

Gardiner and Shipe

by *mt_nestor*

A test of a new Time-Turner not only sends Hermione back into the past but entangles her in the investigation of an unsolved mystery.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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This fic was written for the Summer 2014 SS/HG Promptfest on LiveJournal. It was both humbling and thrilling to be included in this brilliant group of writers, some of whom I've followed for several years now.

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Everything in the Harry Potter universe belongs to J.K. Rowling.

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There was a certain satisfaction in leading a double life, and Unspeakable Hermione Granger's life suited her perfectly. She was close to her parents, had a decent social life amongst her friends from Hogwarts and University, an ex-fiancé with whom she remained good friends, along with a happy inclusion in his large extended family. She also chose to keep a flat in Muggle London, where her neighbours and acquaintances had absolutely no idea what her life in the wizarding world entailed. Hermione's work was compartmentalized as well, for Unspeakables were unaware of who comprised each sub-department, let alone the projects they were working on. She loved her job, which presently had her part of such an important, groundbreaking venture that the lack of a social atmosphere at work never crossed her mind. *After all*, Hermione often told herself, *if I wanted birthday luncheons and pub nights out, there are plenty of departments that would be happy to have me work for them, but where I'd also end up being just another career Ministry hack.*

A paper aeroplane memo flew in and landed on Hermione's desk just as she was pouring her first cup of coffee. Titus Whytham, her boss and head of the division, required her presence in his office as soon as possible. Excited about the summons, Hermione hastened down the short corridor leading to the office of the Man in Charge.

Titus Whytham was a spry, elderly wizard who was rumoured to be in his late one hundred thirties. His sharp, active mind and powerful magic reminded Hermione in some ways of her old headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, and their relationship had remained at the respectful "Miss Granger" and "Mr Whytham" stage regardless of the number of years she'd worked under his leadership. In other ways, Whytham was about as different from Dumbledore as could be. Starting his career as an Auror, he'd been Head of Magical Law Enforcement way back in the 1920s, or maybe it was the 1930s, before the career change that brought him over to the Department of Mysteries. He ran a tight ship, his trademark being the ultra-thorough briefings that preceded each assignment, no matter how large or small. Hermione found his presence both challenging and reassuring.

With a small nod of greeting, Whytham motioned for Hermione to sit down. "I've looked at your calculations over the weekend, and I believe that your TT-Gamma is ready to be tested. Remarkable work, Miss Granger." Hermione beamed at him.

"Will I be on the team to perform the final test?" Hermione asked.

"Of course. I wouldn't have it done any other way. And, as it turns out, this happens to be quite a fortunate time for you to be doing so."

"In what way, sir?"

"This has to do with that nasty incident we had with Mr Malfoy."

Some time ago, Draco Malfoy had used his position as an employee of the Ministry to gain access to the Department of Mysteries and steal a Time-Turner that was still in an experimental stage. The Ministry had been able to keep the news quiet in order to avoid scandal, yet investigations of how Malfoy was able to accomplish the break-in and theft had still turned up nothing. He'd been masterful with some well-placed Obliviates.

Hermione had heard rumours about the mess Draco's life had become since the war, and though her relationship with her former schoolmate had never gotten past one of distrust, she did feel a small amount of pity for him.

"Has someone been able to locate him?" Hermione asked.

"Yes and no, Miss Granger. We sent an operative in to fetch him right after the incident took place. We used your Beta prototype, of course. It worked fairly well, but from what we were able to ascertain, our agent arrived about six months too early. The Gamma should be able to pinpoint your arrival more accurately."

It sounded as if this assignment might be a little more involved than simply testing a Time-Turner, and Hermione felt a small fizz of excitement at the thought. Whytham smiled at the expression on her face and continued. "It seems as if our retriever might be in need of being retrieved himself. The chap's gone missing."

"How can you be sure?" Hermione queried.

"We devised a method ahead of time to be used for communication. Once our agent arrived in the 1880s, he used a pre-determined codename to set up an account at Gringotts that would be accessible to us in this century. Communication could go only one way, of course, since there is no way we can send any messages back into the past. We were hearing updates very regularly, but about a month ago, all communication stopped."

"Do you believe there has been any foul play?"

"I'm not sure. That is why we need you to take a look around. Our operative is using a pseudonym and has set himself up as some sort of Muggle detective. This will cause the least amount of contamination to the past, and we are very serious about this not happening, Miss Granger. He goes by the name of Stephen Shipe, and hopefully, the last address we have for him is still good."

Stephen Shipe, Hermione thought. *Who could that be?*

Whytham handed Hermione a small stack of parchments. "Your briefing, along with the correspondence we've received. Now, if you could take a short bit of time to review this, you will be prepared for your trip into the past. Feel free to make your own notes, but I'd like to see you again in two hours."

Back in her office, Hermione poured herself another cup of coffee and began to look through the documents. She frowned in consternation, beginning to scribble down some of her observations. Finishing this, she flipped over to the letters, her eyes growing wide as she began to read the small, spiky script.

Some time later, Hermione marched back to Whytham's office. "You didn't tell me this was Severus Snape." She spoke flatly, eyeing her boss with trepidation. "I was probably one of his least favourite students at school. He will not be pleased to see me."

Whytham gave her shoulder a supportive pat. "Severus has changed in many ways since the war, Miss Granger. Coming back from death tends to do that, you know. But after all, it's been quite some time since you've been Snape's student, and I'm quite sure that your meeting will go well."

Hermione didn't mention the contact she'd had with him while at University and the abrupt way he'd broken off their correspondence.

"Now then," Whytham continued, "I'm eager for you to share your observations with me." As Hermione discussed her take on the notes, her boss nodded, his face resigned. "I was hoping that this might not be the case, but your opinion confirms my thoughts, I'm sorry to say. Time is of an essence here, so do you have any final questions before your jump?"

"You won't be accompanying me, sir?" Hermione asked.

"Much as I would like to, I cannot. My personal healer has come down on me rather hard...says that at my age, I cannot be gadding about back and forth between different centuries the way I used to. Such a poor sport, I daresay."

Hermione nodded. *I can do this.* "I see you've enclosed some maps of the area I'll be visiting."

"I've done my best to try to remember how things were back then, but it's been a long time. Modern maps might help a bit, but unfortunately, in the last fifty years, there's been a lot of renovation done in the name of progress. Muggles do have that annoying habit of tearing down perfectly good streets and buildings and then re-building them all over again."

~October 1888~

To describe the East End of London as crowded was a vast understatement, for the area literally teemed with life. One could spend weeks on the narrow streets and never grow tired of the variety of people one might encounter. There were immigrants, keepers of small shops and taverns, and the working poor, who still hoped for a future. Tucked amongst them were the do-gooders: the missionaries and social workers, along with those of the upper middle class who thought they'd try slumming for a lark. On the other end of the scale were those whose lives were in a continual downward spiral: the thieves, prostitutes, and petty criminals. And, for those who wished to remain anonymous, the East End was just the place to stay hidden.

At precisely four p.m., Severus Snape filed the last of his paperwork and began shutting his office down for the evening. He'd just finished up the last of the Browne investigation, and so much the better that he'd never see those touchy Muggles again. Severus looked forward to a relaxing cup of tea and maybe even some time to read his latest novel before heading out for dinner and more inquiries about the whereabouts of one Draco Malfoy.

Severus pinched the bridge of his nose in an attempt to stave off an incipient headache. Draco Malfoy, his godson, his responsibility, and the reason for the travel back to 1888 in what looked to be one of the more questionable misadventures Severus had embarked upon since the war had ended. Just where the obligation for his godson began and ended, Severus was loathe to discern. Granted, the Unbreakable Vow he'd made with Draco's mother had been fulfilled, yet he'd continued to feel responsible for the whelp's welfare long after the fact. Could it be that he felt guilt for setting in motion the events that would culminate in the train wreck that Draco's life had become?

For a while, it seemed as if Draco was going to be all right. Severus had done all he possibly could to ensure his godson's sense of security and family. Pleased that Draco had shown an interest in having a career, Severus had used his war hero status to procure a job for him with the Legal Department at the Ministry. Six years later, Severus had been able to congratulate himself on a job well done, for Draco had married and seemed to be a productive and well-adjusted member of wizarding society. That was until two years later, when his marriage to Pansy had unravelled. The divorce was messy, and finding out that his wife had been unfaithful to him with several different men seemed to push Draco entirely over the edge.

Before his disappearance, Draco had been a fixture in many of the area's seedier pubs and brothels, and Severus had been called in much too often to rescue his godson when things got out of control. The final time had been quite disturbing. "We don't want his kind in here anymore," the madam had stated as Snape had half-marched, half-carried the thoroughly pissed, obscenity-shouting Malfoy out of her Knockturn Alley establishment. "He's a danger to our girls, he is." Afterwards, Draco had exhibited the angry and combative attitude that was a marked change from the tearful contriteness he'd always expressed when this type of behaviour had first begun.

As his tea brewed, Severus downed a shot of Headache Potion, thinking he might indulge in a chaser of Scotch as well. He was placing the battered china teapot on a tray when he heard the front door of his office open and close, the bells making only the slightest of jingles. Damn, he'd forgotten to lock the front door.

She had her back to Severus as he entered, and she seemed already engrossed in her perusal of his bookshelf. Young, he guessed, and slim, yet shapely in her wine-coloured woollen gown. Her curly brown hair had obviously been wrestled into a chignon, for a few tendrils had escaped from the back and now lay prettily against the back of her neck. The exposed neck, long and slender, was a sight to behold, and despite his annoyance at the interruption, Severus found his breath catch in anticipation of his interaction with this mystery woman. She turned around, her smile tremulous.

"Hello, Professor."

Oh fuck. "Granger! What in the name of Hades are you doing here?"

"Mr Whytham sent me, of course. He's asked me to help with your assignment."

"Well, you can leave right now," Snape said rudely. "I don't need help from you or anyone else. This is personal business."

"It's not just your personal business, Professor," Hermione replied evenly. "Draco Malfoy has taken one of the new Time-Turners, one that is still in its developmental stages, I might add. Surely, you were informed of that before you were sent here."

"Regardless of how lax the security is in your department, Mr Malfoy is still my personal business, Miss Granger, and I might add that I am no longer your professor."

"Well, what shall I call you then? Snape? *Mr* Snape?"

"Whatever you like, Miss Granger."

Reaching into her reticule, she withdrew a hefty stack of parchment, her quill, and a bottle of ink, setting everything down upon Severus' desk. "I'm not here to babysit you, Mr Snape. I have full confidence that you will be able to retrieve Draco as you were set to do."

"And I, too, congratulate you on your success with your latest Time-Turner. Now, why don't you see if you can repeat your accomplishment and head on back now?"

Ignoring him, Hermione continued. "I have here all of your correspondence, plus my own research and notes." Severus sneered at her as she sat down and began to divide her parchments into neat piles. She was still the little swot she'd always been.

"Go right ahead and make yourself at home, Miss Granger." His sarcasm seemed lost on Hermione, intent on thumbing through one of the stacks. Inside, he was fuming. The bloody audacity of Whytham. This had to beat all...sending Granger, the little know-it-all, to check up on him! The old biddy was becoming nearly as interfering as Dumbledore had been.

Finding the piece of parchment she'd been searching for, Hermione began. "My job is to find and recover the Time-Turner that was taken by Draco Malfoy. Along with that, Mr Whytham and I both noticed a disturbing historical connection with this case and some of the murders you'd mentioned have been taking place. I am here to investigate that as well. Tell me, Mr Snape, does the name 'Jack the Ripper' mean anything to you?"

Snape shook his head and paused, reliving scenes from his childhood, when Toby would occasionally feel remorseful after an evening of drinking and smacking his mother around. *"I'm sorry, Eileen, but you know I don't hit you unless you need it. It doesn't make me Jack the bloody Ripper."*

"The only time I ever heard that term was when my father used it to justify his bad behaviour. I don't see what this has to with prostitutes being murdered."

"So you don't know, then," Hermione said. She took a breath as if she'd just been called on to recite an answer in class, a mannerism that Severus remembered so well from her school days. "Jack the Ripper was considered one of the worst, most brutal mass murderers of women in the nineteenth century. At least five murders, all of them prostitutes in the Whitechapel district, have been attributed to him, along with the possibility of several other unsolved cases." She caught the brief flicker of consternation on Snape's face before he was able to mask it with his usual impassive demeanour. "Could Draco be involved?"

Severus sat down and, sighing wearily, rubbed the area between his eyebrows. Explaining everything about Draco was not going to be easy. He'd tried to keep his godson's actions a secret for some time now, knowing that if things came out into the open, the young man would be, among other things, angry at the breach of his privacy. "Draco emerged from the war in a very fragile state," he said. "His last-minute switch in allegiance brought, shall we say, disfavour from his parents, who repudiated and disowned him before they moved to the Continent. I felt responsible for him. He's my godson."

"Draco and I have never had a good relationship, but I do feel badly for the ways things turned out for him," Hermione remarked in dismay. "He must think of you as his only family, Severus. I'm so sorry."

Snape grunted noncommittally, unwilling to be the recipient of even a small amount of her compassion.

Having eaten his large meal earlier in the day, he offered Hermione some of the light tea he'd planned on putting together for supper, and she accepted willingly. Afterwards, Severus spent what he considered too much of his valuable time dealing with her misinformed and Gryffindorish ideas of where she might sleep now that she was part of his investigation. The silly girl thought that she could just ring the doorbell of a rooming house and be accepted as a boarder without providing any references whatsoever. A room above the Leaky Cauldron was also out of the question. Somewhat ungraciously, he offered her his bedroom.

It wasn't until the stubborn little witch had completed her evening toiletries and retired to said bedroom did Severus finally realize what had put him off for the entire evening, more than the shock of Hermione's sympathy for the plight of Draco Malfoy. She had addressed him by his given name.

The bed he'd Transfigured from his sitting room sofa was actually quite comfortable, yet Severus was unable to sleep. Unquiet thoughts swirled around in his head unceasingly, no matter how hard he tried to put them aside.

He'd had contact with Hermione Granger during her last year at Oxford Wizarding University nearly five years ago. Being the overachieving know-it-all that she was, Hermione was attempting a masters in Potions after already achieving one in Arithmancy, and she'd written to him for advice on her final project. Severus' initial reaction had been one of extreme annoyance...textbook quoting Miss Granger, the most bothersome student he'd ever taught...yet he allowed himself one more glance through her letter before settling down to write his sneering reply. Upon the second read-through of Hermione's note, Severus was struck right away with the mature tone and scholarly nature of her well-thought-out request. Hermione Granger seemed to have grown up during the six years since she'd left Hogwarts.

As the weeks went by, Severus found himself being caught up in Hermione's excitement for her project, and their correspondence became frequent as she kept him updated on her progress. Slowly, and almost without his realizing it, he had begun to allow her to address him in a more familiar manner than she had while still his student. Not only that, he was beginning to open up to her as well. Somewhere along the line, he'd stopped thinking of Hermione Granger as a little schoolgirl and had begun enjoying the friendship that was developing between them. He was, therefore, quite dismayed to recognize that he was beginning to look forward to her letters a bit more than he really should and, once he was aware that this could become a problem, told himself that this simply would not do. It wasn't that he didn't recognize somewhat of a kindred spirit in the intellectual young woman. Severus was simply not going to set himself up to be rejected by her. What could she gain from being with someone like him? He was too damaged, bitter, and gloomy...plus old enough to be her father! Hermione Granger could do much better for herself, and someday she'd meet a younger man, someone worthy enough to be her partner.

And so it begins, Severus thought grimly, as he prepared tea the next morning. Hermione was up early as well, for she came out of the bedroom and asked in an annoyingly cheerful tone if there was anything she could do to help. His daily routine had been roughly the same for the past six months: office hours and appointments with some of his Muggle clients during the daytime hours, a break in the late afternoon, followed by dinner and his evening investigations. Severus was not happy that she

had neatly insinuated herself into his life.

As it was, the first day did not go as badly as he'd anticipated. Once he'd fortified himself with several cups of strong tea, he was willing to fill her in on the details of his search for Draco. Surprisingly, she was an attentive listener, breaking in only occasionally to add a few well-thought-out comments. After a midday dinner and short walking tour of the area, they spent the rest of the day reading Muggle novels, energetically discussing the merits of each one.

The first week went by in a similar manner, and Severus was having a hard time remembering what it had been like without her.

No matter how well Hermione and Severus got on during the day, evenings were an entirely different matter. Sparks often flew between them, but for entirely the wrong reasons.

She was adamant about finding Mary Kelly, the woman who was believed to be the Ripper's fifth victim. "We have less than three weeks until she meets up with her killer, and there's the possibility that this could lead us to Draco as well."

"We don't know whether he is, in fact, that person," Snape interjected. "I suggest you stick to the assignments you've been given and not let your Gryffindor sentimentality be a distraction."

He also wanted to continue with the investigative methods he'd been employing all along. She wanted to try something different.

"These are not the kind of girls who are getting murdered," Hermione argued as Severus prepared to knock on the door of yet another East End brothel. "We need to talk with the ones who work the streets."

Information was not forthcoming, even when Snape grudgingly accompanied her to the dark, twisted alleys of Whitechapel. The streetwalkers were a secretive sort, who assumed that she and Severus were missionaries or, worse yet, the police.

"Why don't you stand out in the middle of the street and just shout out who we're looking for," Severus mocked, with a few choice comments about Gryffindors added under his breath.

"We're dressed all wrong," Hermione concluded. "I won't gain anyone's trust wearing this dress. I need to look more like they do."

"And who shall I dress as? Your pimp?" Severus frowned, drawing her into a shadowy doorway. "You've already called entirely too much attention to us as it is. I don't want to be involved with the police."

"That's why we need to use Glamours!" Hermione insisted. "I could even pose as..."

"And set yourself up as bait? I think not!"

The police showed up the very next morning. Severus usually kept shorter office hours on Saturday, so he and Hermione were still reading the morning paper and lingering over tea in the sitting room when the jangling of the doorbell announced arrival of an Inspector Abberline and his sergeant.

"Please do come in," Severus stated, giving Hermione the look she'd grown to interpret as "keep your mouth shut and let me handle this". She offered the men some tea and chairs opposite the settee where she and Snape sat.

"To what do I owe the honour of your visit?" Severus began.

"Mr Shipe, we're here to find out any information that you may have regarding the murders in Whitechapel. We've heard through some of our sources that you have been conducting your own investigation in that district, and we'd like to know if we are both looking for the same man."

"We have been involved in a private inquiry, only in order to locate a man and return him to his proper place."

"We?" the detective asked, looking at Hermione in a speculative manner, taking in the cozy sitting room and adjoining bedroom beyond.

"I am also involved in this investigation," Hermione began.

Severus, not liking the ugly leer that the sergeant was giving her, broke in smoothly. "My associate, Henrietta Gardiner." Ignoring the sharp, swift kick Hermione had just given his ankle, Severus continued on. "The lady goes by her maiden name for professional reasons, but she is, in fact, my wife."

"Oh, right then," rejoined the inspector. "Very modern of you, Madam."

They spent the next fifteen minutes discussing the Whitechapel murders, or rather Snape and Inspector Abberline did while the sergeant took notes and Hermione seethed and pretended to sip her tea. She noticed that, even though Severus was very eager to gain whatever information he could from the police, he was purposely vague with them, giving answers that contained just enough information to appease their curiosity.

After the two policemen had been shown out, Hermione rounded on Severus, eyes blazing. "You bastard! How dare you shut me down like that! You still haven't figured out that I'm not some silly little schoolgirl, and last time I checked, I was *not* your wife! Of all the misogynistic, paternalistic tripe," she sputtered.

Oh god, she was magnificent when fired up like that! Severus, trying to hide his twitching lips, gathered what was left of his composure and attempted to answer her in what passed as a disdainful manner.

"If you could stay still for just one moment, *Miss Gardiner*, you'll see there's a very good reason why. Rather than flying off your broomstick, you should be thankful I covered for you. The Victorians do insist on being a prudish sort, and we don't need to call attention to ourselves by painting you as a woman of questionable reputation."

"Oh," said Hermione, suddenly taken aback, but in true Gryffindor fashion made sure that Snape didn't get the satisfaction of having the last word. "Henrietta Gardiner," she fumed. "What possessed you come up with that one? I think you're having a little too much fun here, *Mr Shipe*."

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"More tea and biscuits, Henrietta dear?"

Hermione giggled, rolling her eyes. "No thank you, Stephen love. It's very close to dinnertime, and I'd fancy some of the beef and parsnip stew they have over at the Rose and Crowne."

Hermione was confused. This Severus Snape was too much like the one she'd corresponded with during her last year at Uni, and it was bringing back memories that were undeniably unsettling.

They'd spent the afternoon reading the 1880s versions of Potions journals together, with Hermione laughing at both the absurdity of what was considered the latest advances of the time and Severus' rude and snarky commentary on each article as she read them aloud. Severus, for once relaxed and mellow, found his gaze drawn to her flushed and merry face over and again. It was becoming a game of cat-and-mouse, or perhaps hide-and-seek, as each of them seemed as intent on trying to sneak looks at the other as trying to not get caught doing so.

Hermione was also beginning to feel a thrum of attraction that went beyond the simple intellectual compatibility she was discovering with her former professor *The styles of*

the 1880s suit him, she thought, glancing up over the top of her periodical. Severus' hair was shorter and parted on the side, with both the mustache and side whiskers he sported neatly balancing out his thin face and large nose.

Dinner that evening was a pleasant affair, at least it was up until Willy Jenkins, a scrawny and disreputable character whom Severus used as a gatherer of street information, sidled up from the bar to join them.

"Madam Julietta has asked for you, guvn'r," Jenkins said, eyeing up Hermione with interest. His gaze shifted away only when Severus treated him to one of his trademark glares, which were famous for cowing first years into submission.

"Does she have anything new to tell me this time?" Snape inquired impatiently.

"She thinks so."

Placing a coin into Jenkins' hand, Severus dismissed him, noticing the look on Hermione's face. "Don't even think of going off on your own," he said, brushing off her objections. "I'm afraid you are going to have to accompany me to Julietta's tonight."

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Drat these skits! Rushing to keep up with Severus' long strides, Hermione bit back an exclamation of dismay as she stumbled yet again on the damp cobblestone street. This time Snape reached out to grab her elbow, and she batted his hand away.

"Henrietta, my pet, are you drunk?"

"No, but I don't see why I shouldn't be," Hermione snapped. "You obviously were occupied elsewhere."

"Please don't insult my intelligence and act as if you're jealous." Snape smirked, reaching in his pocket for the key that unlocked their lodgings. Once inside, he quickly lit the oil lamp, noticing in the flickering light that Hermione's mouth was drawn down in a scowl of fury.

"Jealous? Don't flatter yourself." Hermione snorted. "How could you leave me alone in a place like that?"

"You were quite safe in the parlour," Severus scoffed. "No one forced you to drink the wine Julietta's servant offered you."

"What will people think? I'm supposed to be your wife!"

"I assure you, no one would think twice about a man coming and going in and out of 'a place like that' as you so aptly call it. This is the Victorian Age, after all," Snape remarked scornfully. "It was quite common for men to frequent such places when their needs weren't being met at home. Are you that kind of wife, Henrietta my dear?"

In answer, Hermione languidly stretched her hands over her head, pushing out her breasts, mimicking the pose of the women pictured on Severus' secret stash of naughty postcards she'd accidentally found in his bottom desk drawer. "I don't know," she said, looking up at him through her lashes and smiling pertly. "Am I?"

Swooping suddenly like the great bat he was purported to be, Severus backed Hermione against the wall, his dark eyes glittering dangerously in the dim light. Bending down so that his face was just inches from hers, he growled menacingly, "I'd advise you not to start something you aren't willing to continue, Miss Granger."

Stifling a gasp, Hermione pushed him away and flounced off to her bedroom, accompanied by the sound of Severus' jeering laughter. Even slamming the door behind gave her no satisfaction.

They spent the following day tiptoeing around, each addressing the other with frosty politeness.

Hermione kept her attention on the meticulous notes she had made on the case. This, unfortunately, was one time that all her studiousness and micro-management would not help one bit. It was now the 8th of November, and she and Severus were no closer to finding Malfoy or speaking with Mary Kelly than they'd been two weeks ago. Why weren't they out looking for them, instead of biding their time drinking tea and avoiding one another?

The real issue here wasn't simply that Severus was uncomfortable with her using a Glamour and posing as a prostitute. He had to be in charge, the git. Well, maybe it was time she acted the part of the Gryffindor she was and step out on her own to get things moving. She'd show Severus Snape that he was not the boss of her!

The next evening, after politely declining Severus' offer of a late supper, Hermione changed her appearance and headed out to the Whitechapel district. She knew that Severus often liked to linger at the pub for a while after he ate; hopefully, this would give her enough time to track down Mary Kelly and warn the woman not to go out that evening.

After a frustrating hour of walking the damp streets, Hermione thought she found the one she was looking for. Hurrying along, she practically ran past a man who was furtively stepping out of an alley's small, dark brick archway. It was Draco himself.

"So what do we have here?" he drawled in the familiar, velvety-smooth tone Hermione had heard so often during her schooldays. Hurriedly glancing into his face, she noticed a moment too late that the expression in his eyes did not match the complaisant sound of his voice.

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Halfway to the pub, Severus stopped, turned around and retraced his steps back home. Hermione was hiding something, that he was sure. She hadn't had much to eat all day, and she never could resist a good meal at the Rose and Crowne.

He arrived back at their lodgings, only to find Hermione missing. What did she think she'd be able to accomplish out on her own like this? Fools and Gryffindors...always the first to rush in. Snarling in exasperation, he risked Apparating directly to the Whitechapel district, hoping that somewhere amongst the narrow alleys he'd be able to locate her before Malfoy did. If only he knew exactly who he should be looking for, that is. *Damn the girl*, he thought, pushing aside yet another painted hussy he'd assumed to be Hermione.

The creeping fog floated eerily around him, and Severus suppressed a shudder, unpleasantly reminded of his former life of evening activities with the Death Eaters. Cursing the lack of visibility, Severus finally found the street he and Hermione had marked as a possible location of where Mary Kelly had met her killer. The only thing he was able to do was to follow any human sounds he might hear and pray to every deity he could think of that he'd not be too late.

Yes, it had to be! The familiar voices of a man and woman had caught his attention, and Severus quickly crept forward in the fog.

Draco was holding a struggling woman in front of him, one arm firmly across her abdomen. With a sudden movement, he drew his wand, holding the tip up against her throat.

Severus stepped out of the shadows. "Draco, put your wand down and let her go."

"Go away, Uncle Severus, or I'll..."

"You'll what, Draco?"

The blond man grimaced, pushing the wand harder against Hermione's neck. "I can do this now," he taunted. "Not like before. I won't go back with you, if that's what you're

here for."

"Just let her go, Draco."

"What's she to you?" Draco sneered. "She's just another whore, like all of them. Or, is she?" he asked, eyes narrowing. Hermione's Glamour fell away at Malfoy's whispered Finite Incantatum, and he began to laugh hysterically as if this was the funniest thing he'd ever seen. "Granger! That's really rich, Uncle Severus!"

"*Expelliarmus!*" Severus shouted, catching Draco's wand neatly as he strode towards them.

Hermione found herself roughly pushed down. She did not even notice the bruising pain in her knees; her full attention was taken by the two men grappling together. In a fraction of a second, too late for any kind of warning, she caught sight of a rapid slash of silver, followed by the blossoming of scarlet across Snape's throat.

"Severus!" From a distant point in the fog, Hermione heard her voice screaming over and over as the two men before her vanished with a crack of Apparition. Several other loud cracks followed, and Hermione's world went blank.

She came to slowly, comprehending after a few moments that she was inside the Ministry of Magic, and that the year was still 1888. There weren't many differences between this Ministry and the one in her time, including what must have been two Aurors who stood by ready to interrogate her.

And question her they did. Hermione tried to stick to her story, that her name was Henrietta Gardiner, and that she was visiting the area. The older Auror began lecturing her sternly, every aspect of his face and posture communicating that they knew much more about her than she thought, and how it would become very unpleasant for her if she refused to tell the truth.

"I think an overnight stay in one of our cells might be just the thing to loosen your tongue," the man stated disagreeably and poked his head out the door to shout for an underling to act as an escort.

Hermione gaped at the young Auror as he entered the room. It couldn't be, but yet it was...the same intelligent gaze, the style of his whiskers, and the certain way he held his head. Clearing her throat, she bravely met the head Auror's eyes. "I'm ready to talk now, but it must be with Auror Whytham...alone, if you please."

~2007~

The door to Whytham's office was closed. Hermione left a message with his secretary and returned to her office to prepare mentally for her debriefing.

Worry and guilt were the top two feelings featured on her emotional playlist since Hermione's return to her own time. She was tremendously worried about Severus, for he hadn't turned up during the three days she'd stayed in 1888 after meeting with Auror Whytham at the Ministry. And the guilt...well, that would be something she'd need to discuss with the present-day Titus Whytham during her debriefing. Hopefully, he'd agree with her decision to not tell his earlier self about Draco. Could she have helped save the lives of the murdered women if her boss had known ahead of time and had been able to prevent the theft of the Time-Turner? Despite everything she'd experienced, Hermione knew that she still couldn't be sure if Draco Malfoy had, in fact, been a murderer.

Coffee, that's what I need. The familiar motions of grinding the fragrant beans and measuring them into the basket were soothing, as was watching the fortifying liquid drip down into the carafe. Immersed in her coffee ritual, Hermione missed the sound of footsteps treading down the short corridor, only becoming aware of feeling the sense of someone standing in her doorway. Looking over her shoulder, Hermione called, "Come in, Mr Whytham. Would you like some coffee?"

Hermione jolted to a sudden stop, the coffee she'd been pouring sloshing over the side of the cup, for it wasn't her boss who stepped into her office, but the dark figure of Severus Snape.

"You're alright!" she cried, practically running the short distance that separated them and grabbing both his hands in hers.

"You were worried about me?" Severus asked sceptically.

"You horrid man, of course I was," Hermione said, pushing his hands away. "I waited for three days! I had no idea if you were dead or alive!" Staring intently at his throat, she traced it with a shaking forefinger. "There's no mark or scar?"

Severus gazed down into Hermione's anxious face. "Trust me, Miss Granger, after my experience with Nagini, I never travel anywhere without flasks of Blood-Replenishing Potion or Dittany. It looked worse than it actually was," he said softly.

"And Draco?"

Severus grimaced. "He took his own life. I had to return with his body immediately."

"Oh, Severus, how awful for you that Draco killed himself!" Hermione cried. "But I'm very glad that you weren't the one who had to do it."

"As am I." There were a few moments of awkward silence until Severus frowned and continued. "I wanted to see you before your debriefing. I've already been in with Whytham and needed to warn you ahead of time that he thinks we should work on at least one more project together."

Hermione's face fell. "So you told him you didn't want to work with me?"

"Much to the contrary, I said I'd look forward to it." Severus paused, his Adam's apple bobbing. "I found our recent assignment ... tolerable."

"Tolerable?" Hermione laughed mischievously.

Snape continued to look uncomfortable. "Well, perhaps ... nearly pleasant. Unless you are adverse to continuing our partnership?"

Hermione's thoughts went back to the three days she'd spent waiting for Severus in what she'd thought of as their office and the dismay she'd felt upon realizing that she'd begun to develop feelings for the aloof, sarcastic man.

"I would be happy to continue working with you, Severus," Hermione paused and took a breath. "And, I'd like to see if this relationship might develop into friendship..."

"Or possibly something more, Hermione?" Severus broke in, taking her hand. His eyes, which up until now had always been unreadable, burned with a fierce intensity.

Hermione felt the now familiar swoop in her stomach and knew that her face was growing pink. Severus seemed to be experiencing something similar, for his normally pale cheeks boasted two small red patches. *I made Professor Snape blush!* Hermione thought and looked up at him coyly. "Why, Mr Shipe, are you starting something that you're prepared to finish?"

As his answer, Severus lifted her hand and, bowing slightly, placed a kiss on the inside of her wrist.

Finite Incantatum

Author's Comments: Historical records show that Inspector Frederick George Abberline, a veteran police officer, was put in charge of the Whitechapel murders in September, 1888. His meeting with Severus Snape and Hermione Granger seems to have escaped the notice of historians.

And of course, my original prompt: Severus is being sent abroad on assignment (by some post-Voldemort person/body). Hermione, by command or design, meets up with

him there in order to "help", and fireworks ensue.