the world. And why was it his role to play host and show her around? For a minute, he imagined her at the former headquarters for the Order of the Phoenix, Grimmauld Place, sitting at the head of the large dining room table, the attention solely on her as she described the unfashionable way he had arranged his sofas face to face in front of the fireplace.

"Severus," she started after casting one last glance at his book shelf and the array of framed pressed plants and ferns hanging above the sofa, "your place is completely different than what I had imagined. It's really... warm."

A thousand Galleons to one she had meant to say 'cozy'.

"Well, yes, thank you; your approval means the world to me," he replied in his usual sarcastic tone. "You may sit here to read your book, Miss Granger, until..." he could not make himself finish the sentence. Heat crept up from his neck to his ears, a tell-tale sign of his discomfiture. He felt both slightly disgruntled and aroused at the idea that he was asking her to sit where he had been jerking off to the image of her from behind the night before last.

She bent down, her hair tumbling down across her face, giving the appearance of weighing her down as she retrieved the multicoloured beaded bag from the floor where she had dropped it. He took the opportunity to observe her closely. He could not explain to himself...or to anyone who would dare to inquire...why he suddenly found her so appealing.

He conceded that Hermione Granger was an attractive woman...not a classic beauty like Lily, but attractive nonetheless. Granger had a natural kind of beauty that seemed to care nothing for embellishment or fashion. Her skin was fair and unflawed like the dermis of an angel of death mushroom...a comparison she might not exactly appreciate, but still accurate. Her brown eyes, seemingly always lit with questions, were framed by dark brows and long lashes that continuously moved to the rhythm of her different facial expressions. She had, of course, that brown curly hair that appeared to grow out instead of down, as if resistant to the laws of gravity, but still, it suited her. She had plump, wide lips that smiled often and easily. Miss Granger...Hermione, his mind corrected... also had an attractive figure with plenty of curves that seemed to dip and rise in the right spots. He was immensely grateful that she looked nothing like she had during her schoolgirl days. The only thing which remained from those days was the steely determination and keen intellect that continued to shine in her eyes.

She seemed to have chosen her clothing with care for the evening: a slightly off-the-shoulder black top with a pair of cream-coloured trousers and black heeled shoes that were more easily heard than seen due to the length of her pants. He was no fashion expert, but he knew she looked... nice. Again, it irked him that she had taken away his chance to change into his *other* black trousers.

Everything hung heavy and silent between them. The way the top fitted her, he could see her collarbone. He was tempted to run a finger along its smooth length. Was her skin as soft as it looked? He felt the pull again, the attraction that made him want to start ahead of the damn charm. But that would be foolish. He knew that she would not be in his living room right now if it weren't for the promise of an amazing night of sexual activity with no strings attached.

"Do not make a nuisance of yourself," he said stiffly on his way to his bedroom. He felt her gaze following him as he left the room, but controlled the urge to look back.

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Hermione sat on Snape's sofa, legs crossed lightly at the ankles, her book face down on her lap. She looked around the room again after Severus had disappeared into a room to the right that was most assuredly his bedroom. He had looked so discomfited in his own quarters, so unhappy to see her before the charm was triggered. What made her think this would be better than waiting in her own quarters by herself?

Well, she might as well take advantage of the fact that he had left her alone and free to absorb the details of his rooms. Upon entering earlier, she had walked through a

narrow stone tunnel with an arched ceiling above her head. She wondered now, if this room was, in fact, a former dungeon. The small hallway led to a large, open, rectangular area that seemed to serve as both library, office, and living room. One wall was covered by a floor-to-ceiling wooden bookshelf containing a remarkable assortment of books: botany texts, identification field guides, organic and inorganic potions lab manuals, biographies, and books on philosophy and history. In fact, there seemed to be a section for every subject taught at Hogwarts. The books were arranged in perfect order, but it still looked like a bookshelf that was being used on a regular basis. There were bookmarks protruding and dutifully marking important pages in various texts, and there was no apparent dust settling on the top of the bindings. She was dying to cradle some of these books in the crooks of her elbows and glance at the marked pages to see what information Snape deemed important enough to make note of. But she felt it would not be right to do so right now. She had arrived early, and she would abide to the conditions they had agreed upon. But she knew, without a doubt, that the amount of Galleons she had spent on her coordinating blue lingerie was already worth it.

Her attention turned to Snape's desk, cornered between the wall of books and a wall with a rather large...considering the location of his quarters...arched window. She had barely had a chance to look at it when he was in the room. She imagined him sitting here, for a moment: head bent, reading; once in a while glancing up to watch the fire flames dance across the room where his fireplace was located. Did he ever get lonely in the dead of winter like this? From the amount of rolled parchment and notes, it didn't look like it, for he seemed to be researching something at the moment. She took a step closer to get a better glimpse of what he was working on. It didn't look like anything to do with potions. They were all sketches of brains, arranged in evolutionary order from simple invertebrates to primates. What the hell was he working on? She resisted the urge to sit in his chair and read the notes scribbled in red on top of the anatomical details.

She finished her tour of the room by studying the various healthy plants on the window sill. She wondered how they managed to capture enough sunlight to be able to adequately photosynthesize. Her own plants were struggling with that, and they had plenty of light.

When she heard movement coming from his room, her eyes darted to his door as she hurried back to the sofa and pretended to be immersed in her book.

A moment later, a door creaked open slowly, and Severus Snape emerged from his bedroom looking like she had never seen him before. She felt her breath catching to the walls of her sternum at the sight of him wearing only a white shirt over black trousers and socked feet. She searched for something clever to say, but the shock of seeing him without at least three layers of garments covering his body left her speechless.

He was stunning in the way that an abstract painting could be, when one decides to accept the hard angles and shapes for what they are without trying to make sense of them.

The air around them was filled with a delicious kind of friction. Goodness, they still had about an hour remaining before the charm was to be triggered. She was ready to start now!

Hermione felt the need to say something...anything...to prevent herself from walking over and doing what she had wanted to do for the past two days.

"You look so different," she said breathlessly.

"Should I not make myself comfortable in my own quarters?" he replied as if her comment had been a reprimand. "I had planned on reading by the fire."

Hermione stood up promptly, sending her book tumbling down to the floor. "Oh, I'm sorry; am I sitting in your favourite spot?"

Snape did not reply. His eyes were fixated on her manuscript which was still lying face down on the carpet.

"I see that you've helped yourself not only to the sofa but also to my reading material?"

Hermione looked down at the book lying next to her feet with a puzzled expression. "No, that's the book I'm reading. The one I brought!" she said, still confused.

Snape, looking sceptical, walked around to the side table next to the sofa and reached under a folded newspaper for his own copy of the same manuscript.

"Oh, we're reading the same book!" said Hermione, surprised. "What a bizarre coincidence."

In lieu of an apology, Snape sighed as if fate were conspiring against him. He turned and grabbed two wine glasses from the oak cabinet behind the sofa.

"I believe wine is in order?" he asked as if they both needed fortitude of some sort. Hermione accepted promptly while bending down to retrieve her own copy of *Reflections on Magic: Magical Philosophy, Implications on Modern Wizarding Society*.

Without so much as glancing her way, he set her glass on the coffee table in front of the sofa and proceeded to sit down across from her in silence.

Hermione was still pondering the chances that they would both be reading the same book, especially on a night such as this. This was not a trendy bestseller newly off the press, in fact, this book had failed miserably with the critics when it had first come out during what would have been Hermione's seventh year at Hogwarts. The theories presented in this treatise had been greeted with scepticism and disdain by the Wizarding community. Hermione had not formed a concrete opinion on whether she accepted all the novel ideas presented by the author. She was, however, very curious to see if Severus agreed with the conclusions the author had reached in chapter three on the location and process of magic. It was ridiculous to sit here and not be able to talk about it. *The hell with this fake silence*, thought Hermione. True, the conditions had been written so that there would be minimal interaction (other than the physical act, of course) but it wasn't like they had made an Unbreakable Vow, was it? Surely he would not kick her out if she asked what he thought about the mental conversion of magic into physical, kinetic energy? Hermione recalled the diagrams of the brains displayed on his desk. It seemed that Snape was interested in the idea of magical ontology.

"Severus, it would seem from the diagrams displayed on your desk, that you agree with Blonk's theory of magical flow genetics."

"I am thrilled to know that I gave you sufficient time to snoop to your satisfaction," he said with a sigh. "And do you not consider discussing magical ontology a form of *entertainment*?"

Hermione ignored his question. The light in Snape's eyes had brightened when she brought up that particular theory.

"Do you really believe that everyone, including Muggles, has magical abilities?"

Snape stopped reading and placed his pewter bookmark back in the crease of the book, giving her a half-smile.

"I am shocked, Miss Granger; I have never heard you succinctly summarize three chapters worth of material into one sentence."

She laughed softly, remembering her long essays from her student days. Now that she had to correct her own, she could appreciate that sometimes less was more.

"Hmm, yes, sorry about that."

Snape refilled her glass, and she watched the reflection of the fire dance on the surface of the burgundy liquid. She was warmed by the small sip she took and tried again to get Snape to share his opinion.

"So, you don't think magic has a genetic component?"

"I have always enjoyed others putting words in my mouth," he said shaking his head slightly, but she could tell he was not really annoyed. He too continued to sip his wine, looking at her intensely over the thin rim of his glass, seeming to choose his words carefully.

"I definitely think that there is a chromosomal component to magic, but nothing as simple as the popular hypothesis that there is a gene that makes you either a witch or a

wizard."

Hermione nodded her head in agreement. Whatever made them magic was not as simple as Mendel's pea plants experiments.

"We, humans, share 98% of our genetic material with chimpanzees, and to this day, no one has been able to determine what percentage magical individuals share with Muggles. Blunk believes that our genome is identical," said Snape, pausing as if to give her a chance to comment.

"Yes, and that's probably why his entire thesis has been rejected without further thought by the Wizarding community. The Wizarding community likes to think that there is a special, powerful gene that determines magical ability."

"Correct."

"But it seems naive to think that magic is simply an adaptation. Goodness, evolutionary speaking, everybody would be magic by now! I can't think of a better trait that would help with survival."

Snape smiled. "Valid point."

As they dove deeper and deeper into magical theory, they both seemed more at ease. Hermione had never seen him so relaxed, so accessible. It seemed like the charm had already started dissolving inhibitions.

"So what are you proposing? I'm curious to see why you are interested in brain phylogeny."

Snape looked at her as if determining whether or not he wished to share his ideas. Finally, he continued softly, "I am proposing that perhaps everyone has magical abilities, but that Wizards and witches have *something* biological...genetic or not...that transcribes mental, magical energy into physical, kinetic energy."

Hermione finished her wine and set her glass back on the table in front of her. Excitement flowed through her. She couldn't remember when she had felt this stimulated mentally or physically.

"You mean a sort of a tool..." she paused, trying to find the best way to put into words what she was thinking. "Like a remote control in the brain?" She laughed at her oversimplified analogy.

"Well, that is not an entirely absurd comparison."

Hermione wasn't sure what agent...the build up of the charm or having a tantalizing conversation...was acting on her psyche at the moment, but all she wanted to do was walk over to his side, straddle him, slide her arms under his unbuttoned shirt and continue discussing magical ontology in that position.

Snape was elaborating on his hypothesis. "I am still trying to make sense of it myself, but I imagine that there is some sort of portal in the brain where our thoughts are converted into 'magic'."

"Why would we ever need a wand, then?" she asked, still fighting the need to touch him.

"A logical question. This is undoubtedly just a model at this point. I have no proof of this, but I was thinking that a wand acts as some sort of magnet to attract the newly transcribed magical kinetic energy out of the body."

"Interesting."

"But, as you well know, a wand is not necessary. Think about the process involved when you are performing wandless magic."

Hermione blushed. She had never had the patience or focus necessary for wandless magic.

"I'm afraid that I have never been able to do wandless magic. The truth is, I just can't be bothered with it. I'm extremely efficient with my wand."

"Has anyone ever taught you?"

"Well, no, not really. I just assumed that you had to think very hard or something, and the magic would flow."

"It's more a question of visualisation than thought. When you are holding your wand in your hand, the magical thoughts are attracted to your wand, much like to a magnet, and flow naturally in that direction and out of your body."

How was it that Snape was making magical theory sound so damn sexy?

"When you are without your wand, you need to show your magical energy the path," he continued, his eyes never leaving hers. "I am positive a witch of your calibre will be able to achieve this task quite easily if you know what to do exactly."

"I'll try," she replied breathlessly. She felt completely swamped by desire. She had not expected the charm to activate by increments...slowly overtaking her senses and saturating them with a tantalizing, pervasive sensuality. She had foolishly assumed that at nine o'clock, the charm would be triggered and they would be suddenly thrown into a prolonged state of arousal. Well, that would have, indeed, been how the things might have unfolded had she not arrived almost an hour early. But she liked it much better this way; it was like slowly getting drunk on lust.

"Think of a simple action you wish to perform," Snape was instructing her, but in a softer, raspier voice than she had ever heard him use when teaching. It made it difficult to concentrate. Very difficult. "Make an image in your mind of what you want to do, and make a conscious decision to let it travel through your body and find a point of exit. I would suggest using your index finger for the first time, as it will feel similar to your wand."

He demonstrated as he spoke, pointing his finger at the wine bottle and refilling both their glasses without spilling a drop. The way in which he reclined on the sofa...looking childishly self-satisfied...both amused and warned her. What a strange effect the charm was having on him too. As if this powerful wizard needed to perform a magic trick to impress her.

"Your turn, Miss Granger."

Why was he still calling her Miss Granger? Was he really unaware that it was almost nine o'clock?

The image of what she wanted to do painted itself easily on the blank canvas in her mind. She then consciously let the image flow downwards, meander down her arm and finally center itself on her index finger...clear and alive.

She pointed her finger at Snape and, without muttering a word, let the mental image transcribe itself into kinetic energy and twirl out of her finger like a physical force.

Snape's crisp white shirt elegantly unbuttoned itself in a gentle, cascading motion, revealing a flat, pale torso with fine black hair dusting his chest *Nice*.

He looked stunned. His head dropped down low, and despite the fact that his black hair was hiding his face, it was obvious that he was staring down at himself. He stayed that way for what felt like an eternity to her. She rose, and he finally glanced up from his open shirt.

"Hermione." He sighed with a mixture of exasperation and desire.

Then he stood, and somehow she was in his arms. His lips were on hers, hungry and seeking, and all rational thoughts about magical theory dissolved into the air around them. Her mouth pressed into his with equal hunger, and her arms went under his shirt and held on to his back. In that moment there was nothing but the feel of his hard, compact body pressed against her, nothing but the incredible effect of the charm, rippling deliciously through their bodies. The kiss was long and deep, and Hermione felt like her insides were being drawn out of her. Snape's hands slid down her back until his fingers dug into her arse, lifting her up onto the hard, pulsing evidence of his erection.

She had never experienced anything like this before, this urgency to release the sexual tension. Her heartbeat was pounding throughout her body, her chest, her gut, and at the junction of her thighs. Her legs had the consistency of warm butter, and she was glad to be partially anchored on Snape's hips.

She dug her fingers into his hair, aware of a wild desire to rub her body against his and let her hands travel all over his flesh. She explored his shoulders and chest, fingers feeling the soft black hair around his breastbone, and skipped to his flat, concave stomach until she came up against the barrier of his waistband. She was pleased to hear his low groan when her hand stroked his erection through his trousers. Snape leaned into her hand, and the force of his movement pushed her back against the coffee table, her knees buckling against the edge of the oak wood. She landed flat on her back without breaking contact with Snape's mouth. They continued to kiss...two starving people with bodies unwilling to part in order to find a more comfortable venue.

When she had daydreamed about the power of the charm flowing through her blood, she had never imagined being taken on Snape's coffee table amongst burgundy stained wine glasses and philosophy books. She concluded that was what two days of pent up sexual energy and a powerful aphrodisiac charm did. She liked it--she liked that they were out of control and that everything was tinged with this sort of impatient energy. She liked the heat his body gave off and the feel of his hard cock against her belly. His skin smelled of cut plants and fresh rain. She tasted it, made a smooth wet trail on his shoulder, and the scent became a flavour on her tongue.

"You taste good," she said.

He shivered and undulated against her and only broke contact when the table scraped backwards. Finally, he cupped the back of her neck, pulling her ear up to his throaty whisper, "Let's move this elsewhere." His hands sought hers and wrapped around her wrists in a commanding grasp, pulling her up to a standing position.

He pulled her soft, black cashmere top over her head, and there he seemed to pause, perhaps realizing for the first time what a crazy pace they had set. "You call this blue?"

"Periwinkle is a shade of blue," she replied as she reached to lick his ear. A ragged breath fanned over the top of her head, and his arms came around hers again.

They tumbled onto the sofa, somehow wiggled out of their clothing, and frantically pushed it out of the way with the tilt of their toes.

Tangled together, they found a rhythm. Their breaths came in laboured gasps that seemed to echo against the stone walls of the living room.

She kissed his chin and felt his jaw move as he spoke in a voice thick and gruff, "This won't last long."

"For me, either."

In answer he only growled and rolled her flush on her back, entering her body. Her heels dug into his back. Hermione heard the sound of her own moans of pleasure as his cock slid in and out of her, creating a tingling sensation that radiated out and permeated her legs with a warm heaviness. She lifted to meet each thrust, watching Snape's face as he pressed his lips tight together and breathed heavily into her hair. Perhaps as a result of the charm, she felt the need to see what they looked liked together and peered between his extended arms to watch their bodies mingling.

When his beat accelerated, her head pressed back into the armrest of the sofa. She closed her eyes and rode the swells with him. He reached and spread her mound with his fingers and let his shaft stroke her swollen flesh. It did not take long for her body to quiver in response.

He grunted as his reached his own climax, coming hard and long and deep inside of her.

Snape fell across her breasts and lay there panting loudly. Had it not been for the charm, this would have never happened, but now they lay together, intertwined on a sofa like teenagers. She ran her hands down his back and buttocks, avoiding his hips, and murmured "wow" as much to herself as to him.

"Indeed."

This is so unreal, thought Hermione. She had never managed to achieve orgasm during intercourse; hell, she had never managed to take her mind off her list of 'things to do' during sex.

She wanted to stay this way, cocooned inside his arms, legs and the cushions of his sofa and enjoy the feeling of contentment that came after the release of what had felt like two days of foreplay. Ruminating on the minutes just passed, she thought of asking him about the charm and whether it had felt different this time around. But she was afraid that if she opened her mouth, the spell would be broken, and they would return to being 'Snape' and 'Miss Granger' to each other. So, instead, she shifted down a bit and curled up securely against his side, listening to the sound of heartbeat against her ear. Soon, in addition to the soothing sound of Snape's heartbeat, Hermione could hear the insistent rumbling of her stomach. It was no big surprise, as her excitement and nerves had kept her from doing much more than pushing her food around her plate earlier, but it was still somewhat mortifying. She was absolutely positive that he could hear it too. "It seems my stomach has something to add to the proceedings," she said laughing softly.

Snape stood abruptly, and she watched the defined muscles of his arse and thighs disappear as he rapidly climbed into his trousers.

"As per our agreement, I will ask Robie to bring you some food. You may shower after I am done," he paused and looked at her almost as if he wanted to add something else. In the end, he strode out of the living room, leaving her feeling disappointed despite the fact that they had, in fact, agreed 'not to cuddle post-coitus.'

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A/N: Please forgive me for taking so long to post this chapter. Hugs to you all for your patience.

Also, massive hugs to my wonderful friend and beta, Lariope. Thank you for your constant encouragement and help. You have no idea how much *that* phone call cheered me up! ;D

## Climate Change

Where we find out if the aftermath of the storm changes the relationship between the two professors.

Snape was well aware that he had been in the shower for a ridiculous amount of time. His body did not need a third thorough scrubbing, and his hair...though he supposed some might disagree...did not require a second washing and conditioning. Granger, he concluded, was entirely to blame for this shameful waste of shampoo products and fresh water. It certainly was not his fault that he needed a long shower to cool down and to wash away the mass of confused emotions sitting at the pit of his stomach.

Unfortunately, it seemed to make no difference how long he stood underneath the warm water, the confusion refused to be washed down. He let the spray massage his neck and shoulders for a few extra minutes, but again, he was unable to shunt his mind away from the annoying feelings plaguing him. Finally, he acknowledged that it would be quicker to let them creep up to his brain to be identified than to wait for them to disappear on their own.

Guilt and remorse seemed to be the predominant feelings.

As he acknowledged said remorse, it was the unfairness of it all that aggravated him the most. Had he not gone out of his way to prevent feelings such as these from occurring in the first place? Damn it! She had been the one to write the conditions down, and she had somehow managed to break three conditions all at once by looking at him with a hurt look that seemed to say *'I can't believe you're going to leave me here after this.'* Whatever happened to condition number two...they would eat by themselves, and condition number three...there would be no snuggling, and more importantly, condition number four...there would be no hurt feelings? The hurt look in her eyes had no right to imprint itself in his mind. He'd been looking for new material to wank to, not new material to feel guilty about. The only image he wanted of his colleague was the one in which she was pinned underneath him, her face tilted upwards in ecstasy...*Gods, the look on her face...*as her climax radiated in waves from her cunt to his cock, sending him over the edge.

That image would have done the trick, but now he was stuck with 'the look' instead. And to top it all off, not only did he feel regret, he also felt guilt.

*Good God!* How in the world had Granger managed to complicate something as simple as a night of mindless sex? Why was he in his shower *washing* instead of getting sweaty? Why was he wasting precious time in here instead of enjoying the effects of the charm?

But that was the problem, wasn't it?

The crux of the matter was that he was not absolutely certain the Snow Day charm had, in fact, been triggered at all.

If the charm had set, then it felt completely different than when he had experienced it almost a decade ago. The lust had certainly been as strong, but this time he was fully aware of *who* he was with instead of seeing his partner in a distorted kind of kaleidoscope effect. Well, at least that's how he remembered it. Should he have said something to her? Perhaps. But had Granger actually given him a chance? No. If he remembered correctly, and he did, they had been waiting for the charm, drinking wine and discussing magical theory. And before he knew it, she had begun to *undress* him. He was fairly certain that no wizard, Slytherin or not, would have chosen that particular moment to bring up the possibility that the charm might not be in effect. Damn! He still could not believe that her first attempt at wandless magic had resulted in the complex motion of unbuttoning... *his shirt.*

She had disrobed him and then proceeded to snog him so completely that it had disintegrated all of the words that he needed to complete a full sentence. Could anyone blame him for not speaking up? He had tried to slow things down, but she had rubbed herself wantonly against him and grabbed his cock through his trousers, nearly making him come on the spot. Perhaps the entire episode had been too quick, but she certainly had not seemed to mind. In fact, she had appeared to crave the fast pace and the intensity.

Was that not a sure sign that she had been affected by *something*?

He quickly absolved himself of any sins of omission and turned off the water. Why was it up to him to figure this out, anyway? Didn't she claim to know everything? Just because he had experienced the charm for a full ninety seconds did not make him a Snow Day expert.

As he towelled himself dry, he thought of Hermione and the way she had snogged him as if her life had depended on it. The image of his beautiful, witty colleague sprawled on his coffee table replayed in his memory. She had been so warm and intense and as eager as he had been. It was obvious that she had been under some kind of a spell to wantonly embrace him in such a way. He felt a delicious pressure filling his cock at the thought of her moaning and grinding herself against his pelvis.

Snape looked in the small, oval mirror above his cabinet. Even the fog could not change the fact that the image staring back at him was not pleasant *Another proof.*

Well, the ball was in her court. He would deal with the possibility that there was no charm when the time came. Granger was probably waiting to use the shower, and if she dared complain about the lukewarm temperature of the water, then she could just cast a bloody Warming Spell. Wandlessly.

He glanced at the small laboratory workbench that he had installed against the wall of his bathroom in order to grow different species of fungi. The moulds were doing quite well...sprouting long, odorous green filaments and spores...especially since the humidity levels had increased outside. He would even be able to provide a significant sample to the infirmary for antibiotic usage. It had never occurred to him to move it elsewhere for the duration of the night. It wasn't probably the kind of thing most hosts kept in their bathrooms... on purpose.

Snape sighed, wondering what else he should have put away before entertaining his colleague.

He paused in his doorway, imagining what his room would like through her eyes later on. The space was divided up simply. The bedroom area was on his right and furnished with sturdy dark oak furniture. There was a mirrored dresser straight ahead which matched the heavy headboard of his bed. His bed was positioned on the opposite wall and was covered by a thick blue and green quilt his mother had given him years ago. It looked dull and faded, probably due to the multiple Warming Spells the fabric had endured over the years.

Snape crossed to the dresser and picked up the smiling photograph of Lily Evans. He ran his finger over the wooden oval frame before opening his top drawer and stuffing it amongst his black socks. He rarely stared at it anymore, but the surface of his dresser looked strangely boring without her mischievous expression adding life to this sombre room.

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Hermione returned to Snape's living room through the side door of his bathroom. It had been a quick shower...compared to his, anyway...despite the fact that she had spent a few extra minutes admiring Snape's mold laboratory. *What a clever set up.* No matter how disgusting some of these organisms looked in their Petri dishes, she couldn't think of a better place than a dungeon bathroom to grow them.

She looked around the room again, feeling a tinge of loneliness creep inside of her as she sat down on Severus's sofa. He had ordered enough food to feed a family; really, he could have stayed with her. She had eaten a light fare here by herself...whole wheat crackers with brie and cranberries...and now she was expected to sit here waiting for his return? *Good Grief! What is taking him so long?* Suddenly, she was annoyed. He had been the one insistent that they draw up some conditions so as to not waste precious time while the charm was in effect and then proceeded to disappear like a hermit crab in his room. She lay on the sofa and attempted to read 'their' book, but nothing could hold her attention anymore. Snape was sorely mistaken if he thought she was going to wait here by herself again. The charm had set, and she wanted to experience this to the fullest.

She had tried her very best to research all aspects of the Snow Day charm, but there was nothing specifically published on the subject. The only information that she had come across was on the mechanism of aphrodisiac spells, and all the data showed that their effects were intensified if the partners remained in close physical proximity.



Goodness, how long before the charm started fading? She was already losing a bit of the buzz in her head. She still, obviously wanted to be with Severus. Very much so...and the urgency to touch him had not diminished one little bit. Really, come to think of it, she had been feeling like this ever since they had met in the Quidditch broom cupboard. She did not feel any differently than she had earlier today, except for the slight giddy feeling the wine had given her earlier. Then the thought struck her sharply, and she felt a confusing moment of dread and amusement at the same time.

Was there a possibility that the charm had not been set off at all?

She buried her face into her hands and bit back the incredulous chuckles of laughter rising up from within *Oh my God!*

No.

That was very unlikely. She enumerated a quick mental list in her head to prove to herself that the entire evening had not been a trick of the mind. First of all, she had never been this turned on before, nor been able to stay in the moment. Her mind had not drifted off to her work once. Also she had a bloody orgasm *during* sex. She found it difficult to pinpoint exactly how that meant a charm had set. She supposed that in a way the anticipation had always been more thrilling than the act itself. But this time she found that once it was actually happening, it wasn't disappointing. She wasn't either wandering off, or trying to reclaim the feeling of attraction by *thinking*.

*There. That's enough evidence.*

And besides, Severus had experienced the charm before...albeit briefly...but surely he would have known that it felt different and told her, right?

*What if I didn't give him a chance to? What if we were both so caught up in the moment? I did have my tongue pretty far down his throat.*

She stared at the sofa, the very same one where she had seen Snape replace his legendary control with fierce passion. Had she really been so turned on by the prospect of sleeping with Snape that she had taken those feelings to be the charm? She remembered how oddly sexy he had looked in his white shirt and socked feet and how she had wanted to disrobe him even before nine o'clock. The tantalizing conversation and the wine must have added to the effect of being under the charm. She shook her head in disbelief. Was it possible that she had been under a placebo effect instead of the real charm? Well, there was certainly evidence to support both claims. Either way, she didn't really care. As far as she was concerned, there were far less pleasant mistakes than this to be made.

Hermione decided that she needed to take charge of the situation or else the charm would fade; or alternatively, if there were no charm, Severus would regress to being all 'Miss-Grangery' with her again, and she found that this was something she never wanted to go back to.

With a new plan for the rest of the evening forming in her mind, Hermione took out her wand and changed the colour of her lingerie into a deep aqua marine blue that was a stronger shade than her earlier choice. She tied back her hair with a hairclip and climbed into her pewter coloured silk pyjamas before heading out to Snape's room. As she walked by the buffet, she decided to bring the food tray with the remainder of her dinner with her in case Robie thought she was displeased and decided to punish himself unnecessarily. She also reached for the bottle of Firewhisky, uncapped it, and took a small sip before placing it with the other items on the tray. She had no idea why she thought she needed that extra bit of reinforcement.

She knocked on the door softly, but did not wait for a reply. She turned the doorknob and pushed the heavy door open. A soft chill crawled up her back at the sight of Severus Snape sitting up in bed, reading the book. For a brief moment, the scene in front of her touched something deeper than any Aphrodisiac Charm ever could. She felt a craving, not only for his body, but for the domesticity of it all. Is this what it would be like if they were together for more than this night? Would she join him while he was immersed in a manuscript they were both reading? Would she crawl into his bed where they would share their ideas and argue until they kissed and made love? She wanted that scenario to be true. She wished she didn't have to pretend to be under some sort of a spell to touch him, to make him squirm, to make him smile, to become the person he thought about the most during the day.

He seemed frozen in place, his dark eyes locked on hers, unreadable.

She heard the wind angrily pelting against the window as if demanding to be let in. It appeared that the storm was still brewing furiously outside. Maybe, she thought vaguely, the charm had set after all, for she could not remember ever feeling this pull, this urge to completely seduce a man, on the inside and out.

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Snape lay in his bed and listened to the sound of the wind bouncing off the walls of his empty room, making it seem larger and colder than it actually was. When Granger entered his bedroom...wearing silk pyjamas and hair tied back with a clip...he felt his room warm up and shrink as if the storm were retreating.

He immediately berated himself for these foolish thoughts. As if Hermione Granger had any control over the weather!

And was she purposely trying to look young? Had he not hinted in the conditions that she should make an effort to appear her age? And why was she holding a basket of food in the crook of her arm and his bottle of Firewhisky in the other? Was she trying to beat her record and see how many conditions she could break at once? What next, cover his bed in rose petals? Foolish witch!

Gods, he wanted her! And she was coming towards him, and he was helpless to indicate that he was unsure about whether the charm had been triggered or not. Surely she would question him if she had doubts? Was there a possibility that the charm hadn't activated and that perhaps she wanted him anyway? He once again had to banish these ridiculous thoughts his mind kept trying to conjure up.

"Hi," she said simply. "Are you hungry? I have some food left, and I didn't want Robie to feel as if he had not done a good job preparing this for me. He's very sweet."

A multitude of scathing remarks...ranging from why he would want unappetizing, soggy cranberries, to the futility of becoming bosom friends with house-elves...sprang up in his mind, but they all seemed to evaporate when she set her loads onto his bedside table and gracefully removed her pyjama top and bottom to reveal a new set of blue-*ish* lingerie.

He reached over and poured himself a cap full of Firewhisky which he downed in one gulp while staring at the no-longer-too-young Granger.

She then proceeded to lift his quilt and crawl into the bed next to him. He liked it entirely too much. It occurred to him that his bed had never embraced the weight of another human being, his quilt had never warmed anyone else but him, and his sheets had never absorbed a feminine fragrance before. He felt obscurely pathetic. Why the hell had he never had a woman in his own bedroom before?

Before he had time to ponder the question further, Granger shifted to her side, facing him. He wondered if she could see how hard he was for her under that thin quilt of his. He saw her small hand reach under and make its way to...

Before he had time to react, her hand was on his waist touching him mercilessly.

He came up like a jack-in-the-box, uttering "Bloody Fuck!" as he gripped her wrist in a death grip. "Why did you do that?" he asked incredulously, still holding her tightly.

"Oh, I just wanted to see just how ticklish you were before I straddled you."

He wanted to say something, but found himself unable to articulate the number of stern warnings at the tip of his tongue. He had no idea why was he putting up with this kind of impertinence from her. She'd just fucking tickled him! And the simple fact that she was slowly pulling herself up on his body until she was astride him, the soft skin of her thighs pressing into his hips while her arse sat on his erection was proof enough that she had taken leave of her senses.

There was a shine of lantern light in her eyes as he looked at her from below. It seemed to him to reflect a touch of mischievousness and smugness. ~~He~~ usually disliked

this position. Apart from the awful apprehension of being touched continuously on his nervous waist, he hated being the one anchored to the bed. But this time, he gave in, savouring the feel of her hands and lips becoming intimate with different parts of his body. He had never been so aroused in his entire life, and tonight, he gave himself permission to relax and enjoy the view from below.

She bent her head down low, and her small hand ran up and down his chest softly, letting her fingers venture to his side firmly once in a while.

"Not too ticklish?" she whispered, her voice hoarse.

In reply, his hands palmed her arse and nudged her a bit forward so she could snuggle into a more comfortable spot than his pelvic bone. He was fascinated by her face and the graceful sweep of her bare neck and shoulders. A loose strand of curl trailed free on her cheekbone. He touched it clumsily, tucking it back in, then watched it drift stubbornly back onto her face.

Her fingers curled into his long, black hair; she bent down low and kissed him so completely that there was almost no doubt left that the charm was on. He kissed her back with equal fervour, and when her hands started caressing his shoulders, his chest and his back, it felt like his scars slid away with each sweeping motion of her hand on his skin.

"This has healed rather well," she announced, trailing a gentle finger up to the fine scars where his skin graft had faded. And before he had time to remind her of the conditions, she was kissing him there too.

"I believe you wanted to know if I could do other things than spew facts with my mouth?"

Her voice, the raspiness of it, sent tremors down his spine. He found the sight of her perched over him unbearably erotic. She hadn't even touched him ~~there~~ yet, and here he was concentrating hard not to come like a lovesick adolescent.

Her hands reached under the elastic band of his bottoms and tugged lightly on them to pull them down. He supposed he could raise his hips to help things along, but he found himself strangely unable to move as if any action might bring her back to reality.

"Here, help me remove these. Or are you going to let me do all the work?" she laughed breathlessly.

"You undressed me just fine earlier," he said as he pushed himself up slightly. She pulled his bottoms down quickly, and his raging hard on did not appear to be deterred by the cool draft travelling over his exposed skin.

A clear drop of fluid had gathered at the tip of his cock, and she reached to rub the head with the moisture. His stomach muscles contracted, and he gritted his teeth tightly, but a moan of pleasure escaped nonetheless. She smiled seductively and bent to lick the entire length of his cock, revealing her cleavage in the process. The charm was rendering this position more tolerable by the minute.

He felt himself relax further and acknowledged to himself that he might as well enjoy the present situation as it was unlikely to ever happen again. Let her do whatever she wished with him.

Apparently, what she wished was to torture him. Her mouth left him and lazily traced its way back to his inner thigh where she nibbled and licked, making her way back up to his torso; licking his nipples, his ribs and even his waist, her small tongue making him squirm.

"Granger!" he warned in the sternest voice he could muster. It was a rather admirable effort considering the fact that she was also delicately holding his balls between her palms.

"Sorry, I couldn't resist."

She did not look sorry at all. In fact, she looked quite pleased with herself as she meandered down his body kissing and touching. Her tiny movements set his senses on edge, awakening nerves he had not realized he possessed.

She licked the inside of his thigh, and he wondered briefly when that particular part of his body had become an erogenous zone. He shuddered.

"Do you like that?" she asked as she repeated the same teasing lick on his other thigh.

"Obviously," he croaked. Why was he answering her, anyway?

Then finally, *finally*, she made her way back down and took him fully in her mouth, her hand massaging his balls at the same time.

*Yes. Oh, fuck, yes. Let this go on.*

Breathing became difficult, and he was unable to tell her how fucking good it felt. She was a clever witch; she could figure it out. The wet sensation and pressure the inside of her mouth provided was beyond stimulating, but in the end, it was the pure enjoyment she seemed to be deriving from the act that sent him over the edge, had him coming in powerful jerks.

He lay there enjoying the remnants of his climax still pulsating through him. He felt her fall back to his side and begin playing with the hair on his chest.

Somewhere, in the back of his mind, he loosely decided that he would dedicate some time to figuring out a way to create large snowstorms that would send this woman back into his bed.

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Hermione could not remember having ever enjoyed herself this much while giving oral sex. Having Snape at her mercy had been a heady experience. She couldn't deny that it had been highly erotic to have the man who had hoodwinked so many quivering underneath her. However, that wasn't the reason why she felt so completely satisfied. A small part of her mind perhaps recognized how little pleasure he has allowed himself over the years and being the one to provide it made her feel strangely feminine, powerful and sexual all at once.

A few moments later...more to avoid the awkward silence than because she was actually hungry...she rose and brought the food tray to the bed. She took a saltine cracker, took a bite and offered one to Snape. Severus leaned in and swept the crumbs from his bed with the palm of his hand. The quilt fell back on his lap. "Granger, what do you think you're doing?"

"I'm trying to feed you, Severus. I have read that it is considered sexy to feed your lover in some parts of the world." She blushed at her own ramblings.

Hermione noticed his expression turn sour. "Is this a backhanded way of saying that I am grotesquely slim?" he asked more petulantly than a three-year-old asked to put his toys away.

She sighed. *Always on the defensive.*

"Severus," she said, putting the tray aside and then snuggling to his side. "Do you want to know how I see you?"

There was a long pause, and Hermione was inexplicably touched by the uncertain look on his face. Was this powerful wizard actually worried about his physical attributes? She pulled herself closer to him, her cheek resting on his chest, trying to find a way to tell him what her eyes saw.

Before she had a chance to choose her words, Snape attempted to distract her by changing the subject.

"If we are proceeding in numerical order, I believe it is *your* turn," he whispered softly into her hair. His hand found her arse and ever so lightly, barely touching her, he began to caress her in slow circular motion.

It worked. She was, indeed, completely distracted by the incredible feeling of tingly anticipation his almost-touch was having on her. It felt like the slow friction he was building up over her was being absorbed into her lower region. That was the weirdest sensation, almost like a tickling inside her pelvic area was gently branching out throughout her body.

*This has to be the charm!*

She couldn't help but rub herself against his hard thigh. The friction felt wonderful, and she wondered if she would come without him even touching her clit.

"Patience," he said as he pushed her off his leg and pulled her up towards him. Surely he knew by now that she wasn't the most patient individual around. She would have protested if he had not reached down to kiss her at the same time.

It was a slow kiss, lush and intimate from the moment of contact. She forgot the brief annoyance she had felt at being separated from his thigh.

Length to length, snuggled underneath the quilt, they continued embracing and tasting each other with their mouths and tongues. Their soft moans mingled together as the minutes stretched in the stillness of the cold dungeon.

Her hands started roaming again, looking for a way to tell him how much she liked this and how good it felt to be in his bed and in his arms and how she wished this night would never end.

"You feel so good," she said because anything else would be too much.

Snape gradually lowered her back down and slid a finger underneath the slim strap of her bra.

"Let's remove this," he said hoarsely. "It's still not the right colour."

Slowly, he loosened the hooks at the back, and Hermione wriggled free of the garment, letting it dangle off her fingers onto the floor. His eyes scanned her bare breasts, and she noticed his Adam's apple gliding up and down as he rose slowly to his knees. Hermione closed her eyes and pulled him towards her chest. She felt the strands of his hair on her nipples before she felt his tongue, and she felt the sensation build up and connect directly to her womb.

She opened her eyes to watch his face, but found herself staring at the part in his hair *Oh, goodness, is this really happening?*

He shifted down inch by inch...the palm of his hand still caressing her breast...until he was at the foot of the bed.

His hands spread her legs apart. His fingers found her sex and smoothed the slippery wetness over her throbbing clit, stroking it gently with the pad of his thumb. She trembled and parted her legs wider as a tingling sort of heat spread down her legs and into her belly.

"More," she managed to gasp when his fingers left her.

"Greedy."

He moved, and then it was his mouth on her swollen clit. She inhaled loudly when his fingers spread her folds apart and his tongue found her sex. He kept his stroke slow and steady and with just the right pressure.

"Yes, perfect," she moaned. *Don't you dare stop!* Instinct made her keep that part to herself.

He didn't stop, and then the heat grew until it controlled her every nerve. It felt like her flesh was tingling everywhere, and when she felt the sensation even permeate into her head, she let the pleasure wash over her. Her body shuddered and pulsed in a releasing spasm of warmth.

Hermione savoured the moment for a few more minutes before looking at the man curled up between her legs.

It struck her that she had no idea what he was thinking despite having shared such levels of physical intimacy. The only thing she could be sure of was the fact that he was most definitely aroused again. He was lean, and his erection stood out against his pale, strong thighs. He was beautifully erotic. But she could never tell him that. Instead, she leaned forward and buried her nose in the soft strands of his hair and kissed his warm head at the part...it was the finest texture of any she'd ever felt. She liked the clean smell of it.

"Your hair is so soft," she said. He snorted.

"Did we not agree to forego the mention of infamous hair?" He pulled himself up to lie beside her.

She smiled and reached for him. They still had a few hours left, after all...

He closed his eyes and groaned softly when she ran his cock through her hands. His head dropped back while she wondered at her power to bring such abandon to a man so untrusting and guarded.

He raised himself up and leaned on his arms. He hovered above, and she guided him to her entrance. This time, when his body slipped inside of hers, it was with great deliberation. Their coupling was completely different from the first time. It was rich with slowness, unfrenzied, and almost studious. Snape was observing her through his hair, making the entire thing more intimate, and making her doubt once more the likelihood of the charm being active. It was *she* he desired.

As he climaxed inside of her, she held him tight, wondering how this entire night would affect them in the future.

And after a while, they lay exhausted together. Hermione's eyes closed for a moment to savour their last few moments together. She felt deliciously sated and sleepy. She would make herself go back to her own quarters (before being reminded of 'sleeping arrangements as per previous arrangement') in a few minutes, as daybreak would arrive soon. She never heard Snape's resigned sigh when she burrowed herself cozily against his side.

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The wind outside was still whistling loudly, and the air in his room seemed more frigid than usual. Severus lay very still, hoping it wouldn't wake Granger. She was lying on her side facing him. Some of her hair had overflowed onto his pillow, and if he turned his head, he'd be nestled in it. The quilt was tucked under her armpits, leaving her arms and shoulders bare. He noticed the fine goosebumps on her flesh, and he felt the need to warm her up...only because he refused to be blamed for giving her laryngitis. But before he had a chance to act, he felt her stirring, stretching languorously as she sat up slightly in the bed.

"Oh, I'm sorry. It looks like I slept here for a bit," she said drowsily. She leaned over, her hands searching blindly for her pyjamas under his quilt. "It's freezing in here!"

His arm wrapped itself around her waist and pulled her back down onto the bed. He quickly convinced himself that it was only for the extra warmth her body provided.

"As usual, you have broken nearly every rule you have been presented with," he said. "I see no reason to stop now."

Her sleepy eyes suddenly lit up. "Does that mean I can now ask you about lacewing flies?" she teased with a satisfied smile. "Later," he said and gave her a meaningless kiss on the forehead. Surely she wouldn't misinterpret it as affection? She smiled again and grabbed his hand and interlaced her fingers with his, settling back down with her back to him. And since she was still holding on to his hand, he had no choice but to draw her spine to him and to put an arm around her, pulling her into his warm curve. He went to sleep that way.

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Hermione awakened to the feel of their warm skin touching and Snape's hand lying relaxed flat on her belly. It felt surreal to not only be in Snape's chambers, but also in his bed, cocooned against him. How in the world was she supposed to pretend that this had never happened when all she wanted was to do it again? It was close to seven in the morning, and she had no desire whatsoever to get up and leave Severus, but she couldn't very well be seen coming out of his chambers by errant students, and besides, the charm had technically ended almost an hour ago. Also, even though it was the start of the weekend, teachers were still expected to attend breakfast. However, the main reason why she should make a quick exit was that, knowing Snape, the awkwardness of the situation would have him erecting walls between them faster than she could get dressed. She couldn't handle any hurtful remarks right now. It was best to leave him now and let him replay their night in his memory without the pressure of having to make small talk and go to breakfast together. Yes, it was best to leave on a high note. Resigned, she found her pyjamas and dressed as quietly as possible.

"Sneaking off?" inquired Snape.

She took her wand and lit the lantern so she could better see his expression.

"I have to go," she replied hesitantly. Should she try to explain her reasoning or just let things unfold naturally?

"I am not stopping you," replied Severus with a slight sneer. She didn't like where this was headed. Perhaps it would be helpful if she clarified her position and got straight to the point.

"I'd like to do this again, Severus."

"Well, yes, as spring is just around the corner, I am sure there will be plenty of opportunities for further precipitation of this magnitude soon."

She sighed inwardly. The sarcasm was back, just as she had predicted.

"Do you really think we need the snow?" She answered with a small laugh. "Perhaps we could try a different kind of climate change." The cool draft of the dungeon was making her shiver. "Next time will be in my quarters," she added.

"Fine. I will make sure to arrive eons in advance."

She rolled her eyes and then bent to awkwardly kiss him on the cheek. "I'll talk to you later."

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Snape leaned back against the pillows, stretched out with both hands beneath his head and extinguished the light Granger had left on above his head. Not so worried about the environment when busy running away, was she? He did not care, he told himself somewhat convincingly, that she had left so abruptly and without an explanation as to where she had to be so early on a *Saturday* morning. It was just as well as she had saved him the trouble of sending her on her way later on.

Still, he felt a strange longing when he noticed her undergarment crumpled at the foot of his bed. He tried to chase the feeling away. Merlin...the girl didn't even know her colours! Really, he had no time for such nonsense. Hermione Granger obviously had a bad influence on his self-control.

But what exactly did she mean by 'Do we really need the snow?' If she suspected that there had been no charm, did that mean she wanted to *døthis* again with *him*? He felt his heart stutter at the thought, but then decided that last night's wine was giving him heartburn.

Well, she had been the one to seek him out in the first place. He supposed that if, indeed, she wanted a repeat performance, he might consider it.

Truth be told, this had been the best shag he'd ever had. He wondered what would it be like to have this on a regular basis.

Despite the complete darkness in his room, he could still see her face, her eyes, her crazy hair and the way she had looked when they had parted. He closed his eyes, forcing his hands to stay behind his head instead of running them over the empty half of the bed. Loneliness was a thing he had not only accepted a long time ago, but something he also craved. But now the emptiness of the word crept up, and he concluded that perhaps there was something to be said for a certain amount of companionship.

He was only forty-two years old, and apparently he was difficult kill. Had he lived quarter of his life? A half? Had he forty-two more years to sleep in this bed alone? It had not been unpleasant to share it with someone.

Perhaps he should get himself a... girlfriend. A woman with whom he could maybe share meals, discuss ideas and have regular intercourse without having to depend on the weather forecast to do so. Yes, that's what he needed, someone who was intelligent and could hold her own in a conversation, someone who would accept some of his lesser points, someone who was independent and had curly brown hair and curious brown eyes.

He sighed deeply.

Well, he supposed she was not the worst choice for a candidate. She had already snooped around his quarters, seen his mould lab, charmed his house-elf... and now just looking at the book they were both reading made him feel lonely and out of sorts.

But how could he even go about setting up such a thing with Granger? He had no idea.

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Two hours later, Hermione made her way to the Great Hall for breakfast. She felt a lot more nervous than she had anticipated. The truth was, ever since she had left Snape this morning, her mind had been trying to conjure up a way to be with him again before they had time to regress to their former type of relationship.

He liked her, of that she was sure now, but the imbecile would surely ignore his own instinct and insist that they carry on as if nothing had ever happened. The fact that she had no plan would not stop her from seeking him out if she saw him at the breakfast table.

Determined, she pushed open the large side doors of the dining room a little too forcefully. Several of the staff members turned towards her. Her eyes scanned the table, found Snape and stopped. She waited for eye contact before she said a silent *hello* with her eyes. His expression, as expected, remained impassive, but it seemed to her that perhaps his cheeks had coloured slightly. Unfortunately, there was no seat available next to him, and she had to sit next to Pomona Sprout.

"Sit, sit, Hermione," said her older colleague jovially. "There's no need to look so gloomy; you're still young. I'm sure you'll get to experience the Snow Day charm at one point during your tenure at Hogwarts."

She smiled distractedly at the Herbology professor.

So, *the charm wasn't triggered*. She wondered if that was why Severus looked so discomfited. Did he think she would blame him for not saying anything? Had she not

hinted...quite strongly, in her opinion...that they didn't need snow to be together?

From the corner of her eye, she saw him stand to leave the Great Hall. Without care for her untouched breakfast, she stood abruptly to go after him, leaving a stunned Pomona in the middle of gossipy chatter about who had slept with whom last night despite the fact that the Snow Charm had never activated.

The long hall was empty, and she called out to him, "Wait!"

He stopped in front of the large windows, and when she was near enough, she blurted out, "They're forecasting six millimetres of rain and dense fog for tomorrow night. I think we should partner up."

He looked at her for a long moment before smirking and replying, "Are you ready to discuss conditions, Professor Granger?"

The unmistakable softness in his eyes made Hermione's heart skip a beat.

This time, it was she who led him to the Quidditch broom cupboard.

~~~The End~~~

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A/N: My endless gratitude to Lariope for the alpha, the beta, and all the laughs while writing this fic. "Awww..."

Thanks to all of you for reading despite the long gaps between updates. You have no idea how much your kind words and support have helped me. (((many hugs)))

This chapter is for the lovely Zucca. Congrats on your wedding! :D