

Wherein Hermione Granger Becomes a Vampire and, in So Doing, Discovers There is Much More To Death (and Life) Than Meets the Eye

by sc010f

Hermione is a practical witch, and a practical vampire. It's too bad for her that she's not exactly the most perceptive of creatures when it comes to her own talents.

The First Problem

Chapter 1 of 6

Hermione is a practical witch, and a practical vampire. It's too bad for her that she's not exactly the most perceptive of creatures when it comes to her own talents.

It surprised Hermione no end when, upon rising, her first thought (and words) were "Oh, bollocks. Now what?" It probably should surprise us, the reader as well. Certainly, it's not what we would have expected from our dear, brave, brainy Gryffindor. But then, did we really expect her to become a vampire, either? I certainly didn't.

In life, Hermione Granger had always been proper certainly not prim (oh no, never prim), but always proper. Her mother had always insisted upon three things: good education, good table manners, and good language.

Apparently in death, the rules were different.

And, in truth, it hadn't been Victor's fault, really. He couldn't help his nature (Vampiric). Hermione had gone into the relationship with her eyes wide open (and garlic around her neck), but as is occasionally the case with sex: the condom breaks or the prophylactic spell fails or the participants fail to utilize their available resources. Hermione had become careless.

So, it was her fault, really. Thankfully, Victor had been gentleman (gentle-vampire?) enough to stick around until she had risen and had shown her the ropes, as it were.

It wasn't all moonlight and fangs, of course. Hermione's working hours had had to be rearranged, for one thing, and the prejudice against vampires was really quite intolerable. It was mostly thanks to Harry's insistence that he simply *could not* get along without Hermione that she even had a job. She expressed her gratitude to Harry one evening over a curry (his) and a nice glass of pig's blood (hers having risen with a practically un-slakable thirst for human blood, Hermione had decided fairly early on to follow the tenets of "vegetarian vampirism").

"Yeah, well," Harry said with a weak grin. "s no problem, really. I mean, it's great for you being all for Magical Creatures' Rights and things, to be, you know, one of the

minority you, erm, represent. But really, I can't... without you... the Ministry itself I mean... And we'll be sure to keep it, you know, on the quiet side it wouldn't do to have you... staked or... erm... anything."

Hermione had smiled to herself. Youngest Minister of Magic in the History of the Wizarding World, Harry Potter might have been, but that did not change the fact that, as ever, Harry felt he couldn't be let off the lead the lead, in this case, being Hermione (and her color-coded charts and schedules, naturally).

So it was with Harry's blessing that Hermione had rearranged her schedule (and Harry's) and continued her work as Liaison To The Minister and Arranger of All Things Important. It was slightly inconvenient, true, to have Cabinet Meetings at night, but there wasn't *too* much grumbling. At least any that Hermione heard and her hearing was very sharp. And for the most part, it went well. Hermione's condition was kept under wraps as best as they could, and the Ministry of Magic was managed with as much efficiency as could be, given its centuries-old traditions of bureaucracy and incompetence.

Until. Until. Until. Until... Until one blazingly hot afternoon, when George Whimple, III bureaucrat extraordinaire, and wizard with the longest tenure in the Ministry this side of the senior Barty Crouch and Cornelius Fudge began to complain loudly in the hearing of A Certain Reporter Who Must Not Be Mentioned in the Hearing of Hermione Granger that the admission of vampires to the upper echelons of the Ministry of Magic was not only tragic, but also Not in the Best Traditions of Magic.

To say all hell broke loose would be an understatement.

The *Daily Prophet* and the *Quibbler* both ran leading articles regarding the presence of vampires in the Ministry of Magic (complete with excessive speculation as to *who* the bloodsucker was), although in completely different veins, so to speak. Naturally, the *Prophet* called for a vampire hunt, while the *Quibbler* expressed an interest in the relative physiognomy of the vampire and its uses in eradicating the Nargle infestation that had plagued the Ministry for centuries.

The *Daily Prophet* sold rather a lot more copies than the *Quibbler* did.

With some prodding from Hermione, Harry made an Official Proclamation regarding the policy that the Ministry of Magic had always been, and would continue to be, an equal opportunity employer and had a long and proud history of employing all sorts of Magical Beings, from centaurs, to goblins, to house-elves, and werewolves, and now vampires, and no, we are not prepared at this time to divulge the name of the vampire in question, but please be assured that the vampire is quite capable of performing all of his or her functions within the Ministry without causing harm to the other inhabitants thereof.

It worked, to a certain extent. Whimple stopped complaining so loudly and threatening to run for the Wizengamot on an anti-vampire platform. The *Quibbler* soon turned its attention to the pressing need for wartmop-proofing one's home, and even the *Prophet* toned down the rhetoric.

So, a few weeks later, when George Whimple III died rather suddenly under mysterious circumstances, it was not too broadly remarked upon. Most people assumed he'd been dead for quite some time conveniently forgetting the uproar he'd created at the beginning of that very same month.

People, Hermione reflected as she read the obituaries, were remarkably stupid.

Although breaking her vegetarian diet had created the effect of slight indigestion, she had found George Whimple III to be a somewhat tasty morsel. Funny, she thought, how the most objectionable of people tasted the best.

Which was the point at which Hermione had an idea.

A brilliant idea, of course. We are talking about Hermione Granger, here.

Of course she wouldn't need to consult with Harry he'd probably object; he never had quite managed to understand that when Hermione had an Idea, it was a good one. (If Hermione had to hear one more time about how inhumane it had been for her to lead Umbridge to the centaurs after the fact, of course, only after he'd been elevated to the position of Minister did he develop an inconvenient conscience she'd bite him)

So, the less Harry knew about her Idea, the better. Summoning a new sheet of parchment (thank goodness her magical powers had not deserted her along with her life), she began to make a list.

And not just any list, either.

But the Most Important List She'd Ever Made important not so much to her, but to the Wizarding World. And in truth, it wasn't really a list so much as it was a chart. In Muggle terms, we'd call it a spreadsheet. That was the beauty of magic: hand-written spreadsheets and relational databases, with one flick of a quill.

The List (or, to use the Muggle term, Spreadsheet) contained the names, addresses, years of service, and accomplishments of every single current Ministry employee. That portion of the Idea took exactly three weeks. Hermione raised her eyebrows when she finished she'd had no idea there were just *so many* of them. Interestingly enough, she noticed, nobody employed by the Department of Mysteries was to be found on the List. Hermione shrugged surely the list of incompetents in her own immediate sphere of influence would be long enough.

The second portion of the Idea was a great deal less time-consuming. One carefully constructed spell later, the List (or Spreadsheet) sorted itself by an incantation that Hermione termed the *Pivita Mensa Incantation*. The *Pivita Mensa* spell sorted the top performers and the bottom performers and created a beautiful, shining report on the Ministry's efficiency over the past century.

She was not surprised, it should probably be noted, that she was at the very top of the Top Performers list. She was also not surprised that Harry was squeaking by on the bottom edges of the Top Performers list (the middle ones, really). Really, if she wasn't there to guide him, she'd have to ...

Hermione grinned as she shoved aside the Top Performers list and grabbed the sheaf of parchment that was the Bottom Performers list. It was *huge*.

This was going to be fun.

The First Solution

Chapter 2 of 6

Hermione is a practical witch, and a practical vampire. It's too bad for her that she's not exactly the most perceptive of creatures when it comes to her own talents.

She didn't tell Harry, not at first. She simply weeded out the worst of the incompetents, a little at a time.

Because really, mass murder in the Ministry of Magic would defeat the purpose. Hermione had learned enough about being a politician's assistant to realize that one didn't just plunge headlong into tasks in the hopes of accomplishing them as quickly as possible.

Sometimes, Hermione knew, one had to take one's time. And in this case, Hermione could only kill so many people in a single sitting. One was usually her limit.

Being Hermione, of course, she couldn't help keeping notes on the various victims: mostly annotations to the initial report regarding their levels of inefficiency and corruptions. The other notes she took (which she would never show to Harry) were her reflections on taste, consistency and general dining experience.

The summer after the War, Hermione (still human) had ventured to Australia to retrieve her parents. It should have been an unpleasant (or at least difficult) journey. Contrary to all expectations, Hermione's parents were not only pleased to discover they had a grown daughter, but they thought it rather nice that she had come to visit them as long as she didn't ask them for money and promised an eventual grandchild (or even two).

They were more than a little put out with their daughter for rearranging their memories, but, as Mr Wilkins had said, one couldn't expect to have a witch for a daughter and *not* have the occasional accident. A few long Discussions about Appropriate Behavior took place, but things were eventually smoothed over.

Hermione had spent several days upon her return to England researching the possible side effects of memory charms and could come up with no reason for her parents to be so cheerful other than sheer dumb luck. Every so often, life is like that.

Anyway, whilst in Australia, Hermione's parents took her on a tour of the wine country, wherein Hermione learned a great deal about texture, body, nose, and other interesting facts about wines and wine tasting.

And those facts came in quite handy when she began her little project to clear the Ministry of its incompetents.

Her initial theory proved quite correct: the more incompetent and slimy the politician, the better he (or in some cases, she) tasted.

Vintage was another interesting factor in Hermione's experiments in tasting. Older victims tended to be mellower in flavor, with a fuller body and more complex texture, whilst younger ones (Ronald, for example) were quite brash and bold. Sometimes, the younger ones (Ronald again), Hermione found quite undrinkable.

Now, I suppose we should stop here and reassure the reader (Hermione insists) that although Hermione might be a vampire, she was not an inhumane vampire. She only weeded out the truly incompetent and nasty ones first. And it was over a period of *years*. It really wouldn't have done to have a Ministry blood bath, all things considered. So she had started out slowly, and chosen her victims carefully, and over the course of almost six years, had managed to thin the herd of self-important, corrupt bureaucrats quite nicely.

And because Hermione was a thorough vampire, (and, as she's insisted, quite humane) she didn't leave *anything* to chance. Widows and orphans received generous inheritances courtesy of their deceased relative, sometimes even more than the victim had been worth, and most of the time the bereaved were more relieved than anything else.

Over the course of those six years, there were only two incidents of note.

The first one was, unsurprisingly, her encounter with Ronald.

Now, it must be recorded that Hermione didn't stalk her victims indiscreetly pouncing on them in dark alleys (well, there was that one time, but over drinks afterwards with Victor, he had explained to her how that sort of thing was so 19th century, and simply wasn't done anymore). More often than not, she called them into a meeting to review their performance or discuss some new project she said Harry wanted them to tackle. Occasionally, she even let them take her out to dinner. Those occasions were only when the bureaucrat in question was either particularly obnoxious or lecherous.

So, back to Ronald. Poor Ronald; he really had it coming, in a way ever since the nightmare that had been Seventh Year (and possibly before that), he'd become more and more of an utter git. There were many times, both before and after she became a vampire, that Hermione had wished he'd been more as he had been in the first years of their friendship once he'd stopped calling her names.

Content to ride Harry's robe-tails, he'd been elevated to a fairly lofty position in the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, where Hermione and Harry'd lost track of him for a few years. By the time Hermione had made her report, she had discovered some disturbing trends.

Working under Kingsley Shacklebolt, Ronald had set up a rather complicated (almost Slytherin) web of graft and corruption, confiscating the property and finances of convicted and suspected Death Eaters. Most of the money was, of course, supposed to be funneled into the Ministry for distribution to various reconstruction projects. However, under Ronald's guidance, a good percentage of that money was going to line his pockets (and subsidize his numerous extramarital affairs).

Every few months, Ronald would ask Hermione on a date (just as "friends," of course), and Hermione would turn him down flat. However, when his name came up on her List, Hermione agreed to dinner.

It made her a bit sad, really, to have dinner with Ronald, only to have to bite him at the end of it. ~~Had~~ been her friend first, and her first shag, come to think of it and there had been a point, not that long ago, when Hermione would have thought that they'd get married. But then, the Prewett had started coming out in him, and it all had fizzled. Mostly because Ronald had wanted kids and Hermione didn't and then he'd gone to his mother and Hermione had seen the proverbial writing on the wall.

Unfortunately Ronald hadn't seen it, and the breakup had been prolonged. Which was about the time Hermione started seeing Victor again.

But, as she said to Ronald over drinks, it was nice to sit and reminisce over old school days and what might have been. Ronald, lulled by wine and food, agreed with her, even daring to reach across the table to hold her hand.

"How's Lavender?" Hermione asked, withdrawing the hand.

"Oh, great... she's started collecting art. I think. Or pool-boys, one of the two. We seem to have a new one almost every month. Jolly good idea, installing a Muggle pool. When the kiddies come along, they're going to love it. And Lav *does* look good in her bikini."

Hermione resisted the urge to gag.

Later on that evening, when she'd finished apologizing to Ronald ("It's not you, it's me, and really, it's for the greater good.") and bitten him ("Ouch! Bloody Hell! Hermione, that hurts! When did you get so kinky?"), Hermione had paused for a moment to reflect, not only on what might have been with Ronald (a narrow escape), but how Lavender was going to be more than fine with her art and pool-boys.

It was quite satisfying, really.

But, of course all good things must come to an end, and after six years of culling the Ministry, Hermione's prospects were looking a bit bleaker. Harry's term as Minister was coming to a successful conclusion, and he was thinking about graduating to a position in the Wizengamot. Hermione had the option, of course, of staying in her current position and maintaining the status of brisk efficiency that had come to characterize the Ministry of Magic in recent years. (It had even been remarked favorably upon by both the *Prophet* and the *Quibbler* - although the *Quibbler* tended to give credit to the removal of the Nargle infestation, more than any efforts by the actual denizens of the Ministry.)

And so it was one dark and stormy night (fittingly enough) when Hermione found herself wandering aimlessly through the Ministry of Magic and into the Department of Mysteries simply for the fact that *she was bored*.

Upon entering the Room of the Doors, however, she found somebody who gave her quite a shock.

"Hello, Granger," said the somebody. "I've been waiting for you."

The Second Problem

Chapter 3 of 6

Hermione is a practical witch, and a practical vampire. It's too bad for her that she's not exactly the most perceptive of creatures when it comes to her own talents.

"Holy fuck!" shrieked Hermione. "You're supposed to be dead!" The part of her that would always be the hand-waving sort, concerned with washing behind her ears and whether or not she had spinach in her teeth and her elbows off the table, tutted at her for her shocking choice of language.

"It takes one to know one, Granger," retorted Snape, finally looking up from his copy of the *Prophet* to glare at her. "As it happens, I'm not exactly dead."

"An *inferi*?"

"*Inferius*. There's only one of me. And no, if I was, do you think I'd really be hanging about here?"

"Erm... That is..."

"How is it that you have so little Latin? Don't you know, girl, that it's the basis for all our magic? Shocking. But then, oh, that's right – the hand-waving Granger only learned what was of interest to her – mostly facts useful for saving Potter or getting into mischief. Well, I hope you're happy; you've managed to keep his worthless carcass alive and successful."

He hadn't changed one bit. Except he was dead. Or not.

"So what are you, Snape?" Hermione asked.

"That's not the question you should be asking, Granger."

"Oh, really?"

"Indeed. You really haven't changed, except for the language and the un-dead bit – still missing the subtle in favor of the blindingly irrelevant. The question is not 'Why is Snape not dead? Or is he?'" Snape's voice took on a querulous falsetto. "The question, Granger, you *should* be asking is 'How much does the Department of Mysteries know about my extra-curricular activities, why are they worried about them now, and why did they send Professor Snape to deal with me?' *Those* are the questions you should be worrying your still-bushy head over."

"You're dead – you can't be anyone's professor." Hermione snapped out the first thing that came to her mind.

"Granger, you've gone thick on me," Snape mourned. "I'm not *exactly* dead, number one; number two, I am a professor – just not yours anymore, and thank Merlin for that. I'm a Professor of Applied Infernal Arts, adjunct to the Odd Sod's Subsection of the Department of Mysteries – otherwise known as the Ghouls, Ghosts, and Weird Shite Brigade. And you, Hermione Granger, serial remover of Ministry of Magic Incompetents and general pain-in-the-arse, are now *my* pain-in-the-arse to deal with. Thank you very much."

"What?" Hermione boggled. "Let me get this straight. One – you're sort of dead, two – you are employed by the Department of Mysteries, three – you're a professor still, and four – I'm a 'pain in your arse'?"

"Brilliantly *summarized*, Granger – as if it had been copied from a textbook." Snape sprang up and began to circle her.

"Back off, Snape, I still have fangs!" Hermione hissed, spinning to face him and grasping her wand.

"Oh, *please* you stupid girl, after being attacked by that snake, do you really think that *you* and your ickle little fangs can really frighten me?"

"Fine, then." Hermione folded her wand away and stuck out her chin – keeping her fangs extended just in case. "What do you want?"

"It's not a question of what / want," Snape said, spinning away and flouncing back to the black basalt block he'd been sitting on. He took up his newspaper with an angry snap. "It's what the GGGWSB wants."

"And what is that?" Hermione asked with exaggerated patience. "And why, incidentally do I not know about them? *Run* this place, remember."

"No, you run Potter's side of the Ministry of Magic. If you weren't so blinded by your own hubris, you'd realize that there's a great deal more to the Department of Mysteries than just reports out of there saying all the prophecies are hunky dory and the veil's still flapping. As it is, people – mostly the GGGWSB – have been watching your little extracurricular activities for years now and have decided that – oh, God, this is the part that really irks me, Granger – they want you to join our team. I'm supposed to be your trainer."

"You're joking."

"No."

"But... I have a job."

"No. You have a hobby. A hobby that, frankly, Granger, is getting in our way. The best way, the GGGWSB figures, to get you out of our way is to make you an offer to join

the team."

It was late, and Hermione was tired (and peckish), so perhaps she could be forgiven for bursting out laughing at Snape's announcement, coupled as it was with his look of dismay.

"Oh, it's not exactly a fucking picnic for me, Granger," Snape shouted. "Do you know what the best part about being bitten was? Next to getting rid of all those damned memories regarding Evans and Potter?"

"The best thing about being bitten was that you were no longer my fucking responsibility. Well, guess what, Granger, you are again, and believe me, I'd rather have tea and sex with Sirius Black and James Potter and Remus Lupin before I'd want to be your instructor again. But we can't always get what we want, so stop gargling and come with me."

Hermione sobered.

"And if I say no?" she asked.

Snape leered at her, his yellow, snaggly teeth glinting repulsively in the torchlight.

"You're not going to say no, Granger," he said. "Because you're already on fire with curiosity."

And without another word, Snape launched himself off the block, tossed the newspaper into the air, where it burst into bright orange flame, and set off down a passageway that seemed to melt out of the stonework.

Hermione looked back to the door to the Ministry and then to the flare of torches that showed the path Snape had taken. Her vampire side reminded her that at some point that evening, she needed to eat. Her Gryffindor side told the vampire side to get stuffed.

Gryffindor won, and Hermione hurried after Snape.

Her vampire side sighed and subsided with a grumble – making her Gryffindor side promise that she'd get a nice, juicy bureaucrat before all this was over.

The Third Problem

Chapter 4 of 6

Hermione is a practical witch, and a practical vampire. It's too bad for her that she's not exactly the most perceptive of creatures when it comes to her own talents.

She didn't get her bureaucrat.

She didn't even get to return to her office when the sun rose and even here, deep beneath the Ministry, she could feel the subtle shifting of the earth.

Oh, no. Instead, she had been installed in a conference room, at a table, and was being tortured.

By what looked like a Muggle PowerPoint on the relationship between Muggles and Wizards and what had been termed "Phenomena Muggles Believe In, But Shouldn't" to wit: werewolves, vampires, fairies, orcs, ents, pookahs, leprechauns, pixies, dwarves, goblins, dragons, toast landing butter side down, and the perfect balance between breakfast cereal and milk.

She wanted to bury her head in her hands, but every time she so much as moved to make herself more comfortable, Snape would hiss a warning and poke at her with his wand.

Just as she was falling asleep unable to maintain even a semblance of interest, because really, this was worse than Divination half of these creatures weren't even a problem, she was sure, given the advances in the treatment of lycanthropy, for example Snape poked her again with his wand.

"Would you stop that?" she demanded. "It's quite annoying."

"No, I will not stop it," Snape replied. "What's got into you Granger? You used to suck this sort of useless information up like a sponge. Surely your transition to vampire hasn't killed off the swot you used to be?"

"Really!" Hermione huffed. "I'm... well, if you must know, up yours, Snape!"

"Professor Snape." He sounded almost bored.

"Whatever you're not *my* professor. And there's no sense in me watching this dreadful waste of time and in PowerPoint? Really? *know* all of this already. I learned it all in third year, when Professor Lupin taught Defense, once we realized who he was, of course."

"Oh, so *he's* Professor Lupin, but I'm just Snape? Is that how it works?"

"He died an honorable death..."

"Right abandoning his wife and child and oh, nobody gives a Fwooper's turd about poor old Snape, who got his throat ripped out by a great bloody snake!"

"It's not like that. Harry idolizes you. He named his son Albus Severus after you and Professor Dumbledore, the two greatest wizards he ever knew."

"But you..."

"I think you're an emotionally immature git. And if you hadn't noticed, I'm not thirteen anymore. Or however old you think I am. I've been around the Ministry a long time, and know a great deal more than you think I do. So you can just fuck off, Snape, because I'm going home to sleep."

"Oh, really?" Snape asked with eyebrow raised. "And just how do you think you're going to leave, o experienced one?"

Hermione spun. The door through which they had entered the conference room was gone.

"Very funny," she snapped. "Reveal the door."

"No."

"What?"

"Have you suddenly gone deaf, Granger? I said no. You're not leaving. You have seven more hours of training."

"Seven more hours! And I never agreed to..."

"Actually, you did."

"No, I didn't."

"Yes, you did."

"No, I didn't."

"Yes, you did."

"I didn't."

"You did. You DID! When you chose to follow me down the corridor and join the GGGWSB, you made your commitment. Don't you feel even the slightest bit of a sense of duty to follow through? Or has that Gryffindor side of you been completely obliterated by your unfortunate vampirism?"

And of course, Snape was right.

Damn him.

Hermione glared and flopped back into her seat.

"Okay, so. Fine. I'm stuck here working for you GGGWSB. I'll even concede that maybe, just maybe, you can be my trainer, but I demand that..."

"You're not in a position to demand anything, Granger. You're going to sit quietly through the training and orientation, and then I'm going to show you to your new cubicle and you're going to start working."

"But what about my real job?"

"What real job?"

"Harry!"

"Taken care of believe me, Granger, you're going to have enough on your plate without haring after that blasted Potter all the live-long day."

"Night."

"Quite. In any event, Granger, you will be much too busy with your own work to worry about Potter's blundering. Now sit up and pay attention!"

"One question."

"*What?*"

"Why Muggle PowerPoints?"

Snape drew himself up and looked down his not inconsiderable nose at her.

"There are some things in Muggle and Wizarding heaven and earth, Granger, that are beyond even your philosophy."

"What?"

Snape rolled his eyes.

"Microsoft gives us a discount, you stupid girl. It's part of the GGGWSB's agreement with them we keep them relatively free of Dark influences, and we get discounts on their products. Now shut up and pay attention this part's important."

Hermione sighed as the lights in the room dimmed and the next PowerPoint started: a history of containment spells for Creatures Muggles Believe In But Shouldn't flickered to life.

Ninety minutes later, Snape allowed her a tea break or more to the point, a lukewarm mug of obviously warmed-over pig's blood and a biscuit.

"Come along, Granger," he snapped when she had eaten the last of the biscuit. "Bring your blood. I'm to show you to your office now."

The term "office" was a bit of a misnomer. Really, it was a cubicle a very Muggle-looking cubicle, actually piled high with files and dusty papers.

Hermione looked around her at all the other cubicles. *They* were neat and tidy and completely deserted.

"Okay, what's the joke?" Hermione demanded.

"No joke, Granger," Snape replied. "This is it. Your new job. What you see before you are ~~all~~ the files that the GGGWSB has accumulated over the last century and a bit regarding unexplained sightings by Muggles of things they shouldn't have seen. Your job is to create a filing system based on chronology, geography, the urgency of a follow-up, and any need for damage control."

Hermione poked at one of the piles. It swayed dangerously and then slithered to the ground in a cloud of dust and paper.

"Snape! This is dated nineteen-fifty! And it's from Teesside! And it's about a UFO, not any... *realmagical* thing!" Hermione protested.

"Unfortunately for *you*," Snape said with a leer. "UFOs also fall into your remit. Mostly because they're not space aliens, but Morinulae, closely related to Cornish Pixies, who like to fuck with Muggles. And us."

"Oh, for..."

"I'd suggest you get started, Granger. There are a lot of files for you to sort."

"I thought you people wanted my special skills," Hermione protested.

"We do." Snape smirked.

"But this isn't utilizing my vampiric ability at all!"

"No, it's not."

"Then what..."

"Your spreadsheet, Granger. We were all very impressed by your spreadsheet. Carry on! I'll check on you in a few hours and then you can go to whatever bolt-hole you call home."

And then Snape spun on his heel in a flourish of robes (did he really think that was impressive any more?) and flounced out of the office, leaving Hermione alone with her files.

After twenty minutes of fuming, Hermione realized several things: the first was that the work was fairly interesting the reports, especially from Muggle papers, were hilarious. The second was that she wasn't actually alone people did flicker in and out of the office but not with the same loud "pops" that Apparation made. And thirdly, that this was actually, for being *filing*, the most challenging job she'd seen in... well, quite a while.

It might even be... interesting.

So when Snape showed up to escort her back to her nicely appointed, sun-protected, spacious flat, she was actually beginning to look forward to coming into work the next evening.

Because, really, this project had the potential to be something exciting. And interesting. More interesting than being Harry's pet brain-in-a-jar, for example. And, if the truth be known, she was running out of bureaucrats at the moment. Six years wasn't a very long time in terms of government work, but it had been long enough for somebody of Hermione's efficiency. Not that she'd tell Snape that. Ever.

The Fourth Problem

Chapter 5 of 6

Hermione is a practical witch, and a practical vampire. It's too bad for her that she's not exactly the most perceptive of creatures when it comes to her own talents.

When she thought about it, as she wove Sorting and Filing Spells, introduced herself to her new coworkers at the GGGWSB, took breaks to chat with Snape well, took breaks to irritate Snape and argue with him about the finer points of infernal magic (she *was* still a vampire and did know a thing or two about being dead) being a glorified file clerk wasn't that bad.

All right, it was a little demeaning. Surely her massive brain could be put to better use, but compared to running Harry's life (down to the point where she had to make sure he was eating all his vegetables in the lunches Ginny packed for him) as well as running the Ministry (keeping Draco from being too much of a prat and sleeping with everything that moved and some things that didn't), filing was actually *restful*. Like a holiday.

There was something soothing about the gentle ebb and flow of paper, the whoosh of the color-coding system she set up, with the frequent baiting of Snape adding a nice counterpoint.

Some days were boring, naturally. Some days she would seethe over what she saw as a demotion going from essentially running Wizarding Britain to a file clerk was, in the harsh light of day, a step or four down but Hermione had always excelled at creating systems, and certainly this was a project in need of a decent system.

She did worry about her "other" job. But Snape did allow her "afternoons" (really the early evening when she first rose) to go and check on Harry and make sure he was eating his vegetables, so to speak. And Snape had pointed out that at some point she had to cut the apron strings with Harry; he was, after all, the Minister, and even if he was a lousy wizard who apparently only knew one spell (*expelliarmus*), at some point, he had to learn how to wipe his own bottom.

Although Snape had used slightly cruder language than that.

"I suppose you're right," Hermione mused, extending her fangs and running a contemplative tongue over them. "It's just I've been so used to managing him for so long, it's become a habit, really."

"Well, it's a bad habit, Granger. You have more important work to do," Snape replied. Hermione noticed he was staring at the gigantic clock that hovered above the cubicles.

"Important work, right. Filing."

"Don't whinge, Granger, you know you like it," Snape said, bringing his gaze to her and smirking. Her vampire side rolled its eyes and groaned. Her human side kicked the vampire side and glared at it. If her human side wanted to feel a flicker of interest at Snape's flirting and she was *sure* that's what it was her human side was damn well going to feel it.

And it was true, too. Because it wasn't just the filing. She was systematically pulling the more interesting cases and showing them to Snape. And then arguing with him about them.

Loudly.

The problem was that it was *fun*.

More fun than biting incompetents, even. Which, Hermione reckoned, was downright disturbing. But now... now, she seemed to be getting a rise out of Snape in a completely different way.

She licked her fangs again.

Snape coughed, and Hermione caught him staring at her mouth.

Her human side smirked.

Her vampire side pointed out that he probably wasn't going to enjoy being bitten, especially since... didn't her human side remember the snake?

Her human side pointed out that she wasn't going to *eat* him, just nibble a bit. And if he'd ever take off those blasted robes, she was sure he had very nice legs there was a rather plump vein in the thigh, or did her vampire side not remember that?

Her vampire side conceded the point and added that now that it had come to think about it, it had been a while since she'd had a shag, decent or otherwise.

Her human side noted it had been Viktor, and expressed its appreciation of her vampire side's acquiescence.

Her vampire side grumbled that surely there were more attractive candidates than Snape in the office, but it supposed that beggars could not be choosers.

"Granger, stop woolgathering!"

"What?" Hermione jerked her attention away from her internal conflict back to Snape.

"You were daydreaming. Stop it. Pay attention to what I'm telling you, you stupid girl."

"Oh, erm, sorry."

"Are you feeling all right?"

"What? Yes, of course. Go on, please, Snape... do continue."

"*Professor* Snape to you, and stop, *licking* your fangs. It's distracting."

Hermione hid a smile and retracted her fangs.

"Now, pay attention. When you've finished compiling your system, you need to assemble a report to submit to the Powers that Be. In your report, you will document the incidents of Muggle-Odd Magical interaction that you find the most disturbing, and suggest solutions for limiting the damaging effects in the future. Use the files you've already discussed with me. Feel free to include any other cases you've discovered.

"I should warn you, Granger, that *obliviate* is completely *out* of the question. I saw what you tried to do to your poor parents; it's a miracle they didn't lose their minds entirely."

"My parents were just fine, and I was *eighteen!*" Hermione protested.

Snape snorted.

"If by 'just fine,' you mean absolutely furious that you'd done that to them and equally furious that they no longer remembered how *to drive*, then yes."

"They forgave me. Eventually." Hermione pouted.

"You're impossible, Granger. Write your report."

Hermione extended her fangs, licked them, and winked at him, hopping up onto her desk and swinging her legs the effect only ruined by the flapping of her robes, and the fact that they got tangled in her legs.

"And stop that," Snape said. "You're not *seducing* me just so you can bite me."

"Well, maybe I don't want to *just* bite you," Hermione snapped back, embarrassed that he'd noticed. Not that she hadn't been hoping, but still...

"Oh, right, you just lick your fangs and pretend to flirt with me because you like doing it."

"Perhaps I like *you*, Snape."

"Thestral shit."

"Professor Snape, I'm shocked. Shocked and appalled," Hermione rejoined, inwardly delighted that after such a long dry spell, her flirting skills were still decent. Although the fact that she was flirting with *Snape* was a bit disturbing.

"No, you're not. Ever since you became a vampire you've also become a foul-mouthed harpy. And I read your file, Granger. *know* how you bit Weasley."

"Which one?"

"Don't make jokes you did make a mistake when you bit Percy. Biting Ronald was the best thing you ever did for the Ministry. And guess what, Granger? You're not doing it to me!"

With that, Snape spun away from her and stalked off down the row of cubicles.

"Write your damn report, Granger!" he shouted over his shoulder. "You have three days!"

Hermione smirked and hopped down from her desk.

Susan Perkins, the witch who handled emergency calls and was therefore the only person on the floor when Hermione was at work, poked her head around the cubicle and gave Hermione a thumbs up.

Hermione giggled and sat down at her desk, satisfied with the groundwork that had been laid.

If she was going to be stuck filing and writing reports for the rest of her death, at least she could get a shag on the side. Even if it was from ~~Snape~~.

Which, in hindsight, didn't sound *too* terrible. She wasn't necessarily going to be looking at his teeth. Or his hair. And he did look as if he had a nice arse.

But, of course, once presented with a task, Hermione set to it. And really, writing the report was child's play. What was really interesting her was Snape. Other than the rather odd desire to shag him (really, what *was* that?), she found him intriguing. So, in the odd minutes when she tired of her report (and she was being very careful to include massive annotations, just to tweak Snape's nose she remembered how he'd always marked her down for them on her Potions essays), she made a list of Things She Knew About Professor Professor (sigh) Snape.

The list was as follows:

One: Still irascible.

Two: Still greasy and ugly.

Three: Still teaching (how the ever living fuck *was* that happening? Hermione had always been of the opinion that Snape had hated teaching and would have been thankful to escape the sheer mind-numbing, soul-crushing tedium of it. Not to mention the danger associated with teaching *Potions* to accident-prone, hormonal teenagers).

Four: Teaching at a higher level. From what it sounded like, he was more of a consultant than teacher. Which would explain number three.

Five: Actually willing to engage in conversation with her regarding her work. This was decidedly new.

Six: Dead. Or not.

It was Number Six that really made Hermione stop and chew her quill.

It was obvious that she was (un)dead or Life-Challenged, as she preferred to think of it and that as a Life-Challenged Individual, it was easy for her to identify and, essentially, connect with other Life-Challenged Individuals. This might, she reasoned, be the cause of her rather odd rapport with Snape. Or it could be that she was just dying for companionship at her intellectual level.

Which also explained the sexual component.

But. But, but but...

There was something *different* about the connection she felt with Snape. Perhaps it wasn't the Life-Challenged thing at all, she mused. Perhaps it was that, for the first time in, well, practically ever, she felt that somebody was actually listening to what she was saying and able to offer cogent and coherent (if not shouted) responses to her theories honing them and developing them with her.

Good Merlin. It was almost like having an actual colleague that one wanted to go round the pub with. Or have dinner (in the traditional sense, not the other one) with. Or even, as Hermione had noticed first interestingly enough shag.

Scowling at her list, Hermione came to, really, what she considered to be the only logical conclusion.

She'd have to find out just *what* Snape was.

And then decide if he was still shaggable.

Solving All the Problems

Chapter 6 of 6

Hermione is a practical witch, and a practical vampire. It's too bad for her that she's not exactly the most perceptive of creatures when it comes to her own talents.

So, this is the chapter where it is expected that we neatly tie up all the ends. Where Snape and Hermione reach a conclusion acceptable to both of them. Where they learn to work together, to enjoy spending time in each other's company, and eventually to shag, preferably with snuggling afterwards.

Except this isn't that kind of story.

Because every so often, the story doesn't end like that.

This is how the story ends, then:

When we last left Hermione, she was puzzling over the mystery of Snape and reflecting on his relative attractiveness. Sure, he wasn't a looker, but ~~she~~*was* a vampire, and a short one at that. It was funny, she thought, how in movies and books, vampires were supposed to be not so much tall as "stately." Anne Rice had a lot to answer for, she thought. Not that she was excessively short, thank you very much, but every female vampire she'd met in fiction had been at least six feet tall. Being a bloodsucker (pardon, Life-Challenged Individual) had limited her dating prospects, certainly, and now her work at the GG-whatever even more so.

And she *liked* sparring with Snape.

As has been established repeatedly, both through her Hogwarts life and her Ministry career and now her undead life, Hermione was a practical individual. Confronted with the problem of making Snape, if not fall in love with her, then at least agree to a relationship with her one that might, if she was very lucky, lead to consensual bloodsucking. Given the success that she'd experienced with her spreadsheets, she saw no reason to change tactics and so began a new one, based on her list of Facts About Snape.

Her spreadsheet did not fail her. Given her Facts About Snape, and the power of her magic, and of course her massive intellect, she reached the particularly satisfying conclusion that the best way to catch the lesser-spotted Snape was to beard him in his native habitats: either pestering her for progress on her report or teaching.

The former habitat turned out to be the best option: Snape taught above ground during daylight hours.

So, on the appointed night, Hermione took extra care in her dress and hair and general fang-brushing routine and prepared to seduce (or at least attract the romantic attentions of) one Severus Snape.

If her heart had been beating, the minute Snape dropped by her cubicle, it would have sped up. As it was, it didn't move, but Hermione did feel a thrill of excitement as she hopped up onto her desk, extended her fangs, and began to arrange her skirt to show her legs to best advantage.

"Granger, what are you doing?" Snape demanded as he loomed in her cubicle entrance.

"I have the report completed," she cooed at him, holding out a sheaf of parchment.

Snape snatched it, flipped through it and grunted.

"Adequate," he said. "Although I notice several infelicities in your analysis that will require further review."

"Oh *really*?"

"Really. Rewrite pages seventeen, subsection four, eighteen, subsection twenty-two, and thirty-five, the entire thing." He thrust the stack of parchment back at her.

"But..."

"But? But nothing. Amend your analysis, and for the love of the Stygian Shades, stop licking your fangs!"

"Why?"

"Why what? God, Granger, you're such a... Your analysis on those pages was weak. Redo it. Licking your fangs is distracting. Stop it."

"Distracting?"

"Is there an echo in here? Distracting."

"Oh, well... perhaps we could discuss my corrections over a cup of... tea?"

"Or blood?"

"Well..."

"Let me guess: pig's blood, slightly warmed, with a sprinkle of cinnamon and a dash of milk?"

"Well..."

"Oh, stop saying 'well' like some halfwit, Granger! And dammit, stop licking your fangs! Even better, put them away!"

Hermione retracted her fangs with a surprised sucking sound.

"You don't like it when I..."

"No. I don't. You obviously think it's sexy, but I keep waiting for you to stab your tongue."

"I... what?"

"I keep waiting for you to impale your tongue on one of your fangs. And I don't think you actually *want* a tongue piercing, as in vogue as it may be with Muggle teenagers." Snape shuddered.

"Oh. So... but... I thought..."

"Granger, are you actually trying to seduce me?"

"Erm, well..."

"Oh, Merlin. Granger... Look, I suppose I should appreciate the sentiment fuck knows that it's been what feels like forever since *anybody's* shown an interest but really, Granger, I'm not interested."

"In me?" Hermione felt deflated. Embarrassed. Disappointed. Angry, even. How could anybody *not* find her attractive when she'd put so much effort into being seductive?

"In *anybody*. Ever."

"But..." Hermione frowned. "What about Lily?"

"What about her?"

"The memories... Harry..."

"Please. The admiration was never even remotely romantic, or..." Snape shuddered. "Sexual."

"Really? I was sure that..."

"Well, you were wrong. Obviously."

"So, you never..."

"No. And I never will."

"What?"

Snape sighed gustily.

"Why are we talking about this, Granger?"

Hermione shrugged.

"I'm curious. And I do fancy you."

"Well, find somebody else. There's no attraction on my part, except to the possibility that your brain might still develop in interesting and analytical ways."

"You make it sound like you're a zombie or Inferius."

"No. I'm not. I'm asexual."

"*WHAT?*"

"I'm asexual. I don't experience sexual attraction to anybody. Or anything."

Hermione was aware that she was staring at him in shock. She snapped her mouth closed.

"But..."

"It *is* possible, Granger. Even in humans."

"But you're a human. Or you were. I don't know what you are now, but..."

"No, Granger. I was never human."

Hermione's mouth fell open again.

"What *are* you?" she whispered.

Snape smirked at her.

"An angel," he said.

We're going to take a break here. Hermione's just fallen off her desk in surprise and bitten her tongue, and Snape's burst out laughing at her.

Once she'd managed to staunch the flow of blood, and Snape had managed to stop laughing, the two of them sat down for a "mature, adult discussion" Hermione's indignant phrasing. They sat on a bench outside the Department's canteen, in a quiet alcove.

"So... you're an angel," Hermione said.

"Only just," Snape said with a wry grin. "I've always been an angel."

"Like Arizaphale?"

"Who?"

"He's an angel in a book I read."

"Oh, no. Never heard of him. And I know all the angels. He's not real."

"But angels are real?"

"And demons."

"God?"

"What do you think?"

"Erm..."

"Just so." Snape nodded peaceably and sipped his tea. Hermione stared at her pig's blood (body temperature, with a dash of vanilla).

"So are you, I don't know, *good*? And what about being asexual?"

"Since bad angels are considered demons, you could make that argument. But it's not particularly accurate. And most angels ~~are~~ sexual. They're not really hetero or homosexual as a rule. More bisexual, or pansexual really. angels tend to be attracted to *soul* more than gender, if you were wondering. And there are some of us who are not wired that way."

"How is that not accurate? Aren't angels either good or evil? And so you're... I don't know, functional?"

"What is it with you and sex? Every vampire I've ever met's been like that. It's all sex and bloodsucking to you isn't it? Yes, some angels do, in fact, shag like demons. I'm not one of them. Anyway, that's not the point. Every so often, Granger, there's a grey area between good and evil. That's where I Fell."

"Where you fell?"

"Fell. I'm a Fallen One."

"*WHAT?*"

"Granger, if you don't stop screaming interrogatives at me, I'm not going to tell you."

Hermione squirmed.

"Can you keep still for five minutes so I can finish my story?"

Hermione nodded.

"Very well. Being silent suits you, Granger. And having your mouth shut definitely improves your appearance."

Hermione glared at him.

"Right. So... I Fell. But not all the way. If I'd Fallen all the way, I'd be in Hell. I was told that apparently I'm to *pr*oud. Arrogant, even. That I had to be born on earth and grow up and learn *humility*. Apparently, you aren't supposed to call members of the angelic hierarchy dunderheads.

"So if you were ever wondering about my wretched childhood," Snape said reflectively, "that's really the cause. I mean, it wasn't *all* bad. I still had limited powers they made me a wizard, at least, not an out-and-out Muggle."

"So, wizards are... I don't know, higher beings or something?" Hermione asked curiously.

"Don't let it go to your head, Granger. It's one of the most frustrating things about being me. You kids never appreciated what you had. You always assumed that being magical was some kind of right, instead of the gift that it is."

"I never..."

"Not *you*, perhaps. But certainly those cretins you ran around with. And ninety percent of your classmates, to boot. It's what made Lily different. It's what makes you different, Granger. Even now."

"Oh," Hermione said. "Erm... thank you?"

"You're welcome. It was a compliment."

The two lapsed into silence. Around them, the magic of the Department of Mysteries hummed.

"So... why are you here?"

"Limbo. I still don't qualify for reentry into Heaven."

"That's unfair! After all you did, all you sacrificed!" Hermione cried.

"Do you think so?" Snape asked without rancor. "It seems all right to me, really. I went through a long time, Granger, with nothing but bitterness and resentment. Some of it directed at Heaven, some of it directed at myself, but really most of it directed at the denizens of Earth, Wizard and Muggle alike. And *that*, Granger, is how I wound up with that blasted Mark. Not because I thought Pure-bloods were superior, but because I *knew* that, compared to everyone on this stinking planet, *I was* superior."

"And then Lily died. And I realized... I'm just as fucked up as the rest of you lot."

"But you died! Surely that was enough sacrifice to atone for... everything!"

"Who said this was about atonement?" Snape asked.

"Well, don't you want to get back into Heaven? Don't you have to atone for your pride?"

"It's nothing to do with that," Snape said.

"Then..."

"It's about *learning*, Granger. And appreciation. I suppose I'll get back in eventually. But until then..." Snape shrugged.

"That's..."

"They say that Slytherins are ambitious," Snape said with a brief smile. "But really, it's Gryffindors that have the corner on that market. It's not always a race to the top, Granger. Sometimes you have to stop and..."

"Smell the flowers?" Hermione asked. "I'm dead, Snape. I can't go out and do that anymore."

"I was *going* to say, before you interrupted me," Snape said, "that sometimes you have to stop and enjoy the details. This world, both magical and Muggle, has some amazing things in it, Granger. You were so close to realizing that when you were a First Year. Then, of course... the war. But now..."

"Now?"

Snape smiled again.

"Enjoy your Death, Granger. Enjoy your job. Enjoy your cat, for fuck's sake. Enjoy whatever friendships you still have. Make some new ones. But take your damn time. Discover new things. You practically have eternity."

The hysterical thought crossed Hermione's mind that Severus Snape, Fallen Angel, was not exactly the person she'd have picked for a motivational speaker.

But he did have a valid point. Okay, several valid points.

"So you *enjoy* my curiosity," she accused Snape.

"Yes. It's always been rather refreshing, actually."

"Oh." There was another pause.

"What, Granger? You're thinking. What are you thinking?" Snape asked, wariness creeping into his tone.

"So..." Hermione said. "You're an angel. A fallen one."

"Yes."

"What would out of curiosity, naturally what would happen if I bit you, then? Would you die? Taste different? What?"

"Honestly, Granger, I have no idea."

"Do you want to find out?" Hermione asked. "I mean... for the sake of curiosity and... I don't know... living?"

Snape closed his eyes and leaned his head back against the wall, the smile tugging at the corner of his mouth again.

"Well?" Hermione pressed. "Do you?"