

# Hermione's Happy Housewarming Party

*by linlawless*

Hermione throws herself a housewarming party, and even Severus is surprised when he shows up.

## A one-shot

*Chapter 1 of 1*

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*A/N: Thanks to my pal Atuliel for popping this little plot bunny into my head, and for the fabulous banner above. This is decidedly AU as of OOTP, considering all the people who aren't dead ...*

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Hermione took one last look around as she put the finishing touches on the food and drink tables. The hors d'oeuvres were elegantly arrayed around the champagne punch fountain on the buffet. A side table had petit fours and an assortment of Honeyduke's finest sweets. When she was satisfied, she cast a quick spell over everything to prevent anyone except her adding anything to either the food or the drinks. Who knew what mischief the Weasley twins might make otherwise?

And it wasn't just Fred and George she had to be concerned with, these days. Since the end of the war three years ago, Harry and Ron had made it their primary mission in life to have as much fun as they possibly could. No serious, boring Auror training for them, as everyone had expected not yet, anyway. No, instead, they had decided that they would play professional Quidditch for a while, and they had both fulfilled Ron's lifelong dream when they had been signed to play for the Chudley Cannons.

They were quite the dashing men-about-town, too. Hermione had remained close with both of them, although she didn't see them as often as any of them would have liked, and Hermione had long since given up trying to keep track of all their various girlfriends. There was no point, as none of them lasted longer than a few weeks, so by the time Hermione saw her friends again, the women were new again, too. Even in the off-season, Ron and Harry were busy. To keep themselves occupied, they helped the twins out at Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes and in so doing, they had apparently discovered a heretofore unknown affinity for outlandish pranks like those the twins had been perpetrating for years. Usually, Ron and Harry either pranked each other or worked as a team to prank Fred and/or George. However, it wasn't unusual for any person in the vicinity innocent or not to get caught in the crossfire.

This was exactly what had happened last week, when Hermione had dropped into the shop at lunchtime to invite them all to this party. By the time she had left, she had required a stop at St. Mungo's to have the Gibberish Hex reversed. As usual, Fred and George hadn't considered that she would have found that particular hex a lot funnier if it had worn off on its own before she had to go back to work. Fortunately, Ginny was training at St. Mungo's to become a Healer, and she had immediately guessed what had happened. She had bumped Hermione to the front of the queue, taken care of the problem, and had her on her way within minutes.

It was good to have friends, Hermione thought happily now, as she looked around her living room.

She was thrilled with the very idea that she owned this place. She couldn't believe everything had fallen into place for her to purchase her first home at the tender age of twenty-two. And it was the very house she had loved since she was a child the 'fairy-tale house,' she used to call it, because it was a gracious old place with turrets and a

tower room, and it always made her think of the story of Rapunzel. The tower room was now her cozy office, which she had carefully warded for privacy tonight. She had almost given in to temptation and made it her bedroom, but it was really too small for that, and anyway, that was the easiest room to keep private a necessity since she had some dangerous texts as well as some top-secret papers in there.

The rest of the house was equally charming, she thought, with three bedrooms and two baths, along with a den, a dining room, and the kitchen. By rights, she probably shouldn't have been able to afford the place at all, but her job in the Department of Mysteries paid extremely well, and the house had been in serious need of repair when she had purchased it, so she had gotten it at a very reasonable price. Fortunately, she was able to use magic for most of the repairs otherwise, the place wouldn't have been habitable for years, even if Hermione had poured every galleon, sickle, and knut she earned into the place.

She had been working at the Department of Mysteries for three years, ever since she had graduated Hogwarts a few months after the war had ended in Voldemort's death. Happily, Hermione's closest friends had all survived, and most of them would be here tonight. She had also invited many of the surviving members of the Order of the Phoenix, fully expecting most of them to decline.

But, to her surprise, most of them had accepted her invitation. Moody had declined, and Snape had not responded, so she assumed he wasn't coming, either they had probably each assumed the other would be there and decided not to come on that basis, she thought. Or maybe they were both just anti-social. It was probably, objectively speaking, better that Snape didn't come. Sirius had accepted his invitation, and despite the work they had done together in their common efforts to bring down the Dark Lord, they still, as far as Hermione could tell, despised one another as much as they ever had.

So the party would certainly be more peaceful with only one of them there.

Everyone else should get along reasonably well, Hermione thought, reviewing the guest list one more time. In addition to Harry, most of the Weasleys (except for Percy), and Sirius, her invitation had been accepted by McGonagall, Dumbledore, Lupin and Tonks, Podmore, Luna, Neville, Dean, Seamus, Lavender, and Padma and Parvati. Even Minister Shacklebolt had promised to drop in for a while. Several guests were planning to bring dates, too, and Hermione hoped the house was big enough to hold everyone comfortably.

Glancing at her watch, Hermione realized she'd better hurry if she wanted to be ready by the time people started arriving. She had done her hair and some light makeup earlier, so now she hurried upstairs and changed into her new dress. She had seen it in the window at a Muggle shop and had simply had to have it. It was a deep, dark, midnight blue, and it skimmed over her curves, making her look, in her own considered opinion, just a little bit like a 1940s pinup girl.

She was just smoothing a stray tendril back into place when the doorbell rang. Her heart leaping with excitement, she hurried to answer the door.

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The party was in full swing by the time Severus arrived. He stood on the porch and debated one last time about going home now, without even ringing the doorbell. He had already argued with himself for the entire week since the owl had arrived with the invitation, though, and hadn't he decided that he would make an appearance, just because no one would expect it of him?

He was certain that she didn't really want him there why should she, considering the way he had treated her throughout her school career, and even, to some degree, afterward? He had tossed the invitation aside with a skeptical snort when it had first arrived, vowing that he would not attend a social event at which several of his least favorite people were sure to be present.

But the invitation had kept nudging at his mind he had been unable to ignore it. If she *really* hadn't wanted him there, a traitorous voice had whispered, she could have not sent him an invitation at all, couldn't she?

Besides, when had he ever let what Hermione 'Know-It-All' Granger wanted him to do to govern his behavior?

Moreover, he had to admit to a certain degree of curiosity, despite his determination not to care. He wondered if she was still as annoying as she had been as a student. He wondered if she approached her job with the same intense desire for perfection and recognition that she had always applied to her studies.

He wondered if she still wanted to know *everything*.

He hadn't seen Hermione Granger or her two irritating best friends in almost three years. Not since their Leaving Feast, really, except the occasional photo in the *Daily Prophet*, because despite Albus's best efforts, he had managed to avoid the last two annual Ministry parties celebrating the fall of the Dark Lord. The first year, he had argued that he was still not fully recovered from that nasty snake bite, and although Albus had looked at him suspiciously, he couldn't really argue the point, as Severus hadn't yet even returned to work at the time.

The second year, he had managed to sneak a few drops of Vomit-Inducing Potion, purchased from Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes while wearing a glamour, into his own tea the afternoon of the party. Albus could hardly argue that he should attend in spite of how sick he clearly was (although Severus was fairly certain that Albus knew exactly what had made him sick).

For this party, though, Severus had made no real attempt to get out of attending. He had kept meaning to send his owl declining the invitation, but he had never quite managed to sit down and write the note. So now, he found himself standing on the porch, reminding himself that it would be rude to just ignore the invitation entirely. Which shouldn't matter to him in the least usually he liked to maintain his unpleasant image. But somehow, it did.

He adjusted the high collar of his black linen shirt and then smoothed the front of his trousers one more time before ringing the doorbell.

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Hermione glanced up to see who had arrived, and started when she saw it was Severus Snape. *Great*, she thought, a bit uncharitably. *Now that's another set of people I have to keep away from one another.* She automatically glanced around to see if she could spot Sirius. Fortunately, he was occupied talking to Lupin and Tonks, and didn't appear to have noticed Severus's arrival.

She couldn't believe how fast things had begun to go downhill. It was all Ginny's fault, really. Hermione couldn't imagine why her friend had thought it would be a *good* idea to bring Draco Malfoy as her date to a party where four of her brothers and her ex-boyfriend, all of whom just happened to hate Draco, were sure to be. Hermione had already had to use some fast magic to keep them from killing one another. Things were calm at the moment, but that, she suspected, was only because neither Harry nor any of the Weasley brothers had noticed that Ginny and Draco had slipped upstairs together. She tried not to think about what they were doing up there she could only hope that the wards on her own bedroom and her office had held firm.

At this point, she was almost considering putting a Laughing Draught into the punch herself. Otherwise, she wasn't sure that her beautiful new house wouldn't get broken beyond even magical repair by the hexes that seemed imminent.

And now Severus Snape was here, and she had to somehow keep him away from Sirius, whilst still keeping Draco apart from Harry or any of the Weasleys.

She was tempted sorely tempted to cast a few protective charms on the house, sneak off to her tower room, and let everyone survive the party, or not, without her. Instead, she squared her shoulders, grabbed an extra glass of champagne punch, pasted a smile on her face, and headed over to greet her newest guest.

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Severus watched Granger approach, looking strained. Apparently, her party wasn't going quite as well as she had hoped. He absently registered the changes in her. She had somehow managed to tame her wild hair, and she had filled out rather nicely into womanly curves. Despite himself, he found he quite approved her choice of dress.

The thought startled him so much that he suddenly regretted coming at all, and wished he could leave without talking to anyone. But then she reached him and said,

"Professor! Thank you for coming. I'm honored that you put aside your dislike of social gatherings to come here." She held out one of the glasses she held. "Champagne punch?" she asked.

He took it, mainly to have something to do with his hands. "Thank you. I appreciate the invitation, and the drink," he said cordially, raising the drink in silent toast.

She looked surprised, then her posture relaxed slightly and she said, "You're welcome." She paused. Her voice was slightly anxious when she said, "Er, Professor, I'd appreciate it greatly if you could manage to avoid fighting with Sirius, just for tonight."

He raised an eyebrow. "The mutt is here?" He glanced around, spying his nemesis in the far corner.

"*Please*," Hermione beseeched, and unbidden, an image sprang to Severus's mind of what Hermione would look like begging a lover to give her pleasure. He shoved the unexpectedly enticing mental picture aside as she continued speaking. "I'm having enough trouble keeping Harry and the Weasleys from killing Draco. I can't possibly manage any more animosity than that."

Severus cleared his throat awkwardly as he continued to force the surprisingly entrenched, very inappropriate image from his mind. "I'm more surprised that you invited Malfoy than that you invited me," he said.

She looked surprised. "Well, of course I invited you. You're a respected member of the Order, and believe it or not, I sometimes enjoy talking to you. I did not, however, invite Draco. I simply made the mistake of telling Ginny she could bring a date."

Severus was still digesting her assertion that she sometimes enjoyed talking to him. "When?"

She looked confused. "When what?"

"When do you enjoy talking to me?"

She gave him a measured look, as if trying to decide if he really wanted to know, or if he was setting her up for a sarcastic putdown. After a moment, she must have been satisfied, because she said, "When you get involved enough in discussing an intellectual issue that you forget to be nasty."

He suddenly recalled the conversation she was talking about. It had happened when she was assisting him in brewing some potions for the hospital wing in anticipation of the Final Battle. She had asked a question about an article she had read in *Potions Quarterly*, and he had been just distracted enough by the potion he was brewing that he had answered seriously, rather than snapping at her sarcastically as he normally would have done. They had debated the issue for nearly an hour before they had, surprisingly enough, come to an agreement.

When he had thought about it later, he had been surprised at how much he had enjoyed it. Now, he said, "Yes, that can be quite acceptable."

He suddenly realized that that was the real reason he was here. He was stunned to realize that, far from finding Hermione Granger annoying, he actually, after all this time, *wanted* to see her, to talk to her. He actually *liked* her.

He felt himself flush, and he was tempted to say something rude just to put himself back on comfortable, familiar footing. Just as he opened his mouth to do so, though, he realized that he really didn't want to ruin whatever slim chance he had at a pleasant interaction with her. He said abruptly, "You should call me Severus."

She looked startled. "Severus?" she repeated, sounding confused.

"Yes, that *is* my name, and I'm not your professor anymore."

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Hermione stared at her former Professor. She thought she wouldn't have been more shocked as if he had suddenly started singing karaoke. Was he really suddenly going to treat her as an equal? She gaped at him for a moment, then decided to go with the flow. "All right, Severus, if you'll call me Hermione."

He didn't smile, exactly, but something flashed in his eyes, and she had the impression he was pleased. He said, "All right, Hermione."

There was an awkward pause, then she asked, "What have you been doing the last few years? I didn't see you at the Anniversary Balls."

She had the feeling he wanted to snort, but instead he merely said, "I was not well."

She looked at him skeptically. "Either year? Why do I have the feeling that tales of your infirmity were somewhat exaggerated?"

His lip twitched, and Hermione thought he suppressed a laugh. "Perhaps because you have always been just slightly brighter than the average witch?"

She couldn't help it, she laughed. "Well, in that case, I'm doubly flattered that you're here." She could have sworn his cheeks turned just a little bit pink, and he opened his mouth to respond.

Unfortunately, whatever he might have said was lost when someone stumbled into Hermione, nearly knocking her off her feet. Fortunately, though, Severus managed to catch her and right her again. She smiled her thanks, and was about to speak again when a very drunken Harry slurred, "'Mione! Besht houshwarmin' party ever! Love the punch!"

Hermione rolled her eyes. "I can see that, Harry," she said patiently. "Where's Ron?"

Harry waved an arm, almost hitting poor Luna Lovegood in the ear. "Over talkin' t' Lavender an' P'vati." He waved again, this time nearly unbalancing himself. As it was, he wound up twirling around and coming face-to-face with Severus for the first time. "Oi!" he said, trying to right himself with minimal success. "Pr'fesshor Shnape! Wha're you doin' here? You don' like 'Mione 'nuff to come to her party!" He swayed alarmingly, then narrowed his bleary eyes. "You aren' plannin' ta hex anyone, are you?"

"No, Mister Potter, I most certainly am not planning to hex anyone," Severus replied, looking and sounding quite put-upon. "However, plans can change," he muttered as an afterthought, glaring at Harry.

Harry stared uncomprehendingly for a long moment, then started laughing too loudly. "You're funny, Pr'fesshor!" he exclaimed. "I gotta go tell Ron he won' believe you're funny!" He turned and stumbled away.

Hermione watched him go, then looked cautiously back at Snape *no, Severus*, she reminded herself. He was watching her, she found, and she could feel her cheeks go warm under his regard. She said awkwardly, "Sorry about that. He's usually not so ..."

She let her voice trail off and shrugged, realizing that she really wasn't all that surprised at Harry's condition. Neither was Severus, apparently, as he said, "If the *Daily Prophet* is to be believed, he is." Before Hermione could defend Harry, Severus continued, "Regardless, it's hardly your fault that Potter exhibits poor manners, when he bothers to exhibit any manners at all."

She couldn't help smiling a little at his disapproving tone. "True, but on the other hand, he usually holds his drink a bit better than that. He rarely knocks anyone down." She smiled. "Thanks for catching me." She was shocked to hear a slightly flirtatious edge to her tone, and she felt her cheeks warm even more.

His lip twitched again, and he said, "It was my pleasure, Hermione." Something in his voice sounded just a tiny bit seductive, and Hermione was fascinated by the reaction

of her body to his voice. She had convinced herself over the years that his voice couldn't possibly have ever turned her on the way her memory insisted it had.

Apparently, she had remembered correctly, after all.

The only question now was what, if anything, she wanted to do about it.

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Severus found himself observing Hermione's flushed face with rapt attention. His mind was seemingly determined to linger on inappropriate thoughts tonight, because now he wondered just how much of her would be that delightful shade of pink, if he could see beneath her very attractive dress. The thought sent a surge of energy to his groin, and he worked to keep from reacting visibly to the fact that he was suddenly semi-erect in the middle of a crowd of people in her living room.

He wondered if her flush was due merely to the warmth in the room, or if she might perhaps be finding him even a fraction as attractive as he was finding her.

He tried to tell himself not to get his hopes up young, attractive, intelligent, powerful witches simply didn't go for old, unattractive, antisocial ex-spies. He thought to make his excuses and leave, but she suddenly asked, "So, how have you been?"

He started, realizing only then that an awkward silence had fallen before she spoke. He cleared his throat and said, "Fine." Then he realized that he ought to say more than that, or she would leave him to his own devices, so he added, "The usual." He was uncomfortable talking about himself, so he quickly changed the subject. "You seem to be doing well. You're at the Department of Mysteries, I hear?"

"Yes, since I finished Hogwarts."

Just then, Albus interjected, "Severus! So glad you're getting out and enjoying yourself!"

Severus frowned slightly. He bit back the denial that was on the tip of his tongue he always had the urge to contradict Albus's cheerful optimism, but he was enjoying himself, and if he said he wasn't, Hermione might believe him. She might leave him to his own devices while she went to speak with her other guests.

He didn't really want to give her up at the moment, so he said, "Well, as I knew Miss Granger would be present at her own party, I felt safe in assuming there would be some intelligent conversation to be had. Don't expect me to attend gatherings at which there is no guarantee of such entertainment." There, he had managed to compliment Hermione without setting any precedent for future socializing, and Hermione looked rather pleased with his comment. He watched silently as she exchanged pleasantries with Albus, and then with Minerva, who joined them after a moment. When Minerva turned to greet him, he forced himself to greet her civilly, although he really wanted to talk to Hermione some more, without all these people around.

Several other people came over to talk to Hermione, and Severus was a bit concerned that he wouldn't get a chance to speak with her again. After several moments, however, he realized that, just as he was resisting any movement that would shift him away from her, she was carefully ensuring that none of the people who approached her ended up positioned between them.

Maybe he had reason to hope that she was a little bit attracted to him, after all. He decided to test the theory. The youngest Weasley boy was trying to convince Hermione to come and join whatever drinking game he and Potter were about to start. She had politely refused once, but Weasley asked again, with a grating, pleading whine in his tone. Severus decided she was being too polite, so he took a step closer, touched her arm lightly and bent close to ask, "You look thirsty, Hermione. May I escort you to the refreshment table?"

She smiled happily and replied, "That would be most appreciated, Severus." Turning to Weasley, she said, "I'll catch up with you later, Ron." Severus savored the stunned look on Weasley's face for a moment, then guided Hermione toward the champagne punch.

When they arrived, he solicitously refilled her drink, then decided to see if he could maneuver her into some time alone with him. "Congratulations on the house," he said sincerely, looking around. "What I've seen of it is charming."

"Thank you," she said happily. "I was so fortunate to get it. Would you like to see the rest of it?"

That was even easier than he had hoped. "Yes, I believe I would," he said, trying not to look too triumphant.

She tucked her arm through his and said, "Great!" She led him through the kitchen and dining room, and he made appropriate appreciative noises, even though he really wasn't paying much attention to the house. She deftly led him through the crush of people to the stairs, returning greetings cheerfully, but never really stopping or allowing anyone to draw her into conversation.

When they reached the first floor, she surprised him by not pausing there. Instead, she headed to the end of the hall, where she took down some complex wards and said, "Come up to my office. It's my favorite room in the house."

He followed her up the stairs and found that they were in a tower room with floor to ceiling bookshelves. The music and the buzz of conversation had largely receded, and it seemed peaceful up here. He glanced out one of the windows and realized that the house overlooked a small park. After a moment, he said, "I can see why you like it so much."

Turning to face her, he found that she was closer than he had realized, and he had to grasp her arms to avoid knocking her over. He felt a new surge of awareness at her nearness, and he wondered what she would do if he kissed her.

She stared up at him for a long moment, as if she were trying to read his expression. He waited, resisting the urge to throw caution to the wind, until suddenly, she asked, "Do you feel it, too, Severus?"

Did she mean ... ? He cleared his suddenly dry throat, then forced a one word question past his lips. "It?"

She flushed again, but that Gryffindor courage, or recklessness, or whatever it was, reared up, and she said, "I desperately want to kiss you right now, Severus. Do you want to kiss me?"

He stared for another long moment, hardly daring to believe he had heard her right, then slowly nodded. For once, he was unabashedly grateful for that Gryffindor spirit. He found his voice again. "Desperately," he said.

Her eyes widened, and then she suddenly lunged forward, throwing her arms around his neck, and stretched up to kiss him.

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Hermione couldn't believe she was kissing Severus, and even more, she was amazed at how he was kissing her back.

She had been kissed before, certainly, and had always found it rather pleasant, but she now understood, as she never had before, that kisses should never be anything so tepid as "pleasant." This kiss was pure heat pure passion. His lips moving on hers were more intoxicating than the champagne punch, more exciting than opening a new book for the first time.

His tongue slid along the seam of her lips, coaxing her to open for him, and she immediately granted him access. She could taste the punch he had sipped earlier, and she moaned as he pulled her closer so that her body was flush against his. She could feel his erection against her belly, and all she wanted was to be closer, closer, and closer still.

She moved restlessly against him, moaning again before pulling back to whisper, "I need you."

His eyes glittered and his voice was unsteady as he replied softly, "Yes."

She kissed him again, then stepped back, twining her fingers through his and pulling him after her. She dragged him down to her bedroom, barely maintaining the presence of mind to hastily reset the wards to the tower room. When at last she closed the bedroom door behind them with a quiet click, she had a moment of wondering if she had lost her mind. She hardly knew him, really hadn't seen him in years, and he had never been particularly pleasant toward her. *Except that one time, and now tonight...*

Before she really began to process her thoughts, he stepped close behind her, sliding his arms around her waist and pressing against her from behind, and rational thought fled. Turning in his arms, she wantonly pressed against him, needing to feel his body against hers again.

For long minutes, they simply kissed, tasting one another, getting familiar with each other in this new way. Despite her desperate desire, part of her was grateful that he seemed intent on slowing things down. He seemed to want to savor each step, and she was more than content to indulge him.

So, she kissed him passionately, enjoying the feeling of his lips on hers, loving the way her heart raced and her body flushed with heat, loving the way his arms held her securely against him while he gently but firmly plundered her mouth. Eventually, he dragged his lips from hers, trailing kisses along her cheek and jaw, nibbling briefly just below her ear, and then changing direction to follow the line of her neck down to where it met her shoulder, then continuing along the top of her shoulder, nudging the softly draping cloth out of the way. Hermione shivered with delight, barely suppressing a moan of pleasure.

Feeling that, he briefly reclaimed her lips before repeating his path on the other side. She held him close, running her hands restlessly along his back and arms and shoulders, feeling frustrated by all the linen that prevented her touching his skin directly. He must have found the zipper on her dress, she realized dazedly when she felt a whisper of sensation flutter over her skin and her dress pooled at her feet. He drew back to look at her, but she felt strangely self-assured as his heated gaze slid over her. For perhaps the first time in her life, she felt truly beautiful.

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Severus could scarcely believe his good fortune. He was tempted to surreptitiously pinch himself, because things like this simply didn't happen to him. Women didn't like him, and they certainly didn't find him attractive.

And they definitely never slipped away from their own parties to snog with him, never mind with such enthusiasm and abandon.

He ruthlessly tamped down his thoughts, which were urging him to move this along, lest she change her mind before he got to see her naked. No, he planned to take his time and savor whatever she offered, for two reasons. First, he suspected that this approach would somewhat increase the admittedly slim chance that she might want a repeat of this type of activity in the future.

And second, in the very likely event that she would later regret this and refuse to see him again, he wanted this to be memorable.

That settled in his mind, Severus ignored the ongoing debate in his mind and applied himself wholeheartedly to kissing the unexpectedly delectable Hermione. As he had mentally warred with himself and kissed his way across the top of her shoulder, he had somehow managed to find the fastening of her dress, and now it lay in a puddle on the floor. As much as he had liked it, he found her more beautiful without it. He was surprised to hear himself say so, but was delighted with the blush that suffused her in response. It turned out the becoming pink shade went quite a long way down her body. She whispered, "You make me feel beautiful."

He kissed her again, trying to communicate without words that he found her gorgeous. She kissed him back, now wearing only a lacy black bra and knickers, which he barely glanced at because he really, really wanted to see her without them. She whispered against his lips, "You're overdressed."

He chuckled, then pulled back and whispered, "I agree." He helped her with the many buttons on his linen shirt, then she pushed it off his shoulders and let out a happy sigh as it fell to the floor near her dress. She gazed at him avidly, making him a bit nervous, until she smiled and began running her hands along his bare chest and shoulders.

Soon, she leaned forward and began following her hands with her lips. He stifled a moan, and leaned forward to kiss her neck and shoulders some more. He slid his hands up and down her spine, and was pleased with the shiver that elicited. Finally, he was unable to resist the temptation, so he slid his hands down to her delectable bum and pulled her forward, pressing her lower body into the evidence of his passion for her.

She moaned against him, lifting one leg to wrap it around his thigh, trying to press herself more intimately against him. She wasn't quite tall enough, however, and he could feel her frustration as she tried to move higher on her toes, throwing her head back and moaning again. He took advantage of her position to kiss her deeply, and simultaneously lifted her off her feet entirely. She wrapped both legs around him, gasping when her mons made contact with his erection. He carried her swiftly to the bed, kissing her all the while, and lowered her as gently as he could manage. She tried to pull him down to her, but he resisted long enough to remove the remainder of their clothing.

He moved over her, using his arms to keep from crushing her as he kissed her once more, then began trailing kisses down her neck and chest until he finally reached one pert nipple. He spent several long moments licking and sucking, encouraged by the way she moaned and writhed in response, and then turned his attention to its twin.

Eventually, he continued his journey down her body, savoring every aspect of the feast she presented to every one of his starved senses. There was the sight of her, all curvy and gorgeous, with her hair spilling out of its previously restrained updo and flowing across her pillow. Then there were the passion-filled sounds that emanated from her throat as he touched every inch of her smooth skin. And she smelled divine, with a lovely, subtle vanilla and almond scent as well as a feminine essence of aroused woman.

But his favorite had to be her taste. It was simultaneously sweet and tangy and completely, mysteriously unique. As his lips finally closed over her clitoris, he sighed with pleasure, fully enjoying the taste and texture of the slick wetness coming from her core.

Really, it was the best flavor he had ever tasted, he thought, as he focused all his attention on learning the rhythm Hermione liked best.

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Hermione had never felt such pleasure had never imagined such pleasure existed. Certainly, she was no virgin, but nothing she had ever done with anyone before had ever prepared her for anything like this. She could barely string a coherent thought together which was both highly arousing and, if she wanted to be completely honest, a bit unnerving. She was always able to think ... until now. Just as she managed that thought, Severus, who had been kissing and licking his way down her stomach, reached her centre, and she gasped as she once again completely lost her ability to think.

Several minutes passed before she could think even clearly enough to realize that she wasn't, in fact, defective. Both Ron and, later, Viktor had tried to pleasure her orally, which all her friends seemed to think was the surest way for any woman to have earthshaking orgasms, but she had never experienced anything more than a mild tremor. She had assumed there was something wrong with her, but now ...

Earthshaking didn't even begin to describe the orgasm Severus had just given her. Even now, she was experiencing little aftershocks, and she glanced at Severus to find him watching her, looking smug. She grinned at him happily and sighed, "That was ... there aren't words." She tugged him up to kiss his lips, and was shocked to find her body responding all over again. Within minutes, she was once again nearly incoherent with pleasure.

At last, he murmured a contraceptive charm, just as he slid inside her. She gasped with pleasure at how absolutely perfectly he filled her. He paused, giving her time to adjust to the feel of him inside her, whispering, "All right?"

"Fabulous," she responded breathlessly. He smiled, and she gasped again at how utterly, boyishly adorable he looked with that particular expression on his face. And then he began to move, slowly at first, then gradually increasing the pace and the depth of his thrusts. She felt herself losing control again, and soon another orgasm overtook her, just moments before he gave a hoarse cry and then collapsed on top of her.

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Severus came slowly back to earth, realizing that he was probably crushing Hermione. He murmured, "Sorry," and made to slide off of her, but she tightened her arms.

"Sorry?" she asked, sounding uncertain.

"I'm crushing you," he clarified, pulling back to look her in the eye.

"Oh, no, I like feeling you against me," she replied, relaxing, then pulling him down to kiss him softly.

He kissed her back, then pulled back to smile at her. "I do, too, but I don't want to smother you."

She giggled. "Don't worry, you're not."

He couldn't resist kissing her again, then he rolled them both over, so that she was now sprawled on top of him. "There," he said, "now I'm really not."

She lay her head down on the center of his chest, relaxing against him. He could never remember feeling so utterly content.

And then she sighed and said, "I suppose I ought to go check on my guests." She sounded as unhappy with the idea as he was.

He said, "I suppose," but he felt himself tighten his arms around her. He wondered if she wanted him to get up and dress and rejoin the party, too. He would rather not, really. He was very comfortable where he was, and he couldn't help hoping that she might return for another round if he just waited here.

She lifted her head to meet his eyes, and her words made him think they were in perfect accord. "Can I persuade you to wait here?" She paused, glancing at the clock. "The party shouldn't go too much longer. You could read something while you wait," she ended on a cajoling note, waving a hand toward something to her left.

He smiled, noticing for the first time the overflowing bookshelves along one wall. "All right." After a moment, he asked, "Shall I help you with your dress?"

The sooner she got her dress on, he reasoned, the sooner she could return to her party, and the sooner she could bid everyone good night.

And then, she could come back, and he would help her take her dress off again ...