

The Art of Resolution

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Severus Snape tapped the feather quill to his lips as he stared off into space. It was the first of January, the first day of the new year. He wasn't one for traditions, but this year he thought it might be nice to make some New Year's resolutions. He had his journal open and sitting on his lap, ready to list them so they wouldn't be forgotten.

New Year's Resolutions:

He looked down at his spiky scrawl. A valiant beginning... Now to actually create some resolutions.

1. Take 100 points from Gryffindor per day.

He smiled to himself. Now there was a resolution worth keeping. His quill tapped his mouth again as he thought.

2.

He seemed stuck at number two. Certainly there was something he could work on during the year! He scowled as he eyed the empty spot where the second resolution should be. There was truly only one thing he wanted to accomplish beyond the devastation of Gryffindor house. Actually, the thing he wanted to accomplish had much to do with the head of Gryffindor, that minx. His lips thinned as he put quill to paper.

2. Get Hermione Granger to notice me.

He eyed his scrawl, wondering just how to go about doing that. Well, he had a year. It couldn't be that hard, could it?

January

She'd noticed him all right. She'd noticed the great amount of house points being deleted from her cubs and came to the only person possibly responsible for such a travesty.

"Severus Snape!" came her cry from down the hall.

Severus turned with a scowl at her sharp cry. She stomped up to him.

"Why are you taking so many points from my house on a daily basis?"

He arched an eyebrow at her. "Professor Granger, I cannot help it if your house has been excessively naughty."

Closing the distance, she narrowed her eyes at him. "They have been no more naughty than they were last month. You have taken a minimum of one hundred points from Gryffindor per day. Why?"

He smirked at her. "It's just a little goal I have set for myself."

Her eyes grew wide. "To destroy my house?"

He shrugged. "You know of my love for all things Gryffindor. I thought your cocky students needed a lesson in humility."

"Severus Snape, that is not the use for house points!"

"I do not punish those who are innocent of wrongdoing. I can't help it if the points I take off for misbehavior are a bit excessive."

Hermione squared her shoulders and glared at him. "You will stop this nonsense immediately, or you'll be sorry!"

He grinned evilly at her. "Oh, I doubt that."

She wheeled around and stalked off.

Severus found, in the following weeks, that she did not look at him; she did not talk to him; nor did she acknowledge his presence in any way, shape, or form. He also noticed a large quantity of house points being subtracted from his house. He wasn't sure what to do. He certainly wasn't accomplishing his task of having Hermione notice him. She was treating him as if he didn't exist. Unfortunately, if he stopped his deducting of points, he would break his first resolution. What a quandary.

Luckily for him, he didn't have to make the decision at all. It was made for him. On the last day of January he was summoned to Headmistress McGonagall's office. He found Hermione there also.

Minerva gave the two professors a glare worthy of death.

"Whatever is going on between the two of you, it will stop immediately," she announced. "I will not have your houses in negative numbers simply because you are quarrelling about whatever it is you're quarrelling about."

"If I could just explain, Minerva," Hermione offered.

Minerva lifted her hand to stop her. "I don't want to hear it, Hermione. The house point deductions will stop immediately, or you will both be suspended. Is that clear?"

Hermione nodded stiffly, as did Severus.

"Thank you, you may go," Minerva said in a dismissive tone.

Hermione turned and glared at Severus before stalking off. Giving Minerva a short bow, he quickly followed suit.

February

With his first resolution unable to be finished, he turned all his concentration to the fulfillment of the second. Unfortunately, Hermione was still not talking to him. He needed to make a peace offering and knew just the thing.

Stepping into his lab, he began a brew of bubble bath. When it was done it would be rose scented and leave Hermione's skin as soft as a baby's. He hoped she would like it and would forgive him for his previous wrong.

Brewing through the night, he quickly bottled the bubble bath early that next morning. Too excited to wait, he rushed to Hermione's door and knocked insistently. Hermione opened it and gave him a curious look.

He extended the large bottle, which he'd wrapped with a golden bow.

"I made you something," he explained.

Her mouth dropped open. "You brought me a Valentine's gift?" she cried.

"I beg your pardon?"

"It's Valentine's Day. I thought you hated this holiday!"

He was at a loss for words. He'd been so wrapped up in brewing that he'd totally forgotten what the day was. He wasn't quite sure what to say.

She took the bottle out of his frozen hand. "Thank you!" she cried. "Is it bubble bath?"

He nodded.

"It's perfect! I was just saying to Ron I could go for a relaxing bubble bath after yesterday's classes."

"Ron?"

"Oh, yes! He's taking over Professor Humphrey's position as Defense teacher until next December while Professor Humphrey is traveling."

"Traveling..."

Hermione gave him a strange look. "You know, he's touring America and Australia to compare Defense programs."

"Right."

"I'm sorry, Severus, I'd invite you in, but Ron's just arrived, and I know the two of you don't get along."

He looked past Hermione to see the annoying ginger-haired man seated on her sofa. He nodded dumbly.

"Thank you, though, and Happy Valentine's Day!"

She reached up and kissed him on the cheek. He stood there rubbing it long after she'd closed the door and disappeared from sight.

March

He'd been so embarrassed by his gift that he hadn't done anything proactive for the rest of February. Hermione had warmed up to him, though, and their relationship was back to where it had been before the New Year. She acknowledged him and chatted with him, but he could barely call that being noticed, at least, not the way he wanted to be noticed.

He determined that striking up a conversation about Transfiguration was the thing to do. He carefully read through the latest *Transfiguration Today*, choosing an article on techniques for getting higher detail in a transfigured object. He knew she'd definitely have an opinion on that.

Heading from the dungeons, he hurried up the stairs with the intent of catching her in her room between classes and dinner. He was disappointed when she didn't answer his knock. She must still be in her classroom. His search turned up no Hermione. Going back down the stairs, he turned and saw her on the landing below, talking to Weasley. His eyes were riveted to the pair. They had been virtually inseparable since his arrival on Valentine's Day. He frowned as he stared. How was he to start up a conversation with that giant, ginger-haired git standing right there?

He continued down the stairs, looking directly at them. So absorbed was he that he didn't remember that this was the stairwell with the disappearing stair. So concentrated on the lovely smile that Hermione was giving to Ron, he stepped right on the stair without a thought. So, when the stair decided to surprise him by vanishing under his foot, it was with a startled yelp that he began to tumble forward and roll down the stairs, landing in a heap at Hermione's feet.

"Oh! Severus, are you all right?" Hermione cried as she stooped down to attend to him.

Weasley just burst into uproarious laughter. Hermione turned and glared at him before turning back to Severus, who'd hit his head so hard that it was now bleeding.

She sat him up and conjured a rag to wipe the blood that was streaming into his eyes.

"What's the matter, Snape? Did you forget about the vanishing stair? Haven't you lived here for eons?"

"Shut up, Ron!" Hermione said through gritted teeth. She continued to wipe his face clean, then took her wand and healed the offensive cut. Severus stared at her all the while, too embarrassed to speak.

Ron did enough speaking for the both of them.

"I swear that was the funniest thing I've ever seen! You just tumbled over and over, and then... and then you flailed before landing in front of Hermione with your legs all spread out." He laughed some more.

Hermione glared at him. "Stop being a git, Ron! If you want to be helpful, go fetch Madam Pomfrey. I'm afraid to move him in case there's an injury I've missed."

Ron grumbled about her being a spoil sport before turning and going to find Poppy Pomfrey. Hermione turned back to Severus and huffed.

"I'm sorry about him. He's never really grown up."

Severus tried to focus on her, but she was quite blurry. His head was feeling rather light, too. He smiled at her.

"I never knew there were two of you, Hermione."

Her concerned look caused him to laugh a bit. "May I have one of you?" he asked playfully.

Now she was sputtering and looking at him incredulously. She waved her wand over him.

"It must be a concussion," she muttered to herself.

"So very beautiful," he murmured back.

Reaching out, he pulled her to him and kissed her. He felt her stiffen beneath him and wondered if he'd overstepped his bounds, but soon she was kissing him with equal fervor. He pulled back and smiled shyly at her.

"I've wanted to do that for a long time now," he admitted. "This too," he whispered as he ran his fingers through her hair. She closed her eyes and leaned into his hand. Just then, Madam Pomfrey burst up the stairs. Hermione pulled away to look at the mediwitch.

"Good heavens, Severus!" the woman cried. "Just because you survived multiple Death Eater attacks doesn't mean you're impervious to vanishing stairs!"

He looked at her rather blankly. "There are two of you, too!"

Poppy frowned as she ran diagnostics. "You fixed his head wound well, Hermione," she commented. "Severus, you're lucky you didn't break your neck!" Lowering her wand, she looked into his eyes. "Yes, you've got a concussion." She waved her wand around his head and said, "*Caput Resarcio*." Lowering her wand, she looked into his eyes again.

"That's better," she remarked.

His vision had cleared as he stared at Poppy. He shook his head to clear it as well. "What happened?"

"You fell," Hermione explained with a concerned look on her face. "Don't you remember?"

He furrowed his brow. "I just remember coming down the stairs, then seeing Poppy in front of me."

He thought he saw disappointment on Hermione's face. Ron came up then. "Is he fixed?"

Hermione rolled her eyes.

"Come on, Hermione, let's go."

"But..."

"Harry's waiting for us at Hogsmeade. He'll wonder what's keeping us. We have to go."

She frowned. "Severus, you're okay?"

He assessed himself and found nothing remiss. "I'm all right," he told her.

"But you can't remember anything that happened?" she asked.

He crinkled his eyes as he tried to think. "No, I can't."

"Your memory might return, Severus. It could take a while to get back what you lost, though. Of course, you may not ever regain those memories."

"I didn't say anything foolish, Professor Granger, did I?"

She looked crestfallen, and he couldn't understand why. "No, Professor Snape. No, you said nothing foolish." With that, she turned and pulled Ron away with her.

He stared after her, wishing that he had said something foolish.

The next day he skipped all meals and ducked behind a curtain when he saw Hermione off in the distance. He was so embarrassed about his graceless fall that just the thought of seeing her sent him running in the opposite direction of anywhere he knew she'd be.

He'd wanted her to notice him. Well, he'd accomplished that in the worst way possible. As he hid from her view, he decided to put his resolution on the back-burner until the next month. By then, maybe he'd be able to look her in the eye.

April

Severus was deep in thought. He couldn't understand why every time he saw Hermione she looked at him sadly. After March had disappeared and he'd finally overcome his intense embarrassment from tumbling down the staircase, he had begun to converse with her again. She'd always look to him in anticipation, but her interest seemed to wane whenever he brought up the latest Transfiguration article he wanted to dissect.

He stared at her now as she huffed and looked to her shoes.

"What is it?" he asked.

She looked quickly up at him. "What do you mean?"

"Do I depress you in some way?"

Her mouth dropped open. "No! Why would you say something like that?"

"You seem sad whenever we speak."

Her eyes searched his. Again he felt she was disappointed with something.

"Has your head healed completely?" she asked him.

He looked at her curiously. "I felt fine the day after the injury," he explained.

She smiled wanly. "I'm glad. You still can't remember what happened?"

"I assure you, Professor Granger, I have tried to remember. It has not come back to me. Maybe you could enlighten me as to what happened."

Her eyes widened, and she wrung her hands together. "I..." She cringed. "No... there really isn't anything to tell. I was just wondering. I... if it were me, it would bother me to have that gap in my memory."

"I, too, feel at a loss, not having that time accounted for."

She nodded and then looked behind her. "Oh, there's Ron. I'd better talk to him. He asked me to help him occasionally with his class. Today is one of those days I'm going to assist."

She turned and abruptly left even before he had a chance to tell her goodbye. He stared after her, debating what to make of her. She was obviously upset about something, and this was the fifth time she'd asked him about his memory since the accident. He wished he could recall what it was that happened. He feared he'd said something horrible to her, and she was just too polite to tell him.

He'd consulted Poppy, but she hadn't seen him do anything but stare at Hermione as she'd healed him. Whatever had bothered Hermione must have happened before the mediwitch arrived. Unfortunately, a Pensieve was useless in a case like this. Lost memories couldn't be retrieved for viewing as there was no frame of reference to latch on to for removal.

May

Severus stood in the greenhouse, surveying the flowers. There seemed to be an endless array spreading out in front of him in all directions. He'd decided to pick a bouquet for Hermione, but given the vast array of Pomona Sprout's greenery, he was at a loss as to where to begin. There were varieties of plants here he'd never seen. Sprout stood beside him, looking at her garden lovingly.

"What did you have in mind, Severus?" she asked.

He looked at her. He'd planned what to say earlier that morning.

"I'm experimenting with different flowers, Pomona. I'd like to use some of the nicer looking ones to see if their beauty affects potion making in any way. I'd obviously like to use some I'm unfamiliar with."

"No honking daffodils, then?" Pomona asked with a smile.

He glowered at her. "Certainly not!"

She moved among her flowers. "Feel free to wander and pick anything that strikes your fancy! I'll gather some from this grouping here."

He nodded and moved farther into the greenhouse. His eye caught sight of a unique flower growing along the back wall. It was shaped like a rose, but every petal was a different color. The effect was stunning. He made his way to the flower and inhaled its scent. Yes, he needed a few of these. As he reached out to cut one with his silver knife, Pomona shouted at him.

"No! Don't touch the exploding roses!"

Too late. As soon as Severus touched the stem, the rose flew apart. Rose petals shot into his face and hair. He stepped back, shielding his eyes as he was bombarded with the flower petals.

Pomona rushed up to him. "Oh! I'm sorry! I forgot to warn you about these roses. Their defense mechanism is to explode when someone touches them. They have to be frozen before they're cut. Oh, no! The petals are all over your hair!"

Severus brushed at his hair. "Confound it, woman, why aren't these coming out?"

Pomona grimaced. "They won't come out for twenty-four hours. That's part of the problem when they explode."

"What? You mean to tell me I have to walk around with rose petals in my hair for the rest of the day and half of tomorrow?" Severus growled.

She looked sheepishly at him. "And on the tip of your nose," she said before ducking away.

He reached up and felt the rose petal there. Looking cross-eyed down at his nose, he saw the petal was blue. He grasped it and tugged, only causing his nose to hurt. He glowered at Pomona.

"What am I to do about this?" he snarled.

"There's nothing you can do. You have to wait until tomorrow. They'll fall off then."

"Pomona!"

"I'm sorry, Severus. That's all I can tell you!"

Without another word, he stalked away.

He'd hidden away in his quarters for the rest of the day, arranging for Minerva to take his classes. The next morning he'd also been holed up, counting the hours until he was himself again. There were only seven more hours until he could show his face in public.

Minerva's head appeared in his fireplace.

"Severus, we're waiting for you."

"Waiting for me for what?"

"The staff meeting, Severus. We're all waiting."

"Minerva, you know I can't go out looking like this," he implored.

Her eyes narrowed. "I said we are waiting for you. You can hide away all day, but I expect you to attend this meeting. Now, get yourself through this Floo and into the staff room immediately."

"Minerva..."

"Now!"

Her head disappeared, leaving him gaping after her. What was he going to do? No glamour covered the hideous petals that clung to his hair and nose. Nothing spelled them off. How could she expect him to show up looking like some deranged clown? His shoulders sagged. It seemed he had no choice. Stepping to his fireplace, he threw some Floo powder into it and disappeared.

Emerging from the staff room fireplace, he was welcomed by silence and stares. That was until Weasley, who was sitting next to Hermione, decided that Snape was the funniest thing he'd ever seen. The ginger-haired man burst out laughing. That eased the tension in the room and soon everyone was laughing, including Hermione.

Pomona tried to shush them. "Please! He had an accident in the green house!"

That just caused everyone but Hermione to laugh harder. She sobered and looked carefully at him.

"You're all right?" she asked.

Her question was pushed into the background with all the laughter in the room. Weasley was slapping his knee.

"You look like a deranged clown!" He chuckled even harder as he looked at Severus' head. "The bat of the dungeons has turned into a bird! Why don't you crow for us, Severus?"

Severus scowled. Minerva cleared her throat. The room continued laughing. Hermione got up, took his arm, and turned to Minerva.

"We'll have a private meeting with you later, Minerva," she told her in a matter-of-fact way. She pushed Severus back into the Floo and sent him back to his room. A few seconds later, she appeared in front of him, brushing off the soot from the trip.

He stared at her incredulously. Once again, he'd managed for her to notice him, but once again, it was in the worst way possible. She looked up at him and couldn't stifle the giggle that escaped her mouth.

"You really look adorable with those rose petals in your hair. However, the one on your nose is a bit distracting."

She tugged at it, causing Severus to wince in pain and pull away.

"Oh! I'm sorry! I thought I could pull it off."

"Don't you think if it could be pulled off, I would have done that already?" he asked through clenched teeth.

She colored and looked away. "I'm sorry," she muttered.

He immediately regretted his outburst, but could think of nothing to say to rectify the situation. Hermione, however, had something to say.

"What happened to you?"

"Pomona Sprout's exploding rose happened to me."

Hermione's eyes widened. "She was telling me about those last month! She just started cultivating them. They're very hard to harvest."

Severus pointed to his flower-covered head. "Obviously."

Hermione giggled again, causing Severus to give her a caustic look.

"I'm sorry," she told him again, holding up her hand for emphasis. "You just look rather ridiculous, but in a cute way."

He narrowed his eyes at her. "Ridiculous... in a cute way?" He looked at her as if she'd gone daft.

"I don't know, Severus," she mused as she reached out and fluffed his hair. "This might be a new look for you."

He frowned at her. "Hermione!"

She smiled at him. "Would you like me to touch a rose so I can match you?"

He looked at her hair. "I'm not sure there would be much difference."

She frowned suddenly and pulled her hand away. "I should get back to the meeting."

"I thought you were going to wait with me."

"You don't seem to want the company," she said tightly.

He grabbed her arm as she turned. "You're upset."

"Well spotted."

"I was just kidding about your hair. It's quite pretty."

She looked back at him sourly. "Don't. I don't need your backpedaling. I've been aware of your opinion of me for a very long time now, since that crack you made in my fourth-year about my teeth."

His eyes grew wide. "Hermione... you know I had a role to play."

"That's what I kept telling myself, but it seems that your sarcasm hasn't changed since your role ended."

She turned and stalked out the door.

Severus hurried down the hallway, ignoring the snickers and whisperings of the children as he walked by. He supposed that his devilish persona was severely hampered by the flower petal stuck on his nose, but he didn't care. He was angry: angry at himself, angry at her, and angry at Pomona Sprout and her stupid exploding roses.

He quickly made his way to the greenhouse. As he looked at the flowers, his mood softened slightly. Hermione's ire was ultimately his fault. Had he not taken such pleasure in his role back when she was a student, he'd have never said such a caustic thing to her. Unfortunately, his only pleasure back then was seeing others squirm. Not the best way to seek out pleasure, he knew that. Unfortunately for him, his life at that point was not to his liking, and that was his only means to let some of his frustration out. He hadn't realized his caustic remark had wounded her so. He knew there were others just as wounded, but that didn't concern him. The irate witch who had stormed out of his room earlier, however, concerned him greatly.

Quickly, he amassed a bouquet. Steering clear of any roses, the bouquet was filled with a myriad of colors and types of flowers. He hoped this small gesture would make up for seven years of hell from him as her teacher.

He knocked on her door. She opened it and seemed to not know exactly how to act. He held the bouquet out to her.

"This is the reason my head looks like a florist shop."

She looked at the flowers in surprise.

He pushed them to her again. "Take them. They're for you."

"You brought me flowers?"

"It would seem so."

She took them and inhaled deeply. "Oh, Severus, they're lovely!"

"I'm sorry."

She looked at him in confusion.

"About before..." He looked deeply into her eyes, trying to convey his feelings. "I shouldn't have said what I did, and I should have never treated you the way I did when you were a student."

Her mouth dropped open. She snapped it shut and looked from the bouquet back to him. "Do you really mean that?"

"I was not in the best frame of mind during your school years."

She gave a quick laugh. "That's an understatement!"

"I enjoyed making students squirm far too much." He glanced down at the bouquet. "I wanted to give these to you before as a token of our friendship, but now I hope you can see them as a sign of my sorrow at treating you harshly."

"Thank you," she said slowly, scrutinizing him as she held the flowers close.

They stood in her doorway, looking awkwardly at one another.

"Well..." Severus stammered. "I... I should go."

Hermione nodded absently, not breaking eye contact. "Thank you for the flowers."

He nodded.

Once again, as she closed the door, he saw that sad look in her eye. What was he missing?

June

Six months. He'd been at his resolution for six months, and where had it gotten him? Not very far. He supposed if he wanted to, he could count his resolution completed, after all, she'd noticed him.

She'd noticed him falling down stairs and with flowers stuck in his hair. She'd noticed he was a total prat when she was a student, and she'd noticed that he made her sad whenever she was in his presence.

Now with the school year over, she would notice his absence. Well, he hoped she would, if only for a minute or two. She was not spending the summer at Hogwarts. Between visiting her parents in Australia and cavorting with that Weasley boy, she would not return until August thirty-first, right before school was to start.

"Have a pleasant summer, Hermione."

She beamed at him, and he felt his heart leap at her smile. "You too, Severus! I'll see you next term."

And with a turn she was gone.

July

Could a month possibly drag by so slowly?

August

It seemed that July went by like lightning in comparison to August. She'd actually sent him some letters. He never wrote back. What was he to say? *dream of you every night. I miss seeing your wild curls as you come down the hallway. I wish you knew how I felt about you, but I'm too much of a dunce to tell you.*

None of that would do. Nonetheless, it was how he felt. He'd dream about her every night. He missed not just her curls, but her eyes, her nose, her silly smile. He longed for her to know the truth, but he was still afraid...simply and honestly afraid. The man who stood in front of Voldemort without shying away was afraid. Perhaps he was a coward after all.

"Severus!"

Suddenly, Severus found himself in a tight embrace. He inhaled deeply, coveting Hermione's jasmine scent that he'd missed so much. She pulled back and smiled at him.

"How was your summer?"

He shrugged. "Very quiet. There were only three of us in the castle."

She laughed, and it warmed his soul. "Well, being with the Weasleys most of the summer, I can assure you it wasn't quiet!"

He frowned then, thinking of all the time Weasley had had with her, while his dreams had been filled with longing.

She frowned in response. "What is it?"

He masked his displeasure. "Nothing. You know how I feel about your friends."

She smiled. "I do," she agreed. She seemed to be searching his face, looking for something. He saw disappointment in her eyes. He opened his mouth to ask her about it just as she pulled away.

"I'd better get to my room. I've a lot of unpacking to do!" she said and hurriedly walked away.

Something niggled at the back of his mind. He watched her curiously and tried to access whatever it was, but it was elusive and fled from his prodding.

September

Severus groaned inwardly. Another Welcoming Feast... another bunch of dunderheads. He glanced to his right in surprise when he saw Hermione sit beside him. He arched an eyebrow at her.

"I love Ron, really, but I think I've had enough of his face-stuffing and mindless chatter to last a lifetime." She motioned over to him. "Besides, he told me to buzz off so he can make moves on the new Arithmancy professor."

Sure enough, Ronald Weasley was shoulder to shoulder with the pretty blonde who had taken over Professor Vector's position. Severus stared in amazement.

"I thought he and you were..."

"Ron? You thought I was seeing Ron? Do you think I have a death wish?"

Severus' head snapped around. "But... you... you are inseparable."

She shrugged. "I know where I stand with Ron. We both know we'd eventually kill each other if we ever tried to have a romantic relationship. I spend time with him because his friendship is easy, so I don't have to worry about being perfect in front of him."

Severus arched his eyebrow once again.

Hermione laughed lightly. "I spent a year camping with him. He's seen me when I haven't bathed in a week." She emphasized her words with slight shakes of her head. "We don't have any secrets. Neither do we need to impress one another."

He looked at her as she smiled at him and hope filled his heart once again. It wasn't too late to complete his resolution, and now that he knew his supposed competition was just a friend, it opened the door for him to do something more than pine away for her. But what?

Minerva interrupted his thoughts with her opening speech. He secretly eyed the woman beside him as he watched Minerva. He wanted to pull her to him and kiss her. He wanted her to know how lovely he thought she was. He needed a plan. A better one than the ones he'd come up with last school year.

He watched her through the meal. She spent a good deal of time chatting with Minerva, but she also took time to converse with him. She always looked at him with interest, and only once did he see that sad look in her eyes when he'd remarked that if there were two of her, she'd be able to sit in the library and read all day while teaching class at the same time.

Once the feast was over, Weasley made a beeline for Hermione. He nodded at Severus as he caught her attention.

"So, I'll see you tomorrow during third hour with the seventh-years."

She smiled at him. "I'll be ready."

He patted her on the back and made his way back to his blonde professor.

"What was that about?" Severus asked.

"I'm helping him in class again."

"Ah, I knew he was incompetent, but having someone else coming in to teach..." He shook his head disapprovingly. "That's a bit absurd."

She slapped him on the arm. "He's doing the teaching, you git. He just wants an extra sparring partner."

Severus rolled his eyes. "Believe what you will..."

She shook her head and laughed. "Good night, Severus."

"Good night... Hermione."

He ran as quickly as he could. He bounded up the stairs and ran some more. He burst through the infirmary doors, skidding to a stop when he saw Hermione unconscious on the bed and Weasley pacing back and forth.

"I don't know what happened!" Ron cried with a flourish of his hands. "One minute everything was under control, the next minute, Harper Connolly sent Hermione crashing into the wall. I didn't think much of it, because that happens all the time, but when she didn't wake up..."

"What was she hit with?" Severus asked as he looked worriedly at the woman on the bed who was being fussed over by Poppy.

"That's the thing, Harper doesn't know. She was experimenting with a Jelly-Leg Jinx and a stunner she'd created herself. She combined the two, and now Hermione won't wake up."

"Where is the girl?"

"Snape, it was an accident. She's upset enough; you don't need to berate her," Ron admonished.

"I have no intention of berating her, you idiot! I want her memories!"

"Oh..." Ron pointed behind a curtain. Severus stalked over and found Connolly with her head in her hands, crying.

"Miss Connolly, might I ask a favor?"

The girl looked up.

"Could we put your memory of the curse into a Pensieve? Perhaps we can figure out how to counteract the spell."

"No."

"I beg your pardon?" Severus asked harshly.

"No, you can't look." The girl's face was filled with fear.

"Why not? Don't you want to help Professor Granger?"

"You can't see! I won't let you!"

Severus bent low so he could look into the girl's eyes.

"What are you keeping to yourself?" he asked softly.

"I just don't want you to see!"

"Give me the memories, child, or I'll take them myself!"

"You can't do that! I won't let you see! You can't!"

Severus' calm shattered. His concern for Hermione drove him. He entered her mind unbidden. The girl stiffened beneath his grasp, but he didn't care. He rifled through her memories until he found the one he'd come for. In a few seconds, he'd shoved the girl back and snarled at her.

"You mixed an Unforgivable with a Jelly-Legs Jinx? Do you know what you could have done?"

The girl was heaving in gulps of air, trying to contain herself. Tears were flowing freely down her face.

Ron stormed over. "You used an Unforgivable?"

Harper nodded. "I thought combining it would counteract the seriousness of the curse!"

"Are you daft, girl?" Severus snarled. "Didn't you realize that you could have killed her?"

"No! I thought it would just be a little fun!"

Severus' fists clenched at his sides. "Unforgivables weren't created for fun!" he cried. "They are called Unforgivables for a reason."

He wheeled around at Weasley. "Haven't you taught these students anything?!" he roared.

Ron looked to Severus crossly. "Look, they know all about this stuff. We've been talking about that on a daily basis."

Severus bent low once again and sneered at Connolly. "You'd better hope she survives!"

Straightening, he returned to her bed. Poppy put down her wand. "I assumed it was the Cruciatus when I heard what Miss Connolly said. That's right, isn't it, Severus?"

Severus nodded, his eyes never leaving Hermione.

"I've countered the effects that I can predict. I'm not sure if there will be any other side effects."

"Why is she still unconscious?" Severus asked softly.

"I don't know."

He closed his eyes and grimaced inwardly. "What can be done?"

Poppy shrugged. "Nothing right now. We'll have to wait until she's awake to assess what other damage there is."

"When will that be?" Severus asked, dreading the response.

"I don't know.... I just don't know."

Late that night, Severus snuck into the infirmary. He sat next to Hermione's bedside and took her hand. He studied her face. She seemed peaceful, that was a good sign, right? His heart filled with grief. What if she never awoke?

"Please... Hermione... please wake up." He gave a short laugh. "You'll ruin my plans if you don't."

October

She hadn't awakened. He'd spent every hour of his free time by her bed. Everyone was talking about his vigil, but he didn't care. He just wanted her to wake up.

"Hermione? I'm back. You must be sick of me, but I won't leave you alone. I will be here for you when you awaken."

His hand was holding hers, and he squeezed it. "Can you feel that? You can squeeze back, you know. Please? Just try."

He frowned at the lack of success. Leaning forward, he brushed her hair back. "So very beautiful."

He was back on the stairway landing, feeling bewildered.

"I never knew there were two of you, Hermione."

Her concerned look caused him to laugh a bit. "May I have one of you?"

Now she was sputtering and looking at him incredulously. She waved her wand over him.

"It must be a concussion," she muttered to herself.

"So very beautiful," he muttered back.

Reaching out, he pulled her to him and kissed her. He felt her stiffen beneath him and wondered if he'd overstepped his bounds, but soon she was kissing him with equal fervor. He pulled back and smiled shyly at her.

"I've wanted to do that for a long time now," he admitted. "This too," he whispered as he ran his fingers through her hair. She closed her eyes and leaned into his hand. Just then, Madam Pomfrey burst up the stairs. Hermione pulled away to look at the mediwitch.

Severus' eyes snapped open. He stared at the ceiling in his room and tried to control his breathing. It was still the middle of the night, but he knew there would be no more sleep for him. His memory had returned, and he was shocked at all that he hadn't remembered. Hermione had known all along! Her sad eyes came back to him. Suddenly, her previous behavior made sense; her sadness made sense. But what exactly did that sadness mean?

He rushed out of his bed and gathered his robes about him. Picking up his wand, he left his rooms and headed up the stairs.

Severus took Hermione's hand. "I've remembered," he told her. "I've remembered the kiss and what I said." He stared at Hermione's still form and wondered how exactly he should proceed.

"Was that why you always looked at me so sadly? I'm at a loss, Hermione. Did you want me to remember or were you feeling pity for the fool who'd fallen for you? Can you even hear me? Please wake up. I need to know if what I feel for you is folly. Please, Hermione... know that there's someone here who cares for you and wants you whole again."

He studied her face, but there was no change. Frowning, he kept his vigil. Being that it was so late, he was suddenly overcome with exhaustion. As Severus reached out and stroked her hair, gazing into her face again, he fell asleep. His head rested on her chest, and his hand held hers in its grasp.

He wasn't sure how much time had passed before he felt fingers stroking his hair. He groaned as they massaged his scalp, not daring to open his eyes for fear that this dream would disappear, and he'd be alone. As his mind focused more, he realized just where his head rested. Remembering where he'd been before falling asleep, he rose quickly, hoping beyond hope that Hermione was awake.

She was smiling at him. He barked out a laugh before composing himself and pushing his excitement into the nether regions of his psyche.

"You're awake," he remarked cautiously.

"And so are you," Hermione responded. "How long have I been unconscious?"

"Over a month."

She sat up hurriedly. "You've got to be kidding me! It only seemed like a few days."

"You had a sense of time?"

"I was conscious the whole time," she explained. "I just couldn't move or speak."

Fear filled him, but he let none of it show in his face. "You were awake? You could hear everything that went on around you?"

Hermione smiled shyly. "I could."

"You heard everything that was said in your presence?" he asked in astonishment. He was uncertain whether to run from the room or stay and figure this whole mess out.

She nodded her head.

"You... know how I feel about you?"

Hermione smiled then and reached for his hand. "I do. I also felt your hand in mine a lot of the time." She squeezed him, and he looked down at their clasped hands incredulously.

"I've remembered what happened back in March on the stairwell."

"I know" Hermione reassured him. "You told me, remember?"

He stared at her, trying to read her. He found he couldn't. "Do you have an answer for me, then?" he asked softly.

She nodded. "I do."

He waited, but she said nothing. "Would you care to enlighten me?"

Squeezing his hand again, she looked into his eyes. "I have never felt pity for you, Severus. I just hoped you could remember that you had feelings for me."

"I never forgot," he whispered, his voice choking up a bit.

"I wish I had known that before."

"It was all part of my great, Slytherin plan."

"Ah, yes, this plan you keep talking about. You told me that I'm ruining it."

"You were. It was impossible for it to work if you were unconscious."

"So, now you can do what you've planned?"

"It seems my plan was accomplished without me even knowing it," Severus answered as he rose and sat next to her on the bed.

She gave him a quizzical look.

"You see... at the beginning of the year I made two New Year's resolutions. One was to take one hundred points from Gryffindor per day. Unfortunately, I could only do that one for a month."

Hermione frowned crossly. "That was a resolution?" she exclaimed. "If that was your first resolution, I'm not sure I want to know what your second one was."

"I think you might," he replied, his eyebrow arching seductively.

She stared at him for a while, then huffed in exasperation. "Well, what was your second resolution?"

"To get you to notice me."

Hermione gaped at him.

"It seems I accomplished that back in March and didn't even realize it."

"How could I not notice you, Severus Snape?"

"Yes, well, I was hoping for a more positive impression than the many times you'd noticed me in the past. I was hoping you'd see past the stern beast and possibly find me worthy of your time."

Hermione reached out and stroked his cheek. "Oh, Severus. I have always admired and respected you. It wasn't much of a jump to become attracted to you. I just wish you'd said something sooner. A New Year's resolution doesn't have to take an entire year to fulfill."

He smirked at her. "I understand that; however, I found it much harder than I had expected, especially since every encounter we had for a while wound up with me making a fool of myself."

She chuckled. "You did look rather funny with a head full of flowers, but I can't recall any other time you made a fool of yourself."

"I simply found myself stumbling in every sense of the word when it came to garnering your attention."

Her hand moved up to his hair, and she ran it through her fingertips. "You must have done something right because here we are."

He reached up and grasped her hand in his. "You want this? You're sure?"

She smiled at him then, pulled him to her and kissed his lips. "I do," she said after she'd pulled away. "Just as much as you do."

He pulled her close and cradled her head in his hands as his lips found hers again. Never had anything felt so right. Never had anyone's lips tasted so sweet. He treasured her even more because of the time he'd taken to cultivate this. He never wanted to let her go.

Poppy had the bad timing to appear right then. Severus pulled away from Hermione quickly when he heard her exclamation that Hermione had awakened.

"Of course she has," he grouched. "Can't you see we're busy?"

Poppy folded her arms and glared at Severus. "You, mister, will leave Hermione alone! She's been sick for over a month, and I need to examine her. She'll also need her rest at least until tomorrow."

"Poppy, I feel fine!" Hermione declared.

Poppy gave her a stern look. "You will need rest!" Turning to Severus, she shooed him from the bed. "Now go! You can come back in an hour, but no snogging!"

Severus opened his mouth to protest, but he knew it was useless. He gritted his teeth but fought to be civil. "Fine, I will do as you say." He faced Hermione. "I will return in an hour."

With that, he turned abruptly and began to stalk away, only to stop mid-stride when Poppy called after him.

"I'm glad you two worked everything out. You make a lovely couple."

Severus smirked to himself but didn't turn. He continued his quick strides after a second and left Hermione to her rest.

December

Time had flown since Hermione had awakened. She had been weak at first from all that time being bedridden. Severus helped her all he could, and she soon recovered. Severus now found his days pleasantly taken up by the witch he'd come to cherish. She bathed him in affection, and he finally felt a sense of belonging that had eluded him all his life.

Severus knocked on her door and found himself ambushed by his witch after she'd flung the door open.

"Happy Christmas, Severus!" she exclaimed before kissing him all over his face. He grinned happily as he moved into her rooms, still holding her in his arms.

"Happy Christmas, Herm..." His salutation was cut off by her adamant lips on his. "... mione," he sighed after a long silence filled with passion.

She grabbed his hand and dragged him to the sofa. He'd never seen her quite so excited before. She placed a gaily wrapped package in his lap and jumped with excitement. "Open it!" she cried.

He smiled at her as he handed her a small, green package. "Open yours first."

She looked from him to the package. "All right," she said with a smile before taking the box and ripping the paper off it. Lifting the lid, she pulled out a finely crafted mirror. It had an ornate silver edging that swirled around it in arcs.

"Oh, it's lovely!" she said. She pulled it up to look into it and frowned. "Severus, I can't see anything in it."

Severus pulled a smaller, less ornate version of the mirror from his pocket and looked into it.

"That's funny, Hermione. I see the most beautiful woman in the world."

Hermione gasped as she saw Severus' reflection smiling back at her. "Oh, it's a two-way mirror!" Her eyes shot up to his. "We can see each other even when we aren't together. Thank you!"

Her arms shot around him, and she hugged him tightly.

"Now, open mine," she directed when she'd pulled back from the hug.

Severus unwrapped the golden paper and opened the box. His eyes grew wide when he saw what was inside. He lifted up a crystal globe filled with purple smoke which swirled around furiously.

"Hermione," he said tentatively. "You know I am not one for Divination."

"It's not a crystal ball. Just hold it and wait. It's charmed to only respond to you."

Slowly, the swirling smoke dissipated and revealed a smaller version of Severus and Hermione dancing together within its confines. Severus was dressed in a tuxedo, and Hermione had on a flowing green dress. Around and around the little space Severus and Hermione twirled. She looked up at him lovingly, and he looked down at her with an expression that said more than words possibly could say.

"How did you do this, Hermione? It's remarkable!"

Hermione threaded her arm through his and leaned her head on his shoulder. "It took some serious spell work, I'll admit, but it was well worth it."

Severus placed the globe back in the box and set it next to him on the couch. He turned back to Hermione. "I'll treasure it always."

She smiled at him. He reached out and caressed her hair. She moved in and placed a kiss on his lips. Pulling back, she looked at him earnestly.

"You are the greatest gift I have ever received," she whispered to him.

His heart filled with emotion. He looked into her eyes and found the courage to say what he'd been trying to tell her for weeks now. "Hermione, I love you."

Her eyes filled with tears as she searched his face. "I never thought I'd hear you say that to me. Oh, Severus, I love you, too!"

She flung her arms around him and pulled her to him, searing him with her kiss. He wrapped his arms around her, and he kissed her like he'd never done before. The realization that she loved him as equally as he loved her undid him. His hand shook as he cradled her face in it, kissing her with abandon.

They finally pulled apart, love radiating from both of their faces.

"Happy Christmas," Severus whispered.

January

Severus Snape tapped the feather quill to his lips as he stared off into space. Once again he had his journal open on his lap. Once again he was thinking about New Year's resolutions, and once again, he could only come up with one thing he'd like to improve upon.

He shrugged to himself. "What can one improve when one's life is perfect?"

It had certainly been a strange year, but he wouldn't have changed a thing. His new life was filled with companionship and love. He felt a lightness about him that he'd never experienced before. He never wanted to go back to how he'd been. He always wanted this new happiness to be in his life.

Smiling, he put his quill to the paper and began to scribble.

New Year's Resolution:

He paused and smiled as he thought of how to accomplish his new task. This year, his resolution would be incredibly fun to fulfill. That is, if the outcome was what he was expecting.

He began to scribble again, finishing the last word in a flourish. Looking at what he wrote, his heart began to hammer within him.

Yes, this is the perfect thing for me to accomplish.

A knock on his door startled him out of his musings. He grinned. Hermione was meeting him, and they were going for a walk around the lake. He tossed his book onto the bed and strode out of the room.

Left behind, the book lay open to the page he'd just completed. In small, spiky writing, his resolution proudly filled the center of the page.

New Year's Resolution: Get Hermione to marry me.

The End

A/N: The original prompt for this story is from brenamarie. Unfortunately, I erased it in a fit of cleaning up my notes to myself, but it went something like this: Severus makes

a New Year's resolution. Track his progress in trying to fulfill it.

This story is dedicated to morethansirius who is a wonderful inspiration to everyone she meets. I had the good fortune to stumble upon her as a cheerleader for the Severus Big Bang. The greatest thing I got from the SB4 was getting to know her and becoming her friend.

Thank you to brenamarie for the alpha read, and to slytherinlaurel as beta reader.

--11/17--I know I posted this somewhere, at some time, a long time ago, but I cannot find it and have no idea whether it was for some promptfest or what. I hope you all enjoy this read. As you may have figured out, I've been examining my hard drive and have found several stories I want archived here. Hopefully you are all reaping the benefit of my search. I may even finish one or two that have been lying dormant.