

Wrapped Around Your Finger

by Jade_Orchid

Hermione wins Snape as a spoil of war. But she's not always nice.

1. Caught Between the Scylla and Charibdes

Chapter 1 of 7

Hermione wins Snape as a spoil of war. But she's not always nice.

A/N: WARNING! This story contains the following: NC-17 rated sex, disturbing themes including somewhat OOC/ Dark Hermione, BDSM/FemDom, language, and spoilers of a sort from OOTP. Now, if you don't like the idea of Hermione being a bit cruel and using Snape as her play toy, then you'd best not read this story!! I mean it!! The premise for this is (very) loosely based off the "Hollow Man" concept from the WIKTT challenge. This is my first HG/SS fanfic. If you want to comment, please be constructive. Nobody likes flames.

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Wrapped Around Your Finger

Caught Between the Scylla and Charibdes

"When you find your servant is your master

You'll be wrapped around my finger"

The Police, "Wrapped around Your Finger" from the album "Synchronicity"

I wait for him to emerge from his room.

I know he heard me knock: two slow, loud raps echoing on the thin wooden door. It's the way I always knock when I intend to possess him. I stand in my customary place in the hall, patient as a spider. He won't be long. He can't. Too much hesitation and the cruciatus kicks in, keeps him from defying me. Clever work on the Ministry's part, really, these "servants": former Death Eaters who have been altered and given to those who suffered greatly from the final battle. Losing one's parents in a Death Eater attack seemed to qualify me.

Oh, he didn't know it was going to happen: I don't blame him for that. What I do blame him for is the utter callousness he displayed in the face of my suffering. "We've all lost something, Miss Granger," he'd said. Was this his attempt at comfort? Pretty bloody pathetic, if you ask me. Then walking off. Dismissing me that way, as if my hurt was of no real importance. It was at that moment that I decided I would get even. Damn the consequences. Severus Snape would learn a lesson. I thought we'd developed an understanding with each other while working together for the Order. Perhaps we did; perhaps it just wasn't what I hoped it would be.

You want a confession? Very well. Yes, I did have a crush on him. Even now I burn for him. I ache for what I wanted him to be with a pain that Voldemort himself could not

have inflicted upon me. But that will never happen. Instead I have to make do with reality. Yet since I own him body and soul, reality is still much to my liking.

Ah, yes. That was irony if irony ever existed. The former Death Eaters given as servants to muggle-born. When I was informed of my option I didn't hesitate. My role in the final battle has lent me a certain amount of status now, and that day I milked it for all it's worth. I stared at Fudge and told him I wanted Snape. He blinked, but made no comment. We of the Order knew Severus was innocent. But unfortunately we could offer no concrete proof. So Fudge threw Severus in with the rest. Stripped of the ability to perform magic, left with only the skill to make potions, then spelled so that he had to obey all orders from me or endure the crippling pain curse. Add instant unconsciousness if he ever made a move to cause harm to another living creature and his enslavement was complete.

He steps out of the room, closing the door behind him. Wordlessly, he kneels, his hands resting on his thighs, his head bent. Good, very good. The first few times he was rebellious, resistant. Trying to defy me, sneering. But he learned rather quickly that I wasn't about to put up with that. I don't think me took me seriously at first. He does now.

"Look at me."

He hesitates, but not long enough to anger me. His dark eyes meet mine. I lean against the wall and let my gaze wander down his body. Black linen trousers, long sleeved black silk shirt. Clothes he might have chosen for himself. But... the top button is undone. Were it up to him, he'd be completely contained within his clothes like he was at Hogwarts. But not now. I like seeing that sliver of pale flesh exposed by that untamed button. It's a reminder to him that I am the one in control here.

"This is abuse, you know," he says, his voice devoid of anger despite his words.

"You feel that I abuse you? Would you like me to return you to Azkaban? Or perhaps let someone else have you as a servant? Someone who doesn't know you weren't really a Death Eater?" My words slip off my tongue like soured honey.

He flinches at this. Not everyone who took a servant treats them with any sort of compassion or respect. After all, they were Death-Eaters. I've heard stories of what happens to Lucius and Draco. And even Harry sometimes visits them for a little "chat." I don't blame him a bit. He would've taken them himself, except that when all was said and done he'd opted for Bellatrix. I like to visit Harry and Ginny and watch Bellatrix cringe each time he pulls his wand out. She killed Sirius, the only family Harry had left except for the Weasleys and me. Who am I to judge what anyone else does to ease their suffering?

"That doesn't make this right," Severus whispers.

"You have your own room and bath. You have good food and clothes. I let you have time to yourself. I even got permission for you to make medicinal potions and set up a lab for you. What more should I do?"

"Set me free!" he cries harshly. "You know I'm innocent!"

I sigh. "Yes, but you know I can't let you go. Someone else would take you, or worse. The world at large thinks you're a Death Eater bastard, or have you forgotten?"

"Why do you do this?" he whispers again, defeated.

Such straightforwardness, from a Slytherin no less. He must truly be desperate.

"Because I enjoy it," I answer.

"You enjoy forcing your will on me? Then you're no better than a Death Eater," he spits.

"You might be right," I say, calm in the face of his anger because I know that's the best way to deal with him. "But I've never killed except in self-defense, and I've never tortured someone and laughed while they screamed. Can you say the same, Severus?"

"That's in my past," he replies, though he looks uneasy.

"Well, in MY past, I had a family. Guess what? They're dead now, rotting in the ground along with Lily and James Potter, and Sirius Black, and Dean Thomas, and Professor Flitwick..."

"Stop!" he cries out.

"Murdered by Death Eaters," I hiss.

"This is still wrong and you know it," he tells me, his voice flat, hollow.

"I don't care."

He stares at me when I say this, as if he's never seen me before, and perhaps he hasn't. Little Goody-Two-Shoes Granger. Pride of Gryffindor. Abusing a former professor and liking it. Maybe I'm a Slytherin in Lion's robes.

He seems to have run out of steam now. Perhaps he's weary of the argument. He knows he can't win. We've had similar discussions before. He looks away, then shuts his eyes.

"Are you ready?"

"Does it matter?" he asks.

I don't reply to his question. Instead I point down the hall. "Go on."

"May I walk this time?" he asks. His tone is soft. After the last fight I made him crawl. It would seem he'll play nice to avoid that.

"Yes," I tell him, feeling a twinge of remorse.

He stands, clasping his hands behind his back, and slowly goes forward to meet his fate.

2. The Spiderman is Having You for Dinner

Hermione wins Snape as a spoil of war. But she's not always nice.

Wrapped Around Your Finger

The Spiderman is Having You for Dinner

"Be still be calm be quiet now my precious boy, don't struggle like that or I will only love you more

The Cure, "Lullaby," from the album "Disintegration"

He stops at the door, one hand reaching out towards the knob but not touching it. This hesitation is new. Why does he wait? Is he suddenly afraid? How unlike him. Yet I can't think of another explanation.

"Trying to postpone the inevitable, Severus?" I ask, then wince. I'm not usually quite so malicious. What's wrong with me? Am I having an attack of conscience after his earlier accusations? I push the idea aside. Not going to let that happen. I've seen what happens to nice people. Nice people get killed. I remember flashes of the final battle. The blood, the blinding light from the curses. Finding Dean's body, so twisted and mangled I didn't know it was him at first. And alongside that the rising anguish of my parents' death, a wound that will never fully heal, offering me to the sweet darkness of oblivion as I lapsed into unconsciousness...

No, indeed. I'm quite done with being nice. Aren't I?

As if he's reading my thoughts he murmurs: "You didn't used to be so vicious."

"I learned from a master," I retort.

"Touché," he answers, and slowly opens the door.

I can almost feel his apprehension. This I understand perfectly, for he never knows quite what will be waiting for him in this room. It all depends on my mood at the time. If I'm feeling generous, it's a simple bed. Sometimes I even decorate in neutral colors instead of the burgundy and gold of Gryffindor. If he's pissed me off, it gets more elaborate. Who knew transmogrifying a sofa into a torture rack could be so much fun? I didn't use it on him: I'm not a monster. But the expression on his face was exquisite. He was as docile as a lamb that day.

Today, despite our earlier discussion, I am in a gentle mood. Under different circumstances, I'd call it romantic. But that word isn't quite fitting here, considering that he's bound to my will whether he likes it or not. Still, some part of me hopes that he'll at least be pliant when he sees the room this time. I took special care. The bed is iron and mahogany, covered with velvet and silk in soft shades of purple and gray. Candles glow from all corners, and a faint scent of rose and amber fills the air.

"How elegant," he jeers.

"I can be gracious at times," I say.

He shakes his head as he walks into the room. His eyes absorb everything in a matter of seconds. When he looks at me he has an eyebrow raised.

"Very sensual. Planning on trying to seduce me? I don't imagine I need to tell you what a waste of time that would be. Or are you just trying to indulge in a ridiculous fantasy?"

I frown as I enter and close the door behind me. I hate these sudden mood shifts. "You're not very grateful for the change of pace."

"Oh, how remiss of me." His eyes take on a hateful glare. "Thank you, Hermione, for going to all the trouble to make our surroundings so pleasant while you compel me to satisfy your desires. It really is too kind of you."

"That's enough," I snap.

He subsides, but not before giving me an angry look. Well, I haven't changed my mind. Gryffindor stubbornness and all. I think a change of pace is in order.

I gesture at a crystal decanter on a small table between two chairs. "Pour me a drink."

He obeys, his movements graceful and precise. When he hands me the glass I say: "And now one for yourself."

His eyes widen, but he makes no comment. I sit down in one of the black leather chairs, enjoying the smell of it, the smooth, buttery texture. He finishes pouring his drink and looks at me expectantly. I wave a hand at the empty chair. "Sit down."

Now that got his attention. I don't always let him sit in a chair. The floor near my feet, often. On my lap, once. O how he hated that! I almost chuckle at the memory. He sits down and looks at me warily, holding his glass close as if it were a shield. I raise mine out towards him in a toast.

"To the waters of Lethe!" I proclaim, taking a gulp of the absinthe.

He follows suit, still on edge. "Drink up, Severus, it's not poisoned," I state gently.

"If you say so," he mutters. But he kills the glass.

I take a few more quick swallows, then hold out my half-empty glass for him to top off. He does so, then refills his own and sits back down, taking a small, slow sip.

"How is it?" I ask.

"Adequate," he replies. "Though why you added vanilla is beyond me."

I shrug. "I like to experiment."

"So it would seem."

I stare at him, but his face is neutral, composed. I say nothing but gesture for him to continue drinking. Now the wariness is back. I can almost hear the gears revolving inside his head. Am I trying to get him drunk to dull his senses for what's to come?

"Such suspicion," I chide him.

He takes a long sip. "This is hardly necessary."

"I'm not doing it out of necessity, Severus."

"Why do you want to get me drunk, Hermione?"

Damn him and his exasperative ways. "I just want you to relax."

"Return me to my pre-conviction state and I promise you I'll relax."

I roll my eyes. "How do you propose I do that?"

"You're the smartest witch to graduate Hogwarts in twenty years, I'm sure you could think of a way if you wanted to."

"Are you implying that I don't want to see you exonerated?"

"You tell me, Know-It-All."

I glance down. He continues his verbal assault, though his voice is quiet.

"You like being able to control me, don't you? Go on, admit it. It's not like I can do anything about it."

I give him an angry stare. "Can you blame me? After all those years of you tormenting me and Harry and Ron? Belittling us, turning cruelty into an art form? Taunting Sirius until he risked his safety and ended up dead? If you hadn't have thrown Harry out of Occlumency in fifth year, maybe he could've kept Voldemort from seeing what Albus was doing. It's your fault Albus has run off."

"MY fault? That brat Potter violated my privacy!"

"That brat, as you say, was a fifteen year old boy at the time. Sure, what he did was wrong. But you... you're an adult. An adult still nursing grudges from when you were that age!"

"Do you have a point to this analysis of my character?"

"My point, dear Severus, is that YOU are not nice."

"So my actions excuse yours?"

"I don't need absolution from you, Severus. I don't treat you any worse than the other servants get. In most ways I treat you a hell of a lot better."

"Except for times like these."

"Let's go back in time then, shall we, and watch how you treated your muggle victims? I'm sure you were so caring, so considerate of them as you poured potions down their throats to see what effect they'd have!"

"Is that what this is about?" he asks. "You want to punish me on behalf of every muggle I ever tortured?"

I snort derisively. "You don't understand anything."

"Then enlighten me."

I set my empty glass down. "I'm through talking. And so are you."

"What a surprise," he mutters.

"Go run a bath. Add some windwalk and lavender."

"And what temperature would her highness like the water?" he scowls.

I smile. "Whatever temperature is most comfortable for you. It's your bath."

"I'm not dirty," he says quickly.

"Go run the bath."

He glares, but obeys.

I have one final taste, then refill his glass and carry it into the bathroom with me. He's just finished adding the fragrances.

I hand him the glass. "Drink it all, quickly," I tell him.

Again he complies. When he's drained the last drop of absinthe he says: "you still haven't explained this."

"What's to explain?" I ask, sitting the glass down and turning to face him.

"Why do you care if I'm relaxed or not?"

I chew on my lower lip. How can I tell him the truth, that what I truly want is for him to come to me willingly, but I know I'll never have that? How can I tell him that this is as close as I can get? And...Gods help me; some part of me truly enjoys this!

I can't. That would give him an edge. Leverage.

"It's easier for me," I say with a shrug.

"Is it really," he murmurs.

The steaming bath, the soft fragrances and his nearness are making the desire rise in me. Whatever bits of conscience have tried to resurface today are shoved down. Only the hunger remains, as strong and sweet as ever and demanding fulfillment.

He's watching me now, trying to figure out the angle of my actions. The absinthe is kicking in: I can tell by the slightly glassy look in his eyes. His breathing has slowed as well.

"Now what?" he asks, voice slightly deeper than usual. My body responds to his voice, as it always has.

"Come here," I bid gently.

He moves closer but still stands about a foot away. I reach out for him, wrapping my arms around his waist to bring him against me. He makes no effort to stop me. I slide my arms up around his neck, and, because I can no longer withstand my wanting, I press my lips to his.

He neither resists nor responds, the barrier of his closed lips frustrating me. "Open your mouth," I whisper.

He makes a soft sound then, of anger and helplessness. He doesn't want to give over. Not that I blame him. I wait, and he waits; too long, regrettably for him, because the next second he's bent over gasping in agony. I lower him down onto the floor and hold him until the spasm passes.

"You knew that would happen," I remind him once he recovers.

He tries to pull away, but I tighten my hold. He stops moving. "I didn't care."

"You are supposed to obey."

His eyes are as dark as I've ever seen them. "I... don't... want to."

"It doesn't matter to the cruciatus what you want."

He sighs. I take his face in my hands. "Stop fighting me," I tell him.

His nostrils flare. "No."

"Then you're in for a rather painful stretch today."

He resists twice more. That's usually his limit, though he has made it to four and even five times once before he capitulated. The fourth time I kiss him I know I've won. His lips part under mine and he lets me ease my tongue into his mouth. Adrenaline rushes through me in one shock wave after another. How can I want this so desperately? How can a rational, intelligent person want to so utterly consume someone else that they abandon all ethics? How ironic that Severus called me a Know-It-All and I have no answer to what should be a simple question.

I stop the kiss. "Your bath is getting cold," I say.

"I'm devastated," he snips.

"Stand up."

He does. "I'm telling you, this is pointless."

I move behind him and circle his waist with my arms. "Let me be the judge of that."

"Forgive me if I don't trust your judgment."

Now I'm getting angry. I decide that I've put up with quite enough for the moment. My hands move to his shirt. I grasp the ends and pull hard and fast. The silk rends easily, buttons flying off like fireworks, revealing his smooth pale chest.

"Dramatic, aren't you?" he comments.

I push the shirt off and let it fall to the floor. I show as little mercy to the rest of his clothes, and a few minutes later he is naked before me.

3. You Are Obsession

Chapter 3 of 7

Hermione wins Snape as a spoil of war. But she's not always nice.

Wrapped Around Your Finger

You Are Obsession

"My fantasy has turned to madness

And all my goodness has turned to badness

My need to possess you has consumed my soul

My life is trembling, I have no control."

"Obsession" by Animotion, from the album "Animotion"

I have seen him naked before, of course. This isn't the first time I've taken him. Need I say that he despises it? Being exposed and vulnerable doesn't sit well with most people, and he's no exception. His head is bent, the sleek raven mass of his hair hiding his face. He's not as agitated as he usually is when stripped, thanks to the three glasses of absinthe. Perhaps I'll get him to drink more often. I wish I didn't have to resort to such measures. Yet there is something arousing about it.

"Get in."

He slips into the rich blue water, leaning back and shutting his eyes. I use my wand to turn some music on low and warm the water a bit more, then slide to the floor near the head of the tub and gaze at him.

He's not a handsome man. It's been said before, by more than one person. He's not even what would be considered attractive by most standards. Why, then, have I always been drawn to him? I've reminded him, and myself, that he's been a horrid person. Cold, harsh, lacking in most redeeming qualities. So why have I wanted him so desperately? Desperately enough to act on it this way?

Albus trusts him. And he has, if nothing else, proved worthy of that. He seemed to despise the children at school, yet unhesitatingly protected them. Even Harry. Quite the contradiction you've been, Severus, I muse as I watch him.

Thoughts of Albus make me wince. No one knows where he is. Harry, Ron and I spent two months trying to find him before we realized that, for whatever reason, he wasn't ready to be found. I can only imagine what he would say if he was aware of what I was doing to his former Potions Master. Legally, Severus has no rights, except to not be mistreated. Technically, non-consensual sexual activities are mistreatment. But the unspoken, unofficial truth of the matter is that not many people really care what happens to ex Death Eaters. Even if Severus could file a complaint, and even if it were taken seriously, he'd just go to Azkaban or be given to someone else. And for all the anger and hatred he must have towards me for what I'm doing to him, he's smart enough to know it's his best choice.

As for me... what would I say if Albus knew? I don't know. I could explain it to him no better than I can to Severus. Well, you see, sir, I've had this absurd crush on Severus for years, despite all his ill treatment of me and my friends, and when my parents died I finally snapped. Then came the offer of a servitor, and I decided I would have him and damn the torpedoes. So I make him do wicked things with me against his will. But I treat him very well otherwise. Care for a lemon drop?

"I'm going to turn into a prune in here," Severus says.

I start. Oh, yes. I cast some quick spells, then take a large washcloth and begin bathing him.

"I can do that myself," he informs me icily.

"You could. But I'd rather do it."

His eyes snap open and look into mine. The intensity of his gaze makes me shiver again.

"I'll say this for you, Hermione: your brand of sadism is quite unique."

"What do you mean?" I ask, frantically trying to still the tremors in my hands.

He shrugs, the movement sending ripples of water dancing across his skin. "The décor, the absinthe, the bath...it's unnecessary and we both know it. In the end I'll have to do whatever you want anyway. So your motive can only be to torment me further."

"Maybe I just want to make it nicer for you," I say quietly.

His expression is grave. "You're violating me, Hermione. There is no way of making that nicer."

I cast my eyes downward. No, I imagine not. A gilded cage is still a cage, and rape is still rape. I curse myself for my moment of weakness in suggesting to him otherwise. Where is the new Hermione? The hardened, I-don't-give-a-damn young woman whose conscience is unladen?

"I'm sure you feel better for making the attempt, though," he adds. "I suppose you think that it makes what you're doing less tainted."

I stop bathing him and scowl, my anger giving fuel to my weakened resolve. Some part of my mind wonders if he's deliberately trying to provoke me, because he knows that I always end up losing my temper with him when he acts this way. Pushing my buttons in the only way he can, the way he always has. What did you expect? I ask myself.

He affects a dramatic sigh and bows his head. "Pretty crude attempt, really."

That does it. I wrap the fingers of my left hand into his hair, pulling his head up so quickly I catch him unprepared. What is that look in his eyes?

"Crude, you say?" I growl. "I'll teach you the meaning of crude."

I reach behind his back and pull the stopper from the tub. As the water swirls away I press him down and grasp his wrists, lifting them above his head on either side near the taps. I grab my wand and point it at his hands. "Deligo."

Instantly his hands are bound to the wall by the unseen force of the spell. He has the grace to look mildly uneasy now. "Hermione..." he begins.

I ignore him and move to the other end of the bath. I seize an ankle in each hand and pull his legs up and apart, then drop them over the edge. "Deligo."

"Hermione..."

"Be silent, or I'll make sure you can't be anything else," I tell him coldly.

His breaths are faster, his anxiety fighting the effects of the drink. A lock of hair has fallen over his eye, but he doesn't move. I can see the faint pulse pounding in his throat, the faint film of perspiration on his forehead. His skin... how can anyone's skin be so pale? Alabaster seems a vibrant color compared to his flesh. There are scars on his chest, some from abuse he suffered before I brought him home with me, some from wounds long gone but not forgotten. His nipples are two small shadowy circles, erect from the slight chill of the room. My eyes wander down. Thankfully, he's gained some weight back since I took him in. I think they weren't given much to eat. He didn't want to discuss it, and I didn't press. I study his slim hips, the long clean lines of his legs, and finally bring my gaze to his sex, the organ somewhat darker than the rest of his skin, a lax but impressive weight against his thigh.

I lean over him, lightly trailing my nails down his chest with one hand, the other hand resting on his leg scant inches from his penis. He tenses, but remains quiet. Slowly, almost casually, I run my hand further down while the other one slides over to grasp his testicles. He gasps.

"You've got a smart mouth, don't you?" I ask tenderly. "If I didn't know better, I'd say you like making me angry."

"Add arrogant and delusional to my list of adjectives for describing you," he rejoins. A mild pain hits him, makes him wince.

How can someone so smart set himself up so easily?

I continue to caress him, using my wand to alter the shape of the bathtub, making it longer and wider. His legs are now pinned to the top of the lower edge, still spread apart. His skin is cold: he shivers.

"I should get you warm," I murmur, resting my hands on his nipples.

"How, by throwing me into Hell? By all means, do so. That would be preferable to this."

I cluck my tongue, pinching his nipples slightly, not enough to really hurt but enough to make him pause. "I told you to be quiet."

"In case you hadn't noticed, I'm usually not good at doing what I'm told," he retorts. Another spasm hits him and he shudders for a moment.

I sigh. "Fine. Talk, then. I'd rather not have you in constant pain for disobeying right now."

"Your continued generosity amazes me."

"There are other ways of shutting you up, you know."

Now he's silent. I dissolve the spell and tell him to get out and dry off.

Once he does, he walks into the bedroom, stopping in the center of the room. "And where would you like me?" he asks. I know he's expecting, hoping, I'll say the bed. Hoping this will be quick. Sadly for him I'm not so inclined at present.

I gesture to the wall. "Over there. Face me. Arms up, legs apart."

He looks apprehensive. But he complies.

I secure him to the wall with the spell again. I found out pretty early in these sessions that if I just ordered him to be still, the cruciatus could kick in with even a small movement. Better to bind him. He tends to move as much as he can.

I cast a warming charm on him. Once he's no longer shivering I sit on the foot of the bed, just staring. The knowledge that I can do anything I want to him is more intoxicating than absinthe could ever be. I feel heady with power and a rush of desire to reprove him for provoking me earlier.

He closes his eyes. "Can't you get on with this?"

"Where would the fun be in that, dear Severus?"

"There is no fun in this for me."

"Since you don't know the meaning of that word anyway, I'll ignore that remark."

What shall I do to him? I wonder idly. The urge to claim him is strong: it usually is when I see him like this. But not swiftly this time. I want things to be different. I want... what do I want? I shake my head, feeling a second of dizziness. It passes as quickly as it came.

"Hermione?"

I see him looking at me. "What?"

"Is something wrong?"

"Would you care if there was?"

He shrugs. "If something happens to you I'll be back in prison. I care about THAT."

"You don't find that idea appealing? I thought you'd rather be in Hell than be here," I say.

"Hell is one thing. Azkaban is another."

"I'm fine."

"Then why are you just sitting there in a stupor?"

I get up and walk to him. "Better?"

"Depends on your point of view."

"Maybe kissing you will shut you up."

"Only if it's the kiss of death."

I almost laugh. I lean forward and claim his mouth again. There's no opposition from him this time. With a sweep of my tongue I take his mouth in mine, sucking in and releasing him again, surprised by the feeling of his body relaxing against me.

I pull back to look at him. "No resistance? Maybe something's wrong with you."

He turns his face. "You're going to have me. Why make it worse on myself?"

Hmm. This is new. I wasn't expecting capitulation from him. Well, not this early into it. Usually he submits from exhaustion borne of cruciatus pain. Once he asked me to give him a lust potion so he at least didn't have to think rationally while it happened. Is he up to something? He is a Slytherin, after all. How long will this last?

I tug gently on his neck, and he turns back. I begin to kiss him again, taking his lower lip between mine and sucking on it, then running my tongue to his upper lip, licking, tracing the outline of his mouth. Then I slowly begin to kiss his face, making my way across his cheeks to his ears, back to his mouth, then sliding my lips along his jaw and down his neck, my tongue darting out in tiny flicks. I swipe the erratic pulse in his throat and travel down his chest, still only touching him with my mouth and tongue, until I reach a nipple. I take it into my mouth, tugging softly, licking and blowing on it until the nub hardens as a physical reaction to the stimulus. I feel him quiver as I repeat the process with the other nipple, but I know it's a sort of reflex response, nothing more.

I continue my descent, nibbling and kissing the inside of his thighs, the tips of my fingers lightly stroking behind his knees. This time I know his shivers aren't from being cold. It's a strange thought to know you can make someone's skin crawl. He pulls slightly against his bonds but that's all.

Very slowly I move to the base of his organ, tongue tracing the tiny folds of skin around his sac, then lick him from base to tip, first hard, then soft, alternating with the top and underside of my tongue, going back and forth. My tongue slips up to the fleshy head of his penis, swirling around, running up and down the shaft. I take him into one hand, pressing gently against the ridged area just below the tip. My lips envelop him and I begin to suck, paying special care to the back of the shaft. Each time I thrust I rest my mouth against the tip, probing the opening, varying the intervals, my other hand continuing to caress.

He's trembling now. I feel him hardening from my ministrations. I stop sucking and wrap both hands around him as I slither up against his body.

His face is flushed, his chest heaves; his eyes bore into mine before he closes them and turns away.

"You drugged me without telling me first," he accuses, but his voice sounds hollow.

"Sure I did."

"I loathe you, you little Gryffindor bitch," he whispers, eyes still tightly shut.

"You might. But your body thinks otherwise."

"What did you use? Ashwinder? Moon Lily?" He turns an even darker shade of red, the trembling worsening as I continue fondling him. A terrible thing, to be betrayed by your own body. I didn't drug him and he knows it. But this... this is the thing he abhors most, the fact that he can't stop his body from reacting. For my part, I wonder again at his lack of resistance. By now he's usually let loose an impressive stream of invective about me and struggled as much as he can before slumping back in defeat. Is he really giving up?

"You won't win, you know," he says, so low and ragged I can barely hear him.

I stop. "Win what?"

Now he fixes his eyes on me. "You can bend me physically to your will. You might even be able to trick my body into thinking it wants you. But you will never, never break me."

I ponder his words.

"I don't want that," I say at length.

"No? Then what DO you want?"

A willing slave, I think. But how is that possible?

Seeing him flushed and intense like this makes me know one thing I want. I release the spell and he stumbles for a second before straightening quickly. I don't need to tell him what to do. With a flickering glance of defiance, he stretches out on the bed.

4. Don't Give Me a Piece of Your Preciousness

Chapter 4 of 7

Hermione wins Snape as a spoil of war. But she's not always nice.

Wrapped Around Your Finger

Don't Give Me a Piece of Your Preciousness

"Lover, brother, bogenvilla

My vine twists around your need...

I can be cruel

I don't know why"

Tori Amos, "Cruel," from the album "From the Choirgirl Hotel"

I watch him, amused and somehow disappointed. I expected defiance from him. But I meant what I told him. I don't want to break him. At least, I don't think so. When did this start getting so complicated?

I follow him to the bed, standing beside him. "Sit up."

He does so in a swift fluid motion, that lock of hair falling over his face again and he impatiently pushes it aside, swinging his legs over to rest his feet on the floor as he looks at me expectantly.

I freeze, staring at his nude form. His body could easily have been sculpted from ivory marble, could easily have been the inspiration for such a sculpture even with the scars. His expression is not so much wary now as waiting. There's still a slight smirk on his lips, though... almost as if he's daring me. Is he so sure he can't be broken? Everyone has a breaking point. Including me. Shall I... no. I won't descend into that particular abyss. Having him is enough. Although, some little voice whispers to me, it would be a shame to disappoint him...

"Undress me."

He blinks. This is a first from me. He studies me, and I study him. Let him wonder if I'm picking up the gauntlet he threw down. His fingers reach up so slowly it's as though a chronos spell was cast upon them. His movements are tentative, as though he's having to make a conscious focus to do what I asked. His knuckles lightly brush against me as he unfastens buttons, pulls down zippers, slips bits of silk and lace off my expectant body. When he's finished he's careful to look anywhere but at me.

"Very good," I purr. "Lie down again. On your stomach."

A spark of fear lights his eyes. But there is still no refusal. Only a wild dark look as he moves.

I remove a bottle of massage salve from the nightstand; scoop some into my hands, rubbing them together to warm the salve before I begin to rub his back. My touch makes him gasp, but he keeps still. He pretends it isn't affecting him, but I know better. The signs are there: the relaxing of his muscles, the slight change in his breathing. Cruciatius is a harsh spell. Why else would it be an Unforgivable? And despite what he might think, I don't enjoy him being in pain. This isn't the first time I have massaged him. My hands work their way down, caressing his buttocks and the curve of his spine, slipping his legs apart to rub his thighs before continuing to his lower legs and feet.

He has been completely silent all this time after the initial gasp. I turn him over and repeat the process, watching him closely. His eyes are once again closed; the dark curved lashes a stark contrast to his pale face. I press a quick flurry of kisses on his cheeks, his lips, his eyes. He sighs.

"Is the pain gone?"

"Yes." He peers up at me. "Is it over?"

I smile. "No."

"I didn't think so," he mutters. His expression changes. "Can't you just take me and be done with it?"

“And deny myself the pleasure of a slow buildup?”

“Seeing as how your pleasure is my degradation, I’m all for moving it along.”

“Not going to ask me to stop?” He did that once. Only once.

“I might,” he said, “if I thought it would do any good.”

He has that tone again, the one that try as I might I can’t quite place. My hands go still.

He laughs mockingly. “Has your exalted courage failed you?”

“Hardly,” I retort.

“Going soft, that’s what your lot does best, isn’t it? All that bravery just to show mercy at the end. Weak.”

“Stuff it.”

“Can’t you stand to hear the truth?”

“I said shut up!”

My blood is roaring in my ears. Guilt is forgotten, gentleness is forgotten.

I take possession of his mouth. There is no room for him to protest. My lips rake over his in a gesture of ownership, the anger melding with the desire until they are a heated blur. When I finally stop his eyes are glazed, his lips swollen from the force of my fury. My fingers are tangled in his hair, holding his face still as I look at him.

“You can insult me all you want, but don’t you ever—EVER—say anything about my house again.”

I give him no chance to reply; I renew the onslaught on his mouth, leaving both of us gasping for breath and still I go on. He could do something: he’s not bound in any way. But he does nothing except lie there and let me plunder his lips with my livid kiss. How good this feels, even as a part of me seems to recoil. More. I want more, yet it feels as if I could have everything and that would still not be enough, or would be too much...

At length I pull away. That look on his face, the mix of apprehension over my actions and satisfaction over goading me. Well.

I run my thumb over his mouth, gleaming wet from my kiss, tender to the touch. He winces slightly. I pull on his lower lip, tracing patterns with my nail until his lip quivers. Only then do I trail my hand down. His nipples are hard. I move lower.

He reacts in the usual way, by shutting his eyes.

“NO.”

He looks up, his reluctance obvious. “Look at me,” I continue. “I want to see you while I do this.”

Now he’s shivering again. I usually allow him the luxury of shutting me out of himself. This is going to be different. My eyes never leaving his, I continue with my caress. He hardens again. I slip my hand to his testicles, lifting them, stroking them as my other hand pumps his shaft. His eyes are a kaleidoscope of emotions: anger, shame, vulnerability, and yes, that perverse desire all spiraling and exploding out.

Still holding him at attention, my other hand goes even lower, finding his opening, gently pressing a finger at the entrance. He draws in a sharp fast breath. The word ‘no’ seems poised on his lips. Yet he doesn’t utter it. Not even when I slip the finger inside. He hisses, he clenches, then exhales gradually and relaxes. Two fingers. His eyes almost roll back in his head. I feel a surge of satisfaction.

A moment later I withdraw from him, muttering a cleansing charm under my breath as I lift his arms up beside his head. Not to restrain him, but so I can straddle him. My fingers clench his chest slightly as I center myself over him. I can feel my arousal leaving a moist oval of heat on his stomach just before I lift myself, moving to his hardness and thrusting against it until he’s sheathed inside me.

He almost turns away, but remembers in time. I have never seen this before. It is written in a language I can’t understand, what crosses his face. These lines are alien to me. The harder I stare the closer it seems I might be to deciphering them, only to discover that they continuously alter, dissolving from one enigma to the next. I will not ask. I’m not entirely certain I want a translation.

I pull myself slowly upward until I’m almost free of him, then plunge back down, taking all of him into me, feeling my walls spasm against him, coating him with my musky fluids. Despite my earlier decision to watch him I close my eyes as I settle against him and begin grinding my hips with long deliberate strokes. I feel him shift slightly, hear his shallow pants, and know that his body has given over even if the rest of him hasn’t.

This submission fuels my already scorching hunger. My movements become less controlled, more primal as I continue working my hips, the built-up need taking over, demanding satisfaction and not being willing to wait. The tightly wound coils within me burst, and I scream out, the rush of orgasm catching both of us by surprise with its quick ferocity. I cling to him, riding the waves as they wash over me, my muscles clamping down on him like a vise, milking him until he, too, climaxes, moaning as he does, but whether or not it is a sound of despair or unwilling pleasure I cannot be certain...

5. The Union of the Snake is on the Climb

Chapter 5 of 7

Hermione wins Snape as a spoil of war. But she's not always nice.

Wrapped Around Your Finger

The Union of the Snake is on the Climb

"There's a fine line drawing my senses together

And I think it's about to break"

"Union of the Snake" by Duran Duran, from the album "Seven and the Ragged Tiger"

Over.

It always seems so abrupt, no matter what I do to prolong it. Though I know that often it's because I've let him get the better of me with that razor tongue he has. No wonder he never had trouble cutting up potion ingredients. Everything about him is a sharp blade. Yet with a simple shift he can become softer than rain. Why does he do it, the deep laceration followed by the subservient soothing? Why, at the precise moment I show him any sign of mercy, does he spit on it and throw it back at me? I am as well as to try and uncover the mysteries of the seven wonders.

"Are you quite finished?"

His voice brings me back to reality. I look down at him, so still and spent beneath me. Sweat glistens his forehead and I can feel the aftershocks as he works to slow his breathing. His eyes bore into mine, his expression unreadable.

As I slide off his prone form he mutters: "still the same as you were in school."

"What does that mean?"

"For someone who wanted to draw this out, you did a miserable job."

He smirks again. That same insidious smirk.

"Eager for more, are you?" I ask with false sweetness, and grin as the smirk vanishes.

"Don't confuse your sadism with me being a masochist," he growls.

"Then why do you provoke me?"

"Because I keep hoping I will pound some sense into your twisted brain."

"Speaking of pounding..." I glance provocatively down to where he is, amazingly, becoming hard again.

"Drugging me isn't cause for flattering yourself."

"I didn't drug you and you damn well know it!"

"If you think for one INSTANT that I am enjoying this you can also add insane to that adjective list!" he spits.

"I think you're running out of things to call me, Severus," I counter. "I'm sure you've used that word already. Do try and be more original."

He glares, he huffs, he moves to get up but I push him back down. "What are you doing?" he asks.

"I'm not done with you."

A quick, calculating flicker of his eyes. I watch, searching his stony features for signs of refusal, but find none.

"Fine," he says bitingly, bringing his arms to his sides, his eyes narrowing into seething black slits. "Go on, then. I doubt you can torture me any worse than what you have."

Now, really, doesn't he know better than that?

For hours I make him suffer unspeakably. I am tender, slow, sensual, as though I am seducing a lover. He obeys my every whisper, follows every lead with alacrity. But I know he must hate it. When I've finally stopped it is very dark outside. The moon shines in through the curtains, bathing us with her silvery purity, an austere contrast to the taint that I can almost see etched into our skin. A few swishes and flicks and we're both clean and in fresh nightclothes. There are no more snide remarks. He looks as exhausted as I feel.

"You will sleep in my bed tonight."

He gets up, follows me. When we are tucked under my faded quilts I draw him to me, his body sliding easily against mine. He stuns me by resting his head on my shoulder with no prompting from me, flinging an arm carelessly over my waist. He notices my stare and shrugs.

"Isn't this what you want?" he sneers.

I don't know which is worse—the times when he seems to know what I want, or the times when he goads me into abandoning it.

They say time is a thief. I disagree. Time has stolen nothing from me. On the contrary. It has done nothing but give. Given itself to me in large doses for me to be able to contemplate my behavior. My sanity. My guilt. My love.

Two months have passed since that day, that night. When did it all begin to change? When did he cease provoking me and start to yield to my touch? Why does he no longer look at me in anger? How can this man, this arrogant, prideful man, who used to fight me with everything he possessed, now strip at the snap of my fingers?

Of course, being the headstrong direct person that I am, I asked him.

"I told you, I have stopped trying to fight it," he peevishly replied. "It is useless and inevitably does me more harm than good. I've accepted far worse fates than this."

Well said, Severus.

I've never had much use for proverbs and adages. Too simplistic, too much like divination. But in light of the fact that I have gotten what I wished for, I am forced to reconsider. For as the old words of wisdom imply, I no longer want it.

I don't know what has happened to me. It seems that nothing makes sense anymore, that everything I thought I understood has slipped through my hands and disappeared into the wind. All of the anger I felt towards him, the desire to get back at him in the most primitive and spiteful way I could think of, the callous craving for his lips, his skin... all that has tangled and twisted into knots that I can only stare at with no concept of how to untie. But somehow I must find a way. I have wandered down a path of disintegration; I have swum in the blackest of oceans. I am an emissary of darkness, and now it is time for me to make my way back to the light.

6. Whose Stretching Arms Match the Hunger of Mine

Chapter 6 of 7

Hermione wins Snape as a spoil of war. But she's not always nice.

Wrapped Around Your Finger

Whose Stretching Arms Match the Hunger of Mine

"With a promise dealer understand all freedoms fade away

To a point of view where many different pathways meet

And we're standing on this precipice with nothing much to save

But the deep blue screams of falling dreams with our next move"

"The Promise" by Arcadia, from the album "So Red the Rose"

"I have to go," I tell him.

"Where are we going?" he asks.

"You aren't going anywhere. I am going away for a while."

He looks up from the potion he's making. He doesn't bother to hide his surprise. In the four months that he's been here, I've never said this to him. He's known something is amiss: stupid isn't an adjective that could ever be applied to him. I've been withdrawn from him the past few weeks, battling with my inner demons. He even commented on it, though it was in the form of an acerbic query as to whether I'd grown tired of molesting him. I haven't touched him in a month. I'm sure he's been grateful. I've made my decision.

"I'm going with Harry and Ron. To find a way to prove you're innocent."

He almost drops the vial he's holding, but recovers in time to set it down. He stares at me. "What?"

"You heard me. With or without Albus, there has to be a way we overlooked before. The aurors have their hands full processing the last of the rogue Death Eaters..."

My voice trails off as a sudden vivid memory of my parents flashes through my mind. Their death at the hands of the Malfoys and several others not long after the final battle had been the last straw at the time. Some part of me had thought Severus should have known, should have been able to prevent it. I suppose in a way I blamed him for this lack of knowledge, just as Harry blamed him for what happened to Sirius. And I jumped right on that train of thought in my grief. Like Harry, I was devastated and needed someone to be angry with, and Severus the ex- Death Eater was a perfect target. Add to that all my years of hurt from his behavior, my unrequited longing, and my not too stable mindset... well. I'm not proud of myself. I need help. Or Azkaban. Or both.

I realize I'm about to cry and pull myself together. "So it's up to us."

"I see." I doubt he could have been more astounded if Minerva had jumped out of the cabinet and started dancing a jig. He met my eyes. "Why now? What changed your mind?"

I shake my head. "It doesn't matter."

I can't sort through the expressions on his face. Gratitude? Relief? Hope? He's at a loss for words. I take advantage of that to head for the door.

"You'll be checked on. If anything happens to you the stasis spell will activate until I get back."

"Hermione..."

"Don't," I tell him fiercely without turning around. "If you were even considering it, don't thank me, Severus. I don't deserve it. And don't bother telling me how you're going to turn me in once you've been cleared, because I'm going to do that myself."

Now I do look back at him. I was wrong when I thought he couldn't be any more surprised. Now he looks as though he's in shock.

"Goodbye."

I run from the room as though being chased by Hell itself.

Two months later, I unlock and unward my home to find him sitting in the living room staring at the door.

He looks dreadful. Eyes blurry and lined with shadow, shoulders slumped. I immediately feel concern at this: what happened to him while I was gone? Why didn't the stasis spell kick in?

I shut the door and cross the floor to him, kneeling beside him. He doesn't seem to be aware of my presence. Gingerly I touch his shoulder. "Severus?"

He snaps out of his daze and looks at me. "You're back," he breathes.

I tug on his hands, pulling him out of the chair. He doesn't resist. "Come on."

I take him to the kitchen and fix him a sandwich and juice. He eats like a starving man. Why hasn't he been eating? How the hell long has this gone on?

"I thought they would check on you," I say apologetically, fuming. The Ministry was supposed to have someone look in on him on a regular basis while I was away.

"They did," he answers. "But since it was only once a week, I didn't have any trouble convincing them I was fine. They didn't seem to care much, anyway."

I'm so startled by his condition that for a moment I forgot why I'd been gone to begin with. "Well that won't happen now," I tell him. I put three pieces of paper on the table in front of him. "You're a free man."

He stares at them as though they will bite. I hand him the first paper. "This is an official copy of your pardon, signed by Fudge, which will be entered into the Ministry of Magic records today." I neglect to tell him exactly what the "Golden Trio" had to go through to obtain it. If the Ministry isn't aware that, among other things, we broke into some offices late one night, we should keep it that way.

I pick up the second document. "This is the means of reversing your condition. The official copy, that is."

He takes the paper and regards me quizzically. "Official copy?"

"Well, I also have an unofficial copy which Harry and I um, acquired a few days ago."

He almost smiles. "Stole, you mean."

I shrug. "Semantics."

"Why?"

I sigh. "Because regardless of whether I could get you pardoned or not, I wanted to give you your magic back."

He stares at me intently. "If I were caught performing magic as a servant, you would have been arrested."

"Yes."

He takes the third paper. I draw a deep breath, my elation vanishing. "And that is a confession of my treatment of you while I had you as a servitor." He looks up at me, startled. "I thought it would be best for us to sign it in front of Fudge once your pardon is recorded."

He folds the pardon and puts it in his trouser pocket. Then he reads the reversal again, and I perform the spells. When it's finished I hand him his wand. "You'll be wanting this."

He looks at it, then at me. I have no idea what is going through his mind. He's probably considering hexing me with about a thousand curses.

"You can pack your things and we can go to the Ministry. Unless you... you probably want to do something to me first," I say. I stand before him with my arms outstretched. "Go ahead. I know I deserve it."

He looks at me for a long time. I stand still, wondering what it will be. Cruciatius? Imperius? Maybe he'll even resort to a physical act like a punch. It doesn't matter. I'm ready.

Very slowly he lifts my confession. His eyes impale me with an expression I can't define. As I watch in astonishment, he rips the paper into pieces.

"What the devil are you doing?" I gasp as he uses his wand to further destroy the document. Comprehension dawns. "Oh.. you want to keep this private. But why? Don't you want to see me in Azkaban?"

His face is unreadable. "No."

"You want to punish me yourself, is that it?" I should have expected this. Well. Not much for it. Perhaps Fudge would find a way around it, if I gave myself up, or try to: a sex scandal would cause him lots of problems. There are half a dozen things I could try to do to keep myself safe from the law. But I don't want to run away from what I've done. My honor might be in tatters, but I'm still a Gryffindor.

"All right," I say quietly, lowering my arms. "What do you want me to do?"

He smiles at me. A genuine smile. "Well...I rather like what you did to me that time in the bath."

I feel myself trembling. "You're insane."

He chuckles. "And you're always the voice of reason?"

"You... how can you... Severus, I forced you to do those things!"

He doesn't reply, just looks at me.

"You're trying to drive me mad, aren't you?"

Still nothing.

"You hate me! You hate what I made you do! You called me a Gryffindor bitch!"

"And you are," he says, eyebrows raised.

"Then why are you telling me that you... you..." I can't say anymore. Tears are streaming down my face. "I'm a monster," I whisper. "I used you. How can you want what you say you want from me?"

He sighs, gestures for me to sit down. I hesitate, then do it. He stands and begins to pace. After a moment he looks at me. When he speaks his voice is low and raw with a level of emotion I'd never have thought he possessed.

"When I told you I didn't know about the planned attack on your parents, it was only a half truth."

I stare at him, stupefied as surely as if I'd been hit with the spell. Knots twist in my stomach. I swallow hard. "Which part was the truth?" I ask.

Another sigh. "I knew there was going to be an attack. I just didn't know who the intended victims were. By the time I was certain, it was too late."

"Then why did you lie!" the words burst forth before I can stop myself.

"It wasn't a total lie," he murmurs. "But I couldn't... I couldn't accept another failure. So much had already happened. I couldn't admit that I had made another mistake. So I feigned ignorance of the whole event."

"Because it was easier than admitting you were wrong?" I snarl. "If you'd have told someone..."

"I didn't have time!" he says angrily. "For Merlin's sake, Hermione, do you think that even I'm so heartless that I'd just stand and let that happen? I had to try and track down Malfoy, find out for certain who they were going after."

I take a deep breath. "All right. So you lied. As far as my parents deaths go, you're still blameless."

"Do you truly think that?"

Now I have to pause. Could he have done more? I'm not sure. I spent all this time thinking he knew nothing, only to find out now that he had. Not enough to have saved my parents. But could it have been enough if he'd done something differently? Would it have mattered?

"You see? You don't know how you feel," he said softly.

"I..."

"Admit it, Hermione. What if I'd gone right instead of left? What if I'd chosen black instead of white? One thing, one small thing could have made the difference."

"You don't know that. You did what you thought was best," I insist.

"Perhaps."

"You shouldn't have guilt over it."

He laughs, but it isn't a happy sound. "There's much more to all this than that bit of guilt."

"What do you mean?"

"When I returned after the attack, before I came to find you, I did tell someone I'd known. One someone. No one else."

I stare at him in puzzlement. Albus was gone at that point, most of the Order scattered around doing various tasks, aurors beginning their pursuit of Death Eaters. Who could it...

When I realize, I suck my breath in painfully. "Fudge."

He nods.

"Why?"

He shrugs. "He asked."

He must see the incredulousness on my face, because he gives me a wry smile. "This will come as a shock to you, Hermione, but I'm not a liar. At least... not usually. And I think I had some foolish hope that he might understand the situation."

"And he didn't."

"He didn't come right out and say, but he implied enough for me to know that he thought this was a sign that I was really still loyal to the Dark Lord. We had a... difference of opinion for a few minutes, and I left to find you. But even as I did I had the sinking suspicion that I had just driven a nail into my own coffin."

"Fudge never made this known," I say with a slight frown.

"Not publicly, no. But while you, Potter and Weasley were gone, he started gathering every scrap of evidence he could find against me. That along with my "confession" to him was enough to get me convicted.

"So you see, when I came to tell you about your parents, I was already quite angry with Fudge. And feeling very guilty. I was ashamed, and deeply worried about what Fudge would do. And so I did what I've apparently always done best: I was abrupt. I couldn't bear to see the look on anyone's face if I had told them the real truth. Especially yours."

"But we wouldn't have thought the way Fudge did," I protest. Would we?

"You might not have," he replies. "Potter and Weasley are not quite so rational. Potter still despises me for what he considers my part in Black's death. As for the others... well. I've never really felt that they trusted me on my own merit. It was because of Albus. On the surface: yes, they would all probably say they knew I was blameless. But underneath it all there would have been doubts. Doubts that could've turned into other things."

I nod. "I can understand that you were concerned."

He snorts. "Concerned with trying to save my own skin, yes. It seemed a small matter at the time: it wasn't a total lie. But I added the guilt of the lie to the guilt of not being able to save your parents and the other muggles. And then..."

"There's more?" Good Gods, what else could there be?

"Flitwick." The name is said quietly.

"Oh."

"Yes, I believe you know the story about that," he says dryly.

I blush slightly. Yes, I do: because I'd eavesdropped on him telling Albus all that time ago. I hadn't meant to: I really hadn't. But eavesdropping is often like a drug. Once you start, you can't stop.

"So you know how he was killed in front of me, and I could do nothing."

"That wasn't your fault either!" I say angrily. "What are you, Catholic?"

He manages a smile. "I want you to understand my perspective, Hermione."

"Fine, fine. You've been really beating yourself up over things that you weren't really to blame for."

"I did lie about the attack," he reminds me. "And I was... callous with you."

"Well..."

"Can you honestly say you don't see my reasoning?"

"No, Severus, I do. But I'm confused as to what this has to do with... with what I've done to you."

He looks away for a moment. "Do you remember when you returned from searching for Albus?"

I nod. "You were scheduled for processing at the end of the week. We tried, Severus..." I feel a lump in my throat. We'd testified, protested, begged. Fudge would have none of it, grateful to us though he was. Even Harry had spoken up on Severus' behalf, though he detests him. Nothing worked. It was then that I'd realized Fudge hated Severus, always had despite seeming friendly to him in previous years, and didn't care if we had a note from God. He was taking him down.

There are still aurors searching for Albus, the only one we'd thought would be able to free Severus. Once he'd been altered, The Order had understood my explanation for remaining at home, that I didn't want to leave Severus to continue the search myself. Harry has had his hands full with being married, Ginny having a baby, doing what he can in the area for the Order, and keeping an eye on Bellatrix. Ron and the others had pressed on, but Ron had returned when I owed him. I suppose in retrospect I was lucky that they weren't here to insist on seeing Severus. What would he have said, if Remus or Molly had visited? Would he have told them what I was doing? Or would he have been too ashamed of his condition? Would they have believed him?

"I know you did, Hermione." He glances at me. "But when it became apparent that you wouldn't be successful, I knew it was time to make plans."

"Plans?"

Another sigh. "Of all the immediate members of the Order, only you and Potter qualified for a servitor."

"Yes."

"As charming as Potter finds me, it was reasonable to assume that if he took a servant, he'd choose Bellatrix."

I nod. Severus' understanding of Harry is surprising. Or maybe not. I'm at a point now where I'm no longer certain of what I know.

"Therefore, if I was to truly be kept safe, I would have to be chosen by you."

"And you think I wouldn't have taken you?" Insanely, I feel hurt by his idea that I would've abandoned him.

"Considering you once tried to free all the house elves, I wasn't certain if you'd take me even to keep me from harm," is his bemused reply.

"Oh, now, that's rubbish!" I retort. "You should've known I'd do whatever was needed to keep you from the hands of someone who didn't know your true loyalties!"

"I didn't truly doubt that, Hermione. But some part of me, the paranoid part if you will, didn't want to take any chances. Especially seeing as how you suffered a great deal of humiliation and pain at the hands of Malfoy during school."

Damn his legilimency, I think, wiping my eyes. Yes, I HAD entertained thoughts of taking Draco. In those few moments when anger and vengeance had spiked a thirst in me to drink from their cups. But I wouldn't have let Severus down.

"Tempting, was it not?" he asks gently.

I tilt my head, puzzled. "So how did you plan on ensuring my choice?"

His stare deepens. "Do you remember the last time you came to visit me?"

"Yes. You were very hateful. I was so angry when I left..."

"Is that all you remember?"

I frown. "Yes. What do you remember that I don't?"

"What, indeed." He seems... ashamed? Why? "You started... changing, after this, did you not?"

I consider. "I was tired. I hadn't fully dealt with my parents' death. I was so sick of everything. So angry." I frown again. "I remember I started feeling so angry with you. I told Harry about it. He was happy to listen..."

"Of course," Severus interjects.

"I was blaming you for everything I could think of. Even things I should've known better than to blame you for. The angrier I got, the colder I got inside, and I wanted..."

"Wanted what?"

I shiver. "I wanted to make someone hurt the way I was hurting. I wanted to make someone else suffer like I'd suffered." I stare at him in horror. "I wanted to make you suffer. Sometimes I would wonder why the hell I was thinking this way, but then something else would set me off and I'd go back to not caring, not caring about anything but the rage. I wanted to tear you into pieces sometimes. I wanted to..."

"Possess me?" he prompts.

I blush furiously, remembering clearly that day all those months ago, that fierce aching heat I'd felt, demanding twisted satisfaction. "Yes."

He nods, as though nothing I've just said has surprised him, while I'm sitting here completely shaken. How did he know? How could he...

No. Oh, Gods, please, no...

"What did you do to me?" my voice is so quiet I can barely hear it.

Yes, that is shame I see. Shame on the face of a man I once didn't think could feel shame, or guilt, or remorse... a man I've feared, respected, hated, loved ...

"I cast a spell on you that day. An old spell, from long before wands were used for magic." He smiles sadly. "There was a lot at stake and several things I wanted, so I had to make it count."

I am very still. "I never noticed that. I would've noticed that..."

"What kind of double agent would I have made if I couldn't cast a wandless spell without being noticed by an eighteen year old?" he asks derisively.

Now I'm trembling. I can't stop my body from shaking. I'm so cold I don't think I can ever be warm again.

"I wanted to be sure you would take me," he says quietly. "And I was getting tired of the guilt. I wanted to atone, and you were the only one I'd have that chance with. I also knew that once it was over you'd revert back to your usual self and work to free me, and that you had genuine anger towards me, although you'd buried it deep. I performed a spell that, I thought, would fulfill both our needs."

"What spell did you cast on me?" I ask, trying to keep calm.

"That... is a bit complicated," he says slowly.

"WHAT SPELL!"

"Caelum Velo Tuus Coniveo."

I blink several times. "Heaven... hide your eyes?"

"Yes."

"What the hell kind of spell is that?"

He smiles at my unintentional joke. "As I said, a very old one. It's been used throughout the ages in religions, for one, though that wasn't the original intent and it has other applications. In simplest terms, the caster wants to be forgiven for something, but wishes to do... penance, I believe is the word you'll understand best, to earn the forgiveness, rather than asking for it. The spell must be cast upon someone the person has wronged. That person experiences the desire to... punish the caster, if they don't already have that want. In some way they do, the caster receives indirect absolution, and the spell ends."

He sits, watching me carefully for my reaction. I'm feeling so many emotions right now my mind is nearly as jumbled as when my parents died. Curiosity wins out first, as it usually does.

"Why is it called "Heaven, Hide Your Eyes" if it isn't religious?"

"It's an irony. The caster doesn't want their actions to be noticed by the Gods. They want exoneration from the person they've wronged. The spell was created by an atheist, actually. He felt that if you wronged someone, you should make it right with that person, not some supposedly higher power. Some magical religions use it in conjunction with other beliefs such as formal confession. But it's more about the people involved than a deity."

"Why not just tell the person what you'd done and ask to be forgiven?"

He smiles, but it doesn't reach his eyes. "That would be a very straightforward thing to do. It's a coward's spell, Hermione. Not everyone who'd like to be forgiven can bring themselves to admit a wrong. Some people let guilt eat them up inside as a way of punishing themselves, because they can't confess. The man who can't tell his wife he's having an affair might buy her expensive gifts to ease the culpability. Not everyone is a Gryffindor."

"But this spell is insane!" I cry. "You could be put through anything by the person you cast it on!"

He shakes his head. "Normally, the punishment level is, how can I put it... on an equal level with the "crime" as far as severity? For example, if you betrayed a small trust, it wouldn't have the same effect as if you'd committed murder."

"So why did I... did it..." Oh, yes. That's the other thing I was thinking about.

Before I know what I'm doing I'm out of my chair and in front of him, my open hand connecting with his face.

"You BASTARD!"

He reaches for me, but I manage to evade him, putting the table between us.

"You messed with my head! You made me want to do those things to you, those terrible fucking things! All this time I've thought it was me, that I'd lost my conscience, thought I didn't care anymore, that I wanted to get some sick revenge on you, thought I was abusing you, violating you, and now you tell me it was all a SPELL!"

I move to hit him again, but he catches my hands in his. "Hermione, listen to me."

"Damn you!" I scream. "You absolved yourself and damned me in the process!"

"It's not that simple!" he shouts, still holding my hands. "Please, please let me explain."

I subside, leaning against him, tears flowing. "How could you do this?"

He doesn't try to move away, though he doesn't let go of me. I feel my tears soaking his shirt, his skin.

"Normally... this wouldn't have happened. You should have just spent all your time berating me... something of that sort. I didn't realize there were... other issues."

I sniff. "What do you mean?"

"I told you this spell has other uses."

"Like what? What's that got to do with it?"

He doesn't seem to want to meet my eyes. "Because of the nature of the spell, it's also used in certain types of... sexual rituals."

"Sexual rituals?"

He actually blushes a bit. "Domination and submission, punishment for being "bad" in a symbolic way. In this version it's used by consenting parties: well, it should be. It adds some extra spice, I suppose. Regardless of its use, this spell is unique in that it works with both the caster's intent and the recipient's existing thoughts and feelings, if any. It makes it more realistic."

I stare at him. "You're saying that..."

"Apparently, you have had... other feelings for me. Unrequited desire, if nothing else. I have had a lot of guilt. I think this was the spell's compromise."

"By turning me into a heartless dominatrix?" Maybe I would've been better off in Azkaban...

He shakes his head. "You aren't heartless, Hermione. There were times when you almost broke through the spell. I could see it. When you forced yourself on me, you were fulfilling the retribution part. When you started having conflict, the spell started to weaken. That's why you stopped wanting to take me."

"And when I decided to find a way to prove your innocence..."

"The spell ended."

"But..."

"What?" he asks.

"You... you went along with it eventually. Well, sort of," I amend.

He chuckles. "I was... confused at first. Once I realized what was happening... I couldn't exactly tell you. So I played it out, starting with being resistant, then after some time had passed I stopped fighting you. I believe, in a way, this fulfilled your unconscious wants, which began to trigger the penance effect..."

A willing slave. "And so on," I finish. I glare at him. "But what you did was still wrong."

He nods. "I never said it wasn't."

"I don't know what to say about all this," I tell him.

He sighs. "You can turn me in if you like. No one has to know the exact details of the spell."

"But part of me liked what I did to you... didn't I?"

"The spell could've found another approach, had you not been receptive to it," he admits. "Hermione... that doesn't mean you really wanted to hurt me. The spell knew I was willing even if you didn't."

"What?"

He appears to be debating something. When he speaks his voice is hesitant yet sure.

"I didn't eventually give in to you just for the sake of the spell."

Air. I need air, there is nothing in this room for me to breathe... "You didn't?"

"No."

'Well,' he'd said, 'I rather liked what you did to me that time with the bath...'

"You enjoyed me..."

"I had an advantage over you, Hermione. I knew what was going on, knew it was my doing in intent if not design, knew what would have to happen for it to work. I didn't have to enjoy it... but... I did. So much of my life has been spent keeping tight control over myself. With the spell, I couldn't do that anymore. Doubtless you thought I was submitting because I thought it was futile to resist you. The truth is that I didn't want to struggle. That might make me depraved, but..." he shrugs. "I've been called worse."

"But I still thought it was wrong, or at least part of me did..."

"The moral part of you. You didn't stop at first because the spell knew. It altered your emotions and thoughts enough to convince you to act it out."

He lets go of me. I throw my hands up. "I don't know where the spell ends and I begin! You say I'd never hurt you, but I must have liked doing this or it wouldn't have worked that way..."

"You never actually... damaged me physically, Hermione. Other than the sexual acts, you treated me like a person, not a possession. And master and servant games are usually just that, Hermione. Games."

"I didn't know that you were willing!"

"I know."

"So I am a monster."

"Why? Because you've had sexual fantasies about having me at your mercy and something I did made you act them out?"

"How did you..."

He rolls his eyes. "Merlin, how can you be so thick? Where do you think the spell pulled from?"

I am blushing. After all I've done to him, I'm blushing.

"It's not as awful as you think," he says quietly. "And as I told you... I enjoyed it."

"So why even tell me everything?"

He glances down. "It wouldn't have been right. It had gone too far. I had to make sure you knew."

"Are you sorry for what you did?"

"I'm sorry you were made to act out things without knowing why. As for the castigation... I can't say I'm sorry about that, because I'm not."

"Even though I might want to turn you in, you still told me."

"Yes."

"Even if I hated you."

"Yes. Do you?"

"Maybe I should," I whisper. "But I don't."

"Then what do you want to do?"

I consider him, thinking about everything he's said, everything I've felt. He waits, watching me. I'm so close to him I can almost feel his heart beating. Yes, my body still responds to his, and now I can see that his responds to mine. No spells, no interference, just real desire. In the end, I give him the answer that we both already know.

"I feel like you need more punishment," I say softly, pulling his yielding lips to mine in a kiss.

7. Let's Play Master and Servant

Hermione wins Snape as a spoil of war. But she's not always nice.

Wrapped Around Your Finger

Let's Play Master and Servant

"Domination's the name of the game

In bed or in life, they're both just the same

Except in one you're fulfilled

At the end of the day"

"Master and Servant" by Depeche Mode, from the album "Some Great Reward"

"What's in a name?" Isn't that what Shakespeare said? Some drivel about a rose smelling as sweet if you called it something else. Codswallop. Names have great meaning and power. Too bad William never figured that out. But he was a nutter anyway, if you ask me. If only the muggles knew the truth about that one! But like so many other things, it would simply elude them.

Is that... ah, yes. Knocks on my chamber door. One, two. The firm preciseness sends a shiver of anticipation down my spine. I am being summoned to the realm of carnal delight. Those flighty thoughts can wait. My desire cannot. I hear her walking away. I must tarry no longer.

I open the door leading from my office into my bedroom. Closing it behind me, I assume my customary position: kneeling, hands resting on my thighs, face down, eyes averted. My hair falls softly against my cheek. I can't hear her now, though my hearing is sensitive. She is holding herself still to make me guess where she might be. Ah. There it is: the sound of her footsteps, slow and rhythmical. She's standing in front of me now, I can feel it. Giving me a moment to speculate on all the sensual torment that is to come.

My name is Severus Snape. I am the newly reinstated Potions Professor of Hogwarts, Head of Slytherin, recipient of the Order of Merlin, First Class (thank you, Albus, yes, I'm ever so delighted that you've returned)... and willing slave of Hermione Granger.

"Took you long enough," she says, her voice calm, silky. I feel my arousal rising hearing those words.

I do not speak, as she has not given me leave to do so yet. I continue to wait, wanting desperately to peek at her feet, but I dare not. As I have requested, Hermione is a harsh mistress and can abandon all her careful plans at the slightest provocation. I found that out a few days ago when she caught me looking at her without permission. No words, no fits. She simply left, left me alone in shame and lust. When she told me this morning to be ready my heart (not to mention other things) was ecstatic. No, I will not make that mistake again. She is the spark that ignites my flame, and I will not be denied the chance to burn tonight.

"Look at me, Severus."

I raise my head and... by all the Gods. Every time I think she cannot possibly become more beautiful, more desirable, somehow she manages to prove me wrong. It is bad enough, seeing her every day as a colleague, at times almost wishing I was a student again so I could sit in her Transfiguration class and daydream about her while she walks around so prim and proper in her teaching robes. Knowing all the while that under those modest clothes she is probably wearing a black lace bra and velvet knickers. Hermione Granger, the bookworm. The Know-It-All. The genius. Sex incarnate. I for one never would have guessed, and certainly would not have thought that I could be an object of her desire. But fate has proven otherwise.

She is wearing a gown of sheer violet lace, her hair hanging down in lustrous dark curls. Her feet are now gloriously bare and I can see the glint of pale green polish on her toes. Lovely seems too weak a word to describe her, though she most definitely is. She is a force of nature that, if I am good, is about to unleash itself on me in all its furious glory.

"You were quite disobedient last time, Severus," she says, still in that deceptively soft voice. "I think we need to do something about that, don't you?"

My eyes travel up her body, taking in the soft fullness of her breasts, the nipples pressing hard against the gown, and I feel my body respond in kind, my erection pushing against my trousers. My breathing is no longer steady.

"Answer me."

"Yes," I whisper.

"Do you know what happens when you disobey me?"

I nod.

"And you like it, don't you, you arrogant prick?"

Ooo. She must truly be in a domineering mood. She doesn't always call me names. Were those words to come from anyone else I would sneer, or make a quick jeering retort. But this is my mistress speaking to me, with a cruelty I love.

I nod again, because I do not trust my voice. My mouth has gone bone dry from staring at her, those breasts like ripe fruit, and that sweet shadow of pleasure between her legs.

"Get up," she commands. "Take your clothes off... slowly... and lie on the bed, face up."

My heart is now pounding so fast it feels as though an explosion will go off in my chest. I rise gracefully, and began to undo my robes. My actions are complicated by the fact that my hands are shaking, but with a bit of focus I still the tremors and do as she orders.

She stalks over to the bed, those coffee eyes of hers alight with hunger, a hunger that I am about to sate. I have never been at ease with my body: pale, thin, my back a crossword puzzle of scars. Yet under her gaze I am transformed into an Adonis. To know that I am the originator of this prodigious outpouring of appreciation and yearning makes me feel so... alive. And after all the years I spent in a state of living death, fearing for my life and the lives of others, I am more than ready to get on with the business of living.

Of course, she does not disappoint me: my hands and feet are cuffed and spread with a few flicks of her wand. I draw a deep breath: the aroma of leather mingles with the scent of her need to the point where it almost overwhelms me. I pull on the restraints, not because I think I can escape, but because I know this gesture will inflame her further. Indeed, a sultry smile graces her generous lips as I "give up" and settle deeper into the bed. Special punishment, she implied. What exquisite suffering does she intend to inflict upon me tonight?

She stands at the foot of the bed, looking into my eyes. She leisurely raises one hand to her breasts, tugging one out of the gown to be exposed in all its creamy glory. She fondles the swell of succulent flesh, pinching her nipple, all the time staring at me.

"Are you watching?" she whispers.

As if I could be doing anything else. At this moment Potter could be stealing my wand and I doubt I would care.

Her free hand slides down to her sex, and she fingers herself through the sheer material covering it. My gaze is transfixed on her as though she were a snake-charmer playing a flute. She pulls out the other breast and caresses it, still rubbing her mound, while her eyes smolder and my erection becomes so hard it could cut a jewel.

"Wicked man, not obeying me," she chides. She lets go of her breast and moves that hand down, her thumbs and index fingers framing her delicious center. "Do you think you deserve this, my rebellious Slytherin? Do you think that you deserve what's under this gown?"

Yes, I want to say, a thousand times yes! But I know what the correct answer is.

"No," I reply quietly.

"That's right, you don't. Not yet, anyway. Maybe later, maybe, you will. But for now..."

She slithers up onto the bed after stripping off the gown, resting on her knees with her legs spread and folded under her. She resumes touching herself, her fingers playing her body like a violin bow, until I can tell that she is on the edge. Then she stops, waits a few minutes, and begins again. All this time I stare helplessly, wanting nothing more than to bury myself inside her and steal that priceless treasure that is Hermione in the throes of orgasm. But I am resigned to watching her, not even thrusting my body against hers.

After several more near climaxes, she moves further up until she is poised just above my aching member. I am shaking with want of her. She can see it on my face, feel it as she strokes both my hardness and her wet center. It takes all my control not to move.

"Are you sorry for misbehaving?" she coos, flicking her clitoris faster and faster while rubbing me with agonizing slowness.

"Yes," I gasp. "Hermione, please..."

"Are you certain?"

Her hand grips me tight and I moan.

"Say it, Severus."

"I'm sorry," I pant, unconsciously pulling on my bonds. "I am so sorry. Please, Hermione..."

She chuckles. "Much better." And with those words and one last squeeze, she plants her hands on either side of me and drives me into her.

She is so hot, so wet, the flesh enveloping me so delicious I moan again, hearing an answering cry from her as she makes a rhythm for both of us, my hips rising to meet hers, matching her stroke for stroke until I can feel her convulsing around me, the muscles tightening. Her orgasm is a series of white hot bolts of lightning that course from her body to mine, capturing and shocking me and sending my own body into sweet oblivion.

Flushed and panting, she releases me and falls limp against me, her eyes shining with post-coital bliss. I'm certain my own expression isn't much different from hers as I lean down and bestow a long, tender kiss to her parted lips. I summon my wand, cleaning us off, then draw the covers over us, nestling her against me with a yawn.

"Tired already, Professor?" she grins.

"For the moment, Professor," I retort. "However, if you give me some time, I'm sure I can recover to your exacting standards."

"Doubtless," she replies, laughing as she kisses me. "I was hoping we could go out for dinner later, since we seem to have missed eating in the Great Hall."

"Nourishment would seem to be conducive to maintaining our energy levels," I smirk. "However, I would like to rest first."

"Since I seem to have worn you out, I don't object."

"You? Not having an objection to something? Now that is a first."

"Watch your tongue, Severus. I might decide you need some more punishment."

"I sincerely hope so."

Albus has told me that he finds it wonderful that I am in love. As I have never truly been in love before, I am uncertain as to whether this is the correct term for my relationship with Hermione. But I am happy when I am with her. In the privacy of my quarters or hers, she makes me smile. I enjoy sharing our lives. It is inconceivable to me that we should not be together. What started off as absolution and desire has evolved into a feeling of completion I have not known before. Perhaps Albus is right. Perhaps this is love.

What's in a name, indeed.

FIN