

From Tiny Acorns

by savine_snape

From the tiniest hope, propagated by his goddaughter, grows a partnership to last the ages. Written for Elise.

Hope Street

Chapter 1 of 2

From the tiniest hope, propagated by his goddaughter, grows a partnership to last the ages. Written for Elise.

Hope Street

Where Hermione lives, officially named Hawthorn Close, has become better known for the gardens of its cottages; there are no eco-savvy dwellings here but a collection of traditional white-washed homes. Some have elaborate gardens that flower throughout the seasons; some are completely turned over to gravel and stone statues.

When she'd started looking for a home closer to Hogwarts, she'd been drawn to the cottage in the corner. The exterior was run-down and in desperate need of attention. Inside, it was dank and forlorn. The place had lain empty for almost a year; a truth attested to by the fusty smell of the place. Although the house needed a lot done to it, Hermione fell in love. It was just what she needed; a project to set her mind to, something to distract her from the grief that threatened to swamp her. Lavender and Ginny had tried to convince her to live in Edinburgh in a trendy factory-conversion studio flat, but it had no soul. No, the cottage in the corner was just what she needed.

~*~*~*

The mid-summer air is heavy with the aroma of the blooming gardenias and roses that populate the formal front garden of the white-washed cottage that sits nestled in the corner of the Close. In the eleven months that she has lived in the cottage it has taken on a new lease of life. No longer is it the sorry excuse for a home it was before she moved in. It is now a haven to all who visit.

He takes a moment to calm his warring emotions. There are a thousand different ways he'd prefer to spend his evening; a Ministry-funded social event is not one of them. He is doing this for *her* not *them*. He would walk over hot coals for her; she has surpassed his first love.

She greets him with a warm smile that stills his heart momentarily.

"My knight," she whispers as he raises her hand to his lips.

"For you, I will weather the storm, fair maiden."

Her stifled giggle warms him.

"Thank you, Severus, for agreeing to do this."

"I wouldn't do this for anyone else."

"I know." She takes his proffered arm. "Come on, we mustn't be late. Rose has gone ahead with Scorpius; Hugo has gone with James and Albus."

With a crack of magic they are gone from Hogsmeade, reappearing moments later in London outside the Ministry of Magic.

~*~*~*

Hermione takes a tight hold on Severus' elbow as they head in to the Ministry; the Atrium is awash with witches and wizards all hustling in the same direction. Even now she loathes the celebrity that comes with the title War Heroine. She smiles at Severus as he whispers words of support to her, cooing and calming her like she used to do with her children; he knows how she hates these occasions.

"You are, as always, the belle of the ball, Hermione."

"Flatterer," she replies. "You'll save me from Molly, won't you?"

"If it becomes apparent that Molly is close to smothering you, I will come save you."

Harry is the first to greet them, giving Hermione a kiss on the cheek before shaking Severus' hand a little too enthusiastically for the older man's taste. They have arrived at a mutually satisfying tolerance of one another; neither would declare that they are friends, but they are no longer suspicious of the other's motives.

"I best go mingle," Hermione murmurs as she withdraws her arm.

"I shall go find Kingsley then." He leans towards her before whispering, "if I see you in peril I will bring you a glass of wine before whisking you away to safety."

~*~*~*

He heads for the bar; a stiff drink is called for. As he takes a sip of amber liquor an unmistakeable voice whispers in his ear.

"You've turned into quite a knight, Severus."

His dark eyes fix the silver-blue ones of Lucius Malfoy.

"You could see it that way, if you chose, or you could see it as one war hero supporting another. Unlike you, old man, neither of us particular enjoys these functions; we tolerate them."

"Touché, there's no need to be so touchy. I was merely passing comment. The girl has you bewitched."

"I am not bewitched, Lucius."

"Says you; I've seen that look on your face before. She is a far better match than the Evans girl ever was."

This is the reason Severus loathes Ministry functions. Lucius is diluted by the other governors when meetings are held at the school; here there is nowhere to hide and no one to come rescue him or so he believes.

"Severus!" He is almost deafened by his goddaughter. "Mum said you were coming, but I thought you might find something to detain you at Hogwarts."

"As if I would leave your mother stranded. I am a better man than that, Miss Weasley. Lucius, delightful as it is to converse with you, I have some business to attend to elsewhere."

"Of course," Lucius replies, nodding to Rose before leaving.

"I trust you are well, Rose, and ready to start the new term?"

Rose rolls her eyes in mock dismay. "I've been ready for weeks. It's Hugo who's driving mum spare. Anyone would think he had a sieve for a brain the amount of times we've been back to Diagon Alley to get equipment and books for him."

Severus' huff makes Rose grin broadly.

"Alas, I am a token Ravenclaw in a house that has been dominated by Gryffindors."

It's true of course, Rose is the token Ravenclaw. She is nothing like her father and younger brother, Hugo. She reminds Severus of her mother. Her head is always in a book, even when she is moving from class to class, although she doesn't quote them *ad nauseam* like her mother was wont to. Neither does her arm flail wildly to gain the attention of her professors.

"I do hope you don't speak ill of your mother's house within her earshot, Rose. Speaking of your mother, I think that somewhat withered look is our cue to go save her from your Grandmother. Remind me, does your mother prefer red or white wine?"

"You know full well that Mum prefers red," Rose replies, playfully jabbing Severus' chest.

Taking a glass from a passing waiter Severus shepherds Rose across the room towards her mum and grandma.

~*~*~*

Hermione is relieved when she sees Severus heading towards her with Rose and a glass of wine. As much as Hermione loves Molly she is growing tired of the matriarchs concern for her. She is coping well on her own, the stipend from the Ministry is more than enough for her to live on, she has good friends to keep her company and Severus has become her rock. She does not need another man, yet.

~*~*~*

The smile that Hermione greets them with causes Severus' heart to skip a beat momentarily.

"I thought you might need a drink," Severus says as he hands the glass to Hermione. "Molly, it's good to see you."

"It's good to see you away from the castle, Severus. You spend far too much time locked away there, you shouldn't hide away."

Severus doesn't respond; he's captivated by Hermione. She's wearing well; there are a few grey hairs beginning to appear and there are subtle laughter lines around her eyes. Post war life has been, for the most part, kind to Hermione. Like everyone else, he had feared that Hermione might crumble after Ronald's death, but she has called upon the much fabled Gryffindor bravery and has set herself new challenges to fill the void left by her husband's untimely demise. She quit the Ministry she couldn't bear to stay there any longer, and took on the challenge of turning a poor, ramshackle cottage into a haven for her children and friends.

Like everyone else, he is amazed by her fortitude. He would willingly whisk her away from everything that reminds her of Ronald but that wouldn't be fair; her children are the centre of her world. He should have refused Hermione's request to be Rose's godfather; after all, he just happened to be in the right place at the right time, that's what he tells himself, fate has nothing to do with it. Someone would have come to Hermione's aid. Over the years, there have been numerous occasions when he could have cheerfully strangled Weasley for his stupidity. What man allows his wife to venture out without making sure she has her wand? Whilst Hermione is a force to reckon with, she was still no match for a disgruntled Death Eater with only revenge on his mind.

"Severus, are you all right? You were miles away."

"I'm fine, Hermione. Although, I must confess I am a little distracted tonight."

He takes a couple of glasses from another passing waiter, handing one to Molly.

Raising his glass he murmurs, "To my goddaughter."

"To Rose," Hermione replies before taking a sip from her own glass.

Severus watches as she swallows, his mind racing with thoughts he dare not entertain.

"Thank you," Rose murmurs.

"I know it's not your birthday yet, Rose, but I will not be able to make your party."

He huffs as Rose wraps her arms around him. She is almost as tall as her mum now.

"Kindly unhand me, Rose, so I may give you your present."

Rose steps back, smiling and watching as Severus reaches into the pocket of his robes. He withdraws a black velvet box within which lies one of the few remaining Prince family heirlooms his mother bequeathed to him.

"Severus," Hermione whispers when Rose shows her the delicate, antique necklace.

"It's hardly something I would find occasion to wear," Severus replies in a matter-of-fact tone. "It has a wealth of protective charms that will serve Rose well should she choose to pursue her dream to become a Potions mistress."

"Thank you, Severus. It's beautiful; I will take great care of it." Rose hugs him once more, and he momentarily places a hand on her back, giving her an awkward hug before pulling away.

"Enough foolish sentimentality, Rose," Severus states abruptly. "We have detained you long enough, I'm sure your date is wondering where you are."

Rose blushes at the mention of Scorpius. "May I speak with you before you go?"

"You know I am always available, Rose."

"Thank you," she whispers before reaching up to give him a final kiss.

"That was extremely generous, Severus," Hermione whispers as she hooks her arm through his.

"Now you're talking twaddle, Hermione. The girl has an aptitude for potions; she has expressed an interest in taking her studies in our shared field further. Before she passed, Mother expressed her long-held desire that I should hand the necklace on to my own daughter when the time was right. Rose is the closest I have come to having a daughter; it seemed like the most prudent option to hand down the necklace to her."

"Shall we get another drink?" Hermione asks, drawing Severus' attention to the fact that he has drained the last of the wine from his glass.

"I rather think I shouldn't. I have a meeting with the board of Governors tomorrow and I have learnt that it is best to have my wits about me when meeting with them." Severus holds her gaze for a moment. "Give Rose my love. I'm sure Harry will see you get home safely."

"Mum?" Rose is suddenly stood beside Hermione again. "Oh, sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt. You're not going yet are you, Severus?"

"I must, I am afraid, Rose."

"I'll walk with you for a bit. You don't mind if I ask your opinion on something?"

"Of course not, Rose. Hermione, it has been a pleasure, I will owl you soon. Molly, it's good to see you looking so well. Please give Arthur my regards."

Hermione's smile is beautiful; it crinkles her button nose, highlighting her laughter lines. Severus falls for her just a teeny bit more in that moment despite his resignation that she will never be his. Again, he offers his arm to Rose before they head towards the Atrium.

"Uncle Severus," Rose asks as she grips his arm tightly.

Severus is immediately on guard; Rose very rarely blesses him with his honorary title.

"Yes?"

Rose rises on tiptoes and whispers in his ear, "Please don't give up on Mum."

"What are you " Words fail him momentarily.

Rose looks at him as if he's suddenly become a dunderhead, rolling her eyes and shaking her head as she lets out a sigh.

"Please, don't give up on Mum, she needs a little more time," she says quietly. "Dad's barely been gone a year. She's respecting Dad's memory; she doesn't want to upset Grandma Molly."

"I remember the stories Mum and Dad told us about you when Hugo and I were younger, about your bravery and patience. Of course, Dad always called you a greasy git, but Mum... Mum would tell your story with admiration and respect. I think... if the truth be told, that she loved you, just a little bit, even when Dad was still alive."

Severus huffs at Rose's declaration. There has never been an inkling of anything except friendship from Hermione; Severus has found peace with the fact that he has, yet again, fallen for the 'wrong' woman.

"Don't give up, no matter what you may think. Mum cares deeply for you," Rose whispers, squeezing his arm before turning and heading back to the Ballroom.

* * *

First things first - I do not own the Potterverse, I just play in JKR's sandpit for fun not profit.

My eternal thanks are, more than ever, due to my triad of Alpha-Beta-Omega readers of awesomeness. Without these awesome ladies, who give their time freely, I would flounder and flail. Thank you!

I will post the original prompt after the last chapter.

The Art Of Waiting

Chapter 2 of 2

The waiting game is over; it's time to speak the truth. Written for Elise.

Severus waits, taking Rose's advice to heart...he certainly wouldn't wish to upset Molly by rushing Hermione into anything deeper than friendship. He and Hermione converse freely both via owls and face to face every other Thursday. Whilst they discuss many things, neither Rose nor Hugo is far from her thoughts, and Severus willingly fills her in on her daughter's brilliance and her son's misdeeds. Neither one of them alludes to how they feel about the other.

~*~*~*

Severus stares at his reflection.

"Preposterous," he growls, tugging at his shirt. Frills are fine on some men; Lucius would look dandy in the get-up. He is much more comfortable in his black teaching robes; it is utterly absurd that he should be held to the bet.

He returns to observing his reflection. With a sigh, he reluctantly admits that the dark green of the kilt is rather pleasing. That does not mute the fact that he'd kill Minerva, Lucius and Arthur if it was not for all the paperwork that comes with murder.

It might have been Minerva's fault that he went away with Arthur and Lucius in the first place, but it was his own stupidity that he agreed to the wager Lucius suggested when Arthur dragged them off to go fishing. The fact that he lost the wager still grated. How Lucius, a novice by all accounts, managed to land twice as many fish as either Arthur or himself baffled him. Magic. He must have cheated and used magic.

He doesn't have time to dally; the Welcoming feast cannot be postponed.

~*~*~*

Rose Weasley scuttles into the Great Hall just before Professor McGonagall arrives with the raft of new first years. She glanced around the Ravenclaw table spotting a space between Lorcan and Lysander Scamander.

"Blooming Nora, Rose, you nearly missed the start of the ceremony," Lorcan hisses as Rose settles between the twins.

The Great Hall is alive with the buzz of incessant chattering as the returning students and staff members patiently wait for the start of the Sorting. Severus sits at the centre of the long staff table in the ornate oak chair that has dominated the head table for centuries. Tonight, the students are seated according to their house; from tomorrow, they would be allowed to mingle.

He closes his eyes and rests his forehead against his steepled fingers...the low rumble of an impending migraine disquieted him more than the owl message that Hermione sent earlier. His meditation was interrupted by the loud groan of the heavy oak doors as they opened to admit the newest additions to the schools ranks.

All the chattering ceases as Professor McGonagall steps forward. With a flourish, she places a simple, four-legged stool before the teachers table before setting down the battered, pointed wizard's hat. The hushed silence seemed to stretch endlessly before the hat started to twitch. A small splutter...and then the hat began to sing.

..."For I'm a Thinking Cap!"

As the cap reaches its crescendo, the hall burst into a loud round of fierce applause. It nods to each of the four tables before once more becoming a sedentary wizard's hat. Professor McGonagall steps forward and proceeds to call the names of each of the new students who, one by one, step forward to sit on the stool.

When the last student is final sorted into her house, Severus rises from his chair.

"Welcome, one and all, to a new year at Hogwarts!"

Lysander nudged Roses elbow. "Merlin's baggy socks, what's Snape got on?"

"It's Headmaster Snape, Lysander," Rose hisses. "And, he's wearing a traditional kilt. Honestly, it's not like we haven't seen the professors wearing kilts before."

Lysander rolls his eyes; Rose is forever correcting them about Snape's title.

"Yes, but it's the Headmaster...", Lorcan whined, a glint in his eyes lessening the effect somewhat.

"Shush, Lorcan, the feast has begun."

Severus watches Rose closely as she begins to load her plate with food. It will be prudent to keep an eye on the Scamander twins he decides, the last thing Rose needs is those two distracting her.

Severus is relieved when the feast finishes; he doesn't have time to change but that's the least of his worries. His mind is racing trying to anticipate what Hermione is so desperate to discuss.

~*~*~*

The cottage is the same as it has always been, or at least how he has always seen it...warm, welcoming and relaxed. He opens the small white gate, and with three long strides he is standing before the Gryffindor-red front door. Whilst he is fighting to control his fears, and before he can summon the courage to knock, the door opens, and Hermione stands before him.

"Nimue, Severus, I don't think I've ever seen you in a kilt before. You look amazing. It suits you," Hermione says fussing with her dress as she bids him to enter. "I feel somewhat under-dressed compared to you."

To Severus she looks incredible...but then again, she looks stunning dressed in jeans and a Molly Weasley-knitted abomination.

"Silly woman," Severus purrs before kissing her check. "You look lovely."

"May I take your jacket?"

He stiffens as Hermione places her hand on his arm, her warmth penetrates through the layers of his jacket and shirt. His mind races as his heart races vociferously; how would those soft, gentle hands feel against his skin?

"You wished to talk, Hermione."

"I did... I do. We need to talk, Severus."

This is it, the inevitable, gentle let down before she rejects him. Rose was wrong to have instilled hope in him all those weeks ago. Severus knows it's best to face disappointment head on; he will not be seen as a coward by her. He can always drown his sorrow once he returns to the privacy of his quarters at Hogwarts.

As he follows Hermione down the corridor to the sitting room, he notices all the details that make the cottage a home. The pictures of family birthdays and holidays that hang on the walls, the worn carpet with a stain Hugo made whilst 'experimenting' like his Uncle George and has yet to fully explain. He has been welcomed into the heart of this family for almost twenty years.

When they eventually reach the sitting room, he waits for Hermione to sit down before joining her on the settee they have spent many a pleasant evening in the last year. As he collects his thoughts, he chides himself for rushing to a conclusion; perhaps he is making a mountain out of a molehill. Hermione has often sought his advice; they have spent many a pleasant hour discussing the latest theories and techniques that have been published in *Ares Analytica*, deriding the ridiculous and pondering the potential of new theories.

Biting the bullet, wanting to get the rejection over and done with, Severus is the first to speak. "You wished to talk."

Hermione appears to dig deep, pulling all her lauded Gryffindor courage together.

"I'm hopeless in situations like this," she begins. "I wish I was more like Harry, more impulsive."

"I, for one, am rather thankful that you are more considered in your approach to things, Hermione. If you'd been as foolhardy as your friends, Potter may not have triumphed over the Dark Lord."

"As true as that statement is, things would be easier sometimes if I leapt with blind faith rather than pondering potential variables."

"Perhaps now would be an opportunity to seize the Hippogriff by its mane," Severus replies sharply, wincing at the severity of his tone.

"Maybe...", Hermione whispers.

Time ceases to matter as Hermione inches closer; he feels paralysed as her hands move to cup his face, and his eyes close voluntarily as her lips gently brush against his. His normally quick mind fails him as all the anxiety and worry seep from him. This can't be real. He refuses to open his eyes...he doesn't want this dream to end. Before he can deepen the kiss, Hermione pulls away.

"Nimue's knockers," Hermione curses shaking her head. She looks as though she's about to bolt out of the room.

His quick mind notes the fear in her eyes; before she can bolt, he grabs her wrists.

"Hermione?"

"I... I'm sorry, I shouldn't have. Oh, gods. I'm so sorry, I shouldn't..."

She pulls away from Severus, and half-runs to the fireplace on the opposite side of the room, resting against the mantel for support.

"You've always been there for me... for us all," she begins. "I've grown to care deeply for you, and a small piece of my heart hopes that you have grown to care for me. I've been married; had my children...whom I love dearly; I've lost my husband at a tender age.

"You are my rock, you've taken Rose under your wing, and you are a dear friend and confidant... I don't want to ruin what we have, and I can understand if you don't want to take me on..."

Before he realises what is happening, he is on his feet walking across the room to stand beside her. One of his hands reaches out to her, entwining their fingers. He stares down at them, momentarily bewildered, struggling to process what is happening.

Her smile is the most beautiful thing he has ever seen. Leaning in, he gently brushes his lips against hers. As the kiss deepens, his tongue slips effortlessly into her mouth, tasting wine and the unadulterated sweetness that is Hermione. She moves to rest against him, her fingers tightening in his hair, as the kiss becomes more heated.

Severus's hands move to cup her perfect arse, pulling her tightly against him. The warmth that radiates from her is far more than he dared hope for when he allowed himself to believe the words Rose uttered to him all those weeks ago.

"Wait," Hermione finally murmurs, breathing heavily, her lips bruised from their kissing. "We're not randy teenagers anymore. If we're going to do this, we do it properly, in a bed."

Severus is lost for words. The idea that Hermione wants to make love overwhelms him. He thinks he may just come then and there.

"Are you certain about this, about us?" he manages to mutter.

Hermione smiles at him, holding her hand out. Severus looks at her, taking in the desire that burns so brightly in her eyes.

"You must be sure," he reiterates hoping desperately that this isn't some silly game, that she isn't going to suddenly come to her senses.

He wonders if she can hear the desperation in his tone, whether she can tell that he would shatter should she decide taking him to her bed is a mistake.

"I am," she whispers before pressing a kiss to his cheek. Taking his hand in hers, she pulls him towards the staircase. They ascend in perfect silence before walking part way down the upstairs corridor.

Severus isn't surprised to find the walls adorned by yet more photographs of Hermione's children; he is surprised, however, that not one of them is just Hermione and Ronald.

There is a fire burning low in the grate as they step across the threshold of her bedroom. He notices that even here there is a distinct lack of any trace of her husband. The room is feminine in detailing with a simple Muggle photograph of her children on either side her dressing table. When he finally looks at Hermione, she is already starting to undress.

"Allow me," Severus whispers into the shell of her ear, gently removing her hands from the zip at the back of her dress.

He still wonders if the cold light of day will bring second thoughts for Hermione, so he's certain he will enjoy every moment of time she agrees to spend with him. Inch by inch, he slowly pulls the zip of her dress down, placing gentle kisses upon each stretch of newly revealed skin. When he reaches the bottom of the zip, he gently pushes

the dress forward taking in the vision before him. Trembling fingers struggle to release the hook and eye that holds her bra in place.

Turning to face him, she smiles as she casts the now redundant bra aside. Standing on tiptoe, she kisses the bridge of his nose as she pulls his shirt from the waist of his kilt.

Smiling, Hermione bats Severus' hands away, taking time to slowly unbutton his shirt, placing kisses upon his chest and stomach as each area is revealed.

"The question remains, have you followed tradition fully?" she asks as she kneels before him.

He is speechless as her warm hands move upwards from his ankle, slipping beneath the fabric of his kilt, before brushing against his proud erection. When she leans forward to mouth his cock through his kilt, the resultant moan resounds through the air.

Helping her to her feet, he half-smiles.

"I will ask you once more, Hermione, before we go too far; are you certain?"

"Yes," she replies.

Severus slips his thumbs beneath the waistband of her delicate knickers and slowly lowers them.

She is perfect. His hands and lips pay silent worship to her body, scars and all. Only a slight softness of her belly gives hint to the children she has carried.

Hermione's fingers are soon working to undo the twin buckles that hold his kilt in place. Once released, she allows the fabric to drop and pool at his feet. His cock is thick, the head peeking out from his foreskin; his balls hang heavy beneath. Kneeling once more before him, she wraps one hand around his length whilst the other cradles his sac delicately. Slowly, she takes him into her mouth.

"Oh, fuck," Severus hisses, his fingers tangling in the mass of curls that crown her head.

Hermione licks around the head of his cock, easing his foreskin back, the salty, musky taste cranking her need for him higher. At least he is able to control his yearning to come...if he were the randy teen she had alluded to earlier, he would be erupting in her mouth by now.

She looks up and sees Severus looking at her through hooded eyes, his chest heaving as he draws each breath of air in deeply. Eyes locked with his, she presses a finger against his perineum, and Severus is helpless to still his bucking hips, forcing his length deeper into her mouth.

"Oh, God, sorry," Severus mumbles as he pulls back.

He's surprised when Hermione relaxes her throat and starts to bob her head, taking his length into her mouth completely before sliding back, her tongue swirling around the head as she squeezes his bollocks with her hand. Minutes elapse, Hermione begins to move faster, sucking harder, Severus rocks his hips gently, fingers still twined within her curls.

"Please...", Severus whimpers.

Hermione gently cups his sac again, feeling his bollocks draw up. Knowing Severus is close to the edge, she sucks him to the root moments before her mouth is full of hot, salty come. Boneless, Severus sits on her bed as Hermione licks his softening prick clean. Carefully, he untwines his fingers.

"Thank you," he murmurs as his thumbs dance across her lips.

Hermione smiles sleepily, taking a moment to catch her breath.

"Come here," Severus whispers, moving into the middle of the bed.

Hermione joins Severus, her arm settles comfortably across Severus's chest, her breath evening out as she dozes against him. Severus pulls her closer, pressing a kiss on top of her head.

"Give me a moment," he murmurs sleepily, stroking her side. "I want to return the favour."

Her gentle snores makes him smile, a full-blown smile that would certainly scare the children in his care. Deciding that it won't spoil anything if he takes a small nap, he closes his eyes and surrenders to slumber.

The fire has died in the grate when they stir from their slumber; neither seems concerned as they explore each other with soft caresses and gentler kisses.

"Sorry. I need to pee," he whispers after breaking the kiss.

"Second door along," she murmurs before burying herself under the covers.

He doesn't take long to complete his ablutions. When he returns, she looks stunning in the half-light of the early morning. Her formally tame hair is now back to being a wild force of nature that cascades across the pillows she rests on. Her lips are parted slightly, and her eyes burn with a heat that surely matches that which once more grows within him.

He rejoins her, kissing her lips as his hand moves to cup an exposed breast. As the kiss deepens, his hand moves down towards the apex of her thighs. His fingers tease her folds, slipping betwixt them, searching for her clit.

"Please...", she whimpers as he grinds his now erect cock against her hip.

The scent of her arousal makes him dizzy with anticipation as he takes in the sight of her, naked and wanting him. She is hot and wet and slick against him as he nestles between her thighs. She arches against him, whimpering with frustration at the limited contact.

In spite of his control, he can't withhold a throaty groan when she touches him. He arches his hips against her hand as she grips him, feeling himself harden further still thanks to her talented fingers.

Taking his cock in his own hand, he positions himself at her core and thrusts forward, burying himself within her; her tightness pulls him deeper. He stills for a moment, catching his breath. When his breathing is once more even, he begins to withdraw from her as she arches against him. He can barely see in the dim light of the early dawn, but it matters not; need, passion and building pleasure are his guide.

He has no idea how long their dance continues; time has no relevance here in this room with the woman who has so completely stolen his heart. The tension builds as his balls begin to tighten, and he knows he can't hold on much longer. His thrusts become erratic as he fights the inevitable; he closes his eyes, dimly aware of the answering moans that shatter the silence of the room, and he moves harder and more forcefully as Hermione starts to pulse around his length. Tension coils in the pit of his belly and at the base of his spine; her nails dig into his shoulders as she comes undone. He drives into her one last time and explodes deep within her, unwilling to suppress his cry of ecstasy as he climaxes so hard he almost blacks out.

His muscles spasm in the aftermath of their union; it takes the last of his strength not to collapse on top of her. As he moves to one side, he buries his face in her curls, desperately trying to regulate his breathing. He has never been as open with anyone before; he feels drained but happy.

Pulling her closer, he kisses her gently before they both succumb to slumber.

~~*~

First things first: I do not own the Potterverse, I just play in JKR's sandpit for fun, not profit.

My eternal thanks are, more than ever, due to my triad of alpha, beta and omega readers of awesomeness. Without these awesome ladies, who give their time freely, I would flounder and flail. Thank you!