

Bumps In The Road

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A Bottle Of Firewhisky

Chapter 1 of 5

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A/N: I own nothing. It all belongs to JK. Please read, enjoy, and review!

Chapter One A Bottle of Firewhisky

He strode through the house of number 12, Grimmauld Place, enjoying the silence it offered. He had the place to himself, and he was looking forward to the bottle of Ogden's Old Firewhisky he had stashed in the library earlier that month. It had been a long day of staff meetings at Hogwarts, and he was tired of dealing with people in general. The start of term was only a little more than a month away, and the Headmistress still had not found a replacement for Slughorn, who had insisted upon retiring. This left both the job of Potions master and the job of Defense Against the Dark Arts professor to him. It was a weight that he was loath to carry upon his shoulders, but it was his load nonetheless. And his strength was starting to wane.

As he neared the library, he paused. Was that sniffing? After another few seconds of silence, he waved the noise off, assuming it was Kreacher somewhere within the house, and continued his path towards solitude. He halted when he swung open the door. There, sitting on the couch holding his bottle of liquor, was Hermione Granger.

In the past three years, since the defeat of Voldemort and Severus's acquittal of all war crimes, Severus and Hermione had worked together at Hogwarts, repairing the damage and infusing the magic once again into its walls. She had also studied under his keen eye as she moved forward to gain her title as Potions mistress, as well as Charms mistress. He wasn't certain that their relationship could be determined as a friendship, but they did have mutual respect for each other, and he no longer carried any ill will towards the girl. In fact, he had expressed to her that he hoped she would be happy in whatever she endeavored to do with her life. And he had truly and sincerely meant every word. He pushed past the heavy door and was able to see her more clearly; it was obvious that she had been crying.

"Miss Granger...what, pray tell, are you doing here?" he drawled in an even voice. He was certainly annoyed that he would not be spending his evening in blissful seclusion, but he couldn't find the strength in him to take his displeasure out on the crying woman that he almost considered a friend.

"And with my Firewhisky, no less." He glanced down at the bottle in her petite hands. *Good gods!* he thought. *She's drunk a third of the bottle already!*

In the few years of working with Hermione, Severus had become familiar with her habits. She was a very neat person and was often cleaning her work space. Her clothing was always clean and fresh, often even ironed. Her unruly hair had been tamed into sweeping flows of honey curls that fell delicately around her slight face. She secured the mass into a tight bun or braid when she worked.

She finally looked up to acknowledge his presence. The girl sitting in front of him was a stark contrast to the woman he had come to know.

She truly was a mess. Her soft brown eyes were bloodshot and swollen, leaking tears consistently down the sides of her face. Her nose was red, as if she had been wiping

