The Project

by Lady Dragonsinger

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ways.

None

Chapter 1 of 1

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It had been several years since the pair had seen each other in any way, either as student/professor or friend or foe. It was hard to define the relationship between the two, as it seemed to oscillate between one side or another of the relationship spectrum. Sometimes good friends and other times, the pair were at loggerheads over some point of magic. Yet, now here he was approaching her office door at the Ministry to ask for help or, as he preferred to refer to it, input. Knocking, Severus Snape entered at the sound of an invitation from the occupant.

"Ms. Granger," he said. A simple address to the young woman behind the desk but, somehow, the words held so many questions that the recalcitrant figure would not ask ranging from 'How have you been?', 'Are you okay?' or 'Why have I not heard from you?'. The Potions master wanted to ask that last question so much but would not open himself up enough to ask it.

"Professor Snape," she said, returning the greeting in a like manner but with a bit more warmth in her voice that brilliant young witch of her time could not hide, no matter how much she tried or how many cloaking spells she used. "Your owl was rather brief, just asking if you could meet with me," she began, deciding to just get down to the matter at hand. "I was rather surprised to receive the message, and I have to admit that I'm curious as to what brings you here today?"

"I have a project and thought you might enjoy doing some research for it," the Potions master explained, knowing full well that the mention of research would be the bait needed to get her attention, and it worked perfectly. Of course, Severus was not planning to say anything beyond that until she answered. Too bad his mouth had not been informed that by his brain as he suddenly heard himself asking the question that had been silent in his thoughts since the last time they saw each other. "You could have stayed and taught and continued researching with me. Why did you leave?"

"I might be ..." Hermione began, halting as the rest of his words came out, crisp and clear, no mistaking their meaning. "I," she began, hesitating for a moment. "I did not think anyone wanted me to remain there." Nervousness began to register as the young woman wondered how in the world did this conversation get started. "Especially you, Severus."

Snape had yet to sit down. He had begun his discussion standing as he had been known to do before Potions class, and as the unexpected words escaped his lips, he had begun pacing in a familiar manner, stopping to look at Hermione with what could only be classified as mild shock. "Not. Want. You. There?" he asked, giving each word emphasis. "Miss Granger," he began, reverting to the familiar mode of Potions professor for a brief moment as he began rebuttal to her words, "for being such a blasted know-it-all witch, you have been rather dense. Not want you there? Where else would I want you to be, Hermione? Do you know how much I've missed you?"

"As much as I've missed you?" She answered his question with one of her own. "So, this project, would it work better if I were to return," she asked as she stood and walked around her desk to face Severus, "permanently?"

"It would improve the productivity of the project, yes," he responded, meeting her eyes with his.

"Then I believe I need to fill out some paperwork here and give proper notice," she told him.

"Yes, Miss Granger," he said, once again using the 'professor' voice she was familiar with. A smirk appeared on his face as he continued, "I believe you do. I shall be seeing you soon then." But it was more of a statement of fact rather than a question as Severus held her gaze for a moment longer before turning and sweeping out of her office.