

Perfectus

by Electryone

Hermione creates a potion with unfortunate consequences.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 4

Hermione creates a potion with unfortunate consequences.

Despite having been brave enough to fight in the Battle of Hogwarts, Dennis Creevey was still intimidated by the thought of seeing Severus Snape.

He had explained his plight to Minerva McGonagall, who had assured him that Snape was always happy to help his former students.

Dennis hadn't believed that for even a second, and McGonagall knew it. Yes, Snape was always happy to help former students...if they were Slytherins.

Taking a deep breath, Dennis approached the heavy wooden door and knocked. After a few moments, it opened a crack.

"Yes, what do you want?" asked a deep voice, which he knew belonged to Snape.

"Good afternoon, Professor Snape, sir." His voice cracked, making him sound Not-Very-Gryffindor. He cleared his throat. "It's Dennis Creevey. I don't know if you remember me, but I was your student in Potions and Defence Against the Dark Arts about ten years ago and..."

The door opened. Snape stood in front of him, as imposing as ever. "Mr. Creevey, I remember you. I'm a very busy man, so I would appreciate it if you would cease your babbling and tell me what it is you want."

Dennis felt a twist in his stomach as he looked at the man in front of him. Snape had traded in his voluminous robes for Muggle trousers and a simple white button-up shirt. Little else had changed...his hair was still stringy and greasy, his nose still had that unattractive shape and his skin was still extremely pale. The sneer that Dennis remembered as a child had not changed, either.

"Professor Snape, my colleague has had a serious reaction to a potion that she has been creating, and I'm completely at a loss about what to do with her. Professor McGonagall said you might be willing to help."

"Mr. Creevey, I have little time to deal with accidents caused by the ineptitude of others. Take her to St. Mungo's." He began to close the door.

"Professor Snape, she won't go there! She refuses to believe that anything is wrong!"

"In case you've forgotten, Mr. Creevey, *you are a wizard*. You can use *magic* to get her there. I'm sure that you're not seriously as incompetent as you make yourself out to be. Now, stop complaining to me and leave my house!" The door slammed, causing Dennis to jump. Dennis took a deep breath. Severus Snape had the ability to make him feel like an eleven-year-old. But he was not going to give up easily.

Dennis knocked on the door again. "Professor Snape, I'm not leaving until you hear me out!" He knew that Snape could hear him, but there was no response. So, he kept knocking.

Snape finally opened the door and glared. "Leave. My. Property. Now. Mr Creevey, I have now officially lost patience with you. I don't care that you're a former student or that you lack the magical ability to defend yourself from any hex I may throw at you. If you do not leave in the next ten seconds, you'll regret being born a wizard.

"Ten..."

"Nine..."

"But, Professor Snape," he began.

"Eight..."

"It's a very Dark potion and..."

"Seven..."

"...you're the only one who knows..."

"Six..."

"...enough about potions..."

"Five..."

"...and Dark magic..."

"Four..."

"...to know what to do..."

"Three..."

"...and Hermione said that..."

Snape stopped counting. "Hermione *Granger*?"

"...she first learned about this particular potion from you."

Dennis tried not to shrink away from the murderous look that darkened Snape's countenance. "What is that intolerable woman doing now? Is she trying to brew potions that are completely out of her league again?"

"I'll have you know that Hermione Granger is the best Potions mistress in Britain," Dennis shot back, his courage growing with each word. "She made a potion that *every* you were unable to brew."

He snorted. "Please enlighten me, Mr. Creevey. What is it that the competent Miss Granger was able to brew?"

"I can't tell you; I'm sworn to secrecy. But I can say that Hermione tested the potion on herself. It works perfectly, but, er, well, you see, she's not quite herself."

"What do you mean, Mr. Creevey?"

"You'll have to come and see for yourself."

Severus sighed. Granger must have used a very strong secrecy charm on Creevey. The boy seemed unable to reveal anything of use. "Mr. Creevey, you have wasted enough of my time. I would like you to leave immediately. If you do not, it will be necessary for me to use magical methods to force you out."

"I'm not leaving until you agree to come and at least take a look at Hermione!"

"Fine," Snape said, lifting his wand. "Goodbye, Mr. Creevey," he said with a sneer.

Suddenly, Dennis was pushed backwards, flying at least a hundred meters. His stomach flipped over several times as he flew through the air and ended up against a tree.

He rubbed his back as he stood up, trying to regain his balance. This obviously had not worked. If Snape wouldn't help, who would?

He sighed, then Apparated away.

Severus watched his former student leave. The boy was extremely irritating, more so than Harry Potter and his two friends.

Despite the annoyance he had felt, his interest was piqued. There was only one potion that he had tried and failed to make.

The Perfectus Potion.

Legend said that the potion could change everything about oneself that the drinker desired. It was literally perfection in a bottle. Nobody in his lifetime had ever made it, and records of the potion were sketchy and unclear. The potion itself was as enigmatic as the Elixir of Life, which he knew had been created by only one person in history. It was unknown if anyone had ever successfully made the Perfectus Potion.

Many of the world's most accomplished Potions masters had attempted to create it. Severus himself had tried as a teenager...and failed. As he grew older, he had focused more on other work, specifically potions and spells to fight both for and against the Dark Lord.

Still, the Perfectus Potion had always been at the back of his mind, tempting him to try again. He had not done so, for he knew how many years he could waste trying to make that potion.

That was the only potion that fitted Dennis Creevey's short and vague description.

It was impossible, though. If he couldn't make it, there was no way Hermione Granger could.

It was time to pay his former apprentice a visit.

It wasn't difficult to find Hermione Granger's house. Minerva McGonagall had been elated when he had Flooed to ask for her address. "Severus, I'm so glad that you're finally taking an interest in the lives of your former students," she had said. "Next you'll be agreeing to go on one of those blind dates that Pomona is so anxious to set up!"

Severus had ignored the comment, knowing that Minerva was simply trying to get a rise out of him.

Hermione Granger's house was situated on the outskirts of North London. Severus knocked on the door. It opened a few moments later.

He expected to see the sniveling Dennis Creevey at the door, or possibly Hermione Granger herself. What he did not expect was the young woman in front of him.

The light brown curls fell to her waist, and the features on her face were completely perfect. What struck him, however, was below the neck. The young woman was wearing a bright red mini-dress that accentuated her voluptuous figure and showed off her perfect, long legs.

He had seen his female students wear clothing like this on Hogsmeade days...and immediately forced them to change while taking off copious amounts of house points. However, none of them had looked like this.

Severus Snape struggled to keep his poise as he looked at the woman, despite the fact that his body was threatening to betray him.

"Can I help you?" the woman asked in a sultry voice.

He ignored the thoughts that flew through his mind about how exactly she could help him. "Yes, I'm looking for Miss Hermione Granger."

"Hermione isn't here right now. I'm her cousin, Miranda Cavendish." She batted her eyelashes. "Come on in. I'd be happy to ~~tentertain~~ such a good-looking man while Hermione is gone."

Was she hitting on him? What the hell was going on here? Severus mentally ran through the list of hallucinogenic potions and tried to figure out which one this woman was on. He finally decided to ignore her comment. "I'm Professor Severus Snape. Do you know when Miss Granger will be back?"

"Shortly. Would you like something to drink while you're waiting for her? Tea? Coffee? Firewhisky?"

"Tea, please."

"Of course, Professor."

He really didn't like the glances she was giving him as she left the room. It was way too seductive for his comfort.

Women almost never showed any interest in him. In fact, the last woman who had... Well, he didn't want to think about that. At least not right now.

She returned a few minutes later and set the tea down in front of him.

Immediately, he knew something was wrong. The tea was nothing more than Earl Grey, but its scent was off. A normal person would not have noticed it, but Severus Snape had an acute sense of smell.

He glared at the woman in front of him.

"Veritaserum." She giggled nervously as he stood up, towering over her. "You put Veritaserum in my tea? I don't know who you think you are, but you have five seconds to explain yourself."

She giggled again, and he nearly hexed her. The only thing that was stopping him from doing so was the nagging feeling that something was very wrong here. And something about the girl was very familiar...

"It was a test, Professor Snape. Congratulations, you've passed it."

He glowered for a moment longer, and she didn't flinch. Then she turned away.

"I think Hermione should be back in about twenty minutes. Maybe you can come back later?"

"I'll wait."

"Fine, if you'd like to. I'll go and see if I can find her."

Severus stared after the young woman as she hurried from the room. He put his hand on his wand, just in case. He began to walk towards the doorway that Miranda Cavendish had just entered. It was locked. Severus considered using a spell, but decided not to. Hermione would be furious if she found him snooping around. After their acrimonious parting years before, he didn't want to give her any more reason to hate him. He picked up an old issue of *Potions Weekly* from the table and began leafing through it. He opened it on a page that contained an article he had written himself about the use of asphodel in medical potions.

After about fifteen minutes, the door opened.

He hadn't seen Hermione Granger in about eight years, but very little had changed. Her hair was still bushy, and she still looked like she cared more for research than fashion and beauty.

Not that she wasn't beautiful. In his opinion, a woman like Hermione Granger, whose face showed intelligence and curiosity, was much more appealing than a woman like Miranda Cavendish.

That had been his problem eight years earlier.

"Professor Snape! What are you doing here?" His heart fluttered as her brown eyes met his, and he realized with horror that his feelings for her had changed very little.

"Can't one visit a former apprentice without causing a stir? Or at least without the fear of being poisoned? No, I suppose not."

"I apologize for the behavior of my cousin, sir. Her actions are...as always...completely inexcusable. Now, to what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?"

"Spare me your platitudes, Granger. I know that you're not happy to see me, so there's no need to pretend otherwise. Your assistant came to pay me a visit, and I was quite curious about something he said."

"Oh?" The Granger girl was way too nonchalant. She obviously knew what he was talking about. "I can't imagine Dennis saying anything that could possibly be of interest to you."

"While I agree that your insipid assistant has little to say that might attract my attention, I can't help but wonder if you've been working on the Perfectus Potion."

"Did Dennis tell you that, sir? He does tend to tell stories."

He watched her closely. As his apprentice, he'd always known exactly what she was thinking. But now her face showed nothing. He supposed he could use Legilimency, but he wouldn't do so unless it was absolutely necessary.

"Miss Granger, you've become much better at hiding your true feelings. I almost believe you."

"I learned from the best, sir."

"And that, Miss Granger, is an admission if I've ever heard one. So, tell me, is it true? Did you actually brew Perfectus?"

"Professor Snape, that's a ridiculous idea. You know as well as I do that many of the world's greatest Potions masters have been unable to brew that potion. An incompetent little girl, whose only triumph is being Harry Potter's best friend, couldn't possibly do something so complicated."

As anger crept into her eyes, he first realized that she still had a long way to go before she would truly be able to hide her true feelings from him. The second thing he noticed was that she had nearly quoted verbatim something he said to her years earlier.

The best Potions masters and mistresses who ever lived couldn't even brew the Perfectus Potion! And you expect that a little girl, whose biggest success is being Harry Potter's best friend, can do such a thing? It had been a few months away from what was supposed to have been the end of a two-year apprenticeship with him. And it was the day that she had walked out of his laboratory...and his life...forever.

He had heard from Minerva that she had finished up the last few weeks with Irena Skłodowska, an elderly and slightly dotty Potions mistress in Poland. Anyone who was not him had been sufficient for Miss Granger.

"I never used the word incompetent to describe you."

"No, you didn't. Your tone of voice was enough. Now, Professor Snape, I would really appreciate it if you would leave."

"Miss Granger, as much as I admire your resolve in holding a grudge against something I said eight years ago, it is completely obvious that something is wrong here, and I would like to know what it is before you endanger yourself and the rest of the world."

"Professor Snape, you have no right to make accusations against me."

Severus took a step closer to her. His eyes didn't leave hers as he stepped closer, near enough to touch her if he so desired.

Legilimens. Without speaking or moving his wand hand, he performed the incantation.

He saw one glimpse of her as his apprentice and him working next to her before she pushed him out of her mind.

"Don't you dare use Legilimency on me without my permission, Snape!"

Suddenly, her wand was at his throat. He had been so intent on getting into her mind that he hadn't really paid attention to what her hands were doing. Apparently, he wasn't the only one who had been keeping his wand close.

"Miss Granger, both your Occlumency skills and your reflexes have improved. Impressive."

"Snape, I don't know what the hell you're doing here, but I do know that you are a despicable man. I would be happy to live the rest of my life without ever seeing you again."

With a wave of her wand, her front door opened, and he found himself thrown through it. The door slammed and locked behind him.

That went better than expected, he thought.

Eight years earlier

He should not have used Legilimency that day. The temptation had been too great, her eyes too inviting.

She sat on the table in his laboratory, her legs wrapped around his waist, her mouth on his. His shirt was unbuttoned, and her hands running up his chest.

That was the point that he had taken himself out of her mind. Her eyes were focused on his face. "Do you want to see more, Severus?"

Yes, of course he wanted to see more. He wanted to find out what else was in that mind of hers, then take her up against the wall, on top of his potions table, in his bedroom, in the shower, and everywhere in between.

Severus took a step back, trying to comprehend the thought that she was fantasizing about him in the same way that he fantasized about her. "Hermione, this is highly inappropriate."

"Is it? It seems completely natural to me."

It was completely natural that he would be attracted to his intelligent and pretty twenty-one-year-old apprentice. However, it was not natural that she would feel the same way about him.

As much as his body wanted it to happen, he knew his heart couldn't handle it. Once the novelty of being with her former professor had worn off, she would be gone, onto someone younger and more attractive than himself.

He did not want to be forced to deal with seeing the woman he loved rejecting him. It had happened before and had resulted in many years of heartbreak.

Truly it would be better to stop it before it started. Seeing her with another man would be difficult, but not nearly as difficult as it would be if they had begun a relationship. And it would hurt much less if he was the one who'd refused her.

"I'm sorry, Hermione," he said. "But I am afraid that I cannot return your feelings."

She nodded and was silent for a few moments. "I'm going to leave for the day, Severus." Her voice was slightly hoarse, the pain in her eyes completely apparent to him. Then she left the room.

That day, he had decided he would make himself as loathsome as possible. If she hated him, his rejection of her would be easier for her to deal with.

And it worked. Possibly too well, for it had taken only six days for her to storm out of his laboratory and find a new supervisor.

It was for the best, he had told himself at the time, a fact of which he was still trying to convince himself eight years later.

He still couldn't help but wonder what would have happened if he had responded differently.

Author's Notes: This was a SS/HG Exchange fanfic written about a year ago that I'm just now publishing to archives outside the community. It was originally a gift for Sabrebabe (who gave me a really great prompt) and was beta'd by the wonderfully speedy and thorough Melusin.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 4

Hermione creates a potion with unfortunate consequences.

Severus knocked on her door for the second time that day.

He hoped that Hermione wouldn't answer the door.

He would also be happy not to see the sniveling Creevey boy.

Miranda Cavendish opened the door.

He hadn't noticed how much she actually looked like Hermione before. It was as if Hermione Granger had put on makeup, done something about her unruly hair and managed to grow her breasts larger. Not that he paid attention to that sort of thing.

"Hi, Sev," she said. He cringed. He had always hated that particular nickname. "What a pleasant surprise. Won't you come in?"

Severus nodded. "How are you, Miss Cavendish?" he asked.

"Sev, you don't have to be so formal with me. All my friends call me Randi. But you can call me whatever you want."

Severus raised an eyebrow. "Very well, Miss Cavendish."

"Would you like a drink? I promise I won't lace it with Veritaserum," she said with a laugh.

He didn't join in her laughter. "No thanks, I'd prefer not to take that chance."

He picked up an open potions journal on the sofa. Had she been reading it? "Are you interested in potions, Miss Cavendish?"

"Merlin, no! They're so boring! Hermione wastes so much time in that lab of hers. I'd much rather go out dancing and meet new people. Say, Sev, do you like dancing? You can come with me sometime."

Her brown eyes looked up at him expectantly. His heart skipped a beat...the last time he had seen that look was eight years earlier.

"Most certainly not." His eye fell upon a stray hair on her shoulder.

He reached out and grabbed the hair between two fingers, only then realizing his proximity to the girl.

She smelled rather nice, a smell that was reminiscent of the last time he had made Amortentia. He had known the scent was purely Hermione: ginger, belladonna, peppermint, in addition to something else that he guessed was Hermione's shampoo.

The fact that Miranda Cavendish smelled of several common potions ingredients was enough to make him realize how unnecessary the test on her hair would be.

"Miss *Cavendish*, which I know is not your real name, we will continue this conversation at a later date."

"Gods, Sev, if you weren't interested, you should have just told me."

"Goodbye, Miss Granger." Severus walked out the door and Apparated from the lawn.

He arrived at his own home and stared at the hair between his fingers. In just a few short moments, he would know for sure if his hunch was true.

Severus unwarded the room behind his laboratory. He walked in and looked around at thousands of bottles, flasks, and vials of varying shapes and sizes. With a flick and swish of his wand and a wordless incantation, one of the vials in the far corner began glowing.

The vial had been in stasis for the past eight years. He was lucky that he had never bothered to organize or dispose of the things he no longer needed.

Near the beginning of her apprenticeship, he had asked Hermione Granger for a blood sample, telling her that if one of their experiments ever went wrong and she was poisoned, her blood would aid in the brewing of an antidote for her.

That had been part of the reason. In the year after the war, he had become paranoid about Polyjuice Potion, kidnappings, and other such things. A blood sample was the only way to tell for certain the difference between a person and his or her Polyjuiced form. It could also help with location spells.

Severus took the stasis charm off the old blood sample and poured it into a small cauldron. After a few incantations and a pinch of powdered Bicorn horn, he added the hair he had taken from Miranda Cavendish.

After about a minute, the potion began to turn magenta. Just as he had suspected.

Severus Snape knew something was up; Hermione was sure of it. She hadn't liked the way he had so nonchalantly shown up at her house demanding answers, and she especially didn't like the way he had treated Miranda. She could only imagine why he had taken a strand of Miranda's hair.

She wondered what Snape would think when he realized that she had created the potion that he had failed at. Would he be jealous? Resentful? Pleased? Indifferent? Or perhaps he would want to claim responsibility for the creation of the potion...he had been her teacher, after all.

Hermione looked at the vial in front of her. It was her last dose of the potion, at least until tomorrow when her next batch would be finished. Hopefully, this would be enough for the night.

Hermione glanced in the mirror as she shrugged out of her robes, drinking in the utter ordinariness of her appearance. It wasn't that she didn't like the way she looked, but

being Hermione Jane Granger was nothing compared to the thrill of being a different person. When she was Miranda, nobody thought she was dowdy, bookish, or dull...they just saw her as a fun-loving and beautiful young woman.

Except for Severus Snape. He seemed immune to Miranda's charms...the same way he had remained unaffected by Hermione's attentions so many years earlier.

Not that she was genuinely interested in him anymore. Her reaction to him was nothing more than a byproduct of an extremely long dry spell. Although she felt sexually attracted to him, he was a callous bastard.

Hermione drank the potion in one gulp, then watched herself in the mirror. She would never grow tired of seeing the potion *her* potion work its magic. Her hair became less frizzy, her skin much clearer. Her breasts grew larger, her waist smaller. All in all, her body became perfect. She was no longer Hermione Granger; she had become Miranda Cavendish.

She sighed in contentment. She had been waiting for this moment, needing to take the potion, for the past few hours.

Miranda smiled at herself in the mirror, then quickly dressed in a short black dress that emphasized her new body.

Then she grabbed her bag and Apparated to where she knew Draco Malfoy would be waiting.

As she walked through the restaurant, she could feel the appreciative glances of men...and some women...and also some jealous glares. Miranda smiled to herself. Hermione never had this effect on others.

He was sitting alone at the corner table. "Hi, Draco," she said when reached him. She had met him at a club a few nights earlier.

Miranda had considered going home with him that night, but something had stopped her. It had been a voice deep inside that sounded an awful lot like Hermione's nagging. Hermione had been angry at her previous sexual encounters, but she would have been absolutely furious if Miranda had slept with Draco Malfoy.

However, tonight she didn't really care what Hermione thought.

She could feel his eyes raking over her body. "Hi, love," he said, kissing her on the cheek. He waved over a waitress and ordered a martini for her.

"How was your day?" she asked.

"Terrible. I don't know why Father makes me work. Life was much better before I had that horrible job with those terrible people."

She listened to him complain for a few minutes before she finally had enough.

"Draco, let's not talk about work." Miranda put her hand on his leg, then began to slowly move it upward.

"I can't believe you're related to Granger. You're so much different than her."

Miranda smirked. Hermione was a prude and would usually wait until the tenth date before even allowing a man to kiss her. Or the second...whichever one it was, it seemed completely unreasonable.

"Hermione *is* rather boring, isn't she? Now let's go to your place and have some fun."

Don't do it! Hermione's voice yelled at her. Miranda ignored it.

"I want to eat first; I'm famished," Draco said.

Miranda scowled and removed her hand.

By the time they had finished dinner, she could feel her mind changing back. And as she changed back, she could feel her desire to have sex with Draco Malfoy waning. Suddenly, he just seemed like a whiny little boy. In fact, she found herself wondering what Severus Snape was doing right now.

That was definitely Hermione trying to take over her mind. Miranda would never be interested in someone like Severus Snape.

Unfortunately, she didn't have any more of the potion.

Now she was in the horrible position of having Hermione's desires, Miranda's body, and the two of them fighting for control of her mind.

"All right, love, are you ready for dessert?" Draco asked, taking her arm as she stood up.

She suddenly felt repulsed by him.

"I've changed my mind, Draco. Next time, you shouldn't make me wait," she said. Then she stalked out of the restaurant. He followed her outside.

"What the hell is going on here? You're acting like Pansy Parkinson." The name sounded familiar, but Miranda couldn't think where she'd heard it before. Hermione would know.

"As I said, I've changed my mind," Miranda said, sounding much more like Hermione Granger than Miranda Cavendish.

His grey eyes narrowed. "Is this one of your tricks?"

"No tricks, I'm just no longer interested." Everything in Miranda was screaming to go back to his flat. But in the end, Hermione won out.

"How can you be no longer interested? You were all over me earlier."

"Goodnight, Draco," she said. Then she Apparated away, leaving an outraged Draco Malfoy staring at the empty space that she had vacated.

When she arrived back at the house, Miranda realized that there was a light on. She knew that she had NOT left a light on. Hermione always got irritated when she left lights on...some nonsense about protecting the environment...and Miranda didn't like to deal with an irritable Hermione.

Miranda took out her wand...well, Hermione's wand. She didn't want to deal with an intruder tonight. Her head was beginning to feel fuzzy. Deep inside of Miranda's mind, Hermione made a mental note to add an extra pinch of asphodel to the potion the next time she made it in order to reduce that particular side effect.

"*Expelliarmus!*" a voice said when she opened the door. Miranda deflected the curse easily.

A low laugh came from the sofa to her left. "I see your reflexes don't change when you're under the influence."

Severus Snape.

"You!" She pointed her wand at him.

"Miss Granger, how nice to see you, too," he said.

A sudden wave of desire washed over her at the sound of his voice. She ignored it, even though she was ready to pounce on him.

"After the way you treated me, how dare you show up here? And it's Miss Cavendish."

"I know you're not going to curse me, so I'd appreciate it if you could lower your wand, Miss *Granger*," Snape said. He stayed seated and put his own wand back in his pocket.

"I'm not sure why you're so certain I wouldn't curse an intruder in my home." She walked closer to him, her eyes not leaving him.

"Your hair is getting frizzy. The potion is wearing off."

"I have no idea what you're talking about."

"It's quite remarkable. You've spent the past eight years creating a potion that nobody before you could make, yet you don't want to admit it. What's wrong with you, Granger?"

"I would appreciate it if you would leave."

"Nice dress."

Hermione...her mind was back now...looked down and was herself enough to feel slightly self-conscious about wearing such a suggestive outfit.

Hermione sighed. He was going to keep bothering her if she didn't talk to him. "What do you want, Snape?"

"I want to know how you did it. We discussed a base for the Perfectus Potion, but what did you put into it to make it work?"

Suddenly, a wave of anger washed over her. "I bet you want to know...then you can brew it yourself and pass the potion off as your own."

"I may be a coldhearted bastard, Miss Granger, but I would *never* steal the work of another and use it as my own. That you would even suggest such a thing is deplorable."

"Snape, this is *my* potion, not yours." Something inside Hermione told her that she was being irrational, but it was quickly pushed away.

"Hermione, you know that I would never suggest otherwise." Was that concern on his face? Probably not...Severus Snape didn't care about anyone except himself.

"Snape, I've been nice to you up until now. However, if you don't leave immediately, I'll hex you so badly that even Dolores Umbridge won't want to get in the sack with you."

"Hermione..."

She jabbed her wand towards him, and he silently walked towards the door.

After he'd left, her actions of the previous few minutes came back to her, and only one thought echoed through her mind.

What the hell is wrong with me?

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 of 4

Hermione creates a potion with unfortunate consequences.

When Minerva had given him Hermione's address, she had also insisted on giving him Dennis Creevey's. Severus had scoffed, but now he was grateful for it.

The next morning found him staring up at Creevey's building. It was in a stylish and expensive neighborhood in Wizarding London. How in Merlin's name could a Potions assistant afford such a place?

Severus took the lift to the top floor and knocked on the door of the apartment that belonged to Creevey. The door opened, and Harry Potter was standing in front of him.

"Professor Snape?"

He sneered at Harry Potter's look of shock even though he was surprised as well.

"Potter?" Was Minerva playing some sort of mean trick on him? Potter had sent him dozens of letters over the past ten years, all of which had remained unanswered. Was Minerva trying to force him to see Harry Potter?

"Darling, who's at the door?" a voice said from the other room.

Severus looked past the front room to see Dennis Creevey, clad only in a towel. Their eyes met, and a look of horror crossed Creevey's face.

"Mr. Creevey, just the person I wanted to see."

"Er, just a second, Professor Snape." Creevey rushed into the back room, his face bright red.

"Dennis Creevey, Potter?" Snape said with a smirk. Anger flashed in Potter's eyes.

"Professor Snape, you are in no position to judge me or my partner. You haven't seen or spoken to me since the end of the war, and you've ignored all of my letters. You can't just show up here and start criticizing me. Why are you even here?"

"I need to see Mr. Creevey regarding Miss Granger." Severus looked carefully at Potter to gauge his reaction. How much did he know?

Surprise appeared on Potter's face.

"Hermione? What about her? Is everything all right?"

"Perhaps. Have you seen Miss Granger recently?"

"Yes, we had dinner together with Ron just a few nights ago. She seemed fine then."

"Has Mr. Creevey told you his concerns?"

"Yes, Dennis is very worried about her. But he doesn't know her the way I do. When she gets involved in a project, she puts her entire soul into it. She's the smartest person I know, and she's capable of taking care of herself. I've learned not to interfere with her projects."

"Have you met 'Miranda'?"

"Who?"

So Potter didn't know much about what was going on. He supposed that Creevey couldn't tell him everything because of whatever secrecy charm Hermione had used on him.

"Thanks for waiting, Professor Snape, sir," Dennis Creevey said as he walked back into the room, this time fully clothed. "Won't you sit down?" He gestured to a large black sofa. Severus sat, and Potter immediately took the seat next to him.

"Mr. Creevey, I've come to talk to you about Hermione Granger. Mr. Potter, can you excuse us for just a few minutes?"

"No, Snape. Whatever you have to say to Dennis can be said in front of me."

"Harry, it's okay," Creevey said.

"Don't worry, Potter. I won't harm your boyfriend in your absence."

Harry Potter opened his mouth, as if to make a snappy comeback, and then seemed to change his mind.

"Fine. But I'll be in the next room."

As soon as Potter had left, Severus put up a muffling charm to prevent him from listening in.

"Mr. Creevey, I realize that Hermione has you under a secrecy charm. However, I hope that you might still be able to help me. As you've probably guessed, I went to visit her."

"I knew that you would, Professor Snape! What do you think about her condition? I'm really worried about her."

"Have you noticed any abnormal behavior when she's not under the influence of the potion, Mr. Creevey?"

"Yes." Creevey struggled to continue speaking. Finally, he shook his head. "I'm sorry, sir, I can't talk about any of the side effects of the potion."

Severus sighed. "Mr. Creevey, I want you to clear your mind of anything except for Hermione's behavior. I'm going to use Legilimency on you."

The images that came into his mind were of Hermione both as herself and Miranda...Hermione brewing the potion, Hermione changing from one form to another, and looking down at her body in surprise, Miranda shoving her cleavage in Creevey's face. In one, Hermione slapped Creevey. In other, she kicked a house-elf.

Severus took himself out of Creevey's mind. The Hermione he knew would never slap her assistant, and she certainly wouldn't harm a house-elf.

Severus wished he could ask Creevey what had set Hermione off in both of those cases. However, the only way to find out more was to dismantle the secrecy charm, which was extremely difficult and time-consuming.

He weighed the benefits that doing such a thing would have. Even if he did manage to get rid of Hermione's charm, there was no guarantee that he would learn anything new. Plus, he would be forced to spend time with Dennis Creevey and, by extension, Harry Potter.

He would avoid this option unless absolutely necessary.

"Professor Snape, are you okay?" Creevey asked.

Severus looked at him for a moment, then nodded.

"Do you know which ingredients she used in the potion?"

"Some of them."

Severus quickly put himself into Creevey's mind again and came upon an image of Hermione's lab. He recognized all of the ingredients...wormwood, crushed boomslang fang, dragon blood, and several others. He saw nothing out of the ordinary, but he knew there had to be more.

Severus took himself out of Creevey's head.

"I need to be going. Thank you for your assistance, Mr. Creevey."

"I hope you can help Hermione, Professor Snape."

Severus left the apartment without saying goodbye to Harry Potter. He Apparated to Hermione's house once again. He didn't care if he had to tie her down and pour Veritaserum down her throat; he wanted answers.

Thankfully, Hermione answered the door, not her alter ego.

"Snape, I told you to leave me alone. Why are you here?"

"Miss Granger, you may not believe this, but I'm not a complete bastard, and I'm worried about you."

"You're right, I don't believe it."

"I need to know what's in your potion, Hermione. I believe some of the ingredients might be dangerous to your mind."

She seemed momentarily taken aback at his bluntness. "No secret plans or deception? You're turning into a fucking Gryffindor, Snape."

Her use of profanity didn't escape his notice.

"I suppose I am," he said as he whipped out his wand and held it to her throat. "Hermione, you can either tell me what's in the potion or I can force it out of you."

"You wouldn't dare harm me," she challenged.

"Wouldn't I?"

"Snape, I don't care if you torture me until I'm almost dead. I'm not giving it to you. It's my potion, and you can't take that away from me!"

There it was again...the paranoia. Why was she so convinced that he wanted to steal her formula? While it was true that he was not a nice man, he was not so unethical that he would take another's discovery for his own.

He backed her up against the wall and stared straight into her eyes. His mind suddenly flashed to a fantasy he'd had long ago of having sex with her against the wall of his laboratory. He quickly dismissed that thought.

Using Legilimency on her was not easy...she was one of the best Occlumens he had ever encountered. Where had she learned? He felt a brief pang at the thought that someone other than him had taught her.

Despite her skill at Occlumency, he had over twenty years of experience on her. After about a minute of nothingness, he started getting images.

"What's in the potion, Hermione?" he asked, still inside her head. Usually, asking a question would direct that person to think of the desired subject.

Not so for Hermione Granger.

Thoughts of anything but the potion ran through her mind. There were thoughts of her days at Hogwarts, a trip to the corner shop, one where she had appeared to have walked in on Harry Potter and Dennis Creevey in the act. After that, there was one which looked very much like his fantasy of taking her up against the wall. Had he allowed that image to slip through to her? No, that was impossible. He didn't know how she had the same image as him, but it was obvious that she was trying to make a fool out of him. He took himself from her mind.

"Fine, Granger, you win. I won't use Legilimency on you again. I know that you hate me," he said as he backed away from her, "but, I want you to stop taking the potion."

"I need to continue testing it."

"You know it works properly, Hermione. You now have many options: you can sell the recipe for manufacture...of course, it will be heavily regulated by the Ministry...or write about it for any of the leading Potions journals. You can be rich and famous, now."

"You know that I've never desired fame or wealth, Severus. Besides, there are other aspects that need to be tested."

"Find another person to test it on."

"Who else could I possibly test it on?"

"What do you pay that Creevey boy to do? Considering his incompetence in Potions was only surpassed by that of Longbottom, I can't imagine he is of much value to you."

"Dennis helps a lot with tasks around the lab. He's not paid to be a guinea pig."

"Test it on me," he offered.

"Absolutely not. I know that you're just hoping to learn more about the potion. You've been obsessed with it for over thirty years, and you can't stand the thought that I brewed it before you."

"Listen to yourself, Hermione!" he growled at her. "Do you have any idea how illogical you sound?"

It's the influence of the potion, he told himself. Hermione is not this ridiculous.

"Hermione, I'm leaving."

He left and immediately Apparated back to Potter and Creevey's apartment. This time, Creevey answered the door, thankfully, fully dressed. The image from Hermione of him with Potter was not likely to leave Severus' head soon.

"Professor Snape, I was just leaving for work, and Harry's not home so..."

"Do you have access to Hermione's labs?"

"Yes, I do. What do you want me to do?"

"Nothing, Mr. Creevey. In fact, take some time off. However, I would like to borrow several hairs from your head..."

Severus disliked using Polyjuice Potion and today was no exception. Although being in a twenty-five-year-old body might appeal to some men of his age, Severus had much less faith in his wandwork and reflexes as Dennis Creevey. On top of that, they had switched wands for the day since Creevey's wand was necessary to get into Hermione's laboratory. Severus had not had the time to find a spare wand, and Creevey had refused to be without one, so Severus was forced to give up his own.

Severus walked into her house and began dismantling the wards to the lab. Creevey had been able to tell him little about the wards due to the secrecy charm, but Severus was able to figure them out without too much difficulty. Having Creevey's wand helped him bypass most of the challenges he would have faced otherwise.

"Dennis, you're late," Hermione said when he walked through the door of the laboratory. She stood in front of a cauldron and didn't look up when he came in.

"Sorry, Hermione. I'll stay an extra hour to make up for it," Severus said in Dennis Creevey's voice.

He stopped in his tracks when he realized what was in her cauldron.

The Perfectus Potion was a dark blue color. He watched the rhythmic motion of her arms as she stirred. He had never seen a woman look more alluring than she did right now.

"Dennis," she said. "I need twenty vials. This is going to be bottled in just a few minutes."

"Of course," he said, wondering where she kept the vials. His conversation with Creevey had been brief...he had found out little more than the location of the laboratory...so

he didn't know the setup of her lab.

However, since there were only two doors, and he had entered through one of them, the other was likely a storeroom. Unless there was a hidden door, of course.

Thankfully, the door led to the storeroom.

Severus looked inside it in surprise.

It was set up exactly the same way as his. He wondered if using his setup had been a conscious choice or if it was just something she had done naturally.

He brought the vials back to her and watched wordlessly as she began bottling the potion. He didn't ask to help...using proper bottling techniques would likely give away his identity. He doubted that she would let Creevey touch something so valuable, anyway.

"Dennis, don't you have something to do?"

Severus had no idea as to what Dennis Creevey was supposed to be doing. What would Creevey say in this situation? Severus wasn't sure, but acting like a bumbling idiot probably wouldn't seem too unusual for Creevey. "Er, sorry, Hermione. What do you want me to do?"

She sighed impatiently. "Honestly, Dennis. The storeroom. You're supposed to be organizing the chemicals and ingredients."

"Right, of course, Hermione."

Severus went back into the storage area and began looking around. He wasn't going to bother organizing, but while he was back there, he could browse around.

The chemicals were typical of a well-stocked Potions researcher with a few rarer ones thrown in. Severus made a mental note of some of the rarer ones...most of which appeared to be parts of animals from all over the world. He wondered how many of them had been tried in making the Perfectus Potion.

Unfortunately, they gave no clues as to which ingredients were used in the potion.

At that point, he realized that his body was changing back. Severus fumbled in his pockets for more Polyjuice. It was hard to find it in Creevey's clothing. His own functional clothes were much easier to deal with than the ridiculous Muggle jeans he was wearing. As Severus' hand closed around the potion, he heard the door open. Without hesitating, he turned away from the door and gulped the potion down.

"Hi, Dennis," a voice said from the doorway. "Did you miss me?"

Severus sighed in relief as he turned to look at Miranda, who either hadn't noticed or didn't care that he had just taken a swig from a potion vial.

"I'm sorry, Miss Cavendish, but I'm very busy right now."

"Don't be so formal, Denny. Do you want to go and have some fun?"

"I'm going to keep working," Severus told her.

"Fine, I'm going out. Come by the Pixie Club later tonight."

She left, and he heard the door slam behind her. He waited until he heard the front door to the house close, then he walked back out to the laboratory. After a quick check throughout the rest of the house, he was certain that Hermione had gone. He began hunting throughout the lab to try to find the location of the potion she had just bottled.

She hadn't left it out...she wasn't stupid. But, it was not that difficult to find, once he found the most heavily warded area of the laboratory.

After a few incantations, the door to a vault appeared.

It took well over an hour to work through her wards. He was surprised to get them when he did. Luckily, she still wasn't back.

Severus opened the vault and stared at the bottles in front of him. The potion glowed, beckoning him. He picked up one of the vials, suddenly feeling a desire to try some. He uncorked it and smelled it, inhaling its sweet scent.

Severus brought one of the vials up to his lips.

Suddenly, he snapped his head away, nearly spilling some of the liquid out of its container.

What was that? he wondered.

He set the vial back down, then began staring at it, wondering what to do. He desperately wanted to try it, just to see what it was like.

The academic part of him refused to act on that idea.

He debated about taking all of them so that Hermione wouldn't continue taking the potion. However, if he did that, she most likely would get angry enough to press charges, then have him thrown in Azkaban for theft. The Ministry had been looking for excuses to lock him up for the past ten years and wouldn't hesitate if Hermione said something. Still, he was tempted.

In the end, he took only about ten drops, pouring them carefully into a vial that he then charmed to prevent breakages and put into his pocket.

Severus quickly put the wards back up on the door and left the lab. Then he went outside and went back to Creevey and Potter's apartment. As they switched wands, Severus said little, even though Creevey was trying to ply him with questions. Finally, he got back to his own house and could work in his own laboratory.

As he picked up the vial, he suddenly felt as though he was in a trance. He raised it to his mouth again, but this time didn't take it away.

Instead, he let several drops fall onto his tongue and allowed himself to swallow them.

The moment Hermione drank more of the potion, her body relaxed, her mind cleared from the stress. That was what she had been waiting for since the previous night.

Hermione had been on edge all day. She hadn't known what was going on with Dennis (he was acting strange), but she ignored it. She had more important things to worry about. Problems were bombarding her mind from all different directions, and she didn't know what to do about any of them. First of all, there had been Severus Snape. Why did he keep badgering her? And why was she still so affected by him?

Secondly, there was the potion. Perhaps it was ready for manufacture, but she wasn't ready to share it just yet. She liked the feeling of having it for herself. If it was widely available, it would no longer be special.

That evening, Miranda went back to her favorite club. Hopefully, she wouldn't see Draco Malfoy again. She was certain that he was furious after what had happened the

previous night.

After dancing with a few of the other regulars, she realized that she was being watched. Her eyes rested upon a man sitting at a corner table, a man who, quite possibly, was the sexiest person she had ever seen.

Miranda watched in fascination as he rejected a young woman who had approached him. His gaze was still fixed on her. Without thinking, she began walking in his direction, not worried in the least bit that he would reject her.

She walked up to him and put her hand on his arm.

"Care to dance?" she asked him, her lips close to his ear.

"I rarely dance," he responded in a husky voice, "but I'll make an exception just this once."

"What's your name?" she asked. "I'm Miranda."

"I'm Toby Prince."

She smiled at him. Something about him seemed familiar. She quickly brushed the thought aside. She had never met this man before; there was no way she would have forgotten someone that looked like him.

They danced for a few minutes, her body pressed against his. At one point, they began kissing. She wasn't sure who instigated the first kiss, but she didn't really care.

"My place?" he said as his teeth nipped at her ear. Miranda nodded.

He led her by the hand out of the club. As the cool night air hit her, he pulled her into his arms and Disapparated.

They arrived in a warm sitting room, not speaking as he lowered her onto the sofa. As Miranda began unbuttoning his shirt, her eye caught something on the table, and she stopped.

"You read *Potions Weekly*?" she asked.

He kissed her neck. "Those belong to my housemate, who is, thankfully, out of the country right now."

Something seemed strange here, but she didn't really care. The way that he was stroking her breast was much more important at the moment.

"Bedroom?" she asked. He nodded then lifted her up in his arms. She giggled then kissed him once again.

Hermione woke up the next morning in a bed that was not her own.

She began cursing inwardly as she looked down, noticing her lack of clothing. It was not the first time this had happened during the past few months, but it was still awkward.

Vague images of a good-looking, black-haired man came back to her. She didn't look at the man in bed next to her as she carefully lifted his arm from around her waist. She remembered sex that had been nothing short of mind-blowing and amazing, better than anything Hermione had ever experienced before.

Too bad it hadn't actually been experienced by Hermione.

Hermione began searching through the clothing that was strewn across the floor until she found her wand. She summoned her potion. The vial was empty. Just great. She would have to do the walk of shame as Hermione. At least she could Apparate and hopefully not be seen by any of her neighbors.

As she fastened her bra, she dared to glimpse at the man in the bed.

Hermione gasped. "What in Merlin's name is going on here?!"

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 of 4

Hermione creates a potion with unfortunate consequences.

Severus shot up in bed, his hand immediately going for his wand. He managed to block the first curse just in time.

"You bastard! How dare you? You've done a lot of horrible things to me, but this is the worst," Hermione yelled at him.

He began cursing at his own stupidity. He had really mucked things up this time.

She threw another hex at him. He blocked it, struggling in his head to think up how he could possibly fix this situation so that she would not despise him. He was at a loss. It was likely she would hate him forever, and he couldn't blame her.

This was possibly the biggest mistake of his life, right up there with letting her walk out of his laboratory eight years ago.

He stumbled out of the bed, trying to avoid more of her hexes. "Hermione..."

"Nothing you can possibly say can change the fact that you stole my potion and used it to take advantage of me," she hissed. Suddenly, her face colored as she looked down and took in his nudity. He grabbed a sheet from the bed and struggled to wrap it around his waist with the hand that was not defending himself.

It hadn't escaped his notice that she was clad in only her undergarments, but he had been trying to avoid dwelling on it while protecting his bits from whatever curses she

had thrown at him.

"Hermione, can we get dressed and talk like rational human beings?"

"We're past that point, Snape. You are obviously NOT a rational human being."

"It was a mistake, Hermione," he said as he deflected another hex. "I was trying to test the potion. But as soon as I picked up the vial..." Another curse flew in his direction "...I couldn't help myself. Believe me, Hermione, drinking the potion was not part of the plan."

As he mentioned the potion, thoughts of taking it ran through his head. Suddenly, his mind could only focus on one thing: he wanted more of it. He thought back to the vial he had filled yesterday. He had at least five drops remaining...

"I suppose that you thought seducing me would be a good way to humiliate me."

"Absolutely not. I would never try to humiliate you. The potion only gave me the confidence to do what I should have done long ago." Part of him wished that he had never taken the potion. He had wanted her for a long time, nearly ten years. Now that he'd had her... suffice to say, there would certainly not be a repeat of the previous night.

The other part of him wished that he could take it again.

She was silent for a few moments, as if trying to process what he had just said. Thankfully, she had stopped throwing curses at him, no doubt realizing that it was completely pointless since he would block them. He tightened the sheet around his waist.

"You had no right to steal it. Tell me, Snape, how did you get it? Did you break in to my lab?" Suddenly, she gasped. "You used Polyjuice! What did you do with Dennis, you bastard?"

"Creevey willingly gave me some of his hair. He was worried about you, as was I."

"Neither of you has any right to interfere. This *is* my potion. I am the only person who should be testing it."

"I would have let you alone if I hadn't thought you were seriously endangering yourself. Hermione, I've dealt with many Dark potions in my lifetime, but this is one of the most addictive substances I've ever encountered."

"This is not a Dark potion, Snape. I would *never* make a Dark potion."

"Perhaps it's not Dark in the way that Voldemort's potions were, but you can't deny that it has some very harmful effects."

Her voice was suddenly less threatening.

"Severus, since I made the potion, my life has been immensely better. When I'm Miranda, I'm completely free from all of my inhibitions, and I can actually enjoy my life. You felt it, too, didn't you?"

He had, and he knew exactly what she was talking about. Last night, he had felt that he could do anything. On top of that, his appearance had improved, and he had experienced the best sex of his life.

Severus took a deep breath. "Hermione it's not real. I woke up this morning, and I was back to being Severus Snape, and you were back to Hermione Granger. All I was left with was a memory of an amazing night experienced by another person."

"It doesn't have to be that way, Severus," she said, looking earnestly into his eyes. "What if you could change yourself permanently?"

For a moment, he felt the craving build up inside him. If he took more of the potion, he could once again experience the ecstasy he had felt the previous night.

He snapped out of it. "No, absolutely not. I don't want that, and I know you don't either."

"Don't try to tell me what I want," she said. "You know absolutely nothing about me."

"I know that, right now, you're wishing that you could take more of the potion and go back to being Miranda for just a few hours. However, the more of it that you take, the harder it will be for you to stop. You've spent months feeding an addiction to this potion, but it's going to stop. Today."

"Don't you dare take this away from me, Snape!"

"*Expelliarmus!*" Her wand flew into his hand, and she looked shocked. "Never let your guard down, Miss Granger. Did you not pay attention to anything in Dueling Club?"

She didn't respond, but he could recognize the glint in her eye. He knew that if she had her wand, she would continue trying to hex his balls off.

Thank goodness he had disarmed her.

"Here's how it's going to work, Hermione: I am going to take your mixture to the headquarters of the International Potions Organization in Geneva. You have the choice to either accompany me or spend the day locked up in my house."

"You can't take it there without me."

"I most certainly can, but if you come along, the paperwork will be a lot easier. Since the rights of the potion belong to you, everything must be filed in your name."

She gave him a strange look. Did she still think he would try to take credit for it himself?

"I'd like to get dressed first."

"As would I," he said, looking down at the sheet around his waist.

"And I'd like to go home to take a shower. I need my wand for Apparition."

He looked at her for a few seconds, debating about the wand. "I'll give it back on one condition. I'd like to Apparate back with you and put my own wards on top of yours, so that you cannot get to the potion."

"No, I need access to the potion for testing."

"You don't really have a choice, do you?"

She was silent for a moment, and he knew that despite the petulant frown on her face, he had won.

"Fine. Let me get dressed, and we'll Apparate together."

"I'll be back in just a moment." Severus summoned his clothes and took them into the bathroom. He kept Hermione's wand with him, just in case. He dressed quickly.

His gaze fell upon the vial. It was still sitting there, where he had left it the night before. Suddenly, he forgot about Hermione, about the problems that the potion had caused, and about what had happened the previous night.

It felt cool in his hand and completely tempting. He uncorked it and brought it to his mouth.

"Severus, I'm ready to leave," Hermione called through the door. "I'd like my wand back."

He took the vial away and quickly stuffed it into his pocket.

Severus walked out. Hermione was dressed in a tank top and miniskirt that he vaguely remembered removing the previous night. She looked uncomfortable in the outfit.

"I need to get something from my lab," he said. The vial was burning a hole in his pocket.

He was grateful that he had kept his stock of medicinal potions updated. After a quick scan of one of his shelves, he found several bottles of anti-addiction potion. He uncorked each of them, then took the vial out of his pocket, ignoring the urge to try some for himself. Into each of the bottles in front of him, he added a drop of the Perfectus Potion.

Without hesitating, he Scourgified the remainder of the Perfectus.

Severus recorked the bottles and brought them out of his laboratory. Hermione was sitting on the sofa. He set the bottles down on the table in front of her. "Do you know what this is?"

"Don't talk to me like I'm a first-year, Snape. Of course I know."

"I've added the Perfectus to them, already. Do you know the proper dosage?"

"Ten drachms twice a day for the next two weeks, followed by five twice a day for the two weeks after that."

"I've charmed it so that you can't drink more than that at once."

"Thank you, Severus. I enjoy being treated like an idiotic child so much. Do you have more of the Perfectus?"

"I used Scourgify to get rid of it."

"What? Are you crazy? Don't you know how valuable it is?"

"It's also extremely dangerous. You know what happened the last time I took the potion." She didn't respond, only wrinkled her nose in displeasure. Was the thought of sex with him that repulsive? He felt a painful tug in his chest at the thought.

"Shall we go?" he said, holding out his arm.

"Can I not Apparate on my own?"

"I certainly don't trust you to go by yourself." He had visions of being locked out of her house while she overdosed on the potion in her laboratory.

She took his arm, and he Apparated them. He followed her inside the house to the entrance of her lab. With his wand pointed at her, he gave her wand back.

Without speaking to him, she took down her wards and let them into the laboratory. She frowned as he walked towards the vault where she kept the potion.

He spent ten minutes adding wards that were basic, but would be impossible for her to bypass without his wand.

Then she added more wards. "You got in once before, and I certainly don't trust you not to try again," she told him.

"Hermione, I'll be back in three hours. The office in Geneva opens at eight o'clock. I'll get us a Portkey. Goodbye." He left the laboratory and her house, Apparating to Harry Potter and Dennis Creevey's apartment.

After knocking on the door for several minutes, a tired looking Harry Potter opened the door.

"Good morning, Mr. Potter."

"Professor Snape?" he asked with a yawn. "What time is it?"

"Four forty-five. I need you to help me get an emergency Portkey to Geneva for this morning. It's for Miss Granger."

"What's wrong with Hermione?"

Severus quickly told Potter about the potion, leaving out his own personal experience with it. Thankfully, helping Hermione was enough motivation for Potter to contact one of his many admirers at the Ministry and get the Portkey.

When Severus got back to his own house, he sank down onto the sofa. He could still smell Hermione/Miranda's scent.

He felt frustrated. Hermione absolutely despised him, and he really couldn't blame her.

He couldn't change what had happened, however. He had taken the potion, he had slept with her and now he would just have to live with his mistake.

After having a headache and feeling tense and irritable all morning, Hermione finally gave in and took her first dose of the anti-addiction potion Snape had given her. Part of her wanted to rebel and not take it because she was so angry at his treatment of her.

Had he not warded the vault, she would have taken some of the Perfectus Potion. Over the last few weeks, she had got in the habit of taking the potion in the morning, in the afternoon and at night. After one drop in the morning, she didn't actually leave the house, but it allowed her to relax before starting a long day of working. The euphoria from the morning usually lasted long enough to get her through lunch.

She didn't have that right now, but Snape's potion had helped.

As much as she hated to admit it, she had been too hard on him. Trying to curse him earlier had been too much. Deep inside, she had known that "Toby Prince" was actually him. And it hadn't been as though he had forced himself on her.

He shouldn't have taken the potion, though. She was still upset about that. Even though he'd told her he had done it to help her, drinking it himself was crossing the line.

Severus Snape knocked on her door at seven thirty.

"You're early," she said.

"The Portkey leaves in twenty minutes," he told her. "I want to take all that you have brewed to Geneva. It's dangerous for you to keep it here. They will allow you to use their laboratories there for any tests you need to do. Of course, it is highly regulated, and you won't be able to use yourself as a test subject."

Part of Hermione wanted to argue, but she knew it would be futile.

They went into the lab and unwarded her vault together.

Hermione began putting the bottles of the potion into a special bag that would keep them safe during the Portkey trip.

Severus stopped suddenly. Hermione looked over and realized that he was staring at one vial and moving to take the top off of it.

She caught his hand midair. "No, Severus," she said softly. At her touch, he snapped back to reality and quickly put the vial into the bag.

Then he looked back at her. Hermione was surprised by the tenderness she saw in his eyes.

She took a deep breath. "I'm sorry I've been so difficult. The potion..."

"Don't apologize, Hermione. What I did yesterday was far worse than anything you've ever done. And as much as I'd like to apologize, there's nothing I can say to change it."

"Perhaps we should try to make a fresh start of it, Severus."

"Perhaps."

That day, she surrendered all of her potion to the International Potions Organization. As hard as it was to let it go, she felt like a weight had been lifted off her shoulders.

The researchers at the laboratory would test the potion's properties and allow her to continue making adjustments in the laboratories there.

The Portkey let them off in front of her house later that evening.

They stared at each other awkwardly for a few moments. *What now?* she wondered. Should she invite him in? Hermione wasn't sure if that was a good idea.

"Hermione, if you can ever find it in yourself to not despise me, I would like to see you again. Goodnight."

He Disapparated before she could respond.

Over six weeks passed before he saw her again. He had been brewing potions for St Mungo's when he heard the knock at the door.

He hoped it wasn't Harry Potter or Dennis Creevey. Or both of them at the same time. Severus shuddered. For some reason, the two of them considered him their friend now.

He supposed they weren't too bad. They were his only connection with Hermione, after all. Dennis kept him updated on Hermione's progress.

Hermione stood at the door. She looked better than he had ever seen her before; her hair was pulled back in a ponytail, and she was wearing a simple blue dress. She was beautiful, much prettier than she had ever looked as Miranda.

"Good morning, Severus."

He stared at her for a few moments. "Hermione. Would you like to come in?"

She nodded and took the chair that he gestured towards.

"Dennis told me that you've stopped taking the anti-addiction potion. He said that you're doing well."

"So you're on a first name basis with him now?" she said with a smile.

"I suppose that I don't completely dislike him. But I still stand by my conviction that he is one of the worst Potions students I ever taught."

Hermione laughed, a sound that was music to his ears. "I do think he'll be more suited to his new job in the Department of Magical Accidents and Catastrophes. And Harry?"

"Harry was also a dreadful student."

She laughed again. "He told me that you'd become friends with both of them."

"I think the word 'friend' is a bit strong. I tolerate them."

"Did Dennis tell you that I'm leaving for Geneva next week to begin working on reducing the addictive aspects of the potion?"

Dennis Creevey had mentioned it, actually. At the time, Severus had been hit by a twinge of dejection when he'd realized that she would probably leave, and he wouldn't see her again for a long time.

"Yes, Dennis mentioned that."

"Well, it's true. However, before I leave I would like to ask you something."

"Yes?"

"In testing the potion, I'm going to need a lot of extra help. And I've heard that the researchers at the laboratory in Geneva are complete imbeciles."

"I can't imagine who would have told you such a thing," Severus said dryly.

"Severus, would you like to work with me on the potion?"

"Are you saying that because your former assistant quit, you'd like me to take over his job of cleaning cauldrons and organizing potions ingredients?"

She laughed. "Although I have no doubt that you excel at those things, I believe that your research with medicinal potions can assist me greatly. And of course, your name

will be mentioned alongside mine in the finished product. Severus, you're the best Potions master I've ever met. I don't think I can do this without you."

"You managed to brew Perfectus without my help, Hermione. I'd say that you're capable of making almost any potion imaginable alone."

"I don't *want* to do it alone." Her eyes met his. He was struck by the bare yearning in them, completely unaffected by any potion or other outside force.

He leaned closer and tentatively brought his mouth to hers.

She kissed him back eagerly.

Other than the night his alter ego had kissed her alter ego, it had been many years since he had kissed anyone. Even then, it had never felt like this.

"I suppose that I can take some time out of my busy schedule to help a former apprentice," he said after the kiss was over. "Just don't force me to be nice to the imbeciles at the International Potions Organization."

"I wouldn't dream of it."

"And we'll need new test subjects. I don't think either of us can be trusted to test it on ourselves."

"Already done. Although, if you want to test it again after it's completely finished, we could try to repeat that night we had a few weeks ago..."

"Or we can repeat it without the aid of the potion."

"Even better." She kissed him again.

The End