

Lavender and Associates

by littleone17

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer - I am not JK Rowling nor anyone else who has a right to make money off of Harry Potter. I just like to play with the characters. I make no money off this fic.

This is my toe-in-the-water testing fic to see if I really want to get back into fanfic writing. I wrote this story for clairvoyant12 in the 2011 Autumn SSHG Exchange; the original prompt is at the end of the story. It's the first fic I've written and published since 2003. I hope you enjoy it. A big thank you to my Betas Supermoth and Kakolukia, who corrected my comma abuse and so much more. Additional thanks to the admins at TPP for their patience and understanding.

Lucius Malfoy strolled down Tottenham Court Road deep in thought. That it was 5:03 in the evening on a Wednesday didn't appear to occur to him, nor did the fact that he was moving opposite the flow of bodies heading toward the tube station. He moved through the masses as a hot knife through butter, the crowd flowing around him and back together. He was looking straight ahead, his lips twisted in a small smirk. If you looked very closely you'd see his eyes moving, taking in and processing everything around him. No one looked closely.

As he walked, Lucius' smirk grew just a little broader, almost a smile if you looked from the correct angle. His friend was going to be released from Azkaban Prison in one week, and Lucius had a surprise planned for him. Or, he would have a surprise planned as soon as he found the blasted building he was looking for. Ah, there it was: 269 ½ Tottenham Court Road, tucked beside a church and completely invisible to Muggles. He turned a sharp right and stepped directly through a brick wall.

Inside was a small lobby. Seated at a desk facing the entry area he'd just walked through was a smiling receptionist. "Good evening, sir. May I direct you to your destination?"

"I'm looking for Lavender & Associates Design."

"Very good, sir, please take the number three lift up to the fourth floor. Upon exiting take a left. Lavender & Associates is located at the end of the hall."

"Thank you." Giving the receptionist a polite nod, he stepped up to the bank of elevators that had appeared as she spoke.

The doors to number three lift opened and Lucius stepped inside. The button panel on the wall showed a larger number of buttons than he'd expected. He noted that there were only six buttons next to an arrow pointing up while the arrow pointing down had around thirty. He pressed the "4", going up. Just as the doors were beginning to close, he heard a voice shouting, "Hold the lift!" Smirk firmly in place he leaned away from the doors and let them shut.

At level four he stepped off the lift, took a left, walked to the end of the hall, and stood facing a nondescript frosted glass door. A small brass plaque on the wall read "Lavender & Associates Design Company". After a quick glance at his watch, he turned the handle and stepped inside.

Severus Snape shifted uncomfortably on the molded metal stool. He realized that prison wasn't meant to be pleasant, but really, would a cushion be too much? Settling into a slightly different angle on the stool, he again stooped over the molded metal desk, secured to the wall, and resumed writing his notes. He probably shouldn't complain; after all, his imprisonment could be worse. He was allowed writing materials and books, he got three square meals a day, and with the Dementors gone he even got to keep his sanity for what it was worth. And, after a year of recuperating from a snakebite and ten years in prison for manslaughter, he would be free in six days, ten hours, and thirty-six minutes not that he was counting.

Severus was looking forward to returning home. As part of his prison sentence he'd been brewing the basic potions for the inmates for the past ten years. It was nice to stay in practice to some degree, but the lab in Azkaban was very basic with no variety to the potions. He missed his lab at home. And he'd had ten years to work on the theory behind several research projects; all he needed now was a lab where he could do the practical work. Six days, ten hours, and twenty-three minutes.

Of course, his house had been searched by the Aurors, quite thoroughly as he understood. All his Dark Arts books had been taken. He needed to start rebuilding this collection, but he'd have to think of a way to do it without the Aurors catching on. He'd have to find a way to start finding those again, without looking like he was trying to find them again. And even if the Aurors hadn't found his hidden potions lab, most of his ingredients would need to be replaced; there really weren't that many potions ingredients that lasted for ten years. Severus thought it best not to even think about the kitchen, bedrooms, and toilets in his home, neglected for ten years and needing updated since 1967. It wasn't like he had money to update his home; he didn't even have the money to buy a best-selling novel, let alone Dark Arts books or potions ingredients.

That was the other thing: Who on earth would want to hire a man who'd just spent ten years in Azkaban after being convicted of manslaughter? People still saw it as murder. He'd had at least two attempts on his life every year for the past ten years. Granted, several of those attempts had been by fellow inmates, Death Eaters; but generally, he avoided one attempt a year from the people outside. The first three years had been the worst. They'd had to put him in solitary to protect him from the other inmates, and all his mail had to be searched for hexes, poisons, and cursed objects. The earliest guards weren't as diligent as they might have been and let several cursed and poisoned letters through. There'd been a sudden change in guard about a year and a half in, and after that, he'd not had to be quite as careful with his mail.

Since then, mail call was surprisingly pleasant. Minerva kept him up to date on gossip from Hogwarts and always provided excellent debate material. Poppy mothered him, as she always had, constantly sending him reminders about keeping up with his health while in prison. Harry Potter, surprisingly, wrote regular letters about news in the Wizarding world. Of course he also wrote about his wife, children, Quidditch, and other mundania that Severus glossed over. He quite enjoyed the occasional death threats that still came through; they made him laugh. The hero-worshipping letters, and the ones from women (and a few men) offering to be his next "Lily" angered him. His scathing replies often meant he got a few additional death threats at the next mail call. By far the most surprising of all his mail exchanges was the continual correspondence with one Hermione Granger, former student and know-it-all pain-in-the-arse. She really was brilliant. It was her research that provided the Order with the ability to plead manslaughter instead of murder. It was Hermione who accompanied the Aurors to Spinner's End to ensure they didn't ransack his house. It was Hermione who made sure he continued to receive a subscription to *Ars Alchemica*, as well as sending him a variety of reading material. Finally, it was Hermione who bounced ideas off of him, shared her opinions of his new theories, discussed his research, and generally made a nuisance of herself. He'd have been bored stiff for the past ten years without her interference. He looked down at his most recent letter from Hermione, his ever present smirk growing as he reread the last paragraph. Yes, Severus thought, it will be nice to be out. Six days, nine hours, and forty-six minutes.

"Mr. Malfoy, welcome to Lavender & Associates."

"Why, Pansy. How are you, my dear? I haven't seen you in months. How is little Peter? He just had his fourth birthday, I believe?"

Pansy blinked. Mr. Malfoy appeared to be in a very good mood. "Umm. I'm well, thank you. It's good to see you, sir. Peter did just turn four about a month ago. He's doing well, spending a lot of time on the toy broom George got him." She smiled shyly at him. "If you're ready, Mr. Malfoy, Ms. Weasley and Ms. Granger are expecting you. Please follow me."

Lucius followed, snickering internally. He did quite enjoy throwing people off balance. And Pansy deserved it; she'd married a Weasley after all. He remembered Narcissa telling him about the hysterics Rose Parkinson had thrown when the bans had been announced. He smirked a bit more. Ah, it appeared they were arriving at their destination. Pansy had stopped and was opening the door to a large, classically appointed office. Standing up from chairs at a small conference table were the two women he had come to see.

"Ms. Weasley, Ms. Granger, Lucius Malfoy is here for his appointment." She stepped aside, waving Lucius into the office.

"Thank you, Pansy. Mr. Malfoy is our final appointment for the day. Feel free to leave whenever you wish, and do tell George and Peter hello." Pansy nodded, said good night, and left, pulling the door closed behind her.

"Well, Lucius, you stopped by the house. What did you think? Is it coming along as you wish?" Lavender rattled off her questions while behind her Hermione rolled her eyes and waved Lucius into a chair at the table. He remained silent as he walked to his seat and accepted the cup of tea handed to him by Hermione. She handed Lavender a cup and quietly sat down in her chair.

Lavender set her cup on the saucer at her spot and took a seat. Hermione watched as she took two cubes of sugar and added them to her tea. She picked up her spoon and began stirring the sugar. The spoon tinked against the side of the cup. Lavender kept stirring, and the spoon kept tinkling. Hermione had discovered that when Lavender was nervous she had to fiddle with things. It was very . . . annoying. The spoon continued to tinkle against the cup. Cutting her eyes over to Lucius, Hermione could see that he was smirking into his cup of tea. She gritted her teeth. The spoon tinked against the cup again.

Hermione's hand snapped out. Lavender gasped and let go of the spoon. Hermione snapped it up and gently set it down next to Lavender's teacup. Lavender blushed and picked up her cup. They sat in silence for another minute. Lavender opened her mouth to say something. Before she could get a sound out, Lucius began to speak.

"I did stop by the house. It appears to be coming along as planned. The kitchen is just as updated as I'd hoped. The stainless steel appliances, black granite countertop, and updated cabinets look just as I would wish. The toilet, bathroom, and bedroom are nearly done and to my specifications. I do quite like what you've done with the entry hall and the dining room as well. The office is well appointed and I noted the electronics. I assume you've placed the proper charms to ensure the computer, TV, DVD player, etc., all will work around magic." At this there was a nod from Hermione. "This brings me to my concern. Ms. Granger, when will you be working on the study, back garden, and potions lab? I believe those were the aspects of this work that I stressed the most concern about."

At this Hermione smiled. "Indeed you did, Lucius. And you are correct. Those three spaces are the areas that will need the most careful eye and direction. They are the spaces that will take the longest. And they are the three sections of the home that have the most potential to be completed substandard."

"Yes, we agreed on these issues a month ago when we finalized the contract. *Why haven't you started yet?*" Lucius' voice and body had risen as he spoke. Hermione raised an eyebrow. He glared and settled back into his seat, quietly.

"As I was saying, in this situation we needed input from the homeowner." Hermione saw Lucius open his mouth, she held up her hand to stop him. "Tell me, Lucius, what do you think is the better plan? To attempt to imagine what Severus Snape would like, get it wrong, and have to start over at the beginning. Or to wait for him and follow his exacting plans for his ideal lab, study, and back garden. Do you think he'd let us have another go if we get even the smallest thing wrong the first time?"

"I see your point. I must ask, Hermione, why didn't you mention these thoughts when we started the contract?"

"Well, if I'd have told you the same thing a month ago, you'd have taken your contract elsewhere. We certainly didn't want that." Hermione grinned evilly.

Severus stepped outside and the doors of Azkaban closed behind him. He took a deep breath. Finally he was free. His wand firmly grasped in his hand, *Merlin it felt good to hold it again*, Severus turned and, with a small pop, Apparated away.

A moment later, he reappeared outside number 13 Spinner's End. The row of houses looked just as they had when he'd seen them last. It was good to see that nothing had changed while he'd been gone.

A few steps up the walk and he was standing at the front door. With a quick wave of his wand Severus tested the wards. The ministry wards he disposed of easily. Lucius' he had to examine for a minute. He took down two and left two up. The final wards had a signature that seemed familiar but he couldn't quite place. They did not prohibit entry into his house, nor were they tracking wards, and they didn't appear to be malevolent. He would leave them for the moment, until he could ask Lucius who had placed them.

Wards taken care of he opened the door and stepped inside. The door shut quietly and firmly behind him. He blinked, startled. There were voices coming from the kitchen. Wand gripped tightly in his hand and eyes wide open, he walked along the hallway of a home he no longer recognized. A sharp left, through the nearest doorway, and he stood in the suddenly silent kitchen. Severus' eyes widened further then narrowed to suspicious slits.

"What the *hell* is going on? And what are you all doing in my kitchen?"

A house-elf squeaked and disappeared. The remaining house-elves gathered into a small huddle talking quickly. An occasional head would pop up, look at Severus anxiously, and disappear back into the huddle. After a few minutes they broke apart. It looked like they'd selected a spokesperson.

"We is remodeling sir's kitchen. We is following orders, sir."

"I can see that. Whose orders are you following?"

"I can answer that." A warm, female voice spoke behind him.

Severus spun around, wand extended, and froze. Looking at him, with a soft smile on her face, was a beautiful woman. He let his eyes drift down her body and back up. "Hermione?"

"Oh good, I was afraid you might not recognize me. That makes things much easier." Her smile deepened and he felt his heart clench. "It's good to see you, Severus, though you *are* two days earlier than we expected."

"Yes, they let me out two days early for 'good behavior'. And now, I reiterate my question. What is going on, and what are all these elves doing to my kitchen?"

"As I believe they stated, they are remodeling your kitchen."

Severus glared. "I can see that. *Why* are they remodeling my kitchen?"

"Lucius Malfoy wished to surprise you on your release from Azkaban. He hired Lavender and me to do the interior design work."

"You let Lavender Brown design the décor for my house? Which room has the pink carpeting, the cushions, and incense à la Trelawney? Please tell me it isn't my study." He threw his hands up in frustration.

"Severus, calm down." Hermione reached out and grasped his hand. He felt her touch to the tips of his toes. "Lavender's design style is much better than that, believe it or not. It's her design that the kitchen is being remodeled under, after all. Have a little faith. I wouldn't be working with her if her design sense was awful. Oh, and she's Lavender Weasley now." Still holding his hand she tugged him around to look at the kitchen again.

His eyes took in the work that had been done. It really was much better than what he'd had before, not that that would have taken much. Certainly the brown, orange, and off-white colors were gone, as were the laminate flooring and counter tops. Actually, if he could have a top-of-the-line kitchen, it would look something like this one. "The kitchen isn't too bad." He admitted, grudgingly.

She squeezed his hand. "Good. If you'll come with me, there are a few things I'd like your thoughts on." So saying, she tugged him along behind her, across the kitchen and out the back door.

"There were some areas that Lucius specifically wanted me to design. He trusts Lavender with the basics, but he wouldn't let her design the back garden, your potions lab, or your study."

Severus smirked, Lavender Bro... no... Weasley wouldn't know what to do with a potions lab if it bit her.

"As you can see," Hermione continued, "I put my foot down with Lucius and refused to do any design work without your input." She smiled broadly up at him. The smile changed to a sheepish grin. "I did clean everything up a bit."

"This is what I was thinking." Severus watched her wand twirl in a complex pattern. Suddenly his back garden was covered in a detailed glamour. "Here," she tugged him over to a raised bed. Looking closely he could see that each plant was labeled. "If you want to move anything around just tap the item once with your wand, and then tap again where you'd like it to be. If there's something you don't want; tap the item three times, it'll disappear. If there's something you would really like to see, picture it firmly in your head, and tap once where you'd like it to be. If you have a question about anything I've put in, just ask." With that she let go of his hand and stepped back.

Severus wandered the garden making small changes. This really was a clever charm. Finally he was at the bottom of the garden. It looked like this was the area Hermione had planned for a wildflower garden. There was a small fountain feature and a little stone side path, leading to a garden bench hidden by a trellis. The bench and trellis were sweet and romantic. An image popped into Severus' head and, without really thinking about the consequences, he tapped the bench. There was a gasp behind him. Turning he saw Hermione blush a deep red. In confusion he turned back to the glamour bench. Sitting on it was himself, holding glamour Hermione in his lap. They were engaged in a very heated snogging session. He blushed. Reaching out with his wand he quickly tapped his glamour self three times. The images disappeared.

He turned back to Hermione, who was still an enchanting shade of pink. "Hermione? I . . ."

"It's okay, Severus. You don't need to explain. Come with me, there's more I'd like you to see." She turned and started walking back to the house. Severus took a deep breath, trying to calm his racing heart.

His long legs caught up with her just at the door. She smiled shyly at him and grasped his hand again. His heart skipped a beat. Hermione tugged him along to his study. It looked the same, dingy and brown, with wall-to-wall bookshelves. The bookshelves were especially depressing; so many of his books were missing.

Hermione glanced up at Severus. He appeared deep in thought with a slight frown on his face. She followed the direction his eyes were looking and smiled. His books were important, and while she couldn't replace them, she did have a surprise for him there. Using the same intricate twirling of her wand the study came to life. Severus looked around him in amazement. The study was still the same, wall-to-wall bookshelves, but the room seemed lighter somehow. The windows stood open, gauzy curtains wafting in a light breeze. A small writing desk sat in one corner. Turning to the fireplace he saw a cheery fire burning. A cozy arm chair with a foot rest sat at an angle from the fireplace, next to it was a matching loveseat. He watched Hermione blush as she reached out and tapped the loveseat with her wand.

There, sitting on the loveseat, in black, silk pajamas, was himself. And cuddled up to him in a clingy, silver negligee, was Hermione. He looked over their shoulders and saw they were sharing a book. On the coffee table in front of them rested two glasses of liquor. He turned to look at Hermione, her cheeks still glowing with embarrassment.

He looked down at their clasped hands and then back up into her eyes. Over the many years they'd exchanged letters, he'd grown to realize that he had fallen for Hermione. She was clever, witty, had a dry sense of humor, enjoyed long discussions (well, long letters anyway) about diverse topics, and seemed interested in him. He'd never dared to hope that she would return his affection. Looking at her now, he dared to hope.

"Hermione, aren't you seeing Neville Longbottom?" He glared and looked down; he sounded like a bloody teenager. It seemed to him he recalled some mention of dates with Longbottom in a couple of her letters.

"Severus, that was seven years ago. There hasn't been anyone but you for five years now."

At this admission Severus' head snapped up. The hope that filled his eyes made Hermione's knees weak.

Looking again at their clasped hands, Severus smirked lightly then tugged. Hermione came easily into his arms. For a full minute they stood there, just looking into each other's eyes. Then slowly his head tilted down as hers tilted up, and their lips met.

Upon reflection later, Hermione decided that, perhaps the romance novels weren't all bunk. She certainly felt their first kiss all the way to her toes. It was sweet and warm, Severus' lips moving softly against hers. And when his tongue tapped lightly at her lips, she opened for him. Passion flared as their kiss deepened. Hermione felt warmth pooling low in her belly. As Severus pulled her closer, she could feel his arousal pressing against her stomach. Finally, they had to part and breathe. Severus leaned his forehead against hers as they panted.

Once she'd caught her breath Hermione clasped hands with Severus again and stepped back. "Come, there's one more room I'd like to show you." She tugged him across the study, back into the kitchen, and to the far wall. Waving open the door to his hidden potions lab, she led him down the stairs, casting *Lumos* as she walked. At the bottom of the stairs, she paused for him to take a look around. The Aurors had indeed found his lab; it was empty, the shelves mostly cleaned out, and his cauldrons and other supplies missing. He would have to start completely from scratch. It was a little depressing.

Seeing the sad look on his face, Hermione reached up and kissed him lightly on the cheek. She then twirled her wand and cast the glamour he was learning to love. This new lab was bright and cheery. Natural light flooded in from several small windows placed along the tops of the walls. The counter tops were granite, the island counter stainless steel, the shelving stocked with ingredients, the storage areas full of supplies. Severus walked around examining the changes with a look of joy on his face. He came back to Hermione standing in front of the glamour island workspace. "It's what I've always dreamed of having. I never thought it possible." He pulled her close, leaned down, and kissed her deeply. Hermione melted into him. Without even realizing it, their clasped hands touched the island once. When they finally broke apart, for air, they noticed movement to the side. Together they turned to look at the counter.

Hermione gasped and turned bright red, Severus' cheeks tinged pink.

Lying back on the counter was a very naked Hermione, thrusting into her was an equally naked Severus. As Hermione watched herself being pounded into, she wondered if the glamour was an accurate representation of naked Severus. She hoped so.

Hermione, still blushing, turned to look at Severus. He'd recovered from the shock quickly and was currently leering at her. Hermione blushed again.

"Umm. . ."

"Could I interest you in staying for . . . dinner?" He let the sentence float the double meaning.

Hermione opened her mouth, blushed, closed her mouth and nodded.

"Good." He turned towards the lab stairs tugging her with him.

"Severus, what about them?" She waved her hand back towards the counter. The glamour Hermione and Severus were still going strong.

"They seem to be having so much fun, stopping them would be cruel. Let them finish; we can take care of the glamour later." He tugged her up the stairs. "Come, you can show me where the food has been stored. Is my bedroom finished?"

"The food is in the kitchen, Severus, where else would it be? Your bedroom *is* finished. Would you like to see it? Lavender did a good job . . ." her voice trailed off as they closed the door to the lab.

From his spot in a corner of the lab, hidden behind a disillusionment charm, Lucius Malfoy smiled. Things hadn't gone quite as he'd expected, but he rather suspected they had ended better than even he had planned. Looking at the glamour couple in the room, he chuckled. It was about time he got home to Narcissa.

Original Prompt: *Hermione Granger combines her magical know-how with Lavender Brown's sense of style to become the Wizarding world's most sought after interior designers. To celebrate his friend's release from Azkaban, Lucius Malfoy hires the duo to renovate Severus Snape's childhood home at Spinner's End, much to Severus' chagrin. Can home improvement lead to friendship and love for Hermione and Severus, or will they kill each other with power tools? Combative, witty banter is a must.*