

The Ghost and Professor Granger

by blue artemis

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Hermione just wanted to be alone. She was turning twenty-five this year. Today, in fact, although no one had acknowledged it. She wasn't sure she wanted anyone to know how old she was anyway.

Molly treated her like she was the most spinstery of spinsters, a blue-socking no one would ever want. Well, it wasn't her fault. Just because she didn't want to celebrate the death of Voldemort in bed with Ron should not have meant that she would never end up in bed with ANYONE. He, of course, found a willing partner in Lavender, and well, forgetting one crucial thing meant they were married quite quickly after that. They were currently on their fifth (or was it sixth?) child.

She was the current Charms Professor at Hogwarts; she had earned her mastery just as Professor Flitwick was retiring, and he had the ability to name his successor in his contract. Against Headmaster Snape's wishes, he named Hermione.

The odds were against her, but she managed to become a very popular Professor. She was tough but fair, and showed no house preferences, making her a favorite with the Slytherins, of all things. Their Head of House, Draco Malfoy, usually was a good friend. This evening, however, he seemed to find it personally amusing to pick at her about the fact that she had no romantic prospects, making dinner unbearable. Hermione finally had enough and left the table before dessert, running along the corridors, not paying very close attention to where she was going. She left behind a couple of very startled Slytherins and quite a few worried students. Professor Granger usually was not that easy to rile.

When Hermione finally stopped, she was unsure of where she was. The stone looked, well, older than the rest of the castle. There was a door that seemed to Hermione to be glowing. She walked toward it, and it swung open at her touch.

"Who is there? Tell me who you are!"

"I am Professor Hermione Granger, sir. Who are you?"

"I don't know any Grangers," the ghost said as it materialized. "When are you from?"

"When?"

"Yes, girl, when. You sound British, so I don't need to know where."

"It is currently the year 2004, sir. If I may ask, who are you?"

"I am Salazar Slytherin, girl. What do you teach?"

"I teach Charms. But I love Transfiguration, Arithmancy and Potions as well."

"A woman after my own heart. You like to learn, girl? You like books?"

"I love books, sir. Some say I love books too much, but I don't think that is possible."

"That does explain why you found this place."

Hermione looked around; it was a small yet comfortable sitting room, but she couldn't see what the ghost of the founder was talking about. Slytherin stood back, a small smirk on his lips. Hermione began to examine the room more closely when she noticed the small snakes adorning the lamp on the back wall. She went up to them and ran her fingers over them when, all of a sudden, the lamp turned and the wall melted away, revealing a library. And what a library: it was Slytherin's personal library. Hermione was in heaven. There were hundreds of books there, many of them thought to have been lost to the ages.

She turned to the ghost and thanked him profusely for the opportunity to study his personal books.

"What good do those do moldering down here with no one to appreciate them? But only those who share my love for knowledge would ever find this place. So, don't worry, girl. You are always welcome, and you will always find this place when you need it. Now, tell me why you were so upset."

Hermione sat down on the surprisingly comfortable settee and told the ghost her story.

"Well, girl, it sounds like the boy was just that, and not worthy of you. As for the other men in your life, well, if they cannot appreciate you, I certainly can. Too bad you aren't a ghost!"

Hermione smiled at that. She asked if she could borrow a couple of the books and promised to return soon. She realized that she wasn't too far from the Head of Slytherin's quarters, and that amused her. She began the walk back to her rooms with a smile on her face.

As she turned the corner to the staircase that led up from the dungeons, she ran into a pair of frantic men.

"Hermione, I'm so sorry. I didn't know it was your birthday. I didn't mean any of it." Draco couldn't seem to apologize enough. His demeanor reminded Hermione of a puppy who had been caught chewing on a pair of Jimmy Choos. He turned to look at the man with him, and at the look on his face, walked off quickly, stating that he had to check on his house before curfew.

"I have informed Professor Malfoy that he is to cover all of your rounds for the remainder of the month. It is as close to detention as I could give him."

At that Hermione laughed out loud. "There was no need, Headmaster. I just needed to be reminded that I have worth all my own, no matter whether anyone finds me attractive or not."

"Of course you are attractive. Why would you think otherwise? You are intelligent, your eyes sparkle when you are interested in what you are saying or hearing and you are built quite nicely. Women should look like women, not boys."

Hermione's smile just got brighter. "Thank you for the wonderful birthday gift, sir."

"Severus, girl. Call me Severus. You've been working for me for three years. You don't have to call me sir."

Hermione looked up at the usually dour man whose last comment reminded her greatly of the ghost she had just met. Before she could second guess herself, she stood on her toes and kissed him on the cheek. She then started off to her rooms, happier than she had been in years.

Birthday gift? And where did she get those books? "Professor Granger!"

Hermione turned around. "Hermione, please."

"Hermione. Let me walk you to your quarters." His long strides brought him to her side quickly. He held his arm out to the bemused witch, who took it as they headed for her rooms.

Years later, Hermione would remember that very moment as the beginning of the best part of her life.

Prompt from HermioneDiggory: B. Hermione just wants to be alone when she unexpectedly encounters the ghost of Salazar Slytherin.

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