

Unintentional Amour

by Southern_Witch_69

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Doing His Duty

Chapter 1 of 8

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Disclaimer: I'm just mucking around with J.K. Rowling's characters. I'm not making any money either.

A/N: This is in response to my HP Chapter Challenge. Rules can be found at the end of the chapter. This story will be eight chapters total (all completed already), and there will be no great plot twists here. It's mostly styled as a PWP. The very adult rating is for all of the chapters to come after this one.

Also, this is only "canon compliant" up through OotP and does not reflect events from HBP. It takes place after Voldemort has been defeated and after Hermione and Harry have graduated.

Thanks go to my beta, Charmed_Nay, and thanks also go to CocoaChristy for brainstorming with me.

Severus glared at the headmaster. "Why would you choose *me* of all people to escort *him* from his home?"

"Because, Severus, you are the only one available to do so, and I can't have him traveling on his own. Lily's sister and her husband are only allowing him to stay this one night with them, so he needs protection. You heard the statement that Lucius gave to me," Dumbledore said sternly. "The Lestranges are going to try to avenge Voldemort's demise by ending Harry's life. Until we sort them out, he will not be safe. It's only a matter of time until we get them."

"You should not have made a deal with Lucius, Headmaster. He told you nothing that I couldn't have told you," Severus said in annoyance. "I wouldn't be surprised if it was Lucius waiting outside Potter's door for a chance to kill him."

"You and I both know he will do what he can to keep out of Azkaban and protect what's left of his family name," replied Dumbledore as he rubbed his head wearily. "Besides, if they contact him or his wife, we shall know. If you cannot do this for me..."

"I shall. It doesn't mean that I will like it," Severus said.

"The two of you will sort your past out in time." He smiled then, stood, and moved to the younger man's side. "Now, I must be off." He placed a hand upon Severus' shoulder. "I do appreciate this, my boy."

Nodding, Severus stood. "I shall return with him shortly. Where do you want him to stay?"

"I've taken the liberty of arranging quarters for both Harry and Miss Granger in the dungeons adjacent your own."

"What? Near me?" Severus asked incredulously. "And what need is there for Granger to come here? I thought it was Potter that we were worried about."

"She is all he has left since Ronald Weasley died, and he requests this for her safety. She has agreed," Dumbledore said simply. "I figured the quarters neighboring either side of yours would be most peaceful for them, especially when the students come back from holiday. They will both need your protection."

"Fine." *The blighters had better not interrupt me whilst here, or I will make their stay miserable. It's bad enough to have to spend my summer at the castle, but now, I have to keep close to Potter and Granger!*

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Severus used a Portkey to get to a small thicket of trees in Little Whinging. He merely had to walk a couple of blocks down to reach house number four where the boy was staying. He made certain to go after dark, but there were still people about. Those that saw him looked upon him with disdain and fear. He made sure to glower at them as he strode by.

"All of these bloody houses look the same," he grumbled. Finally, he reached his destination. Without wasting another moment, he banged on the door as hard as he could. To his surprise, it was Granger that opened the door.

"Professor Snape!" she said pleasantly. She looked over her shoulder and back to him. "And not a moment too soon. We are ready to be out of here! Come in. I'll go up and get Harry." She quickly ran up a small flight of stairs just to the right of the entryway.

Severus stepped in and closed the door with a snap. He saw that their trunks and other items were packed and waiting at the door. Curious about Lily's sister, he strode forward and saw that they were watching a television program. Interestingly enough, it featured a vampire who happened to be biting on a woman's neck. *Petunia*, he thought sourly. *She still resembles a horse in the face. Good Lord! Which fat lug is her husband? Oh, right. The blond whale was the son. I remember him from Potter's memories. Dudders... No, Dudley is his name.*

He cleared his throat to let them know he was there, and Dudley screamed and ran from the room. The older fat man's mouth gaped open, though his skin seemed to be changing to a deep purple shade.

"It's quite safe to breathe," Severus said quietly, looking around with his lip curled in disgust. "So this is where Potter has been living most of his life." He shook his head. "No wonder he's keen on Hogwarts. I suppose you know that I am here to take him."

Petunia nodded. Her husband still didn't speak. A frightened voice from the kitchen asked, "Are you g-going to drink his blood?"

Smirking wickedly, Severus said, "Of course not. I reserve my appetite for tastier...larger meals."

Not waiting to see the responses on their faces, he spun on his heel and went back to the doorway where he shrunk their packages. Both came bounding down the stairway an instant later.

"Professor," Potter said coolly.

Severus nodded to their things in response. "Carry your items, follow me, and try to keep up." He slammed out of the door, purposely walking fast so that they would have to run to keep up with him. He never looked back once, but the pounding of feet behind him told him that they were catching up with him. Once they were safely ensconced by the trees down the road, he pulled out his Portkey and activated it.

"What are you waiting for?" he asked snidely. "Touch it. Three... two... one." *I thought I was finally rid of them when they left Hogwarts, he thought in annoyance. In what other ways will the headmaster purposely find to keep them about?*

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"This," Severus said, pointing to the door, "is to be your room, Potter. You can set your wards as you see fit." He pushed the door open with his foot. "See that doorway?"

"Yes," the boy said defiantly.

"Never use it." With that, he moved forward and noticed that Granger wasn't following him. "Do you not wish to see where your chambers are?"

"Oh," she said, apparently surprised. "I thought I would be staying with Harry."

"I think not," Severus said, enjoying her discomfort. "The headmaster wants the both of you to have separate chambers. He must have reasons of his own. Who am I to change that?"

"Very well, sir," Granger said, nodding in agreement. She turned to Potter. "I'll be back in a few minutes."

"All right," the boy agreed, smiling slightly.

Passing the tapestry that hid the door to his chambers, he moved on to the next door. "This is the entrance to your rooms, Miss Granger." He opened the door. "You may set the wards." Severus opened the door and moved aside as she entered. When he went to follow her in, she held out her hand to stop him.

"It's not necessary, sir. I think I can find my own way about," she said, looking away from him.

"If you don't mind, there is something that I'd like to show you," he said, utterly irritated that she thought to send him away like some errant schoolboy.

"Of course." Once in her bedchamber, she took her shrunken items from her pocket and returned them to normal size while he pulled a colorful tapestry aside.

"Through here is a small walkway to my room. Do NOT use this unless there is an emergency," he directed, crossing his arms over his chest. "I'll not ward it... just in case."

"Don't worry, Professor. I'll not intrude upon your privacy." She smiled. "I do appreciate that you've allowed us to stay here with you this summer."

Severus nodded and opened his mouth to speak when the handle of her trunk broke, causing it to drop to the floor. The top opened when it landed on its side, and it spilled some of its contents to the ground. Instinctively, he bent down to help her retrieve her clothing. He first noticed the dip in her blouse and the ample cleavage it displayed. *Has she always been so... developed?* He tore his eyes away to concentrate on the task at hand, lest she see him peering down her blouse. It wasn't as if a nineteen-year-old could truly interest him anyway. The first piece he grabbed was a pair of shiny, black knickers. *What the hell is a girl such as Granger doing with such a... womanly item?* He raised an eyebrow. "I do apologize. Scrutinizing your undergarments was not something I planned on doing today."

She snatched the scanty bit of silk away, glowering as she did so. "I can sort my things out, thanks. Now, if you don't mind, I'd like to get settled in."

Incensed that he'd been dismissed when he was only trying to make certain that her rooms were in order, he bit out, "Excellent. The less amount of time that I have to suffer your presence, the better."

Severus quickly strode away, not caring if she thought him rude. He had better things to do than look after the pair of them anyway. He did wonder about her assumption that she would share Potter's chambers with him. *Exactly what is the relationship between the two of them? Potter certainly didn't wait very long after Weasley's death to slither into his niche, did he? Sexy knickers! The idiot bastard likely doesn't know how to appreciate them.* He closed his eyes and shook his head to rid himself of the unwelcome vision that his line of thinking brought to mind.

Perhaps later he could walk through one of the secret entrances and catch them doing something inappropriate. That should prove to be uncomfortable for them *Maybe she'll be wearing those black knickers.* The smirk on his face faded. What did he care what they were doing or what she was wearing? "I think I'll take a trip into Hogsmeade... where real women venture." It had been far too long. Yes, that was the only reason that he'd been intrigued by what he saw. "I wonder if Rosmerta is wearing silky black knickers today."

Southern's Notes: Slow moving, I know, but after this, we'll have a bit of fun. This story is completed, and I will be uploading a new chapter every other day until it's done.

Chapter 1 Quote from HP and the PS: He cleared his throat to let them know he was there, and Dudley screamed and ran from the room.

Well? Did you recognize it? Hehe!

SW69 HP Chapter Challenge Rules:

This has been influenced by Doompark's 394 Challenge. The stories created from that have been amazing, so let's have a try again. I hope this doesn't sound complicated. I'll try my best to explain (A big thanks to NSS for the help with the wording).

Pairings? Hermione / Severus

1. Take the month and day of your numerical birth date and add them together. (Example: My birthday is on July the fifth. 07 [seventh month] + 05 [fifth day] = 12)
2. Divide the sum by 2 to get a second number. (Example: I would divide 12/2 and get 6. Round all half numbers up to the higher number.)
3. Open up Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's (Philosopher's) Stone and use your SECOND number to figure out what chapter to open up to. (Example: I would open to chapter number 6.)
4. Use your FIRST number to find the sentence to use. (Example: I would scroll down to the 12th sentence of the chapter, even if the sentence is on the next page.)
5. The first chapter should include that sentence. ****Note**** In the case of an odd or too short sentence, you may use the one immediately before or after (include your sentence with it). I won't be going behind you to see if you have the correct quotes. If you'd like to include a cool sentence before or after your designated sentence, please do so. It's all about fun.

Example:

"Go on," he said.

This could become...

"Go, on," he said. Having said that, he stood and gathered his things.

6. Continue the process with Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets following the same formula and the second chapter will be formed around this sentence.
7. Continue with POA, GOF, OotP, and HBP in the same manner and in this order. *Each chapter must be 1000-2000 words long. No shorter and no longer*

BONUS:

An additional chapter or two chapters can be created from the two extra books that J.K. Rowling wrote: Quidditch Through the Ages and Fantastical Beasts & Where to Find Them. These aren't as lengthy as the others, so you'll have to find your sentence and page a bit differently here.

Fantastical Beasts...

1. Use your FIRST number to determine what page to turn to. (The highest sum would be 43. Since there are only 42 pages after the foreword, if your sum is 43, use the number 42.)
2. Use your SECOND number to determine which sentence to use on that page. If your number isn't found on the page, simply use the last sentence. (There are so many run-on sentences. You'll probably have to do this.)
3. Record the sentence AND the beast's name in which it falls under. (Example: I would pick sentence 6 from page 12 and note that my beast is the Common Welsh Green.)
4. Write the chapter using the sentence and the beast from that page. Use the same length requirements as above.

Quidditch Through The Ages...

1. Use your FIRST number to determine what page to turn to.
2. Use your second number to determine what sentence to use. Record the sentence and build the chapter around it. You may not have enough sentences on the page, so simply use the last sentence if this is the case. There are many run-on sentences there, and some pictures take up a lot of room.

Use the same length requirements for this chapter.

NOTES:

If you use the six current Harry Potter books plus the 2 extra books, you could have an 8-chapter story. The chapters won't be very taxing, as the length requirements are minimum. If you do not have all of these books, please ask me or anyone else who might own them.

Seeing More Than His Duty

Chapter 2 of 8

Snape hears a noise coming from Hermione's room and goes to investigate.

Disclaimer: J.K. Rowling owns the characters. I'm just having some fun with them.

I'd like to say thanks to my brilliant beta, Charmed Nay.

Severus staggered to his bed. "Why do I do this time and again?" he asked aloud, slurring slightly. "Fucking Hooch!" he grouched. *Where is that Sobering Solution I made?* He'd been talked into a drinking game with Rolanda and Hagrid. They, along with the headmaster, Minerva, and Filch, were spending their summer at the castle in order to provide extra protection in the case of the remaining Death Eaters coming onto the grounds for whatever reason.

In his opinion, it was ridiculous. Those that were still not captured were likely long gone. He wouldn't have remained nearby in an attempt to seek out Potter. Shrugging, he pulled his robes off, and just as he unfastened the second button at the top of his shirt, he heard a scream. It sounded like Granger. Wand drawn, he moved quickly to the wall, pushed his tapestry aside, and made his way through the small walkway towards her room. Before he pushed aside her tapestry, he heard her giggle. This caused him to pause. If she was in trouble, she wouldn't be laughing, the twit!

They'd been at the castle for nearly four days, and though they hadn't truly been a bother to him, he hated having to take his meals with them and check on them. Just as he turned around to head back to his rooms, he heard, "Oh, yes, Harry. Just like that."

Granger? Seemingly breathless and anticipating something... sexual? Eyebrow rising nearly to his hairline, he tiptoed forward and peeked through the space between the wall and the thick drapery. Her bedchamber was mostly dark, save the single lit candle on the opposite side of her bed. He knew that he would not be seen, so he opened the tapestry a little more.

Potter was sans shirt and hovering over Granger. He thought them to be in the midst of a coupling, but then, he noticed that the boy still had his trousers on. Feeling no shame by watching, he smirked as the boy started to hump her through his clothes. *What in the world is he about?*

"Come on, Harry," Granger said in annoyance. "Off with them. Fuck me. Really fuck me."

Severus nearly choked, for as she said that, she sat up to reveal her full, bare breasts. The only thing going through his mind was that it was a pity that they were being wasted on Potter. *Come on, boy. Lower your mouth and take a nipple between your lips!*

Potter sighed. "Hermione, it doesn't feel right to me... Ron being dead and all."

To hell with Weasley. He's dead and can do nothing for her. Get on with it! Severus thought in annoyance.

She took the brat's hands and placed them on her breasts while she moved to unfasten his trousers. "heed this, Harry. So do you," she said, easing down his trousers.

Disgusting, Severus thought, lip curling in distaste. He turned around to head back to his room when he heard Potter groan.

"Good God, Hermione. You're so wet."

"Yeah, snogging for an hour does that to a girl," she answered tartly.

Severus felt a jolt run through. Exactly how wet was she, and why did he care? *If I'd known that I would be in this sort of mood, I would have taken Hooch up on her offer.* He shook himself mentally. *What am I saying?* Hooch had been talking about some new magical strap-on that she wanted to purchase to explore her manly side a few weeks back. *For all I know, she's gone and bought one.*

Deciding that one last little peek wouldn't hurt, he moved back to the tapestry, moved it slightly, and saw that they were in the midst of a snog, Potter's hands on her breasts, her hands fondling him through his underpants.

He was suddenly horrified as Potter bolted up and said, "What the fuck?"

Severus thought sure he'd been spotted, but he heard the squawk of an owl. *How had an owl found its way into her chambers?* He wondered, half thinking that he'd heard wrong, being intoxicated. In the next instant, he saw the Weasley owl, Errol, circle Granger's room and head for the small table in the corner nearest him. Unfortunately, it wasn't able to stop itself, and it smacked into the wall. Errol slumped, unconscious, onto the table, his legs in the air and a damp red envelope in his beak.

Don't the Weasleys realize that their owl represents them in the public's eye? Why not be rid of such an incompetent creature? He thought snidely. He'd never own something so ineffectual.

"Oh, a Howler!" Granger yelled, nearly knocking Potter off the bed to grab the envelope. "Hope Snape doesn't hear this!"

Potter was pulling on his shirt and fastening his pants, as if the sender could actually see what he'd been about. The boy froze when the yelling began.

HARRY POTTER! HERMIONE GRANGER!

I HAVE BEEN WORRIED SICK ABOUT THE BOTH OF YOU! COULD YOU NOT HAVE FLOODED ME OR SENT AN OWL TO LET ME KNOW THAT YOU WERE SAFE BUT IN HIDING? I WAS FORCED TO SEND THIS TO THE HEADMASTER SINCE ONLY HE KNOWS WHERE TO FIND YOU!

YOU'D BETTER LET ME KNOW THAT ALL IS WELL THIS INSTANT, OR I'LL COME TO FIND YOU MYSELF. I'VE ALREADY LOST ENOUGH OF MY FAMILY. I NEED TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE BOTH SAFE!

"She's right," Granger said, moving back as the envelope burst into flames.

Potter shrugged. "I thought that Dumbledore would tell her."

"No, that's not it. You just don't want to face her in any way since Ron died. Admit it."

"Maybe," the boy confessed. "I just want things to be like they were... especially with the three of us."

"Harry," she said, moving to pull him close, her bare chest crushed against his clothed one. "We need each other now more than ever. Stay the night with me. We'll work through this."

"No, Hermione, I can't. Especially not now, not after hearing her." He snorted and stood. "It's like betraying him. Don't you feel... dirty?"

Granger gasped. "Get the hell out of here then, Harry!"

"Wait! I didn't mean that *you* were di..."

"Just go," she said, holding out a hand to stave him off. "I can take care of this myself."

"It's only because we had that firewhisky, you know," Potter ventured. "You wouldn't be all over me like this otherwise."

"I am *always* trying to be with you. You're just too thick to notice. The liquor just gave me the nerve it is all. Now... if you don't mind?" She nodded to the exit as she brought one hand to her breasts, and the other moved beneath her knickers. "Unless you want to stay of course."

"Not tonight," the boy said, fleeing from the room.

"What an idiot," she said in exasperation, falling back to the bed, ceasing her tempting ministrations immediately.

Severus couldn't believe that Potter had turned her down. The idiot needed only to remove a couple of layers of clothing, and he could have had her. Not realizing what he was doing, he stumbled through the opening. When she gasped and sat up, he said, "I couldn't help but to hear a ruckus." He hoped that she would think he hadn't been there until after he'd heard the Howler. "I came to see if you needed assistance."

"I'm fine," she bit out, covering herself with a pillow. "You're in my private bedchambers, Snape. I'm not dressed."

Raising an eyebrow, he said, "So I noticed. Whilst I was here, I happened to hear Potter rebuff your advances."

"And?"

Oh, but he could nearly see a fire burning in her eyes. Was that a fire needing to be extinguished, or was she about to explode in anger? "And I was wondering if you needed my... assistance in regards to that," he said lamely. *Damn! Not what I meant to say at all.*

"Are you mad?" she asked incredulously.

"Whatever gives you that idea?" he asked indignantly.

"You're pissed!" she accused. "I can hear the slurring of your words!"

"I've only had a few... bottles, though I did share them with my associates," he confessed.

Granger's mouth gaped open, and she shook her head. "I can't believe this! What happened to never using this passageway unless it was an emergency? You shouldn't just barge in, you know!"

"Headmaster Dumbledore requests that I protect you. When I heard something out of place, I had to check," he said crossly. "A mistake I'll not be making again for certain."

Hermione started laughing. "You'd have to be pissed to come here and offer *assistance* to me."

Was she fishing for him to ask again? What was that mischievous tone? "Miss Granger, I meant what I said," he said as seductively as he could. "Why ask a boy to do what a man can do better?"

"Bloody hell! You're serious!"

"Sirius? How dare you call me that?" He turned on his heel and fled the room, much like Potter had. "Sharp-tongued harpy," he groused as he entered his bedchamber. He went to use the loo, undress, and take a bit of his Sobering Solution.

I can't believe I propositioned her! She's probably gone to Potter's room, and they're likely sharing laughter at my expense Severus scowled at his appearance in the mirror. "How dare she think that I look like Black?" He pulled his clothing away, save his underpants, and stood against the wall while his potion took effect. Feeling that his head had cleared, he opened the door and strode out. Only when he reached his bed did he notice a silhouette step out of the shadows.

Granger. What the hell did she want? "Come to have another laugh at my expense? Don't bother. I've seen to it that I'm no longer intoxicated, and had that not been the case, I would never have..." His voice trailed away as she moved forward. She stopped a few feet from him and slowly lowered her knickers...the only bit of clothing she'd had on. He was at a loss for words. Though he'd seen most of her body in her rooms, he'd not had her present herself to him so openly or so invitingly. The effect was completely and utterly... arousing.

"Come here, Snape," she said seductively, crooking her finger at him.

How dare she think to come into his rooms and command him to go to her... like some randy little schoolboy that would fall prey to her charms! He did what any sane, logical man would do.

He went to her.

Southern's Notes: Fear not. All the "good" stuff missing here will be in the next chapter. I couldn't fit all of that in here with the word limit restrictions on the challenge. Harry is just missing out, isn't he? Hehe!

Hp and the CoS quote: Errol slumped, unconscious, onto the table, his legs in the air and a damp red envelope in his beak.

Giving More Than His Duty

Chapter 3 of 8

Snape shows Hermione that he's good at what he does.

Disclaimer: I've borrowed some of J.K.R.'s characters and am using them in a little tale.

I'd like to thank my brilliant beta, Charmed Nay, for finding the time to beta for me, even though she has a busy schedule lately.

Severus looked down at Hermione, dark eyes taking in her tempting, naked body. He lifted a finger and touched her collarbone sliding it down through the valley of her breasts and over her stomach before coming back up again to cup her face in his strong hand. "I'll give you just one chance to run away whilst you can," he said silkily. "For once I begin, I'll not let you leave my bed until I...we...are completely sated."

Part of him feared that she would come to her senses and leave, but he could see the firm set of her jaw and the daring glint in her eyes.

"Maybe it is / who won't allow you to leave," she said boldly, reaching up to touch his face with one of her hands.

"All this will be is tonight," he said suddenly, wanting to make certain that she had no illusions about any sort of relationship.

He needn't have worried, for she said, "All I want is tonight." She brushed her lips against his. "Make me feel again."

Severus knew well the feeling of loss after losing a lover. Different people coped in different ways. Some people did what they must to rid themselves, even if for only a moment, of that numbness that settles in. As his lips pressed gently against hers for another kiss, he thought, *Potter was insane to pass this up. I suppose I shall have to take care where he would not.*

Hermione's lips were soft and just plump enough to complement his thin, firm lips. Once his tongue found hers, he could taste the firewhisky Potter had spoken of earlier. He didn't care what had changed her mind. She would be his. Intensifying the kiss, his hand left her face and slid down to cup one of her pert breasts while his other hand moved around to cup her arse and pull her against him. He groaned in appreciation as her hands began exploring his body, nails scraping his skin as she did so.

What the hell are you doing? an inner voice asked. *This is Hermione Granger...Potter's friend.* He shrugged those thoughts away. Tonight, she was just a woman in need of a lover, and there was no way that Severus would turn her away. Though he'd been intoxicated when he'd propositioned her and started things, *she* had ultimately come to him.

Finishing their kiss with a featherlike brush of his lips against hers, he pulled back to look into her eyes. When he saw only acceptance and desire, he lifted her and moved back towards his bed, laying her down in its center and moving over her. He didn't bring his lips back to hers. Instead, he moved them to one of her ears where he whispered, "I'm going to make certain," he nibbled on her lobe lightly, "that you never forget this night or our time together, short though it may be."

From there, his mouth moved to her neck where he paused to nip at her skin and taste her flesh. When he was certain that he'd marked her, he moved down to her breasts, placing wet butterfly kisses along the way. He enjoyed the small moans and breathy gasps that his lips and tongue caused. Although he wanted to rip his underpants away and plow into her body savagely, he couldn't. He had all night and wanted to make the most of it, but on the morrow, they would go back to being Snape and Granger. Just for tonight, they would be Severus and Hermione.

Laving and nuzzling her breasts languidly, he tried to memorize every inch of her nubile body and every sound that escaped her lips. One hand made its way down to caress her neatly trimmed and partially shaved center, parting the soft lips of her labia and dipping a finger inside of her.

"Ahhh," she murmured, hands coming up to tangle in his hair and pull him closer to her body.

This encouraged him to slide another finger within her. She was definitely hot, and after only a few strokes of exploration, she was certainly wet. Unable to stop himself, he brought those two digits to his mouth to lick them, truly tasting her for the first time. *Much to my liking*, he thought eagerly. His fingers moved back down to pleasure her while his mouth began a more fervent assault on her breasts and stomach, eliciting moans of excitement from her.

"Sev-Severus... please," she managed, breath catching as his teeth nipped her flesh.

Hermione's inciting plea only served to further arouse him, so he quickly moved down her body, wanting more, needing to taste her again. Using his fingers to part her flesh, he ran his tongue down one labium and up the other, finding her clitoris as he neared the top. She bucked against him and whimpered in excitement, hands finding their way back to his hair in an attempt to urge him on. Sucking and pressing his tongue against her, he felt her body tremble with anticipation. Wanting to prolong her pleasure and drive her mad, his tongue slid back down between her labia to enjoy and savor the taste of her body.

Surprisingly, one of her own fingers began to stimulate her clitoris. *We'll have none of that, dear Miss Granger. I believe I am the one doing the pleasing here* he thought smugly, knowing her desire was peaking. He lifted his mouth and nipped at her hand, pushing it away with his face, using his tongue to encourage an orgasm. He could feel the tightening of her legs and the trembling of her body before she cried out a string of incoherent words.

Severus moved off of the bed and quickly divested himself of his underpants, wondering why he hadn't done that in the first place. He swiftly crawled back to her, and in one smooth move, he was over her again, taking her mouth with his and parting her thighs with his knees. Hermione maneuvered her body, guiding his erection to her entrance herself and wrapping her legs about his waist. She broke their kiss and whispered, "Inside..."

"As you wish," he murmured, pressing in slowly.

Impatiently, she used her legs to force him into her completely, pulling him flush against her body. He groaned in response, whispering about her heat and tightness, but quickly forgetting the need to speak, only wanting to feel. He pulled nearly all of the way out before thrusting completely back in, quickly increasing his strokes, each time harder. After an awkward moment, they found a steady rhythm where nothing but grunting, whimpering, and meeting flesh could be heard.

When he felt his climax coming for him, he changed his strokes, needing them to be choppy, rough, and angled, wanting her to climax once more. Each time he would slam into her, she would cry out and claw at his back and attempt to grind herself against him. "Yesssss," he hissed encouragingly, wanting to hear her and feel her as she found her climax.

Again, she moved her hand down to stimulate herself. This time, however, he did nothing to stop her. Severus continued his strokes until he felt her body bucking erratically against his, signaling her release was near. He then began deeply thrusting into her as quickly as he could, causing the headboard to pound against the wall rhythmically.

"Oh, God, don't stop!" she exclaimed, "Oh... my... Severus! Just don't stop... yesssss."

His name spoken in such a way was so erotic and arousing that his release was upon him nearly instantly. The moment she tightened around him in spasms and gripped her legs forcefully, he exploded within, groaning and murmuring as he did so. His orgasm was so intense that he simply collapsed atop, not caring if he crushed her or not,

vaguely noticing her legs limply falling from his waist. The only thing he could feel was his heart beating against his chest, sweat gliding down his back, and movements of their bodies as their breathing returned to normal.

When a hand slid down his damp back and kneaded his arse, he lifted his head to gaze at her. She smiled, putting him at ease. "Well... that was interesting," he said uncertainly.

"Quite remarkable," she agreed, lifting her head to press her lips against his. "Though I do hope you're not trying to be rid of me just yet."

Her words were confidently spoken, but he could see the shimmer of uncertainty in her eyes and hear the hopeful tone in her voice. She didn't want to be alone and wanted to be with him... again. *Who am I to turn down what is so freely offered?*

"You may stay the night," he said, finally moving next to her to lie on his back. "I'm not quite through with you."

An uncomfortable silence ensued. Wanting to break the ice, he asked, "What is between you and Potter?" It wasn't exactly any of his business, but he was curious. He'd known that she was Weasley's woman. Had she once been Potter's as well?

"Harry..." Her voice trailed away.

"I apologize. I shouldn't have asked such a question," he said.

"No, it's all right. You might as well know." She turned to face him, placing a hand upon his chest as she did so, running her nails over his chest hair. "When he lost Ginny, he... he turned to Ron. I guess in some part of his mind, Ron was Ginny... in an odd sort of way."

"Oh," Severus said, not understanding. Then, realization hit him. "Oh."

"Right," she said, smirking. "For some reason, I didn't mind. Ron was surprised one day when Harry kissed him. We talked about it, and the three of us... Well, you can imagine, can't you? Now that Ron is gone, though, Harry isn't too keen on just being with me."

"That little git," he said calmly.

She shrugged. "I can understand that he feels the loss and needs to cope differently than I do, but I need someone, too. I never thought I'd be with anyone other than Harry after Ron died."

"I suppose I am privileged then."

"You surprised me... I'll admit that," she said, smiling. "But I needed this. I hope you understand that I don't normally act this way... or at least I haven't always." She shrugged and moved to lie back against her pillow. "Harry likes me to talk dirty to him and get a bit vulgar. Even *that* didn't work tonight. I'm sort of glad it didn't..."

"As am I," he whispered, allowing silence to overtake them again. A few minutes later, Severus turned to face her, tracing her jaw with his fingers and moving his head down to kiss her unhurriedly. "Hermione, if you only want to stay the night and perhaps... talk, I wouldn't mind." He definitely wanted to do more than talk. Having her yet again would be most pleasing, but he would give that option to her.

She gently pushed him onto his back. "No, I really want this," she said, stroking him back to arousal, adding softly, "And you."

He smirked as she straddled his waist. "So be it."

Southern's Notes: Well, I suppose this chapter covers Severus' exploration of Hermione. Next, it will be her turn to explore him. Hope nobody is squicked about the Harry, Ron, and Hermione background morsel because... HaHaHa!

Quote from HP and the POA: "That little git," he said calmly.

Getting More Than His Duty

Chapter 4 of 8

It's Hermione's turn to show Snape just how good she can be.

Disclaimer: I've borrowed some of J.K.R.'s characters and am using them in a little tale.

I'd like to thank my brilliant beta, Charmed Nay, for finding the time to beta for me, even though she has a busy schedule lately.

Hermione couldn't believe that she and *Snape* had shagged. Never in all her years would she have believed *that* if someone had told her. Harry had utterly aroused her and left her frustrated. She'd been horrified when Snape first stumbled out from behind the tapestry, but when she'd heard the desperate slurring of his voice, she'd decided that there would be nothing wrong with having sex with him. Sex between consenting adults was allowed...even if one of the adults happened to be her arsehole, ex-professor. Besides, there was something intriguing about him. She'd naughtily been wondering if he'd thought about the pair of knickers he'd touched days before, and if so, what had he thought of them? The scene replayed over in her mind on more than one occasion. The raising of his eyebrow, the silkiness of his voice, and the momentary shock on his normal austere expression were engraved in her mind.

And now, here she was, straddling him and leaning over to kiss his lips lightly. He'd already sated and explored her body. She was of the mind that she should return the favor. Sliding off of him, she noted his quickly dismayed expression. "One moment," she said, quelling his question. She snatched his wand from the nightstand and handed it to him. "A couple of Cleansing Charms if you don't mind. It appears that my wand was left in my rooms."

"Very well," he said, eyes glinting as he said the charms that saw their bodies clean again.

Instead of handing the wand back to her, he slid it beneath his pillow. Hermione said nothing. Moving between his thighs and lying atop him, making certain her skin touched his as she kissed him again, parting her lips and inviting his tongue to join hers. She loved the way his mouth moved against hers. Though his lips were thin, they

were firm and aggressive, and if she wasn't careful, she would always long to kiss him when he would come near her.

The feel of his hands crushing her body to his urged her on. Her lips left his and nibbled their way down to his throat, sucking and laving along the way. She bit his chest, eliciting a growl from him. Enthused, she continued on, pinching and licking his flat nipples, forcing them to bud. She was glad that he didn't have too much body hair upon his chest as she rubbed her cheek against it, enjoying the light tickle against her skin. She followed the trail of hair down to where it thickened.

She felt him suck in a breath as she passed by his erection, the side of her facing brushing it lightly. No, he would have to wait before she would return that favor. She wanted to explore him as he'd done for her. She bit, sucked, and licked her way down to one knee and made her way back up along his inner thigh. His pale skin was firm beneath her mouth, encouraging her to touch him all the more.

Hands found her hair and twisted roughly, causing her to wince. She shook them away and nibbled her way up to his scrotum where she allowed a quick swipe of her tongue to antagonize him before making her way over to the flesh of his other inner thigh, causing him to squirm and groan.

"Hermione..." he pleaded, hands now groping at his sheet.

She'd never heard him speak in such a tone and felt... smug that she could elicit such unrestrained need from him. As she suckled his skin, she brought one hand up to lightly brush over his hardened penis, eventually running the tip of one of her fingernails around its head and down the long, thick shaft before moving back up again.

He arched into her and blurted, "Good Lord."

Maneuvering herself, she whispered, "No... good Hermione," before using her tongue to follow the path that her finger had created.

"Yes, yes," came his breathy reply. "Show me how good."

She blew a hiss of hot air over him just before her mouth closed over the tip, sucking with her lips and laving with her tongue as her head moved down. Hermione smiled inwardly as his body began responding to her: hips moving, legs stiffening, hands groping, and voice cracking as it muttered incoherently. She brought a hand up to fondle his scrotum and used a nail to scrape her way down towards his arse, causing him to buck. Quickening her head's movements and bringing her hand up to hold the base of his penis to help steady it, she did her best to make him groan and ache for release, watching him all the while.

When he lifted his head to look down at her, she didn't stop, wanting him to see her watching his expression as she pleased him.

"I'm so close," he admitted.

This would not do. She wanted to ride him and have her body help him find release, not her mouth. She slowly came to a halt and smiled as he protested momentarily. Crawling up his body, she straddled him once more, a hand guiding his hardness into her body. "Oh, now that's... good," she murmured, easing down onto him.

"Indeed," he said, sharply thrusting upward.

It didn't take long for her to find a rhythm, and though he tried to dominate her strokes, she maintained her own speed, grinding herself against him each time she took him all the way in. "Oh," she gasped as his hands began kneading her breasts, thumbs and index fingers pebbling her nipples. Hermione could take no more and felt excitement building within her. She arched back and away from him, bracing her hands behind her on his legs as she continued to ride him enthusiastically. The moment one of his fingers stroked her clitoris, her orgasm exploded, causing her to cry out loudly. "Severus! Yes, fuck, yes..."

When she lost her steam, his hands held her at the waist, and he continued thrusting up into her until he grunted with release. She watched as his eyes closed, and his face contorted as his climax found him. After his movements ceased and his face relaxed, she collapsed atop him, placing her head on his chest. She could hear the fast-paced beating of his heart and wondered if her own sounded similar.

Severus shifted under her, causing her to look up at him. His eyes were still closed, and when she moved, his arms tightened around her. She knew he wanted her to remain as she was. She couldn't say that she was all that eager to move either. However, she did want to kiss him. She adjusted herself just enough to kiss his jaw. This caused his eyes to snap open and gaze her way.

"Kiss me," she demanded lightly.

She needed only to say that, and his head lifted to reach hers. Their kiss was slow and unhurried, but she could feel her stomach tingling. The man reminded her of an incubus from a story she'd read. Though she'd enjoyed making love to Ron and even to Harry, it was never quite so... intense or sensual.

He cleared his throat to speak when she ended their kiss and put her head back on his chest. "So what now?"

"I don't know," she said honestly. She knew that she wanted to be with him again, but she didn't want to appear too needy. It might turn him off. "What do you want? Shall I go back to my quarters?"

"You may stay this night," he said. "Perhaps in the morning..." His voice trailed away, leaving an open invitation.

"If I'm not too sore, and if you're up to it, oh, yes, definitely," she agreed, giggling slightly. "And thank you. I needed this."

"As did I."

~~~~~

Harry stretched and yawned loudly. "Sorry. I got to sleep a bit late last night," he said. "Now, today, I wish I could be back in bed."

"Go on then," Hermione said dismissively before sipping her orange juice. "We don't have anything to do today."

"Hermione, I regret not being with you last night. I just couldn't bring myself to do it," he said, searching her eyes for disappointment. "I went back to my room and thought things over. I wanted to go back to yours, but I figured that you'd already turned in. Tonight," his hand slid across the table to grasp hers, "I won't make that mistake again." He grinned when she looked up at him, eyes wide. "I know. You thought I'd never come round."

"Well, considering how you acted last night, I thought you didn't want me," she said, squeezing his hand. "Am I to understand you want me? Always?"

"Er..." He was confused, but he knew he couldn't lose her. "Let's take things one day at a time, Hermione. We need to learn to live alone now that Ron's gone. It'll be awkward, but I think things will work out."

She looked away and nodded, pulling her hand from his. "And what brought about this epiphany?"

"Snake," he said, smirking at her shocked face.

"Did... did he talk to you?"

"No," Harry said, leaning forward. "Last night, he had one of his lovers in his rooms with him and forgot to put a Silencing Charm about his quarters. They kept me up for a couple of hours, and they woke me early this morning." He shook his head and laughed. "I didn't know he had it in him."

"Nor did I," Hermione quipped.



"You heard them, too, then?" he asked. She only nodded so he went on. "Ha! I'd bet it was Hooch. Isn't she one of the only females here at the castle this summer? Surely he wouldn't bring someone from Hogsmeade over." She remained silent. "What d'you think?" he asked anxiously.

Leaning back, Hermione brought her hands up to her face. "I think Harry that there is something you should know before we decide to move our relationship along."

Harry's smile faded. He didn't like the resigned tone and worried expression upon her face. He was about to urge her to go on when their ex-Potions master graced them with his presence at their breakfast table.

When the man noticed their expressions, he cocked an eyebrow at Harry, and said, "It appears that I've interrupted something. Don't mind me. Carry on." He took a sip of the juice before him, took a slice of toast and bit into it, and hid himself behind the early edition of the *Daily Prophet*.

"Er... It's all right, Hermione. We can finish this later."

She shifted in her chair, took a sip from her own glass, and said casually, "No, this is perfect. Perhaps we should discuss this now." She tapped the back of Snape's paper, causing him to lower a corner and peer out. "Professor, perhaps your input would be appreciated. Care to listen in?"

Harry stifled a displeased groan as the man he affectionately and privately called the Great Fucking Bat of the Dungeons lowered his paper and looked between them expectantly. *Just fucking great. Why does he need to be in our business?*

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**Southern's Notes:** So now Harry wants something more. Dang it! His timing is quite off. I wonder what Snape will think about this.

Quote from HP and the GOF: "What d'you think?" he asked anxiously.

## Wanting More Than His Duty

*Chapter 5 of 8*

Snape learns some displeasing news and handles it the best way he knows how.

**Disclaimer:** I've borrowed some of J.K.R.'s characters and am using them in a little tale.

**I'd like to thank my brilliant beta, Charmed Nay, for finding the time to beta for me, even though she has a busy schedule lately.**

---

Hermione nodded towards Harry. "I just thought you ought to know that Harry has just made a big decision, and it may be of some concern to you."

"Indeed?" Snape asked, arching a quizzical eyebrow.

"How's *my* decision have anything to do with him?" Harry asked, unable to keep quiet. He couldn't believe that she was telling Snape about their personal business. And what was the point? Snape hated them and hated having them there.

"Because, Harry," Hermione began, still looking at Snape, "it's his duty to keep an eye on us, so if you are going to be sharing my room with me," at this, Snape choked on his toast and then coughed, "then he should know that and be prepared for it."

What she'd said made sense to him, but he hated that Snape would realize exactly what was going on. That wasn't any of his business. He joined Hermione in glancing at Snape to see what he had to say. The man was paler than normal and seemed at a loss for words.

"Well?" Hermione finally prompted.

Snape laid his paper aside and said curtly, "So long as you two don't go traipsing about the grounds, I am quite certain that you can... entertain each other in your quarters if you so choose." He stood and placed his napkin onto his plate over his unfinished toast.

"Now, look! See!" Harry said indicating towards Snape. "Now, he's gone off his breakfast. There was no need to tell him anything!"

"Why, Potter, I had no idea that you cared," Snape retorted sarcastically. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll leave you *two children* to your games." That said, he turned on his heel and left the room.

Harry grinned. "Good riddance."

Hermione simply nodded and continued to stare at the door as if she expected Snape to walk back in.

"Seemed to be in a right jolly mood before that." He snickered. "Maybe telling him about us, giving him such distasteful imagery, and ruining his breakfast was a good idea."

"Oh, shove off, Harry," Hermione said, jumping up and leaving the room.

"What did I say?" Harry asked aloud, shrugging when she didn't turn back. If he didn't know better, he'd think that she was disappointed at Snape's lack of interest in their living arrangements. "Even I'm not that thick," he mumbled to himself. Things had certainly been easier when Ron was alive. No, they'd been much easier when Ginny was alive. He should have never allowed her out of his sight for a moment. He should have never allowed Ron to leave his side either.

His smile faded. Ron had been Hermione's boyfriend, but so much of what he did and said reminded Harry of Ginny that he'd impulsively kissed him without thinking of the consequences or what Hermione would say about it. Ron had pulled away, face aghast for a moment while he moved his hand back and forth in front of Harry's face as if checking his eyesight, asking, "You all right there, Harry? You just bloody kissed me. I'm a bloke, you know!"

Harry had replied, "I just... I need you right now. You're so like her..."

Realization had lit Ron's eyes, and he'd looked disturbed for a moment. However, he hadn't pulled away when Harry leaned forward again. Ron had allowed the kiss and had tentatively responded. Once it was over, he'd stood and said, "Just give me some time."

Before Harry knew it, Hermione had found him and forced him to have a long bloody conversation about his feelings for Ginny and Ron... and her. Blinking and letting the memories fade away, Harry sighed. He loved Hermione and wanted to be with her, but he felt as if it wasn't right...not with Ron gone. When Ginny had died, he'd sworn that he'd never let another woman take her place. However, when Ron was in the picture, it seemed all right that he cared for Hermione in that way. Now, things were back where they were...only worse. He needn't make Hermione suffer. She'd lost someone she'd loved as well, and he felt pretty shitty for not being there for her. Whether he liked it or not, he would be with her and have to learn to accept things. She was all he had left.

~~~~~

Severus was utterly annoyed. He and Hermione...Miss Granger...had come to an agreement. They would be cordial in front of others, but they'd decided to carry on a sexual relationship privately, as they'd found contentment, companionship, and satisfaction in their one night together. Why not carry on a bit? They were both consenting adults, were they not? If Potter was now trying to get things started again between them, then that certainly took him out of the picture, didn't it?

He was uncertain what game she was playing with him at breakfast. Had she been hoping he'd throw down his napkin, draw his wand, and demand that Potter duel him to win her affections? He snorted. "I certainly hope not." He'd initially believed she was letting him down easy...with Potter as an unknowing witness...so as to keep things peaceful. "However," he mused aloud, "now that I've had time to think on it, I do believe she was giving me fair warning or inviting me to speak up."

As hard as he could, he kicked a nearby chair, pausing to watch it fly across the room. What did he really want? He knew for certain that he wanted to sleep with her again. *Don't you mean fuck, Severus? There wasn't much sleeping involved last night.*

Sitting down at his desk, he placed one hand under his chin as he began thinking of something he could do...unbeknownst to either of them...that would get Potter to change his mind again, sending Hermione back to his bed. There was one problem. Had he gone too far by calling them children earlier? She was bright. She would understand that was just his uncertainty and disappointment talking.

"Draco," he mumbled suddenly, as his eyes took in the short note the boy had sent him days prior. "That's it." He'd just realized what he needed to do. He summoned a quill to him and replied to the parchment the boy had sent.

~~~~~

Severus entered Hermione's chambers unannounced and didn't particularly care if he caught them in a precarious position. All the candles had been extinguished save two. The bedroom looked, if anything, even darker and gloomier than it had on first sight. The blank picture on the wall was now breathing very slowly and deeply, as though its invisible occupant was asleep.

Neither Potter nor Hermione were in bed, so he paused, not entering the room completely. Where were they? He wanted to let them know that a guest had arrived and intended to pass a few nights with them. His gaze darkened even more as he thought of what it had taken to bribe Draco into coming to attempt to keep Potter occupied. After all, if the boys drank themselves into oblivion, Potter wouldn't be up to something in Hermione's bedroom. No, he'd be fast asleep in his own chambers under the watchful eyes of Draco.

As he turned to search elsewhere, he heard a small laugh. He'd not checked the small adjoining bathroom that the headmaster had installed. He crept forward stealthily and peered into the room through the crack between the door and the doorjamb.

Hermione was resting back against the wall of the bath, naked breasts jutting out over the sudsy water in front of her, while Potter sat behind her on the ledge, feet and legs dangling in on either side of her. He was kneading her hair with his hands, lathering shampoo throughout.

"Have you ever thought of cutting this mess off?" the boy asked playfully, tugging on her soaped locks.

*She'd better not*, thought Snape, realizing that he liked the way her hair looked while she moved with abandon and hadn't minded that her hair fanned out over his chest and pillow while she'd laid her head against him.

"No, I'm quite fond of it, thanks," she replied, handing him a tall glass of water. "Rinse."

Gently, the boy began pouring the water over her tilted back head, refilling the cup and pouring again until all suds were gone. From another plastic bottle, he used conditioner to tame the wet knots and tangles.

"I always did like doing this," he said. "It so relaxing."

"I know. It nearly puts me to sleep when you do it." She sighed in contentment. "It's times like this that I really miss Ron."

Potter snorted. "He'd be spraying us right about now."

"Getting your underpants wet!" Hermione giggled.

"Yeah, he never could understand why I didn't feel comfortable going around half-dressed even if it was just us." He looked down at his underpants. "They're still a bit wet anyway."

"What do you expect, you berk? It's a bath!"

They laughed and continued to chatter. Severus backed away from the doorway, not wanting to disturb them. Perhaps it was wrong of him to be so selfish and to try to monopolize her time. He merely wanted sex from her. It seemed that the boy could give her much more than he ever could. There would be no gentle baths and long talks of past happenings if she stayed with him upon occasion. There would only be sex and some companionship... Well, maybe a little talking, and possibly a bath wouldn't hurt.

He frowned. This amour was quite unintentional. Perhaps happening upon them at such a peaceful moment was meant to be, for if he hadn't seen how comfortable they looked with each other, how well-suited they seemed, he'd have done all he could to break that apart... while they stayed at the castle with him anyway. After that, it wouldn't matter what they did, as they'd be out of his sight and out of his mind.

Severus turned around and tripped over a pair of trainers. "Shite!" he blurted as he failed to balance himself and hit the cold floor.

"Who's there?" Hermione called from the bathroom.

"Snape?" Potter's voice joined with hers. "I'll go see."

As quickly as he could, Severus scrambled up and made his way to the door just as the bathroom door creaked open behind him. He spun around and attempted to look as if he'd just walked in and hadn't seen the pair of them in such a cozy position.

"Er... what do you want?" Potter asked, quickly closing the door behind him to hide Hermione from view.

Snape looked down at his skinny body and mostly wet underpants. "Bad time?" he snapped.

"Yes," Potter said nastily. "What is it?"

Feigning indignation, Severus said, "I thought to be cordial and invite the pair of you for drinks in my sitting room. Draco has come to spend a few nights with us and is looking for company." He turned and went to the tapestry that covered the entrance to the passageway. "If you decide to join us, I shall see you then."

Harry watched as the man disappeared behind the tapestry and frowned. Snape had come in through the doorway, but he'd gone out a secret entrance. He looked at the door behind him where Hermione was splashing around in the large bath. Something seemed odd, and it wasn't the man's flush. No, it was something else, but he couldn't really place it. He shrugged and thought about Draco. He hadn't seen him in weeks. Draco had tried to help Ron. Maybe he should talk Hermione into joining Draco and, unfortunately, Snape for a few drinks. What could go wrong?

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**Southern's Notes:** I hope that nobody minds that I've brought Draco into the mix. That is CocoaChristy's fault. She put that idea in my head months ago, and well, here he is. However, at least the road looks a bit clearer for our "main" couple, eh? If Snape loses his newly found conscience, that is.

**HP and the OotP quote:** The bedroom looked, if anything, even danker and gloomier than it had on first sight. The blank picture on the wall was now breathing very slowly and deeply, as though its invisible occupant was asleep.

Yes, I cheated and used two sentences. The one before my quote was so perfect that I had to filch that one, too. Muahahaha!

## Needing More Than His Duty

Chapter 6 of 8

Snape is not above using trickery to get what he wants. Neither is Draco.

**Disclaimer:** I'm just playing with J.K.R.'s characters for a little while. I'll Scourgify them and Floo them home later.

**I want to say thanks to my brilliant beta, Charmed\_Nay. She's always busy with work, yet she finds time to read through my chapters. Cheers, dear.**

---

Hermione sipped her drink as she listened to Harry and Draco's conversation about Quidditch. She was quite bored with it, as they'd been talking about it most of the night. She glanced towards Snape to find him watching her intently. He wanted her. It was plainly evident. So much so that she wondered how Draco and Harry couldn't see it.

Feeling particularly naughty, she slid lower in her chair, kicked off her shoe, and reached out with her foot, finding his leg. His eyes widened momentarily, but his expression returned to normal.

"I'll bet you like the Bats, eh, Snape?" Harry asked, slurring with intoxication.

Snapping his head to look at Harry, Severus asked, "What's that supposed to mean, Potter?"

"Oh, only that..."

"Er, Harry," Draco interrupted, "didn't you want to go out and show me that move you've learned?"

"Now?" Harry asked incredulously, looking down at his nearly empty glass.

"Why not?" Draco asked with a shrug.

"Yesssss," Severus hissed as Hermione's foot finally made its way to his crotch to rub his hardening bulge. Catching himself, he corrected, "Yes, why not?"

Hermione hid her smirk behind her goblet, continuing to move her foot slowly, enjoying the pleased glint in Severus' eyes. Suddenly, Harry gasped, frightening Hermione into thinking she'd been caught.

"Yes," Draco said, "my grandfather's father saved the memories all these years. My father found the Pensieve in one of our dungeons, and he let me watch it."

"Well, I'm glad we don't use a Snidget any longer. I don't know if I'd feel right about it," Harry said.

Draco nodded. "The poor little Snidget shot up and down the pitch, seeking a means of escape, but the wizards in the crowd forced it back with Repelling Spells." He smirked. "Nothing we can do about it now though. So want to go at it then? Er... on the pitch I mean."

"Well, all right then," Harry said, still unconvinced that it was a good idea. "Coming, Mione?"

"We'll stay here," Severus answered for her.

She straightened up, taking her foot from his lap, and put down her drink. "I think it's a bit dangerous, Harry. You've had a bit much to drink and will likely kill yourself."

"All the more reason for him to go," Severus said in dislike.

"Shove off, Snape, you great bloody water!" He shook his head and snorted with laughter. "I mean to say... you great bloody wanker!"

"Why, you insolent little..."

"Stop!" Draco said, diving to pull Severus back while Hermione put her arms around Harry. "Maybe we could all use a walk. We've been drinking for a couple of hours and could use it to sober up." He slipped his flask into a pocket in his robes.

Hermione saw a knowing look exchange between Severus and Draco. *He's set this up. He wanted Draco here to distract Harry.* She downed the last of her goblet. She should have known that he would do something like that instead of simply admitting to her that he would rather her not allow Harry into her bed. Well, she'd given him the chance earlier that morning, and he'd called her a child...more or less. She could tell that he'd been disappointed though. In fact, she was, too, for she'd completely enjoyed their night together, as he'd made her feel so alive and so wanted. She longed to be with him again. However, he certainly didn't deserve to have it so easily.

Harry's hand fell to her thigh and squeezed, causing her to look at him. "Sorry? Didn't catch that."

He said, "Wannagowalking?"

"I suppose so," she said and immediately heard a growl from across the table. Apparently, she was supposed to decline and allow Severus to pounce on her the moment the boys left. She looked to him sweetly then, adding, "If Professor Snape comes with us. He's likely in need of some fresh air as well."

"Deal," Draco said, giving Severus a glare.

"Very well," he replied silkily.

Hermione removed Harry's hand from her leg and stood, swaying slightly. "I don't know if any of us will get very far."

To her surprise, Draco came around to help Harry up by extending a hand, which Harry immediately accepted. They'd been on friendly terms before, but it seemed they were getting on exceptionally well. Her eyes narrowed. Draco had better not be trying to seduce Harry! She glanced at Severus to find him brushing off his robes, oblivious to any of them. Had he and Draco planned that? She hoped not. Harry didn't need to be hurt or have any other problems. He'd already lost so much. She shook her head. No, Draco didn't like men, only women as far as she knew.

Relieved, she turned to follow them slowly, giving Severus time to catch up and walk at her side. While Harry and Draco whispered and laughed drunkenly, she and Severus moved in silence. Out onto the grounds they went, moving toward the Quidditch pitch. Hermione stumbled and was caught by Severus.

"Are you all right, Miss Granger?" he asked silkily.

"Yes," she whispered.

Hearing them, Harry asked, "All right?"

"I am," she said. "You two go on. My shoe broke. Snape's going to fix it for me."

"We can wait," Harry said, turning towards her and nearly falling. Draco whispered something, however, and Harry said, "Er... all right. We'll be up at the pitch."

As Hermione watched them go, she felt a little guilty. It was terrible of her to lie to Harry, but she couldn't help wanting a little something for herself. She was startled when Severus knelt before her and reached for her shoe.

She placed a hand on his shoulder, causing him to look up. "What is it?" he asked impatiently, grabbing for her shoe.

Easily, she slid down to her knees before him, cupping his face within her hands. "I want to kiss you and thought to buy us a few minutes."

The expression on his face was endearing. "I'd wondered if a few drinks had rendered you incapable of remembering how to repair your own shoe," he said, slanting his head and pressing his mouth against her waiting lips.

His gentleness surprised her. While they'd not been as fervent when they'd made love after they woke, there had still been a great intensity. This was different. It was soft and everything she'd expect from someone else. His probing tongue found hers and gently chased hers for a moment before he pulled back.

"This morning when I said..."

"I know," she interrupted. "It's all right." She kissed him again, and this time, she found the fire he'd shown her on their previous encounters. He pulled her roughly against him, one hand gliding over her body.

"We've time," he said hopefully, tearing his lips away from hers.

"No, not here. Later," she said. "I want to make certain that Harry gets back all right."

"He'll be fine. Draco will see to it to keep him occupi..."

"So I was right!" she exclaimed. "You and Draco have some agreement to keep Harry busy while... God! Does he know about us?"

Severus looked away. "He only knows that I wanted to *try* to seduce you, not that I already had."

"And he's going to try to seduce Harry now? Is that it?"

"Of course not!" Severus said indignantly. "He's only going to see to it that he drinks enough to pass out."

"Well, I could have done that if you'd only told me," she said in annoyance, rising to her feet. "You needn't have gone through all this trouble!"

He stood and gazed at her before quietly saying, "I thought that since he'd changed his mind... I was uncertain if..."

"I thought of telling him the truth," she confessed.

"We agreed to not say anything," Severus reminded her, expression inscrutable.

"I know. I just felt guilty when he'd told me that he changed his mind." She looked away.

"What do you want, Hermione?"

She looked up into his face upon hearing the strain in his voice. What did he want her to say? She supposed honesty would be best. "I thought that I should stay with Harry because he was all I had left of Ron and because I do care for him deeply."

"But?"

"But I don't think either of us will truly be happy in the long run. We are forcing this. I know that. We're trying to do what Ron would have wanted..." Her voice trailed away, but she refused to give in to tears.

"What do you want, Hermione?" he repeated.

"I think I want to just be free...free to do as I please, to heal, and to live for myself for a while." She smiled and took his hand. "And if that means slipping into my old Potions professor's rooms at night for a shag, so be it."

"Old? I'll have you know..." He smiled genuinely. "Very well. My advice to you is to be honest. Perhaps you might find that he feels the same way."

"Come on." She pulled his hand to get him moving. "I think I'll go have a talk with him now."

Hermione smiled, realizing he'd not pulled his hand from hers. She was glad that they'd taken a moment to talk, as it had only confirmed what she'd been thinking. Perhaps staying at the castle was the best thing that could have happened for her and Harry.

Before they'd even gotten to the pitch, they spotted Harry and Draco, lips locked, hands fisting in each other's hair, bodies pressed tightly together.

"Good Lord," Severus said, pointing at the pair, horrified expression on his face as he stepped forward.

Hermione's mouth gaped open, and she quickly pulled Severus behind a bit of shrubbery. "Don't," she said. "Let them."

"Are you all right?" he asked, gazing at her intently.

"If that's the kind of... love Harry needs, maybe we should leave him to it." She snickered for a moment. "I didn't know that Draco fancied men!"

"Nor did I," Severus said, peeking out at the pair again. "What would he want with Potter?" he asked in distaste.

"Ha," Hermione huffed. "Don't you mean to ask what Harry would want with him?"

She took a step away from him when he gazed back at her, his expression dark.

"That little devious bastard conned me out of my last phial of Veritaserum and an aged bottle of whisky!" he grouched. "And all the while he was wanting to come here to play... house with Potter."

Hermione took another step back as his frown slowly changed into a wicked smile. "Severus?"

In the next instant, he grabbed her and lifted her into his arms, moving them further into the thicket of trees and bushes. "We'll have to be a bit quiet," he murmured before casting a Cushioning Charm, "but I have to have you... now." He kissed her deeply and put her on her feet, pulling away his robes and placing them on the ground.

Her first instinct was to decline, but the excitement of it all was very enticing. "What if they go look for us?" she asked, even though her fingers were already nimbly pulling her clothing away from her body.

"From what I last saw, I doubt they will be looking for anything for a while yet," he said, pulling her down to the ground with him, hands finding skin, lips finding lips. Lust and need reached their limits quickly. As he moved between her thighs and pushed himself into her with a single, quick, powerful thrust, he said, "I've been thinking of this all day."

"As have... ah... I, Sev... erus."

She closed her eyes and arched her body to be closer to his. The fresh breeze blew around them in a fruitless attempt to chill their heated bodies. The nocturnal sounds faded away until she could only hear his heavy breathing and grunts mingling with her own as he repeatedly thrust into her and moved with her seeking culmination.

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**Southern's Notes:** This was the worst chapter for me to write. I had to figure out how to get that dang quote from the Quidditch book in there, hence the boring Quidditch conversation. LOL! Grrrr, I say! Ah, well, at least Harry's having a bit of fun, eh? This quote was supposed to be used after book six's quote, but I had to have this happen before my next quote. Hope you don't mind the shuffle. Cheers.

**Quote from QTtA:** "The poor little Snidget shot up and down the pitch seeking a means of escape, but the wizards in the crowd forced it back with Repelling Spells."

## Having More Than His Duty

*Chapter 7 of 8*

Hermione and Harry make decisions that will alter things for not only them, but also for Draco and Severus.

**Disclaimer:** I'm just playing with J.K.R.'s characters for a little while. I'll Scourgify them and Floo them home later.

**I want to say thanks to my brilliant beta, Charmed\_Nay. She's always busy with work, yet she finds time to read through my chapters. Cheers, dear.**

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Hermione slipped into her chambers near dawn and found them empty, bed cold and unused with no fire in the grate or candles lit. Harry had not been there as far as she could tell. That meant that he was either in his quarters or the ones that Severus had prepared for Draco. After she and Severus had made love out near the pitch, they'd searched for the pair, but neither could be found. They weren't in their rooms either. She and Severus decided to make use of his quarters and let them find their own way back, not caring if Harry or Draco realized what they were up to.

After the liquor had left her mind and rest had come upon her tired body, she felt quite different... quite worried. What would Harry say about her new relationship with Severus? Would he be furious that she'd slept with Severus and not him? Would he be disappointed in her for her choice or for her dishonesty? Would he even notice now that he was interested in what Draco had to offer?

How did she feel about it really? She'd never thought of Draco as anyone's significant other before...aside from Pansy of course. Although he had tried to help Ron and had become a friend of sorts, was he good enough for Harry? Would he hurt Harry?

"Poor Harry," she said quietly while undressing and making her way to the bath. Harry had loved Ginny deeply, and she'd been killed, leaving him lost and eventually giving way to his feelings for Ron, who reminded him of Ginny. Since Ron had been in love with Hermione, she became part of the deal. To have Ron, she had to be included, or it would never have happened. She'd never regretted their decision to include Harry in their relationship. It somehow felt right anyway.

How could she have believed that she would be enough for Harry after Ron died? She was not Ginny and couldn't take her place. While she and Harry loved each other, she knew that she was not the right woman for him. She knew in her heart that Harry could probably only be happy...guilt free...in a relationship with someone of the same sex, someone like Draco.

She didn't feel quite as jealous as she likely should be feeling. She supposed that her newfound confidence and feeling of comfort that Severus gave to her helped. If someone of Snape's age, stature, and intelligence would find her appealing, then she must be. She needn't worry about being alone or never finding happiness again. Ron would want her to go on, and she would. Perhaps not right away, but eventually, she would love again. The sleepy smile and kiss Snape had given her when she'd wakened him to tell him that she was leaving came to mind. Maybe she could love him one day if he wanted it.

She remembered the way he woke her during the night.

*"Hermione... wake up," Severus' silky voice whispered into her ear.*

*She moaned and tried to turn away to continue sleeping, but firm hands wouldn't allow it. Warm lips kissed her throat, sucking and nipping at her flesh.*

*"I want you... again," he said, moving his mouth back to her ear. His tongue snaked out to trace the shell of her ear and dip into it slightly, causing chills to pass through her body and goosebumps to rise on her arms and legs.*

*"Severus," she said, fully awake. "Again?"*

*His impish grin was her only answer as his hands slid down to fondle with her breasts for a moment before venturing down to her center. She stilled his hands with her own.*

*"Let there be no rush this time," she said quietly. He acquiesced by allowing her to slide out from under him and guide him into a sitting position with his back against the headboard.*

*Straddling him, she leaned forward to kiss his lips, bracing herself by placing one hand on either side of his head against the headboard. The kiss was unrushed and soft.*

*"I believe, Severus, that you have the softest touch of any man that I've ever been with." She smiled as his hands ran up and down her spine, keeping her close against him. "I confess, sadly, that I'd always thought you to be of a more rougher nature. How did you get to be so gentle and graceful?" she asked, cutting off his response with her lips.*

*After long minutes of kissing and touching, she said, "Bugger taking it slow."*

*"Bugger?" he asked in amusement.*

*"Er... well, I suppose... but I meant..." Her eyes widened as he shifted his erection beneath her and slid into her wetness.*

*"Next time," he said, intent on the job at hand, thrusting upward.*

*Hermione moved up and slid down, gyrating her hips to grind her pelvis against his, bottoming out as she did so.*

*"God..." she said in a moan.*

*"I am," he replied arrogantly.*

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Harry opened his eyes warily, remembering the last thing he'd done before falling asleep. Though his vision was blurred, the light from the dying fire enabled him to see that the hair tickling his nose was platinum blond and definitely not Hermione's. What was she thinking? Had she seen them and fled with only Snape to comfort her?

He nearly groaned. Snape. He probably knew and had perhaps witnessed the heated snogging session he and Draco had before finding a more ideal location, forgetting about everyone and everything.

Lifting a hand, he moved it slowly up Draco's bare back and grasped the hair at the nape of his neck before placing a frustrated kiss on the back of his head. In the next instant, he felt the kiss being reciprocated, though Draco's lips grazed Harry's bare chest.

"All right, Harry?" Draco asked.

Rubbing lazy circles against Draco's scalp with his fingers, he replied, "I'm all right. You?"

"Yes."

They remained silent for a long time, not moving any more than that. Finally, Harry spoke. "I'll need to explain to Hermione."

Draco sat up then and eyed Harry. "What do you think she'll say?" He got up and moved to the table in the corner to pour himself a glass of water, seemingly unshy about his lack of clothing.

"She's not thick. She probably figured it out... or saw us." He hoped not. It wasn't that he was embarrassed, but if she saw him and Draco, she'd likely been hurt. She'd been hurt enough, and he didn't want to add to it. However, she deserved the truth.

"Or," Draco began, bringing a full glass of water to Harry, "she's in Snape's bed, right where ~~he~~ wanted her to be anyway."

Harry took the glass, sitting up sharply. "What do you mean?"

"Er... Well, he seemed fascinated with her."

"I doubt that."

"She seemed to like it."

"Hermione's not that way!" Harry defended.

"Look, Harry, there's nothing wrong with it if they did end up shagging last night." He smirked. "We did. I have no regrets."

"Yeah, well, neither do I," Harry agreed. "Not really." He took a long drink of the water. "If you hadn't slipped me that damn Veritaserum, I might not have admitted to finding you attractive and to wanting a night with you."

"Ah, but, Potter, you want more than a night with me," Draco said confidently, pulling a dressing gown on.

Harry grinned, remembering that Draco had drunk some of the Veritaserum laced liquor. "So do you."

Draco nodded. "Let me just get the paper." He slipped from the room to venture into the adjoining sitting room.

Harry got up to find his clothes. He needed to get to Hermione, needed to explain, needed to make certain that she was all right. If she wanted him to never see Draco again, he would do that for her, but he privately hoped that she wouldn't request that. He privately hoped that... "No, don't think it," he mumbled.

"Think what?" Draco asked.

Reddening, Harry said, "Just thinking."

"Er, Potter," Draco said, looking down at the morning edition of the *Daily Prophet*.

He didn't like the look on Draco's face.

"It says that Lupin has been injured. There was a scuffle last night at the Fortescue's place, and Death Eaters wer..."

"...the ice-cream place in Diagon Alley?" Harry interrupted, with an unpleasant, hollow sensation in the pit of his stomach.

Draco nodded. "They've got the last of the Death Eaters that they were searching for, but the place is a wreck. Looks like Lupin is at St. Mungo's."

"Thanks," Harry said, finding his trainers. "I need to tell Hermione and see if Snape knows. We'll have to go to see about Lupin."

"Should I be here waiting for you to return?" Draco asked, eyes shifting away from Harry's.

Harry knew what he meant. He wanted to make certain that there was something between them. Thinking of Hermione briefly, he said, "If you'd like... here or maybe that flat you have outside of London. If the last of the Death Eaters have been taken to Azkaban, I won't have to hide out here, will I?"

Shaking his head, Draco said, "I wouldn't think so." He then smirked proudly. "My father's information brought about the arrest, you know." When Harry said nothing, he added, "I know many of you don't think he changed sides for the right reasons, but he's not above helping."

"Last night was..." Harry was uncertain how to say what he meant.

"I agree," Draco said in understanding. "And I'll owl you later to let you know where I am if I am not here."

Making his way to Hermione's quarters, the feeling of foreboding grew uneasily in his stomach. What if she was furious? What if she didn't understand? What if she wanted him to never see Draco again?

Guilt reached out and grabbed him by the balls as he found her sleeping peacefully, curled up in her bed. Had she waited up for him all night, worrying or crying over his not coming in? Knowing that he'd been with Draco? He sat down next to her, but he didn't touch her or face her. He simply leaned forward, placing his head in his hands. What could he do? What could he say?

A soft hand slid up his back and grasped his shoulder. "What's wrong, Harry?" she asked.

"I didn't mean to wake you," he choked out emotionally.

"It's all right. I've just come to bed."

He turned to look at her, hating himself. "You've... you've been up all night?"

"Most of it," she replied.

"I can explain," he blurted. "We had a lot to drink, and then there was the Veritaserum. And when..."

She placed a finger upon his lips. "We saw you, Snape and I." She sat up. "And it's all right."

He closed his eyes in embarrassment. "We were on our way to the pitch. I took a drink from his flask and realized after it was laced with the serum. He asked me questions, and we ended up..."

"Snogging and shagging," she finished for him.

"Yes," he said in a whisper. "I didn't mean to hurt you. I swear."

"Oddly enough, I'm relieved," she said honestly. "If you know what I mean. I love you, but I think that we should each go our own way in the relationship department. I can't give you what you need, and I'll never be Ginny."

He gulped, relief and sadness washing over him. "And it's not the same without Ron."

She shook her head. "It's not, but he would want us to go on, Harry."

"But about Draco... do you think badly of me? I mean, times have changed. So what if he was in Slytherin or was an arse. It's now that matters, right?" he asked, hoping she would approve.

"I agree, and I hope you can use that mindset to understand that I am attracted to Professor Snape."

He was quiet for a moment. Draco had seen their attraction, but he'd been blind to it. He thought back to the happenings over the past couple of days: Snape acting oddly around them and eyeing Hermione with... longing. How could he not have realized it sooner?

"Hermione, I don't like Snape." He saw her smile falter. "But," he added, "I think you can make your own decisions. If he is what you need, I won't try to sway you."

She nodded and hugged him. "I love you, Harry."

"I love you." He held her tightly. "I've some news about Lupin and the Death Eaters that Dumbledore was worried about."

Southern's Notes: There is only one chapter left, and it will be uploaded in two days. Thanks for reading along. This was a fun little story to write. The chapter quotes guide you in directions that surprise you! Cheers.

Quote from HP and the HBP: "the ice-cream place in Diagon Alley?" Harry interrupted, with an unpleasant, hollow sensation in the pit of his stomach.

What Duty?

Severus and Draco await Hermione and Harry, wondering what will happen next.

Disclaimer: I'm just playing with J.K.R.'s characters for a little while. I'll Scourgify them and Floo them home later.

I want to say thanks to my brilliant beta, Charmed_Nay. She's always busy with work, yet she finds time to read through my chapters. Cheers, dear.

Severus smirked at Draco's pacing. The boy had had lunch and had been on edge since. He'd yet to let him know that he and Hermione had happened upon his little outing with Potter, as he wanted to see if the boy would mention it first.

"I wonder where he... er... they are. Surely checking on the ruddy werewolf shouldn't take this long!" Draco said impatiently, throwing his hands up in frustration.

"Don't worry. I'm sure your little girlfriend will be along soon," Severus said nastily, enjoying the narrowing of the boy's eyes and his indignant expression.

"Potter is not my girlfriend!" Draco said firmly, though his pale cheeks colored. "Besides, isn't Granger *your* little girlfriend?"

"She's not my..." His words trailed away. What was she? He hated to simply think of her as a friendly shag, but she most certainly was not his girlfriend. She belonged to Potter in that sense and would never be his so long as Potter wanted her. His gaze darkened. Why did everything have to go that damn brat's way? Why should he get everything all the time?

"Harry and I certainly never saw you again after you fixed her shoe. Fix something else, did you?" Draco's boorish grin widened when Severus slammed down his tumbler.

"You could say that," Severus said, deciding to toy with him. "Had you done what you claimed...keeping Potter in his cups so that I could seduce her...she would have been in my bed last night." He feigned anger. "As it was, I had to console her and watch her cry for hours on end."

Draco paled. "W-why?"

"After I fixed her shoe, you could never guess what we happened upon?" Severus sneered and nodded when the boy's eyes widened. "That's right. You and Potter going at it in the open like a couple of animals. Why, it was all I could do to keep her from hexing you."

"Shite. She's probably told him to never... I knew this would happen," Draco said, jumping up to run his hands through his hair. "That's why they've not come back. He's probably waiting and hoping I'll clear out." He strode towards the door. "I'll just owl him later like I told him."

Severus could see the disappointment on his face, but he wanted to see him suffer, as he'd been conned out of his last phial of Veritaserum by the little twit. "Come back here, boy," he demanded. "Are you afraid of a woman? Come here and hold your ground. Potter is an adult, and so are you."

"You just want us to all have a row so that you can be there to comfort her," Draco accused. "That's right. Think I can't figure you out, eh?"

"Perhaps if you'll make an exchange with me, I can help things along," Severus said thoughtfully. "But you've nothing that I want."

"What do you mean help things along?" Curiosity got the better of the boy, and he sat across from Severus.

"Oh, you know," he began, "I could talk to her and give her advice about how Potter and she should part for a while and mull things over. That sort of thing."

"Well, do it."

"Certainly not," he retorted. "You've nothing I want."

Draco frowned. "Hang on! I still have most of the bottle of liquor you gave me, and I've only used a few drops from the phial of Veritaserum." He blushed again. "I wanted to see... I needed to know if he felt..." He sighed and shook his head. "I can give you what's left if you'll put in a word."

"Very well," Severus said. "Go along and retrieve them. Place them on my desk." He stood. "I think I'll have a walk out to the lake."

"I'll leave them for you, and then I plan on leaving. Talk to her, and I'll owl Potter later."

Severus watched him go and felt like patting himself on the back. Nobody cheated him and got away with it. The brat would be fretting about his situation all day long, and he'd given up that which he'd taken in the first place.

As he walked, he thought of what Draco had said. The boy had been worried that Hermione would force Potter to never see him again. Severus knew that wouldn't be the case. She'd seemed relieved if anything. So where did that leave him? Would she carry on with him now that she no longer had to stay at the castle? Would she and Potter see things differently in the light of day and decide to continue their farce of a relationship? How would he feel if she never wanted to be with him again?

They'd only been together a handful of times, and yet he felt as if he'd been with her longer than that. He never felt the need to put on an air with her...not when in private. She didn't seem to mind his snide remarks. He snorted. "What snide remarks?" he asked aloud. He'd been anything but snide while alone with her. The fact was that he enjoyed her company, especially the sex, and he would miss her when she ended things.

Nearly thirty minutes later found Severus a great distance from Hogwarts, sitting atop a small hill overlooking the lake and castle. When a twig cracked from behind him, he turned to see Hermione striding towards him. He scooted over on the large rock he was sitting on to give her room.

"Well?" he asked after a few minutes of silence.

"Lupin is fine. They've discharged him, and we brought him to Grimmauld Place. He's going to stay there with Harry for a while," she said quietly. "And how was your day?"

"Long," he answered honestly. Unable to help himself, he asked, "And Potter?" She giggled, making his heart lighten with relief.

"He's off with Draco right now." She slid her hand over Severus' and curled her fingers under to hold his. "It seemed that Draco was frightened that I'd forced Harry to stay away from him."

"Is that... not the case?" he asked, turning his face to look at her intently, wanting to read the answer in her bright, brown eyes.

"Harry and I, we've decided that we are better off as friends." Her eyes became teary, but she blinked the tears back. "Life moves on."

Severus lifted their joined hands and kissed the back of hers softly. "I was thinking," he said, changing the subject. "If we are no longer expected to remain at the castle for ours and its protection now that the last of the Dark Lord's followers have been rounded up, we should leave here."

"Together you mean?"

He swallowed thickly. "I ran into Charlie Weasley after you left this morning...he came to speak with Hagrid...and we had a talk about some of the dragons he's watching

over. Right now, he has a Common Welsh Green that is ill. One of her eggs is quite smaller than the others and will take a bit longer to hatch. It could be anytime in the next two weeks so long as it's kept heated properly. The others should be hatching today."

"And?" she prodded.

"And I told him that I might be interested, as I'd like to collect the remnants of the inside once it hatches and keep the shell, sending the dragon back to him and using the ingredients for a potion I'm working on."

"I didn't know people used that in potions," she said with a smile.

"Well, I intend to, as it helps to protect the young dragons from extreme heat, and I suppose I'd like to show you my research on that if you're interested. I think developing a product wouldn't be amiss." There he'd offered. Now, it was up to her. If she accepted his invitation, they would simply go from there.

"When do we go get the little thing?" she asked, squeezing his hand.

"So you will?" He had hoped she'd accept, but it was still a surprise that she did. When she nodded, he replied, "We can go as soon as we're packed." He smirked. "And it's not a little thing by any means, though it's smaller than the others." He pulled his hand from hers so that he could gesture the size. "The Welsh Green's eggs are an earthy brown, flecked with green. Oh, and they smell horrible."

She scrunched her nose. "I suppose we don't have to keep a watch on it for all hours of the day." She gave him an appraising look. "I think I can help you occupy your time."

He lowered his face to capture her lips with his, showing her with his mouth what he could not voice. He was quite pleased that she wanted to spend just a little more time with him.

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"I can't believe this is really happening," Harry said, straightening Draco's tie. "A binding."

Draco frowned, stilling Harry's hands. "You don't want to go through with this?" He stepped back, tugging at his tie and making it crooked again.

"Fine. Leave the thing like that. I don't care," Harry said with a sigh, adding, "and no, Draco, I'm not backing out."

"Good because the harp has started playing. That's my cue to walk out and smile at the guests while I make my way to the front where I'll be awaiting the bride." Draco smiled, looked around to be certain that nobody was looking, and kissed Harry chastely. "See you out there." He hurried off.

Harry stood alone for a moment. The thought of all those people, invited and uninvited alike, waiting to take pictures and gossip made him feel queasy. Hermione entered in a rush.

"Sorry, I'm late!" she said. "You know how Mrs. Weasley is! She wanted me to pass on all sorts of advice to you, knowing how nervous you are about this. All right?"

He grinned. "I'm a little nervous."

She smiled and touched his cheek. "It will be fine." The current tune stopped playing, and another started to play moments later. "Go on," she urged. "Don't even look at the crowd."

Harry made his way to the door, took a deep breath, and stepped out. He began walking down the aisle, gaze never leaving Draco's as he approached him. He could hear whispers, but he couldn't truly make out anything said. Once he made his way to the front, he nodded to the Ministry representative and turned to give Draco and Snape a tight smile.

Stepping aside, he turned around to watch Hermione being led down the aisle by her father. He'd never seen her look more radiant, hair upswept, white robes and dress trailing behind her perfectly. His eyes left her smiling face to find Snape's. He'd never seen the man smile before, but that was certainly what he was doing. Maybe the old bat wasn't so bad after all. For the past two years, Hermione had been telling him how perfectly they'd fit together, and he'd always nodded his head and agreed. However, he'd never truly believed it. Not until this very moment.

When Hermione's father shook Snape's hand and moved away, Harry's eyes met Draco's. Life had moved on, and although he wished some things in the past could have been different, he was right where he wanted to be. Defiantly, he gazed out at the large crowd. Instead of finding sneers or disgust, he found smiling, supportive faces. He'd purposely stayed out of the public eye to avoid any commenting on his relationship with Draco and to avoid the ever-present pests wanting his life story. Perhaps it was time to get a grip and get on with things completely.

"Severus, do you take this woman into your heart and life to care for and to cherish until death do you part?" the man was asking.

"I do," came the resounding response.

A moment later, Hermione's emotional agreement joined it.

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**Southern's Notes:** Sigh. I don't know if I'll do any more of these challenges. The two extra books' quotes had me quite aggravated. It's hard to fit in dragon talk and Quidditch talk when you're trying to do something else. Anyway, hope you've enjoyed it. I tend to be longwinded, so it was hard keeping to the challenge rules and making these chapters only 2000 words each. Yikes. Cheers go to those who have been reading, and thanks for the reviews you've left.

**Quote from FbaWtFT:** "The Welsh Green's eggs are an earthy brown, flecked with green."