

The Puppet Master

by melusin

Hermione's on the hunt for arcane information, and there's only one source left to contact. Drabble series written for the 'Foot Fetish'Challenge on GS100.

One

Chapter 1 of 4

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'And supposing I should know the whereabouts of this grimoire.' Snape paused, raising the tea-cup to his lips. 'Why should I reveal its location to you?'

'It's... complicated,' Hermione replied, smiling pleasantly.

The wizard sitting opposite sipped his tea, his face partially obscured by a lank curtain of hair. 'Such ancient magic is not easily manipulated. Disaster awaits those whose intentions are anything less than... pure.'

'I know—'

'I'm sure you do, Miss Granger.' The cup joined the saucer on the side-table. 'I'm sure you do. But knowledge without wisdom holds its own dangers. It invariable comes at a price...'

*

He smirked. 'So... what are you willing to pay?'

Anything almost came tumbling out, but Hermione held her tongue. *Once a snake, always a snake.* Taking a deep breath, she said instead, 'Name your price, Mr Snape.'

Snape chuckled. 'My, my. You appear to have matured more than I was willing to give you credit for.' His gaze fell to the hem of her robe.

The silence grew uncomfortable. Hermione shifted in her seat, wishing he'd just tell her what he wanted so she could get out of here. The equinox was tomorrow and—

'Take off your shoes, Miss Granger.'

*

'Pardon?'

Snape sighed. 'Take off your shoes. I should like to see your feet.'

'Erm... '

'Do you want to see the Abramelin or not?'

She most certainly did. 'Oh, very well...'

'You won't succeed in re-creating the Philosopher's Stone, you know,' Snape said conversationally as Hermione leant forward to unbuckle her sensible shoes. 'That particular skill died with Flamel.'

That was not the reason for her request, but Hermione saw no reason to gainsay him. 'The elixir of life will always be the Holy Grail of Alchemy.' She kicked off her shoes. 'And now?'

'Your bare feet, Miss Granger.'

*

Hermione was blushing to the roots. 'You could at least be a gentleman and turn your head,' she scolded, rummaging under her skirts.

'Yes, I... could.'

Hermione tutted. 'You know, I always thought you were a bit strange, but I never had you pegged for a—'

'Pervert?'

'I was going to say weirdo.' Huffing, Hermione pulled her tights off. 'There. Satisfied?'

Snape's gaze never left her feet. It seemed an age before he responded, his voice sounding hoarse and ragged. 'Not yet.' He stood up abruptly, holding his hand out towards her. 'I should like you to come with me.'

*

Treading gingerly, Hermione followed Snape up the stairs. It wasn't the cleanest of houses and—eugh, were those mouse droppings? She shuddered. The depths she was prepared to plumb in her quest for knowledge surprised even her sometimes.

Once on the landing, Snape opened the first door on the left. 'In here, please.'

Hermione paused on the threshold, taking in the shabby furnishings and faded wallpaper of what was evidently the master bedroom. 'Soooo... I take it we're going to have sex, then?'

Snape's lips twisted into a wry smile. 'If you so wish.' He gestured towards the bed. 'Sit.'

*

This was getting odder by the minute. But while Snape's behaviour was perplexing, in all of their encounters, she had never felt in any way threatened or afraid in his company. And this time was no exception. She watched him ransack the room, muttering to himself, until he pulled some red ribbon from a drawer. Then, he walked over to the old-fashioned washstand, cast 'Aguamenti' on the large bowl that sat on top of it, heated the conjured water and carried it over to where she was sitting.

With a lop-sided smile, he sank to his knees at her feet.

*

Two

Chapter 2 of 4

Hermione's on the hunt for arcane information, and there's only one source left to contact. Drabble series written for the 'Foot Fetish'Challenge on GS100

'What are you *doing*? Hermione asked impatiently. It seemed like he'd been kneeling there for hours, and she had better things to do than examine the top of Snape's head all evening. Gods, but his hair was still a greasy mess—although there wasn't a streak of grey in that stringy mop, she'd give him that. 'Can you hurry up. Please?'

Without warning, Snape lifted the hem of Hermione's robe, surreptitiously fingering the heavy woollen fabric, and laid it gently over her knees. He swallowed hard and rasped, 'You have the most delectably perfect arches I've ever seen, Miss Granger.'

*

And they were, too. Perfect. Just... perfect. As were the toes, the ankles... everything. He hungrily took note of every ridge and dimple of the unblemished skin, traced the networks of veins with his eyes, assessing the overall proportions of each foot. Beautiful. Just as he'd imagined.

She was talking again, but Severus was oblivious, lost in his own little world. He licked his lips unconsciously, already hard in anticipation of actually touching... Savouring... A minute more...

A sharp tap on the shoulder broke the spell. He glanced up only to lock eyes with one very exasperated, cross-looking witch.

*

Severus supposed he owed her some sort of explanation. 'Has it never occurred to you that, in a society where women are clad in mediaeval robes, the glimpse of a well-turned ankle has a certain... appeal?'

Hermione snorted. 'How terribly... Victorian. Besides,' she added, 'you live amongst Muggles. Just Apparate to Manchester on a Friday night. You'll see enough flesh there to make your eyes bleed.'

'Not the same,' Severus replied, scowling. 'Now, please. Allow me this. Think of it as an act of atonement, if you must.'

'Get on with it, then. But I'm warning you: I'm very ticklish.'

*

Hermione flopped back on the bed and stared at the ceiling. On her quest for the location of the earliest known copy of the Abramelin Grimoire, she'd met with all sorts of opposition, been led down several blind alleys and had some rather unsavoury wizards take advantage of her desperation. Enduring Snape washing her feet with a flannel was pretty tame in comparison, peculiar though it was. This was hopefully the final hurdle. Pervy old wizards and the wizarding world would soon be a distant memory. Once she'd gained access to the portal, she'd be free from all of it.

*

The heady scent of something decadent laced with a dash of sin filled the air. Severus smirked as Hermione inhaled deeply, visibly relaxing into the coverlet.

She sighed. 'Is this where you try to ensnare my senses?'

Chuckling, Severus began drying her feet, paying particular attention to the skin between each individual toe. 'Only some scented oils. You are far too tense.' To prove his point, he scratched a nail along the underside of her foot.

Hermione fisted her hands into the bedclothes as she jerked reflexively. 'Don't *do* that.'

'Relax,' Severus chided. 'You never know: you might even enjoy it.'

*

Somehow, Hermione doubted it, but she tried her best not to tense up as dextrous fingers began wiggling toes, articulating each joint, massaging arches: first the left then the right. Whether he'd hit some special pressure point or pinched a nerve, she didn't know, but the sensitivity was ebbing away...

How curious... Her mind battled with the conundrum and decided it wasn't worth the effort. Simultaneously, her fingers relaxed their death grip on the quilt. Actually, it was sort of... nice.

The muted sighs from her tormentor and the slight tickling sensation between her toes seemed very far away indeed.

*

Good. It was working. As Hermione's breathing evened, Severus made the first pass with the ribbon, tucking it carefully around the big toe. Once secured, he let the charm take over.

The ribbon wove its way through the toes, criss-crossing the instep and wrapping around the ankle like a ballet slipper. At that point, Severus halted the charm, looking up anxiously as a long sigh escaped the witch on his bed. But to his relief, Hermione quickly settled back into her comfortable stupor without opening her eyes.

'Now, Miss Granger', he urged softly. 'Hermione... Turn over for me. Please.'

*

Three

Chapter 3 of 4

Hermione's on the hunt for arcane information, and there's only one source left to contact. Drabble series written for the 'Foot Fetish'Challenge on G...

Severus smirked at Hermione's little moue of protest, but there was no further resistance to him coaxing her onto her stomach. He allowed himself the luxury of sliding his hand over the smooth suppleness of her (rather muscular) calf as he bent her knee and shifted closer to the bed before taking a firm hold of her ankle.

Cresce!

The ribbons tightened, extending the foot into a balletic point. He paused a moment to survey his handiwork.

Very nice....

A nail polish to match his ribbons would've been the icing on the cake, but he supposed pink would have to do.

*

A warm moisture was nudging Hermione's defences towards the realisation that something was amiss. An unwelcome, slimy... wetness, progressing up the sole of her foot.

Tickle, tickle, tickle...

What was he *doing*? She sucked in a breath while, keeping as still as possible, craning her neck slowly so not to alert him. But she needn't have bothered. Snape was too far gone to care: his tongue swirling, exploring... Then he touched on a particularly sensitive spot, and Hermione yelped, flinched and tried to pull away, but Severus held fast to his prize—like a dog savouring a particularly tasty bone.

*

'Ew... Oh, my *God*...'

She lashed out reflexively with her free foot, but Snape caught it effortlessly, tucking it under his arm without missing a beat. He glanced up, scowled, and then...

Hermione shrieked as half her foot disappeared inside Severus' mouth. She buried her face in the pillow, nails digging into her palms while he sucked her toes greedily. Her expertly bound foot left no room for squirming, however. She could only endure.

The mattress began rocking rhythmically, and she soon became all too aware of the ragged breathing behind her.

He wasn't, was he?

'A-ah-ahhhh...'

Apparently he was.

*

Knowing a post-orgasmic male is the most malleable beast on the planet, Hermione lost no time in seizing the advantage. She quickly hoisted herself upright and grabbed Severus by the hair, yanking his head back and forcing him to look at her. 'Now can I see the grimoire?'

He gazed back through hooded eyes, more smug and self-satisfied than anyone who'd just come in his pants had the right to be. 'No, you cannot.'

'What d'you mean "No". You pro—' Sighing, she released his hair and wiped her hand deliberately on the coverlet. 'You didn't promise me anything, did you.'

*

Bastard.

'You still have much to learn about bargaining with Slytherins, Miss Granger,' said Severus, sitting back on his heels. 'Especially this one.'

Bastard. 'So what *do* you want?' Hermione demanded. 'And no tricks this time.'

He regarded her for a long moment before replying. 'Tell me what it is you seek in Avalon?'

'Wha—?' she spluttered. 'I-I don't know what you mean.'

'Don't play games with me, Miss Granger. I'm not an idiot.'

Stubbornly, Hermione folded her arms and bit her lip.

He sighed. 'Very well, then. Have it your way. I can wait: the question is, can you?'

*

He was right: there wasn't much time. If she didn't go tomorrow, she'd have to wait until the spring equinox before the portal could be accessed again. It seemed she'd have to level with him.

'I seek... knowledge.'

'Knowledge,' Severus repeated slowly. 'That's it?'

'Yes.'

'And what preparations have you made, pray tell?' One eyebrow rose almost to his hairline as Hermione stared at him blankly. 'None? So let me get this straight; you intend blundering into Avalon, seeking the knowledge of the Old Ones without any clear intention as to why? Have you taken leave of your senses, woman?'

*

'I thought... I thought—'

'No, Miss Granger. You did not *think*.' Severus got to his feet abruptly, casting a wandless cleansing charm as he did so, and leant, arms folded, against the wardrobe. 'Of all the— What makes you assume the Old Ones will so much as acknowledge your presence, hm? You'll be lost in the Mists before you know it, wandering for eternity, gradually fading to nothingness, just like all those other souls punished for their arrogance.'

'You mean...?' Hermione swallowed hard. 'The Mists are... souls?'

'Yes,' Severus replied. 'Unprepared idiots, every one.'

Hermione sighed. 'I had no idea.'

*

The damp patch on the rose-trellis wallpaper had apparently become utterly fascinating, judging by the way she was staring at it. She did however look terribly... endearing, dishevelled and lost in thought as she was, sitting on the edge of his bed, assimilating this new information. Severus coughed.

'Can't be any worse than this,' Hermione murmured.

'Excuse me?'

'Nothingness,' she replied, shrugging.

'Explain.'

'My life is—Oh, you might as well see for yourself.'

Severus hesitated only a moment before bridging the distance between them in one stride. He cupped Hermione's face in his hands. 'Are you sure about this?'

*

A brief nod, a silent 'Legilimens' and he was in, wading through the maelstrom of memories and emotions: the promise of youth, the disappointment of experience. And there it was: the gnawing emptiness. Abandoned by friends, parents unaware of her existence: grief over losing a much loved pet. He saw the pointless drudgery of a mindless job, the daily return to a messy flat—not a home, merely somewhere to crash at the end of the day. Fruitless dalliances with disinterested men. Despair, frustration and loneliness.

Gently, Severus retreated from her mind. *That* is no excuse for seeking certain oblivion.'

*

'I'm not—'

'That, my dear girl,' Severus said, dropping his hands, *'is/ife*. Not everyone gets the roses-round-the-door, perfect happy ever after. I've lived alone like this—' He gestured around the room in a graceful sweeping motion. '—for nigh on twenty years, as have countless other people, and they aren't out and about seeking the rarest grimoire in existence to get away from it all. What makes you think you should be singled out for some special destiny?'

'I-I don't think I'm special,' Hermione replied. 'I never said that. It's a risk, I know, but it's one that's worth taking.'

*

'I'm no use here—in this world,' she continued, holding up her hand as Severus tried to interrupt. 'Perhaps the Old Ones can find a use for me in theirs.'

'No use?' Severus dropped to his knees once more, taking her hands in his. 'No *use*? How can you possibly say that? One of the best minds I ever had the pleasure of teaching?—Yes, I just paid you a compliment—A mind the wizarding world can ill-afford to lose?'

'Snape...'

'Severus. Please.'

'Severus... I've no reason to stay.'

'Really,' Severus smirked. 'Now that sounds like a challenge to me...'

*

Four

Chapter 4 of 4

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It was probably the nicest thing anyone had said to her in a very long time, but clinging to a few words of kindness like some sort of lifeline—especially from Snape, of all people—seemed almost pitiful. Too late, she noticed those dark eyes searching hers again, following her thoughts to that very conclusion. He drew away from her.

'I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend you.'

'Hmm...? No matter.' His attention had shifted once more to her feet. 'That emptiness can be relieved—at least... temporarily. I wish to show you how. That is my price. Miss Granger.'

*

'I don't under—Oh!' She'd forgotten about *those*. Energised by some wordless spell, the ribbons on her bound foot were winding their way up her leg, weaving an elaborate diamond pattern over and under her calf and shin as they went, creating little triangles and forming knots at strategic points. When they reached her knee, they paused as if awaiting further instructions.

'Observe,' said Severus.

One of the knots began to pulsate against her skin.

'Oh, that's-that feels really...ooh... strange...' Hermione gasped. 'What's it doing?'

'Not much. Yet,' Severus replied. 'But note what happens when I do *this*...'

*

He watched her face intently, counting the tell-tale signs of arousal. Ah, yes,*there*: the widening eyes and dilating pupils, the silent 'O' of the lips, teeth clamping down, eyelids fluttering... 'As you have probably realised by now,' said Severus, as Hermione let out a little sigh, 'my ribbons are designed to have a certain... effect on the body's nervous system. The little shockwaves of pleasure you are no doubt experiencing can be increased or decreased at my command. *Thus*.'

Hermione squeaked.

'Now, imagine how that would feel with the ribbons encasing your entire body *All* your body, Miss Granger.'

*

'A-all?'

'Yes, all. From the tips of your...' Severus licked his lips '...toes to the roots of your hair—and all... points in between.' He tweaked the ribbons again and was rewarded with rather a delightful moan.

'You still—oh—still haven't told me what it is you want, exactly,' Hermione managed to gasp.

'Ah, such fortitude. Such...single-mindedness.' Severus chuckled. 'You are to be commended, Miss Granger, for keeping your focus.' He reached forward to make a minor

adjustment to the ribbon, unable to resist grazing his fingertips against her skin as he did so. 'Not to mention... rewarded.'

*

'And so, Miss Granger,' Severus continued as the young woman on his bed sighed deeply, 'if you will allow me free reign with my ribbons as I see fit, and if, after my best... efforts to convince you that your existence is not pointless, you are still hell-bent on pursuing your route to oblivion, I will show you the Abramelin. I will even help you increase your chances of survival by assisting in the preparations for your pilgrimage—on one further condition.'

'And what might that be?'

'I would very much like... ' He swallowed thickly. '...to fuck your beautiful feet.'

*

Impulsive...reckless...stupid... Severus chided himself, thinking for a moment that he'd overplayed his hand. But then, seeing as he was her last hope, what choice did she have?

Letting his hair obscure his smirk, he began fiddling with the second ribbon in readiness, drawing it repeatedly through his fingers while patiently awaiting her decision. Soon, *soon*, she would come to the same conclusion as him, accede to his demands and submit to the tender mercies of his ribbons.

He prayed she was adequately flexible—bent backwards, wrists bound to ankles was always the best position...

Please. Just say *yes*.

*

Severus felt a small hand stay his much larger one.

'Can they really make me... *feel*?'

He met Hermione's gaze evenly. 'Rest assured, my dear. They will wind their way into your most... intimate places: inflame your fantasies, rip away any and all inhibitions and leave you *quivering* with desire.'

Hermione averted her eyes and nodded. 'Well... I knew sex had be involved somewhere.' With a long sigh, she began unfastening her robe.

'Only if you wish it,' Severus murmured, introducing the second ribbon to her naked foot. *Only if you beg for it. And you will. Oh, you will.*

~ *finite* ~