

Men With Brooms

by Wenches of SASS

Hermione does not like flying - is it because she's scared, or because she's never been properly taught? A SASSY Production, in the form of a Round Robin

1. Falling With Style (<i>Michmak</i>)

Chapter 1 of 7

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Chapter One: Falling with Style

by Michmak

From Michmak: this is a SASS-y production and will be written round-robin style be several SASS-y wenches. We have no idea where it is going or how it will get there, but what the heck...the journey is half the fun. Chapter One is written by me and I believe the wonderful Goblynn is in charge of chapter two....please R&R and let us know what you think.

She had always hated flying - an irrational fear of falling kept her feet firmly planted on the ground. She didn't even like to fly in planes, for Merlin's sake, and flying by broom was far worse. For one thing, brooms didn't have seatbelts. For another thing, they didn't have windshields, and Hermione was less than fond of swallowing bugs or having them get stuck in her teeth. Harry had told her if she would just keep her mouth shut when she flew bugs wouldn't be a concern, but she was too busy screaming at the time to pay any attention to him.

It grated on her nerves that flying was the one area in which she truly failed as a witch. She just didn't get it - didn't understand the thrill her friends seemed to get at liftoff; hated the way the wind made her hair even bushier, as if she had just walked backwards through a wind tunnel; detested the way the air chapped her face and made her ears pop incessantly.

No, flying was not for her. Never had been, never would be. She had decided at the end of her first year to leave the flying for the birds and the other bird-brains who seemed to love the thrill of rushing hundreds of feet above ground; the only thing between them and certain death a thin piece of wood jammed in the crack of their collective asses.

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They were at it again. Quidditch and brooms! Brooms and Quidditch! As if there weren't more important things in life than chasing after some small golden snitch on a piece of wood. Hermione was doing her level best to ignore Ron and Harry as she re-read her notes.

"But that's just an urban myth, isn't it?" Harry asked Ron. "It didn't really happen, did it?"

"Didn't happen? Harry!" Ron rolled his eyes, "Of COURSE it happened. I'm telling you, Bill was there - he saw it all. Too bad, too. Bill says if it weren't for his tragic accident, Filo Fabrizius would have been the best Quidditch player ever - better even than Wronski."

"I don't believe you," Harry stated flatly. "It's just not possible. How does anybody FLY headfirst into a gaggle of Canadian geese? During a pick-up Quidditch match? In the middle of *Batavia*. Do they even *have* Canadian geese in *Batavia*?"

Ron shrugged, "I'm just telling you the story as I heard it from Bill and he swears it's the honest truth. Man, I would have loved to have been there!"

Hermione slammed her book shut and looked at her two friends in annoyance, "Honestly, Ron you really would have wanted to see a man plummet over 1000 feet to his death? And Harry have you learned NOTHING in Hagrid's classes? Of course, there are Canadian geese in *Batavia* what do you think the *Batavian* Snaggle-Toothed Dragon eats? Now, are you two going to study or are you going to sit there all night wasting my time talking about Quidditch and flying?"

Harry looked at her and grinned, "You're just angry because you can't fly."

"No, I'm angry because you two are idiots and you're going to fail potions if you don't get your assignment done. And why would I want to fly, if there are hoards of dangerous geese out there, waiting for an opportunity to knock witches and wizards out of the sky?"

"I don't think the geese killed him on purpose, Hermione," Ron replied. "I mean, they have just as much right to enjoy a quick fly-around as the rest of us do. Really, I think it must have been Filo's fault he should have looked where he was going."

Hermione wanted to hit him with something and quickly considered smacking him with her book, before deciding the poor book had done nothing to deserve such treatment. "Who said it was the geese's fault? Certainly not I! I think any fool who...who...larks around on broomsticks....invading the territories and natural environments of actual flying creatures whether they are geese or...or...or....Snaggle-Toothed Dragons deserves whatever happens to them!"

Harry smirked at Ron, who was looking completely befuddled at Hermione's outburst, "Don't worry about it, Ron she's just angry because she can't fly, like I said. She can dress it up all she likes, but the reason she doesn't fly is because she can't, not because she doesn't want to 'invade the natural environments of actual flying creatures.'" This last part he said in fair imitation of Hermione's voice.

"Harry Potter you are a PRAT!" Hermione yelled. "Go go go fly into a gaggle of geese, why don't you and leave me alone!"

The two boys watched her storm out of the Gryffindor common room with surprised looks on their faces.

"What's wrong with her?" Harry asked Ron in bemusement. "I was only teasing."

Ron shrugged, "Never tease Hermione, mate especially about flying. I think it bothers her that she can't seem to get the hang of it. You just hit a sore spot with her, that's all."

~~*~*~*~*

Perhaps she could get some studying done on top of the Astronomy Tower. She knew neither Harry or Ron would ever look for her there, and since Harry no longer had the Marauder's Map they wouldn't be able to find her either.

She knew she had flown off the handle a few moments ago, but honestly how much could one person put up with? They knew she hated listening to talk about Quidditch all the time and they knew she wasn't fond of flying, so why did it seem that was all they ever talked about?

Sighing, she pulled her hair back off her face and quickly fastened it into a pony-tail at the nape of her neck. It got pretty windy on top of the astronomy tower and she didn't want to be brushing out gnarls for a week.

It was already quite dark out when she finally reached her destination. Muttering a quick illuminating spell over the pages of her book, she sat with her back against the turret wall and tried to finish reading.

The words all blurred in front of her. She hadn't yelled at Harry because he was right, had she? She was far too sensible a girl to actually let Harry's comment about her not being able to fly get to her, wasn't she? It wasn't as if he was even saying something that wasn't true she couldn't fly and everyone knew it. It didn't bother her in the least.

Did it?

Sighing, she closed her eyes and leaned her head back against the cold flagstone. She had flown on Buckbeak's back in third year with Harry and Sirius and had found the ride quite invigorating. Was riding the back of a Hippogriff really all that different from riding a broom?

Well, for one thing Buckbeak's back was far broader than a broomstick could ever hope to be. There had been something rather sizeable there for her legs to grip to and while they were flying, when she looked down she didn't feel as if there was nothing underneath her.

Brooms were so...so...*unbalancey* and insubstantial. Just look at what a strong gust of wind and the Whomping Willow had done to Harry's old Firebolt. There hadn't been a piece left that was big enough for Hagrid to even use as a toothpick by the time the twins had retrieved them all. How was a girl supposed to feel secure perched on something so slim?

It wasn't as if she was scared of heights, after all she was currently sitting at the top of the highest tower at Hogwarts, with only a thin battlement keeping her from being practically on the edge of the tower. If she stood up and peered over the wall, would it make her faint? Give her vertigo? She was pretty sure it wouldn't.

Slowly moving to her feet, she stood on her tip-toes and tried to look over the flagstone walls to the ground far below, but found she wasn't tall enough to see anything.

Just how high up was she, anyway? Gingerly placing her notebook near her feet, she pulled herself up the wall by her arms and leaned well into a wide crevasse between the bricks. If she twisted to the left *just* so and tilted her hips sideways, she should be able to see the ground quite easily.

Foot here...other foot there...hand on this small outcropping and voila! The wind was whistling through the large crack she had managed to stuff herself into, buffeting her face and robes and Hermione grinned into it. This wasn't bad at all felt good, actually. Now all she needed to do was stick her head out of the wall...

And that was when she saw him a solitary shape, a black shadow sweeping across the face of the moon. His robes were streaming out behind him, swirling with the force of the winds around him. She watched in awe as the shadowy figure shot straight up in the air, before abruptly changing direction and plummeting straight downwards again. She could almost swear she heard the sound of deep chocolate laughter racing towards her on the wind.

She inched forward a bit more, hoping to get a better glimpse of the mysterious man, intent on learning if it really was laughter she heard streaming behind him and not the abject screams of terror one would expect from a man plunging to his death.

Where had he gone to? She had lost track of his downward trajectory as she had moved forward and she could no longer see him. Scanning the sky anxiously, she tried to control the roiling in her stomach as it occurred to her that maybe he hadn't been able to turn his broom before hitting the ground.

Where was he? Inching forward a bit more, she chewed her lip worriedly and adjusted her legs so that she was now almost standing, giving her more mobility in her upper body and enabling her to lean out just a bit further.

Where was he?

Where was he?

Where...

"Miss Granger! What in all the circles of Dante's Hell are you doing crawling through the wall at the top of the Astronomy Tower at midnight!" It wasn't the voice that scared her so much as the sudden appearance of its owner, hanging in the air a mere three feet in front of her. Snape? He was the mysterious flyer?

Jerking upwards, she cracked her head viciously against the top of the hole she had managed to insert herself into, screaming. Letting go of the bit of protruding rock she had been holding with her right hand, she swiftly brought it to her head in an automatic motion of protection, bending forward even more so as she did so. Her other hand had flown to her chest in an effort to keep her fast-beating heart from exploding in shock.

The wind was whipping around her and Professor Snape was staring at her in horrified disbelief as she smiled at him weakly. "Professor Snape, you fly beautifully," she managed to murmur before she passed out, slowly somersaulting from the crevasse in the astronomy tower and plummeting to her death.

A/N: LOL evil cliffie. Please keep in mind, crazy meds and lack of sleep will make anyone nuts not just me.

Learning to Fly Pink Floyd

Into the distance, a ribbon of black

Stretched to the point of no turning back

A flight of fancy on a windswept field

Standing alone my senses reeled

A fatal attraction holding me fast, how

Can I escape this irresistible grasp?

Can't keep my eyes from the circling skies

Tongue-tied and twisted just an earth-bound misfit, I

Ice is forming on the tips of my wings

Unheeded warnings, I thought I thought of everything

No navigator to guide my way home

Unladen, empty and turned to stone

A soul in tension that's learning to fly

Condition grounded but determined to try

Can't keep my eyes from the circling skies

Tongue-tied and twisted just an earth-bound misfit, I

Above the planet on a wing and a prayer,

My grubby halo, a vapour trail in the empty air,

Across the clouds I see my shadow fly

Out of the corner of my watering eye

A dream unthreatened by the morning light

Could blow this soul right through the roof of the night

There's no sensation to compare with this

Suspended animation, a state of bliss

Can't keep my eyes from the circling skies

Tongue-tied and twisted just an earth-bound misfit, I

2. Descent to Darkness (<i>Zambonigirl</i>)

Chapter 2 of 7

Hermione does not like flying - is it because she's scared, or because she's never been properly taught? A SASSY Production, in the form of a Round Robin

Chapter Two: Descent To Darkness

by Zambonigirl

Zambonigirl here! I know that Goblynn was supposed to take on chapter two, but her phantom fishie is keeping her a little under the weather right now, so we switched. Fear not, Goblynn will take over chapter three.

For those of you looking for actual humor, you're probably not going to find any in this chapter. Sorry. I just couldn't make Snape's childhood humorous. I added a song ala Mich at the end, though, to soften the blow, so to speak. I hope you enjoy, and I hope you like long chapters! Also, thanks for the great reviews of Michmak's chapter, she really appreciated them, as all the SaSSy girls did.

Flying was the only thing he had left that was his, all his, pure freedom. He was his own man on his broom, beholden to no one, only the wind and the sky. He could fly as high or low as his imagination would allow him, and in the stillness of the night, when no one else was around, he could cast off his severe persona and laugh away his pain.

The first time he had ever been on a broom was when he was seven. Sirius Black had been given a Windrider for his birthday, so Snape's father bought him a newer model for Christmas. The animosity between Snape and Black had started long before Hogwarts, long before they were sorted into rival houses.

But the broom represented more to Snape than just a catalyst to make Sirius green with envy. The first moment that he took the broom handle from his father, after a brief demonstration of how to ride one-as if he didn't know already-he could feel the power within his grasp. If he wanted to go somewhere, he would be there almost immediately. He could fly to the moon, he was sure of it.

And so, he took the broom handle and straddled it, then kicked off the ground. It was as if the broom was connected to his mind as he began to ascend towards the heavens, riding as high as he could go in the crisp winter air. Snow began to fall, and he rode towards the clouds to catch the newest, smallest flakes on his tongue as the wind whipped around his cloak and his hair became damp with melting snow. It was a delicious feeling of freedom as he increased his speed by leaning forward lower, and thoughts of somersaults and corkscrews filled his head as he remembered all the Quidditch games he had seen.

Gripping tightly, he held his breath and began to try and imitate his heroes, and was surprised when he righted himself perfectly after performing a simple trick.

He could fly! He could do it! Oh, how the heavens had opened in his mind, and a gale of laughter followed in his wake as he realized his newfound freedom. He ~~was~~ flying!

For the first time in all his seven years, Snape felt joyful.

From there, he went on to Hogwarts where he was forced into a class to 'learn' how to fly. He had protested to his father that he already knew how to fly, and that was when he learned about Mudbloods. Why should *he* be forced to endure a class to teach him what he already knew just because there were other children that didn't know how to ride a broom, who shouldn't be allowed into Hogwarts in the first place? His father agreed that it was unfair, but what could either of them do? It wasn't as though they could openly fight against these Mudbloods infiltrating their way of life, was it?

Resolutely, Snape had taken the required class and passed, though his first class had been traumatizing. As he attempted to mount his broom, it began to buck uncontrollably, and one of the Gryffindor Mudbloods had the nerve to laugh at him! A Mudblood! And to make things worse, it was all her fault. If the Mudbloods didn't infiltrate Hogwarts and abuse the school brooms with their untalented riding, his broom wouldn't be bucking!

He still wasn't good enough, however, to join the Quidditch team in his second year, and his father regaled him day after day during the Christmas holidays that Black was on the Gryffindor team, and he was tired of hearing about it. Snape diligently worked to make his father's dream come true, and spent all of his spare time in the Quidditch Pitch, working on new moves, attempting to become better. He had to. His father wanted this! He wanted this! After all, he was a Pureblood, and all magical things should come to him far easier than they came to Mudbloods, yet there were Mudbloods playing along with Black on the Gryffindor team.

Lucius Malfoy, the seventh-year captain of the Slytherin team, took Snape under his wing, and they practiced valiantly day after day during the second half of Snape's second year. Malfoy talked about how unfair it was that they were forced to be in school with Mudbloods while they were Purebloods, and Severus found an outlet to vent his frustration, and Lucius was more than sympathetic.

When Malfoy graduated, Snape felt that he had lost his only friend, and when he didn't make the Quidditch team again in his third year, his father continued to plague him. Couldn't he learn to ride better? How dare he disgrace his family in this way? Didn't he understand that there were Mudbloods riding better than he did?

Snape assured his father that he was riding as well as he could. That Christmas, he was told to remain at school. His father and mother had other engagements to attend to, and they could not bring him along.

He knew the truth, though. He knew that his father would not be able to brag about his Quidditch-playing son to his other friends, so what good was he?

Lucius Malfoy sent him a Christmas letter-an invitation to a party at his family home, and Snape sought permission from his parents to go. His father sent him back a permission letter, and a personal note to make every effort to become better acquainted with Lucius. His father stressed that the alliance could be the most important of his life.

His broom now hopelessly outdated, and with any chance for fame as a Quidditch player remote, Severus gave up on flying for any reason other than transportation, an issue that remained in great contention in his family. His father insisted that with Malfoy's influence on his other teammates, coupled with constant practice, he was sure to make the team.

Severus was invited to Malfoy's house over the summer holiday after spending only a few days in his family house. His father was invited to dinner often, and Lucius and his father often alluded to happenings among the Pureblood wizards to work out the Mudbloods from their society. It was disgraceful! They would argue at dinners, Severus looking on and absorbing all of what was said. How could their children possibly learn properly if there were so many Mudbloods around? Mudbloods had to be taught basic wand use, basic spells, basic potions! Any Pureblood child would be aware of these techniques from watching his parents. Why, Purebloods were given practice wands as children!

A list was made of the Purebloods currently residing in Hogwarts. Severus snorted when Potter, Black and Pettigrew were brought up.

"Potter is ever after a Mudblood called Lily Evans, and Black has been disowned by his family."

"And Pettigrew?" Mr. Malfoy prodded.

"He's so busy worshiping Black and Potter and Lupin that he cares not for anything else. He's a useless boy, if you ask me. Hardly good at charms or potions."

It was the first time he had spoken at one of these dinners, and he almost regretted it at first. But then, all eyes moved to him, and he found that what he had to say was considered important to them. Even to his father!

Feeling encouraged, Severus continued to weigh the merits of his other classmates, and by the end of the evening, they had a list compiled of students and parents, and unknowingly, Severus contributed to the rise of Lord Voldemort by supplying names for followers.

None of that would have made a difference to him at any rate, for he spent the summer with Lucius Malfoy, riding Lucius's brand-new Cleansweep and learning new tricks. Between making friends with a man that his father obviously respected and the fact that he would now have an even better chance at making the Quidditch team since Lucius was teaching him again, Snape spent the summer in bliss.

In August, just before he was to take a trip to Diagon Alley and buy his new school things, Lucius brought Snape into his bedroom with a cryptic smile.

"Now I'm going to show you why being a Pureblood is truly so grand, my friend."

With a flourish, he opened the door, revealing two beautiful blondes in skimpy clothing lounging on the floor and listening to phonograph records. They immediately stood and went to Lucius, placing kisses on his cheeks at the same time. He kissed them back, and then indicated Snape, who at nearly fifteen was already experienced with his own arousal. He was not prepared for the feelings he felt when both women turned to him and kissed him in the same way.

"My friend Severus is a virgin," Lucius said. "Do either of you think you can help him with that?"

One of the girls put her hand directly on his arousal and smirked. "Oh, from the feel of things, it would be a pleasure."

"A pleasure," the other one purred while biting his ear.

At first, Severus had felt self-conscious as Lucius watched, sitting on the edge of the bed with his arms crossed and an unreadable smirk on his lips, but then one of the girls knelt down and pulled his robe apart, and he found that he couldn't even bring himself to care if his own mother walked in at that moment.

When Severus had been divested of his virginity and felt sated, Lucius took the prettier of the two girls and told Severus that he would show him how to give pleasure to a lady in the proper way. Severus then watched in rapture as Lucius brought the girl to climax four times before he finally came. Severus was then encouraged to do the same to the other girl, right on the bed where Lucius was now laying, kissing his conquest.

Severus managed to bring the girl to climax twice, once with his hand, and once with his mouth, but came too quickly inside of her. Far from discouraged, the girl simply laughed and held him to her, her hands working on herself while Severus grew hard once more inside of her. Beside him, Lucius moved his face to Severus's ear and began to whisper words of encouragement and direction as Severus began to move again. He told Severus to keep going, no matter how it felt, to not give in to the urge to climax. He had to think about the girl, think about her pleasure, about how she *must* enjoy what he was doing to her. If he could make her enjoy it, she would give him the world, she would tell him anything, she would love him and worship him.

With those words, Severus felt the girl beneath him begin to twitch around him, though he was unsure at the time what it meant. She scratched into his back and arched her breasts against his chest and bit his shoulder. She screamed and exulted him, begged him to never stop, begged him to love her, begged him to want her. Severus felt the power he held over the girl. If he stopped, he knew that she would do anything to keep him from leaving her. Lucius affirmed that in one ear while the girl whispered similar words in his other ear. He felt powerful and strong and magnificent. He had discovered the secrets of the universe, and he would never let go. The girls at Hogwarts would be gagging for him!

When she came, he came, and they ground against each other for a moment until Lucius pulled Severus off.

"Not too much, friend," Lucius whispered. "She'll come back for you if you don't give her too much."

What Lucius had said proved to be true. What made matters better was that the prettier of the girls-Bellatrix Black- was a seventh-year Slytherin, and word of his prowess quickly spread through the Slytherin ranks like wildfire, causing the girls to love him and the boys to hate him. He actually found that he didn't mind it too much. Unfortunately, it kept him off the Quidditch team, as none of the members would even let him try out. The team captain had even laughed in his face and told him to go back to his harem.

That was precisely what Severus did. He walked back into the common room, grabbed a random third-year by the hand, and showed her that she didn't need to date the captain of the Quidditch team with him around. After that, he was given a wide berth by the other males in Slytherin, unless Potter and Black decided to torment him. Then the Slytherin boys would suddenly appear out of nowhere and egg them on.

In retaliation, Severus took pictures of himself and Bellatrix and sent them to Black. Bella started to teach him how to defend himself. In front of Bella, Severus performed his first Unforgivable on a second-year Mudblood while she praised him for his form.

She had performed fellatio on him while he watched the boy suffer from Cruciatus, pain meeting pleasure in the same room. Afterward, Bella taught Severus how to use an Obliviate on the boy, and they left him on a grassy knoll to be found whenever someone wandered out that way. Severus felt safe. After all, who would suspect a skinny fourth-year of performing an Unforgivable?

The only thing that ruined that day was when he received a letter from his father berating him for not making the Quidditch team again. Now he had to deal with both Sirius and Regulus playing for their respective houses without a Snape representing in the game! Severus was told to practice even harder, for at least an hour every day. He would make the team the following year if only he would practice more!

Severus decided that he no longer cared for flying or Quidditch. In fact, it would not be until he became head of Slytherin house that Quidditch would hold any meaning for him again. During the matches in his school years, he could be found under the bleachers with at least one Pureblood bird, finding out the information that Lucius had requested.

Yes, Lucius had become his closest confidante. Lucius would Owl Severus with the name of a bird, and the information that he would need to find out about her family. Severus did not understand for a few more years what Lucius was gathering information for, but at the time, he really didn't worry too much about it. He possessed a power over the girls of the school that no other wizard possessed.

And while he worked on the girls, Bellatrix worked on the boys.

Flying was certainly his first pleasure, but it had disappointed him. He decided that there were more ways to gain fame than by playing for the British Quidditch team, and if the reaction from the girls at Hogwarts was any indication, he was on the right track to becoming immortal.

Of course, pleasing a teenage girl was a lot different than a full-grown woman, as Snape would come to find out. But that would not be for many more years.

In the mean time, he found his third greatest passion: potion making. It was something that he found he was good at, at first, but at the urging of Lucius and Lucius's father, Snape had delved into the study even deeper, learning concoctions by heart that Lucius said would be pertinent very soon.

When Severus graduated from Hogwarts, he was ready to apprentice under the greatest Potions Master of the time, but he was also ready for something else. Lucius and his own father had been keeping him apprised of a fellow named Lord Voldemort, a man who sought to purge the Wizarding World of impurity by waging a war against the Mudbloods. Severus was incapable of saying no, after all that Lucius had done for him, and after letting his father down year after year by not making the Quidditch team. Lord Voldemort would need a great Potions Master on his side, Lucius had said. It was an honor to be invited, his father had said. The Dark Lord had spoken Severus's name to Lucius personally, and wished to meet the young man who had found so many followers by making friends with their daughters. Voldemort, according to his father, had been very impressed by Severus.

Severus was pleased at the attention, and was brought before Lord Voldemort himself, bowing lowly before the great man. The Dark Lord began his speech by complimenting Severus on fortifying his ranks with Purebloods who would vanquish the impurities in the Wizarding World. They were loyal followers, and he was sure that Severus would be as well.

How could he say no to such an offer? Acceptance. Family. Friendship. They would all be all of those things to each other. As one force, they would unite and conquer the world!

Severus was never quite sure when exactly it was that he grew tired of his decision. Perhaps it was the seven hundred and thirtieth time that Voldemort reminded him that he could not go and fight, that his hands were too valuable to put into danger. Perhaps it was the eight thousandth potion he was told to brew without so much as a thank you or a well done when it was finished.

Perhaps it was when he realized that at the age of twenty, he no longer had an appetite for sexual relationships. All the women looked the same now. All the potions seemed the same now. Every day melted into the next and every hour brought him one step closer to despair.

Always a boy of a melancholy disposition, he had turned into a moody man with moments of great sorrow and depression that would leave him close to suicide.

Then he heard about the attacks. Not the ones on the Mudbloods, but the ones on the Purebloods. He asked Lucius if this was true-weren't they only supposed to kill those who defiled Wizard Blood? Lucius explained that the Purebloods who were being exterminated for standing out against the Dark Lord. Weasleys, Potters, Longbottoms, Bulstrodes, anyone who would not join Voldemort was being "exterminated", as Lucius put it.

But the last straw was when his father, growing old and a bit weak from a long battle, was Crucio'd by the Dark Lord, and died in the middle of his writhing. The Dark Lord stared straight into Severus's eyes as he killed Tetricus Snape. He laughed at the shocked look on the son's face.

"Get used to it, my beautiful Severus," Voldemort hissed. "You have always been the one I was after, anyway. He was standing in your way and my way. He was expendable."

Severus watched, stricken, as the Dark Lord stalked from the room, his black robes billowing behind him.

"See that you're not next," Bella whispered.

Severus returned to his family home and told his mother. He would always contend that the grief killed her.

At twenty years old, Severus found himself an orphan with no future and a searing "Dark Mark" on his arm that he was told would never go away.

Two days after his mother's funeral, Severus received an Owl from Albus Dumbledore, now Headmaster at Hogwarts. He wanted Severus to take the Potions Master position, and be head of Slytherin house.

In a moment of sheer stupidity, weakness, or great wisdom and foresight, Severus went directly to Dumbledore and told him everything, tears flowing down his face as though he were six years old once more.

"As I see it, you have two choices," Albus said quietly, moving his chair closer to Severus. "You can either go on as you have been, and be killed by Riddle-his true name, Severus-or you can come here and make yourself very useful to both Riddle and me."

Severus looked up into a pair of sparkling blue eyes and felt his doom. "How do you mean?"

Dumbledore sat back in his chair and pressed his fingertips together. "Bring Riddle the letter I sent you, and see what he says. If I know him well enough, he will be pleased to have you here, and will expect you to spy on my every day activities."

With a sense of foreboding, Severus listened as Dumbledore outlined his proposal. He knew that he had no choice, and he certainly knew that he could not go back to Voldemort now, after all that had happened, and have everything be the same. He had no choice but to change, no choice but to concede to Dumbledore.

His training to become a spy had been difficult, but he mastered the art of Occlumency quickly, and began his task for Dumbledore, hopeful that he could succeed.

Severus began to give misinformation to the Dark Lord, information that Dumbledore had told him to give. After the second attack against Dumbledore's force, The Order of the Phoenix, as they called themselves, Voldemort had punished Severus severely. Crucio was something that he had given, but not something he had ever experienced. Within seconds, Severus was writhing in the worst pain of his life, begging for death to take him. The Dark Lord had no patience for a sniveling coward who could not take his punishment.

Voldemort did not extend the punishment for too long. Severus's potions were still the best he had ever seen, and he was unwilling to risk nerve damage. Severus was given a warning to bring better information the next time, and Albus, out of pity, feigned a defeat in order to keep Severus in good standing with "Riddle", as he called him.

It did no good. Severus fell into a deep depression, hardly bathing, caring nothing for his appearance or for food. He took no pleasure in life, and teaching potions to half-witted students was greater torture than any Crucio he could feel. Bottling medicinal potions for Madam Pomfrey as well as Voldemort also became a chore. What did he care if a new use was found for thistle milk? It was a routine, it was his life, and he saw no end for himself but death.

And yet he could never quite bring himself to the end he so desired. Realizing that he was too much of a coward to commit suicide caused him to become even more depressed, and he began to take out his frustrations on his silly students. Making them suffer was almost a joy to him, it was almost enough to make his life seem worthwhile.

Almost, but not quite.

Severus was still not allowed to fight for his lord, but he found that he was rather contented over that, especially considering the wounds he would be forced to heal on his fellow Death Eaters, as Voldemort called them. He was also not allowed to attend the meetings that Albus held in a secret location. No one was to know what Severus was, nor his position in the war. This became especially important when Albus discovered a "spring in his well", as he said it. Different information was being taken to Voldemort from someone other than Severus, and Severus was the one who began to suffer for it.

He could not argue with the Dark Lord that he only passed on the information that he picked up from Dumbledore, the Dark Lord did not care to hear excuses.

In an act of self-preservation, Severus gave true information to the Dark Lord, and because of it, the Longbottoms were driven to insanity by Bellatrix. She even came to thank him for the chance to perform the experiment when it was over.

The morning that Severus awoke without a Dark Mark marring the white flesh of his arm, he was called to Dumbledore's office, expecting to find a triumphant Albus, full of happy energy and plenty of twinkle. What he found was a dejected man, shaking his head and grieving. The Potters had died, sacrificing themselves to save their son, Harry. Voldemort's curse had backfired, and since there was no love lost between Potter and himself, Severus congratulated himself and Albus for a job well done. The madman was gone, and they could all go back to their normal lives.

For a moment, it was almost like he was seven-years-old again, back on his first broom, riding through the snow and wind. But like all moments, it ended as quickly as it began, and Dumbledore explained that he doubted Voldemort's complete demise. He would return, Albus was sure of it!

When Severus heard that it was Black who had betrayed Potter, it had been both easy to believe and a small triumph in his mind. Bloody Potter and Black, always making his life miserable, thick as thieves, they were. He would smirk when he would think of the look on James's face when he saw that it was Black who had turned on him, his dearest friend who wished him dead.

It would be hard for him to believe, even years after he discovered that it had been Pettigrew, that Black had not been the one to turn coat. He had allowed the balm of Black's treachery soothe his wounded soul for so many years, it was better to continue to believe that Black was exactly who he wanted him to be.

The truth cut like a knife, wounding him freshly, bringing back all of the hated memories he had tried so hard to bury. Harry Potter was loved just as much, if not more, than his father had been, and his friends were just as true and thick as Potter's had been. How dare the boy be happy when he had everything going against him?

At the return of the Dark Lord, Severus had resumed his old job, spying for Dumbledore and feeding misinformation to Voldemort. This time, however, he did not have another spy to counter; he was the only one.

This time, however, he did not hold out any hope that Potter would complete his task. He felt that Voldemort would continue to live, and that he himself would continue to merely exist without living.

When Potter was successful in his seventh year, Severus locked himself in his rooms for days without emerging, afraid that it was all a dream or misinformation. In that time, instead of his sorrow lessening, it increased.

No longer useful as anything but a Potion's Master, Severus was faced with the fact that he had spent his entire life looking for acceptance from others, his father included, that he completely lost himself along the way. He no longer had dreams or aspirations, and the feelings that his seven-year-old self had felt while learning to fly seemed like an imitation of life, a dream and nothing more.

He was unaware of his appearance in the following weeks, but his students kept even farther away from him than usual, as did the other professors. Eventually, Dumbledore called him into his office and held up a mirror.

The face, his face, looked like a ghost. Bloodshot eyes poking out behind a curtain of greasy hair and a white protruding nose were all he could see, the rest of his face had sunken into oblivion, swallowed up by his beard.

"You're killing yourself," Albus said gently.

The reflection twitched a little in acknowledgement to the words, but the corporeal body made no attempt to reply.

"If any man in the world had cause to celebrate, Severus, it is you. I cannot force you to care for yourself, but you must do something, or you will die."

Severus was left to think about his choices. In the morning, he arose from bed and stepped into his shower. The pipes groaned a bit, having not been used for several weeks, and the water at first was a bit rusty. A bottle of shampoo and a bar of soap later, Severus stepped out of the shower and set to work on the tangles and gnarls that had worked themselves into his hair from poor grooming, and ended up removing most of them with his wand. It was still long enough to pull back as he set to work on his beard, trimming it carefully before taking up his straight-edge and cutting the follicles from his face and neck.

In his wardrobe, he found a clean robe and went to the Great Hall for breakfast where Minerva greeted him with a smile, tears in her eyes. She confessed that she thought they had lost him completely. When she squeezed his hand gently under the table, he looked at her in wonder, unable to comprehend that she would be happy to see him again.

After all, he'd outlasted his usefulness. What could she possibly want to see him for if he had nothing else to offer her?

The remainder of the day had been just as baffling. All of the professors, and even a few of the students, had told him how good it was to see him feeling better again.

In the following weeks, he managed to write off most of the compliments and wishes for good health. After all, there was always a chance he would be needed again, wasn't there? He was sure that this was the reason.

Minerva and Miss Granger, however, still puzzled him. He could see no duplicity in either of them, simply a hope for good health. Minerva gave him a pudding for Christmas. Miss Granger knitted him a brand-new Slytherin scarf without tassels, as she noted that his old one looked a bit worn, and not quite sufficient to keep him well in the cold winter months.

The pudding was eaten in due course, but the scarf remained in his wardrobe, to be worn only in the safety of his rooms where no one could see it, especially not her.

Spring came with a breath of fresh air, and Snape ordered a new set of robes as his old ones were growing a bit too tight in the midriff. It was an occurrence that Albus particularly remarked on when the package from Gladrags, the robe maker in Hogsmeade arrived one morning. Severus said nothing, merely took his package and went to change in his dungeon before his first class.

But it was all a façade. Albus expected him to take better care of his appearance and eat more. He did. That did not mean that his life had a purpose or meaning.

"You want me to do *what*?"

"I want you to go see Madam Rosmerta in Hogsmeade."

Severus was baffled. "Why?" Inwardly, a voice was telling him that he should simply be happy to be useful once more. Another voice began to argue that he was just being used again, and that Severus would fall into even more of a depression at the end of it. The first voice was that of a small boy, eager for acceptance. The second was that of a bitter old mad, aware of his own redundancy.

Which one was he?

"Severus, were it not a matter of supreme importance, I would never ask it of you, but I do not trust owls at this moment, and the Floo network is still being watched. If you take a broom, you shouldn't be gone more than five minutes or so."

That was how he found himself on Xiamora Hooch's broom, flying through the night sky, the wind whipping at his hair and stinging his eyes. Having delivered the package to Madam Rosmerta, he found himself enjoying the freedom he suddenly felt. All of the Quidditch games from his childhood came back to his remembrance, the moves he would watch his heroes make, and the first time he ever tried one. It was a basic move, just a simple spin, but he had done it.

Severus looked down to make sure that no one was lurking around the grounds, and began to pick up speed, racing to catch the moon and bypassing it before directing his broom upward, ascending towards the stars, eager to catch them in his hands.

He was at one with his broom, he could feel it vibrate between his legs as he pushed it to perform even more, and a laugh escaped his throat, a sound that was so incredibly foreign to him that he pushed on even faster to escape the sounds of his own joy.

Rising high into the atmosphere, Severus saw the castle below him looking small and toy-like. He wondered if he could still dive and then pull up at the last minute, just like that famous Quidditch player. What was his name? Severus decided that he didn't care, and went plummeting towards the earth at breakneck speed, only to avoid crashing at the last second.

Oh! It was marvelous! The years melted away as he lifted once again towards the Astronomy Tower, where he would land and then go directly to Dumbledore's office. That would have been exactly what he would have done, too, had not he spied a bushy-haired student standing in a crevasse in the tower.

"Miss Granger," He demanded. "What in all the circles of Dante's Hell are you doing crawling through the wall at the top of the Astronomy Tower at midnight!" Her surprised look was priceless. She had been watching him, he knew, but until this second, he did not know that she had been unaware that it was *him* she was watching.

Snape smirked when Miss Granger jerked upwards, as if to stand at attention, but his smile faded when her head made hard enough contact with the stone above her to send out a resounding "Crack" in the windy night.

It was inevitable that her hand would move to her injury, but he was not prepared for her to let go of the castle all together. He wondered for a moment if she was truly hurt or only superficially. "Professor Snape, you fly beautifully," she murmured, just loud enough for him to hear it before she toppled over and began to fall down the tower.

In a trice, Snape pulled out his wand and shouted, "*Immobulus*!" as he swooped down to intercept her lifeless body.

TBC

What? It's not an evil cliffie! Sort of.

Hello, good morning, how ya do?

What makes your rising sun so new?

I could use a fresh beginning too

All of my regrets are nothing new

So this is the way

that I say that I need You

This is the way

This is the way

That I'm learning to breathe

I'm learning to crawl

I'm finding that You and

You alone can break my fall

I'm living again, awake and alive

I'm dying to breathe in these abundant skies

Hello, good morning, how ya been?

Yesterday left my head kicked in

I never thought I could fall like that

Never knew that I could hurt this bad

I'm learning to breathe

I'm learning to crawl

I'm finding that You and

You alone can break my fall

I'm living again, awake and alive

I'm dying to breathe in these abundant skies

So this is the way

that I say that I need You

This is the way

That I say I love You

This is the way

That I say I'm Yours

This is the way

This is the way

~Learning To Breathe-Switchfoot

3. Lessons to Learn (<i>Goblynn</i>)

Chapter 3 of 7

Hermione does not like flying - is it because she's scared, or because she's never been properly taught? A SASSY Production, in the form of a Round Robin

Chapter Three: Lessons to Learn

by Goblynn

A word from Goblynn: Fishie has decided to give me a temporary reprieve, so I was able to get this chapter down. "happy dance" Much as Zambi warned in the previous chapter, no humor here--no angst, either.

Since the precedent has been set, I've also included a song at the end, and--on behalf of Zambi--she thanks everyone for the reviews (as does all of SASS).

And for those keeping track, DADA_Mistress is up next!

He directed his broom into a sharp dive, the urgency born more of instinct than of necessity. There was no need to rush--her body hung motionless in midair, some thirty feet above the ground.

The broom slid past her, arcing beneath her form and rising back up beside it. The sight meeting his eyes caused a faint flush to gather in the cheeks of his face--tiny dots of pink darkening the otherwise ghostly pallor. Her clothing was frozen in place, another result of the spell, and the standard-issue robe was the lone article of modesty left to her.

The white blouse had ruffled up against her breasts, her skirt lifted by the same force of wind at her back as she fell. He could, quite clearly, make out the shape of her--precious little was left to his imagination, save what her knickers safely covered. The image of powder blue fabric against her fair skin was burned into a corner of his mind, and he ripped his eyes away, turning instead to her face.

She was not pallid; rather, her face retained its natural, healthy coloring. No blemish was visible, but he greatly expected even minor damage from the hearty bump to her crown.

Shaking his own head, he reached one hand out for her, taking hold of her upper arm. His grip unrelenting, he guided his broom to earth, dismounted, and banished the object to his cupboard. Easing her body to the ground, and a quick "Finite Incantatem," he further examined his charge.

No apparent injuries...he slid his fingers into her hair, probing her scalp...ah, there...a rather nasty bump. He parted the hair, casting "Lumos" to provide additional light. The knot wasn't as large as an egg, slightly reddish, and soft to the touch. Nothing suspicious, there--her unconsciousness was probably related directly to the pain of impacting her skull against stone. She did hit it quite hard, after all.

"Ennervate."

Her eyes fluttered open, one hand automatically going to her head. Blinking rapidly, she brought her gaze into focus. "Professor Snape?"

"Yes, Miss Granger. I'm certainly pleased to see your injury hasn't damaged your ability to state the obvious."

She glanced around, apparently confused by the darkness surrounding them. "What happened? How did I get down here?"

Snape sighed. "You were in the tower--spying on me, I suspect. When confronted, you struck your head upon the stones, lost your balance, then fell. As a professor of this school, it was my duty to save your interminably prying hide."

Easing herself up from her prone position, she turned her eyes to the ground. "I--thank you, sir." She paused, rubbing her head gingerly. "I was not spying, sir, I was merely looking at the sky when I saw you. Curiosity got the better of me and I was trying to see who might be flying of nights."

"Miss Granger," here he stood, "your curiosity will always get the best of you--an unfortunate habit you would do well to curtail." A hand appeared before her. With no small amount of hesitation, she clasped it in her own and permitted herself to be pulled upright, onto her feet. "Are you able to walk?"

She looked upward at the tower walls, shuddering at the height. "Yes, sir."

"Very well. I shall escort you, seeing as it is well past curfew."

She nodded. "Thank you, sir."

He turned, briskly making his way to the entrance doors. She moved to follow, stumbled, caught herself, then jogged to catch up, falling in behind him. As they made their way to the moving staircase, she cleared her throat. "Professor, sir?"

"Yes, Miss Granger."

"Should I go see Madam Pomfrey?"

He paused on the second landing. "Do you feel you should seek her assistance?"

"Erm...well, no, actually. I've bumped my head before--I was prone to falling down stairs as a child--and this doesn't seem terribly bad. It smarts, but I'm not feeling unusual or anything. I was fortunate."

He met her gaze, eyes searching hers for a moment. "You say it hurts?"

"Yes, sir."

Snape turned, going back down the stairs. Noticing she failed to follow, he motioned impatiently. "Come along, Miss Granger."

Hermione rushed back down, catching up with him at the next landing. "Where are we going, Professor?"

"To my office. I am loath to wake Madam Pomfrey over such a minor incident. I have the necessary potions available in storage."

She followed him down the last flight, then into the dungeons. Approaching his classroom, he stepped aside, indicating she should wait behind him, then unlocked the door and removed the wards. He stepped through, allowing her entrance before closing the door behind them.

There was very little light in the room, apart from what emanated from a few lamps hanging upon wall hooks. He pointed to a seat some distance from his desk. "Sit."

She immediately complied, waiting patiently as he entered the storeroom, returning a moment later with two phials clasped in his fist. He held both out to her, motioning that she take them from him. Once she had, he stepped back, watching her examine them in the low light. "The pink liquid is an anti-inflammatory--it will reduce the swelling. Use the other potion only as needed--there are approximately five doses in the phial--for pain. I suspect no severe damage from this occurrence; these should be sufficient for your care."

"I'm obliged, Professor." She uncorked the pink phial and tipped it back, allowing the liquid to flow across her tongue and down her throat. It tasted of bubblegum, and she sputtered. "That--(cough)--tastes terrible!"

"An unfortunate result of attempting to sweeten the potion."

Hermione glanced up at him. "But, sir--I mean--I thought you didn't try to alter the tastes of potions. Based on principle."

"I normally do not. That mixture was created at Poppy's insistence; upon tasting the sample however, she found it overly strong. I want it sweet, Professor, but not like it

came from Honeydukes!' were her words, if I recall correctly. Rather than waste it, I've retained the batch for use elsewhere." He moved to his desk, seating himself. "I would prefer you remain here for a short while, Miss Granger, so that I may verify you are indeed suffering no ill effects."

"Certainly, sir."

"Excellent, Miss Granger." He adjusted a stack of parchments, moving them to another corner of the desktop. "Seeing as you have time to spare, perhaps you shall enlighten me as to the real reason for your presence in the Astronomy Tower." His eyes met hers again, the unwavering gaze causing her to shift uncertainly in her seat.

"I was looking at the sky, sir. As I have said."

"And I say you are foolish for thinking me capable of believing such a lie."

Hermione froze. *What in heaven would cause him to presume anything? What does it matter what I was doing there?* She blinked once, hard. "I was trying to study, sir."

"And Gryffindor Tower is unsuitable for such a pursuit?"

"I was seeking privacy, sir."

Snape's brow lifted in a smooth arch. Part of her groaned inside, knowing the meaning of that look: he was deciphering her real meaning. She awaited his response.

"You were hiding. From Potter and Weasley, I presume?"

A quick sigh escaped her lips. "Yes, Professor."

He nodded, apparently expecting further explanation. She offered none.

"Miss Granger, you have a few minutes yet before I release you. Shall we pass the time staring at one another, or shall you explain your actions?"

Hermione blinked again, slowly. "I was trying to get away from them because they were making fun of me."

"I should think you accustomed to such behavior."

Anger flared up in her gut. *How dare he say that to me? He knows how I've been treated by Malfoy and his two lackwit thugs, but he accuses Harry and Ron of hurting my feelings?* She ground her teeth. *But they did hurt my feelings...* "Harry and Ron don't mean anything by it, they were only trying to tease--they don't mean to hurt me."

"Yet they do." She didn't reply. "May I enquire, Miss Granger, as to the nature of their 'harmless jesting'?"

She could hear the inflection in his words, knowing he was quietly ripping at her defense of the two boys she called friends. "Flying brooms, sir. That I can't fly, I mean."

"The incomparable Hermione Granger is incapable of flying a broom? I find that difficult to believe."

"It's true, sir. It's the one thing--aside from Divination--I've not been able to master. They know it, and they rib me about it often." She hesitated. "And I was watching you, sir, from the tower. I didn't know it was you...I saw someone flying, and considering what Harry and Ron had said earlier, I couldn't help but watch. I'd crawled into that nook just before seeing you, so I could look down, and when you appeared from nowhere, I guess it startled me." Rubbing her crown again, she noticed the bump was all but gone. "I suppose that's how I hit my head." She finished her story and sat quietly, her hands tucked under the folds of her robes to ward off the chill, waiting for permission to leave.

The time passed more quickly than expected, and he rose from his chair, motioning for her to do the same. Moving to open the door, he spoke. "I shall escort you to the Tower, Miss Granger, as I had originally intended." She hurried to his side, waiting silently as he locked and warded his door, then fell in behind him as he led the way from the dungeons. On the fourth-floor landing, he broke the silence.

"Miss Granger, what prevents you from attempting to fly?"

Hermione's eyes bore into his back, watching the dark hair at his neck sway gently with the motion of his walking. "I--well--I'm afraid of brooms, Professor."

Snape cast a glance at her over his shoulder, his progress up the stairs never slowing. "Afraid of brooms? May I ask why that is?"

"Erm...they're rather small, sir, and seem terribly fragile. I feel like I'm going to lose my balance and slip off at any moment."

"Skill is not in the size of the broom, Miss Granger. It is in how one uses the equipment given them."

Hermione gaped a little--*I know what he means, but it sounds as if he's talking in two tongues with a comment like that* and said nothing.

Snape paused on the seventh-floor landing. Before allowing her entrance to the corridor, and to the portrait of the Fat Lady, he turned again, one hand placed upon her elbow to halt her progress. "Miss Granger...given opportunity to learn flying--in a more private and secure fashion--would you consider trying your hand at it again?"

"I suppose so, Professor. I'd not given it any thought--there are no flying classes for upper-year students. Only first-years have lessons."

He grunted. "I don't mean 'classes,' Miss Granger."

She crinkled her forehead in confusion. "I'm sorry, sir--I'm not sure I understand."

He blew a breath out his nostrils, acting for all the world as if he were dealing with an imbecile. "Lessons, Miss Granger. Private flying lessons. I shall teach you, if you will consider it."

Had he struck her, she wouldn't have been more shocked. "Professor...why?"

Snape turned pitch-black eyes on her.

My God, I don't remember them looking like that before.

"Because flying is a pleasure only wizarding-folk are able to enjoy. As a Muggle-born, you should realize that more than anyone. Even your precious Potter." He snorted. "I would regret seeing a person of your potential and ability leave this place lacking a skill that provides more enjoyment than practical use."

Hermione paused, gathering her thoughts. *He's offering to teach me to fly a broom. I don't see why he would say anything other than the truth...after all, we're alone up here. Maybe I should do it. He's right--I shouldn't graduate without being able to fly a broom, even a little. Yes, I will do it.*

"I'd love for you to teach me, sir."

He nodded slowly. "We shall discuss it further, at a more opportune moment." He turned away from her then, entering the corridor. "Now is not that time."

They passed through the antechamber quickly, the Fat Lady eyeing them both askance, failing miserably at her attempt to seem uninterested in the pair before her. "Password?"

Professor Snape glared at the portrait. "Open up, you fool. This student has been injured, and I haven't the time nor the patience to deal with you tonight."

Offended, the portrait swung open with nary a word.

He gestured towards the opening. "Miss Granger, if you please."

She stepped through, hurrying to the common room. Finding only a handful of fourth-years practicing Transfiguration spells, she released a long breath. No need to fret over explaining her absence to Harry and Ron, at least not this night.

"Miss Granger? Your room?"

She nearly leapt from her skin. Spinning on her heel, she found herself toe-to-toe with Professor Snape. In the Gryffindor common room. A small voice in the back of her mind wondered that he didn't implode at the sight of so much red. "Sir?"

"Your room, Miss Granger. I must see to it that you reach your quarters safely."

The fourth-years in the corner were openly watching the conversation. Noticing Hermione's distraction, Snape's gaze wandered around the room, falling on the group. The hushed twittering silenced completely. He swung his eyes back to her. "Must I ask again, Miss Granger? or shall it be points from Gryffindor?"

Jerking to attention, she blushed and turned to the Head Girl's room access. Snatching her door open, she rushed inside, expecting him to remain safely distant in the Common Room, along with those irritating fourth-years. Again, her assumption was incorrect. He stood just inside her doorway, eyes following her every move as she dashed from bed to desk and back again, moving books from their scattered locations to her shelves. When the flurry of activity abated, he spoke again. "Miss Granger-- please, sit."

She stopped, moving to a chair without question. Professor Snape approached her. "I trust you know well enough to keep the events of tonight to yourself?"

She nodded in reply.

"Excellent. Then I shall take my leave of you." He turned his back on her again, but paused in mid-stride, drawing himself up short and casting a guarded look at her. "Do see Madam Pomfrey if, for any reason, you feel oddly."

Hermione looked up at him, startled at his concern. His demeanor revealed no difference, but the edge in his voice had softened. Blinking, she replied softly, "Yes, sir. Thank you, again."

With a slight inclination of his head, he departed through her open door.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

That old wind that's whippin' out there

It's whistlin' your tune

That wind blew pyramids to Egypt

And footprints to the moon

And that old star that you been wishin' on

Is shinin' mighty bright

But it's the fire inside your heart

That's gonna lead you to the light

How you ever gonna know

What it's like to live there

How you ever gonna know victory

How you ever gonna know

What it's like when dreams become reality

How you ever gonna know

How it feels to hold her

How you ever gonna know

What it's like to dance

How you ever gonna know

If you never take a chance

You know failure isn't failure

If a lesson from it's learned

I guess love would not be love

Without a risk of being burned

Anything in life worth havin'

Lord, it has its sacrifice

But the gift that you're receiving

Is worth more than the price
How you ever gonna know
What it's like to live there
How you ever gonna know
What you never knew
How you ever gonna know
If you're down here doin'
What the good Lord put you here to do
How you ever gonna know
If you could have done it
How you ever gonna know
How it feels to fly
How you ever gonna know
If you never dare to try
Listen not to the critics
Who put their own dreams on the shelf
If you want to get the truth to admit it
You gotta find out for yourself
How you ever gonna know
What it's like to be there
How you ever gonna know
If you're the best
How you ever gonna know
What you believe in
If you don't put it to the test
How you ever gonna know
How it feels to hold him
How you ever gonna know
What livin' means
How you ever gonna know
If you never chase the dream
How you ever gonna know
Your potential
How you ever gonna know victory
How you ever gonna know
What it's like when dreams
Become reality
How you ever gonna know
How it feels to hold her
How you ever gonna know
What it's like to dance
How you ever gonna know
If you never take the chance
"How You Ever Gonna Know"--Garth Brooks

4. A Push in the Right Direction (*<i>DADA_Mistress</i>*)

Chapter 4 of 7

Hermione does not like flying - is it because she's scared, or because she's never been properly taught? A SASSY Production, in the form of a Round Robin

Chapter Four: A Push in the Right Direction

by *DADA_Mistress*

AN: Thanks to all the SASS members that helped me out with this chapter! I really needed your support this time around and you came through. I am eternally grateful! :)

This is a pretty silly chapter, so bear through it with an open mind. :)

For those of you who are keeping track, Pooka is next. :)

"Number one in the hood, G!"

Disclaimer: Not mine. It belongs to JK Rowling. I'm just borrowing her characters to have some fun. I will not make any cash with this.

"SHE WHAT?" Harry gasped in disbelief as he sat with Ron at breakfast the next day.

"That's right, mate," Ron nodded. "Ginny told me that last night. Hermione stole a broom, went out onto the Astronomy Tower, and then tried to fly."

"Tried to fly? That doesn't sound like `Mione. She hates flying. Why was she..."

"Maybe she was trying to prove us wrong. I don't know! Just be quiet and let me finish! Anyway, she ended up falling off the broom and was plummeting to her death until Snape heard her screaming, opened a window in the Astronomy Tower, and caught her just in time."

"A window? Ron, where's there a window in the Astronomy Tower? And what was Snape doing there? It doesn't seem likely that he'd be out of the dungeons."

"Maybe he was on rounds. I don't know, just shut up and listen, Harry! After he caught Hermione, Snape took her back into her rooms and stayed with her until she fell asleep to make sure she didn't fall out of her bed."

"Wait, he STAYED in her room? Bollocks! That can't be true! How'd he even get IN her room?"

"Professors are exempt from the warning klaxon, Harry; don't you know anything? Anyway, I'm just telling you what Ginny told me."

Well, that was half the truth. Ginny DID tell Ron a story about Snape and Hermione, but it wasn't that one. She had told him that Hermione had stolen many brooms and had taken them to the top of the Astronomy Tower and began flinging them over the side, jealous that she couldn't ride them. Snape caught her in the act when one of the brooms in question hit him on the head. Then he escorted her to her room to make sure she didn't steal more brooms along the way.

But stories have a way of becoming distorted, and as the tale passed from Gryffindor to Gryffindor, it became more illogical and outlandish with each telling. Neville said Hermione went to the Astronomy Tower to snog with another student, who'd brought a broom up with him to try and convince Hermione to go on a romantic broom ride. When Snape caught them, he threw the other student and his broom off the Astronomy Tower and then escorted Hermione back to her rooms and threatened her life if she told anyone.

However, Neville claimed this was all that Colin Creevey told him, which wasn't the case, either. Colin said that Hermione took a broom and went to the Astronomy Tower to fly, but she chickened out at the last minute. Then she thought she could experience flying by "getting high," thinking it would have the same effect. She was just lighting up when Snape caught her while flying on his broom and brought her back to search her rooms, telling her if she ever did it again, he'd throw her off the Astronomy Tower.

But that's not the story Colin heard from his brother. Dennis said that Hermione had gone to the Astronomy Tower to study how to fly, when she caught Snape getting high while flying on his broom. He escorted her back to her room and threatened to throw her off the Tower if she told anyone what had happened.

Of course, Dennis swore that's what Hermione told him, because he was in the Common Room when he saw Snape bring her in. After the big black bat left, he went to Hermione's room and asked her what had happened. She told him the truth and how she went to the Astronomy Tower to study and she saw Snape flying on his broom. "He was up so high that I could barely see him sometimes!" she gasped. "He's a wonderful flyer!"

Then she explained how Snape had caught her watching him and she fell off after she bumped her head, but he saved her and brought her back to her rooms after treating her injuries.

Hermione came down to breakfast totally unaware of any of the gossip or rumors spreading about her whereabouts the previous night. It wasn't until she sat down between the boys at breakfast that she first caught wind of it.

"Hermione!" Harry gasped as he suddenly clung to her. "Are you all right?"

"Of course I am!" she said, surprised.

"I'm so sorry we made fun of you last night about flying!"

"Oh, it's no big..."

"But even if you were THAT upset, that's no reason to try and commit suicide!"

"WHAT?"

"Ron just told me that last night after you left, you went to the top of the Astronomy Tower and tried to throw yourself off of it, because you were so upset about not being able to fly!"

"RON told you that?" Hermione asked as she turned to the redhead who was nodding vigorously.

"Yes!" Harry continued. "But it was a good thing Snape was down there at the bottom of the Astronomy Tower to break your fall! I can't believe he stayed with you the whole night on suicide watch!"

"Harry Potter, that is the most preposterous thing I've ever heard! I did NOT go to the top of the tower to kill myself, and Professor Snape was NOT in my room last night! Honestly, I wasn't even that distressed!"

Hermione then began to tell Harry and Ron her story over breakfast, the same story she had told to Creevey last night, explaining all the events that took place from catching Professor Snape flying on his broom to escorting her to her room after he offered to give her flying lessons. When she finished, the boys looked at each other dumbfounded before suddenly bursting into laughter.

"What so funny?" Hermione asked quizzically while Ron pounded his fist on the table and Harry clutched his stomach as he doubled over in laughter. She became annoyed when neither of them stopped to give her an explanation. She began drumming her fingers on the table as she waited impatiently for them to stop. Finally, Harry was the first to somewhat regain his composure before he chuckled, "Snape? Flying? Oh, that's rich!"

"It's true!" Hermione insisted. "And he's wonderful at it!"

"And he's going to give YOU lessons?" Ron asked before he and Harry fell into bleats of laughter once more.

At that point, Hermione was thoroughly annoyed with both of them and glared before she spat, "Yes, he is, and I happen to think it's most kind of him to do so! He's taking time out of his busy schedule to help me and I think that's more than my 'best friends' have ever done!"

"His busy schedule?" Ron snorted before laughing even harder. "Oh yeah! Where will he find the time between terrorizing students and stalking around like an overgrown bat?"

"He'll probably have to push back his hair washing ritual to once a month instead of once a week," Harry added.

"Stop it!" Hermione seethed. "I won't tolerate you talking about Professor Snape like..."

"Yeah, Harry!" Ron agreed. "I think he's stopped brushing his teeth all together. You won't have to worry about him cutting that out of his 'busy' schedule, Hermione. After all, that's at least two more minutes of sneering!"

"Or kissing his little Slytherins' bums!" Harry retorted before making kissing sounds which caused Ron to burst into laughter again.

"Or perhaps it is two more minutes worth of thinking what would be the best detention for the two of you," a cold, silky voice said from behind the trio.

The color from Harry's and Ron's faces suddenly drained, and they slowly turned around to confirm their worst fear. Snape was indeed standing right behind them, arms folded over his chest, staring at them with a cold stern expression. Hermione kept her head down as she tried to suppress a smile. Serves them right for talking about him in that horrible manner.

"Let us see," Snape said coolly as he stroked his chin with his thumb and forefinger, "Ten points from Gryffindor each... detention for the next two days after dinner starting tonight... and each of you shall have to scrub the floor without magic... with a toothbrush."

"Scrub the dungeon floor with a toothbrush?" Harry and Ron asked, horrified.

"Who said anything about the dungeons? You shall be scrubbing the floor of the Great Hall."

"WHAT?"

"Five points for raising your voice to a professor. While I did enjoy your little conversation, gentlemen, I did not come here to speak with either of you. I actually came to speak with Miss Granger."

Hermione turned around and with her best innocent look asked sweetly, "Yes, Professor Snape?"

"Miss Granger, you are to meet me at the Quidditch pitch tonight at five o'clock. That should give you time to prepare for your lesson after your last class as well as give you enough time to wash up for dinner after our lesson is through."

"Yes, sir."

"Also, I will provide a broom since I suspect that you do not have one for yourself."

"Yes, sir, and thank you."

"Five o'clock?" Ron whined, "but that's when we're all supposed to be in our study group!"

"Well it seems you and Potter will have to cut the apron strings, Weasley, and learn to survive academia on your own for a change. I'll see you then, Miss Granger. Good day."

Snape spun around and swept out of the Great Hall with his robes billowing behind him, while Hermione grinned at Harry and Ron's shocked faces.

Five o'clock couldn't come quickly enough for Hermione. She rushed out onto the Quidditch pitch ten minutes early just because she couldn't wait to get started. She really wanted to prove to Ron and Harry that she could do this, and Snape was part of her road to success.

As she expected, Snape was already at the Quidditch field; however, he was not alone. The Slytherin Quidditch team was there as well, practicing for the coming game next week. Unfortunately, Draco Malfoy was among them. He had gotten off easy after the final battle when he'd claimed that his father had put him under the Imperius Curse. Of course, the Ministry bought it... especially after Draco's "generous donation."

Hermione crept silently along the bottom of the stands as she made her way towards Professor Snape. He watched his house team with folded arms, leaning against the base of the goal with both his and Hermione's brooms at his feet. Professor Snape looked so intense as he studied the team barking orders to each other that Hermione didn't say a word as she appeared at his right side. If he knew Hermione was standing next to him, he made no indication of it. He simply continued watching his team with Hermione watching alongside him.

Suddenly, much to her surprise, she caught a glimmer of gold from the corner of her eye. As she turned to the right to see what it was, she gasped. The Golden Snitch was coming straight at her like a bullet! There wasn't enough time for her to move as it came barreling towards her.

Just when she braced herself for the cold hard pain that was undoubtedly about to hit her square in the face, a hand shot out from her left and grabbed the Snitch inches from her nose. Startled, she jumped back and found herself pressed up against the body of Professor Snape, who was holding the Snitch!

Hermione gasped at the sensations that flooded her. The feeling of his warm, tall body pressed hard against her warmed her to the core, as if it were the most wonderful thing in the world. It just felt so right as she stayed there, stunned by the odd feeling of both shock and excitement. She slowly turned her head up and saw Snape was already looking down at her. She locked onto his gaze, once again taken by his eyes. They were so dark and deep that she had to stop herself from shivering at the sight.

They alone told the sorrows and hardships of his tragic life. Yet, as she continued to stare, she could see a glimmer of something more, as if there was still some hope left in the man whose life seemed hopeless. Why hadn't she ever noticed that before?

Though he'd never admit it, Snape also felt the odd sensation that coursed through both of them. Having her pressed close to him felt so good, especially with the scent of her milk-and-honey shampoo wafting into his nostrils. As his eyes connected with hers, he could see the excitement dancing in them, as if she felt it too. Her eyes...they were...beautiful. He felt as if he could drown in those dark pools of amber that reflected his softened facial features. Why had he never noticed that before?

Overcome with feeling, he said softly in his silkiest voice, "Careful... you wouldn't want to start off your first lesson with a bruise."

He brushed a soothing hand against her cheek where the Snitch would have hit had he not caught it. She took a sharp intake of breath as her skin tingled where he had touched, warming her insides even more.

Suddenly, they both noticed the eerie silence on the Quidditch pitch. They looked up to see the entire Slytherin Quidditch team hovering above them in stunned silence, some even with their mouths hanging opened in obvious disbelief. Regaining his composure, Snape took a step back and gave Hermione a small (but gentle) shove, snarling, "Get off me, you silly girl. I've never seen such poor reflexes. No wonder you can't ride a broom."

Seeing their Head of House return to his usual self, a few of the Slytherins snickered while Hermione's cheeks slightly flushed.

"What do you think you're doing, Mudblood?" Draco scoffed. "Trying to get fresh with the professor to get a better mark on your NEWTS?"

Before Hermione could retort, Snape replied smoothly, "Well, Mister Malfoy, had you been doing your job and watching the Snitch, we would not be in this position."

This time it was Draco's turn to flush before Snape gave a crooked smile and continued. "Really, it was a good thing I was here to catch the Snitch, or perhaps you'd have to fetch Mister Potter to collect it for you. How embarrassing would that be for Slytherin, eh?"

Snape gave Draco a satisfied look as the blond turned his head away quickly and glared off into the distance. After putting Draco in his place, Snape sneered up at the Quidditch team before barking, "Seeing how you have all stopped practicing, I think you are done for the day. Now get out of my sight, the whole lot of you!"

The Slytherins obeyed, touching down to the ground before making their way to the locker room. They gave Hermione strange looks as they left. Draco glared at both Hermione and Snape as he entered the locker room muttering something Hermione couldn't hear. Snape pocketed the Snitch before glaring at Hermione in an attempt to master the feelings inside of him. Just as he was about to give her his first order, she looked up at him and asked softly, "You were a Seeker, Professor Snape?"

"As a matter of fact, I was," he responded sharply, "but that is beside the point, Miss Granger. We are here to teach you to fly. Are you ready now, or are you going to play twenty questions and waste my time?"

"I'm ready, sir."

"Good, now come here next to your broom... no, that one... yes. Now place your hand... no, Miss Granger, do NOT pick it up. Place your hand over it and say 'up.' "

Snape stood behind Hermione as she looked down at the broom. Hesitating, Hermione turned around and said, "It doesn't go up when I command it. Can't I just pick it up?"

"No," Snape said sternly. "Part of the magic is in this first response. You MUST have control over your broom or else it will control you! I have a feeling you would not want your broom to start bucking you off because your will is so weak. Now do as I say and command the broom to fly into your hand."

Hermione turned her attention back to the broom and sighed. Placing her hand over it, she said in a normal voice, "Up."

The broom didn't even move.

"No, no, no!" Snape said, shaking his head. "You're going about it completely wrong. You need to be firm and sharp."

"Up."

The broom rolled over once.

"Firmer, Miss Granger."

"Up."

"Louder, Miss Granger."

"Up!"

The broom flopped around a little.

"Again, Miss Granger."

"Up... please?"

"TELL it, Miss Granger, do not ask it! Command it at once!"

"UP!"

Suddenly, the broom flew up, but not into her hand. The handle hit her straight in the face, as if she had stepped onto a rake lying face up on the ground.

"BLOODY HELL!" she cried out, covering her face with her hands as her eyes began to tear. Snape couldn't help but smirk. She'd had it coming.

"Five points from Gryffindor for cursing, Miss Granger," Snape announced as he took a few steps to stand directly behind her. "Unless you are seriously injured, I suggest you put your arms down and listen to my words."

"I'm fine, thanks," Hermione said snidely, giving her forehead one more rub and wiping the tears from her eyes.

"Stop whining and pay attention. Listen to my voice as I summon the broom into my hand and try to mimic my inflection."

Snape stretched out his hand over the broom while still standing close behind Hermione. With her hands at her sides Hermione listened patiently, secretly enjoying his closeness and the heat radiating off his body. In a strong firm voice, Snape commanded, "Up!"

Immediately, the broom jumped into his hand.

"Did you notice the power in my voice?" Snape purred.

"Y-yes, sir," Hermione stammered, surprised at how his voice was as smooth as butter.

"Do you think you repeat that now, Miss Granger?"

"Yes, sir."

Snape dropped the broom onto the ground again, and didn't move from his spot. Nervously, Hermione put her hand over the broomstick and gulped. She calmed her nerves and focused all her energy into a single command.

"Up!"

Suddenly, the broom shot up into her hand, causing Hermione to jump. Her mouth dropped open as she stared in shock at the broom in her hand. Slowly, a smile began to spread across her face.

"I... I did it," she said confidently.

"Yes, but can you do so again?" Snape asked. "Drop the broom and try it again."

Hermione did as she was told and nonchalantly summoned the broom again. Unfortunately, this time it did nothing. She frowned, confused as to why it didn't work. She tried a second time, unsuccessful once more. Her anger and frustration building, she said it again. Still, the broom remained rooted to the ground. She gritted her teeth and said it three more times in a row. The broom refused to move.

"Miss Granger," Snape started before Hermione cut him off.

"UP!" she practically screamed.

The broom shot straight up, but not into her hand. Once again, it was heading straight for her face. However, since she had experienced this previously, Hermione easily dodged the oncoming broomstick.

Unfortunately, Snape did not.

"BLOODY HELL!" Snape cursed after the broom cracked him over his nose.

"Oh, Professor Snape!" Hermione gasped as she whirled around in horror. "Are you all right?"

"Of course I am not all right, you silly girl!" he spat through his hands that covered his mouth and nose.

"Are... are you bleeding?"

"Just get away from me! Merlin's beard, that smarts!"

He turned his back to her and walked a few paces away while using every profane word he could think of and even a few he made up on the spot. Hermione bit her lip nervously. Oh, she'd really mucked it up this time! There was no way Snape was going to continue the lessons. He'd just tell her she was hopeless and stalk off. She glared back down at the broom.

"Stupid broom," she muttered.

Hermione looked back up at Snape who still had his back to her. Well, at least he had stopped cursing. Finally, with a long heavy sigh, Snape turned around and slowly walked back to face Hermione, making sure to blink away the tears that automatically began pricking.

"Miss Granger," he said, barely above a whisper, "you **MUST** learn to control and focus your energy. Recollect what you were doing and how you felt when you first summoned the broom into your hand, and repeat the process or else we will both have concussions before the day is done. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," Hermione said quietly.

She placed her hand over the broom again and closed her eyes while Snape took a few steps back and stayed facing her. Hermione recalled how it felt; the emotions, the energy that pulsed through her when she first summoned the broom, and focused them all into that one single task.

Finally, she opened her eyes and said firmly: "Up!"

The broom jumped into her hands immediately.

Hermione grinned and looked up at Snape who merely nodded his head and grunted.

"Again, Miss Granger," he said, his arms folded over his chest.

Hermione dropped the broom and repeated the process, this time much more confident than before. The rest of the lesson was spent on Hermione summoning the broom. They didn't stop until she could summon it into her hand every time she commanded it.

"That's enough for today," Snape said as the broom flew into her hand for the fiftieth time.

"But... but I didn't even get to ride it today," Hermione protested.

"One step at a time, Miss Granger. You are a complete novice at this."

"Yes, sir, and thank you for tutoring me. I just want to prove not only to myself that I can do this, but to Harry and Ron as well."

"Yes, I recall the conversation the three of you had earlier today," he said with a sly smile, remembering how it had led to Potter's and Weasley's detentions.

"They love to remind me about my inability to fly," Hermione said downheartedly.

"Miss Granger, it is only because it is the **ONE** subject in which you are **NOT** accomplished. It is the one area in which they do not have to depend on you and they feel better about themselves because of it. Let them have their fun. Take pride in knowing that you are better at everything else."

Hermione looked up at Snape in astonishment. In Snape-speak, that could almost be considered a compliment.

"Th-thank you, Professor Snape," Hermione said with a shy smile.

Realizing his comment might have been taken as a compliment (which it was), Snape scowled and said sternly, "Come along, Miss Granger."

They gathered up the brooms and walked together towards the castle. Neither of them said a word for a long while. Finally Hermione spoke.

"You were a Seeker, Professor," she commented meekly.

"I was." Snape nodded, not giving any further explanation.

"So you like Quidditch, then?"

"I suppose I would, considering I actually participated in the game."

"I think Quidditch is okay. Harry and Ron talk about it all the time. A little too much, actually. I really wish they'd stop."

They arrived at the door and Snape opened it and allowed Hermione to enter first.

"Actually, Miss Granger," Snape began after he closed the door behind him, "Quidditch would be most beneficial to you."

"Really?" Hermione questioned with a quizzical look. "How so?"

"In Quidditch, many flying techniques are utilized and practiced by the players, especially the Chasers. It would do you some good to actually watch a game or two."

"Well, I have gone to every Hogwarts Quidditch game, and next week is the start of the new season..."

"No, Miss Granger. I do not mean a bunch of children flying around on their brooms bumbling around for the Quaffle. I am talking about a REAL Quidditch game to observe flying techniques and movements. I suggest you inquire at Hogsmeade and see if a professional team will be playing anytime soon. It would be a perfect opportunity to watch and apply some of the style to your lessons."

"Oh! Thank, you, sir. I shall look into it."

"See that you do, Miss Granger. I shall see you at dinner."

With that, Snape turned away and headed for the dungeons, leaving Hermione in the middle of the hall looking after him. As she made her way towards her room, she didn't notice the pair of twinkling blue eyes behind crescent moon spectacles that had watched her and the Potions Master the entire time.

"Oops," said Draco Malfoy in his best "innocent" voice as he dropped a pile of mashed potato mixed with peas and carrots on the floor. "Oh dear, looks like I made a huge mess! Oh well, I'm sure SOMEONE will clean it up."

He shot a sly look over to Harry and Ron who glared angrily at the flaxen haired boy.

"Who told HIM about our detentions?" the redhead steamed before stabbing his fork into his sausage.

"I'm sure Snape probably posted an announcement in the Slytherin Common Room," Harry grumbled as he watched Malfoy convince Pansy and her friends to throw their chicken bones on the floor as well. "Speaking of Snape, how was your lesson today, 'Mione?"

"Oh, it was great," Hermione smiled. "Very informative."

"Are you going to practice tomorrow too?" Ron asked as Draco flung his dirty napkin over his shoulder.

"Yes, I am. In fact I..."

Hermione was cut short as an owl suddenly swooped down from overhead and dropped a letter into her lap. She took the letter and inspected the front, which only had her name written in green wizarding ink. With a shrug, she opened the envelope and pulled out the letter, which read:

Meet me at 11AM at the Quidditch pitch. Do not be late.

With a quizzical expression, she looked inside the envelope and gasped. Inside was a ticket to a Quidditch game that Saturday at Hogsmeade! How wonderful! It's just what she needed since Professor Snape told her to...

Hermione's eyes went wide at a sudden thought. "Professor Snape must have gotten this for me!"

Slowly, she turned around to the High Table to see Snape was also inspecting a Quidditch ticket in his hand. He was very surprised when he received a letter. He almost never got mail. This was odd indeed. It was even odder that he received a strange note along with a Quidditch ticket. What in Merlin's name was going on? Who would give him a Quidditch...

Then a thought occurred to him.

"Miss Granger must have gotten this for me," he thought with a snort.

It really shouldn't have surprised him. She was brilliant and studious. She had probably looked up the schedule as soon as she got to her rooms and got tickets for the both of them. Of course, it made perfect sense that she got him a ticket as well, since she wouldn't know how to identify different styles of flying.

He looked over to see Hermione already staring at him with her own ticket in hand. He gave her an approving nod, and she grinned in return. Somewhere inside of him, he felt a warm sensation flow through his body as she smiled, and he wondered at it.

"What have you got there, Severus?" Professor McGonagall asked as she leaned over next to him to get a closer look.

"Nothing of importance to you," Snape muttered as he quickly pocketed the ticket in his robes.

"Was that a Quidditch ticket?"

"Can't I enjoy a meal without having you pestering me, Minerva?"

"It seems Miss Granger also has the same ticket. In fact, she seems to be the only one with a ticket besides you. Why do you suppose that is?"

"Really, Minerva, is it too much to ask for you to leave me alone? I will even say 'please' if it will get you out of my hair."

McGonagall thinned her lips and gave him a questioning look. Snape sneered and looked down at his plate, returning his attention to his meal. She turned to her other side to ask Dumbledore what he thought of the situation. She caught Albus looking quite satisfied at both Hermione and Snape before he, too, busied himself with his meal. Minerva knew her old friend long enough to know when he was plotting.

"Albus," she started, "isn't it odd that both Severus and Hermione Granger were the only ones that received the same type of Quidditch tickets?"

"Quidditch tickets?" Dumbledore asked, looking and sounding shocked. "I didn't even notice."

"Doesn't it also seem strange that they both looked rather bewildered to have received them?" Minerva persisted.

"I suppose it does seem a bit strange. Maybe they forgot they ordered them."

"As sly as you may be, Albus, you cannot fool me," McGonagall said bluntly. "I know you're up to your meddling again."

"Who? Me?" asked Dumbledore innocently. "Minerva, I am both shocked and appalled that you would even think I'm capable of doing such a rude thing as meddle. It is absolutely none of my business. Honestly, what kind of a wizard do you take me for?"

He took a sip of his pumpkin juice while McGonagall continued to give him a stern look, still totally unconvinced. After setting his goblet down, Dumbledore looked around quickly before whispering to Minerva, "Besides, I wouldn't call it `meddling.' It's more like... a push in the right direction."

McGonagall couldn't help but smile as she stared back at him. She sighed and went back to her meal, wondering exactly what Albus had in store for her favorite student and her favorite Potions Master.

"Push"

by Matchbox 20

She said I don't know if I've ever been good enough

I'm a little bit rusty, and I think my head is caving in

And I don't know if I've ever been really loved

By a hand that's touched me, well I feel like something's

Gonna give

And I'm a little bit angry, well

This ain't over, no not here, not while I still need you

Around

You don't owe me, we might change

Yeah we just might feel good

[chorus]

I wanna push you around, I will, I will

I wanna push you down, I will, I will

I wanna take you for granted, I wanna take you for granted

I will

She said I don't know why you ever would lie to me

Like I'm a little untrusting when I think that the truth is

Gonna hurt ya

And I don't know why you couldn't just stay with me

You couldn't stand to be near me

When my face don't seem to want to shine

Cuz it's a little bit dirty well

Don't just stand there, say nice things to me

I've been cheated I've been wronged, and you

You don't know me, I can't change

I won't do anything at all

[chorus]

Oh but don't bowl me over

Just wait a minute well it kinda fell apart, things get so

Crazy, crazy

Don't rush this baby, don't rush this baby

[chorus]

5. Afraid of Waking (*PlaidPooka*)

Hermione does not like flying - is it because she's scared, or because she's never been properly taught? A SASSY Production, in the form of a Round Robin

A/N: Big thanks to everyone who has been kind enough to review this round robin, Men With Brooms. The feedback has meant a lot to us, and I know all the writers so far have been grateful. Now it's my turn! I do hope you get a kick out of my chapter. I've never participated in a round robin before; it's quite a challenge. For any of you keeping track, NotSoSaintly is up next.

Thanks to Doomspark for being kind enough to beta this chapter for me. You are a gentleman and a scholar, Doomie!

Disclaimer: They are not mine; I just take them out to play.

Chapter 5: Afraid of Waking

by *PlaidPooka*

Lying in bed, her eyes still closed, Hermione mused for a moment about why she had woken up smiling. Hmm...well, it was Friday; that was always good for a smile. No classes in the afternoon so she could do as she pleased, read what she pleased, or study for her NEWTS. That is, if Harry and Ron would leave her to it. Smile fading to a slightly petulant frown at the thought, Hermione grumbled to herself about the annoying idiocy of teenage boys for a moment. The smile returned, wider than before. She remembered that she might have something more interesting to look forward to this afternoon; flying lessons! This thought made her giggle aloud. Hermione Granger, flightless witch, suddenly pleased about flying lessons. Yet she honestly was excited about continuing her lessons with Professor Snape.

Her smile faded once more, this time into a slightly puzzled expression as she considered the situation. It was no secret that she was embarrassed by her inability to fly and it was a relief to finally be taking some action to fix that. Professor Snape had been truly nice about the whole situation. Oh, he was still his snarky self, to be sure. Hermione rather thought the biggest reason he was helping her was to annoy Harry and Ron. Yet he had been undeniably kind, both when she had fallen from the Astronomy Tower and during the lesson last evening. Not to mention the fact that he had bought her that Quidditch ticket and planned to accompany her personally to the game tomorrow. For a normally disdainful and sarcastic man, he had truly been extraordinarily kind. The puzzled look became an amused grin. Honestly, if it had been one of the Gryffindor boys behaving this way, she would know all they wanted was...

In a flurry of sudden movement, Hermione opened her eyes wide in shock and sat straight up on the bed.

No! Surely not! He was a grown man, not some hormonal teenage boy! Despite her attempts to remain firmly in the realms of logic, Hermione could not stop her mind from finishing the thought it had begun. If it had been a Gryffindor boy who was suddenly treating her this way, Hermione would know that all they wanted was to get into her knickers. With a slightly mortified groan, Hermione closed her eyes and flopped back down on the bed, her thoughts once again swirling.

Trying to stay rational about the situation, Hermione determined to attack the quandary with all the logic at her disposal. The moment she tried, she found herself immediately distracted by how she had felt last night on the Quidditch pitch when she had pressed back against Professor Snape to avoid the rampant snitch. His body had felt hard and lean as she pressed against it. She'd felt the heat of it even through his robes. Recalling her own body's tingling and excited response to his sudden nearness, Hermione was rather shocked to feel that same wave of uncertain desire sweep through her again. Apparently--she thought with a snort-- if Professor Snape did indeed have designs on her knickers, her body was already applauding his intent. Yet was that idea plausible in the least? Severus Snape was an odd man and difficult to understand.

When Voldemort had at last been beaten, Hermione had thought that Professor Snape would have more reason to celebrate than most. Instead, she had watched in growing horror as he had slipped into despair. Unkempt, skeletally thin, and barely going through the motions of living, Snape had seemed like a man simply waiting to die. Watching the empty look in his black eyes--eyes that had once been filled with life and intelligence--had nearly broken Hermione's heart. Frustrated by her helplessness in such a situation, Hermione had channeled her worry into a project. She spent countless evenings knitting him a scarf in silver and green stripes; a scarf that Professor Snape had taken from her hands with a sneer and never--to her knowledge--actually worn. Well, there you have it, she thought with an amused smile. If Professor Snape had any designs on her knickers, he would have worn the scarf she had given him; she was being foolish to even consider such a thing.

The amused smile faded from her face as she realized how inexplicably disappointed she was by that realization. With an exasperated sigh, Hermione dragged herself out of bed and prepared for the day.

Severus Snape awoke with a slight smile on his face. It immediately turned into a puzzled scowl. What in the nine circles of hell was he smiling like an imbecile about? Hmm...ah, yes...he'd been dreaming. In his dream he'd been flying; soaring and swooping over the school. He'd been laughing again with the simple joy of rediscovering the pleasure of flying. It both surprised and pleased Severus that he was still able, after all his dark years of spying, to take simple joy in anything.

Having spent so many years merely existing and trying to be of some use, Severus had been at a complete loss when the war ended and his usefulness was over. Yes, he had been aware that he was free, but what the hell was he supposed to do with the endless hours of that freedom? The hours had stretched on and on, in never-ending, empty torment. Amazed that he survived the final battle at all, Severus had then come to the despairing conclusion that he no longer knew how to live. Perhaps there was more to life than merely being of use. For the first time since Voldemort's demise, Severus was beginning to feel that simply enjoying being alive might not be beyond him after all. If he could rediscover his joy of flying, what other joys might once again be his?

More of his dream came back to him. Severus had not been the only flier. As his dream self had swooped and laughed, a young witch had raced about him, her wild hair flying out behind her. Her laugh had echoed his and the moonlight had made her eyes sparkle with mischief. In fact, her face thus caught in the moonlight had been altogether lovely...

Sitting straight up in his bed, his eyes going a bit wide in shock, Severus growled aloud, "That's a preposterous notion!"

But was it?

Severus Snape flopped back down on the bed considering. After a time, a calculating glint appeared in his eyes and the tiny smile he had awakened with crept back upon his face.

Hermione's final class on Friday morning was Potions. When Professor Snape asked her to remain behind after class, Hermione assumed he would tell her when to meet him for their lesson that afternoon. She was to be disappointed.

"Miss Granger, I know we had planned to have another flying lesson this afternoon," Severus began, "but I shall have to postpone it. Perhaps we can meet later this evening if I have time...I will endeavor to get word to you once I know for certain."

"May I ask why, sir?" she began hesitantly. "I don't mean to pry into your affairs, Professor," Hermione hastily added when he scowled coldly at her, "I only meant...well...is everything all right, sir?"

Severus had indeed assumed that his brash young student was being a Nosey Parker. Her heartfelt inquiry combined with the obvious worry on her face made him suddenly realize that she was honestly concerned--and on his behalf. His scowl softened as his eyebrows rose in surprise at that realization.

"Nothing is amiss, Miss Granger; I am quite well." His eyebrows rose again as he noted the obvious relief cross her features. Pausing a moment to consider the situation, he decided to elaborate. "I'm afraid that Peeves had made a nuisance of himself again. I don't understand why the Headmaster doesn't have the annoying beast banished."

"What has he done this time, sir?" Hermione asked with a smile.

"He's been wreaking havoc in Madame Pomfrey's stores. She managed to salvage most of them, but he's completely ruined the burn paste and the Dreamless Sleep. Pomfrey asked me to brew the replacements."

"I don't suppose..." Hermione's soft voice trailed off as a blush crept over her face.

"Speak up, Miss Granger. I haven't got all day, especially if you wish us to ever manage a flying lesson."

"Well, I only wanted to tell you, sir, that I would be happy to help, if I could be of any assistance?" The look she gave her stern Professor was full of both hope and trepidation. Severus studied her intently before he made a brusque reply.

"That would be acceptable. You may meet me here after lunch. Do attempt not to dawdle." With a wave of dismissal, Professor Snape returned to his papers as Hermione fled the classroom, her face graced with a happy smile.

The brewing went well. In spite of Severus' doubt, Hermione had shown up promptly after the noon meal. Indeed, the young witch had been so enthusiastic that she had nearly beaten her Professor to the classroom. Setting Hermione to brewing the burn paste on her own, Severus took on the more difficult task of the Dreamless Sleep. At first, they worked in awkward silence. As the work progressed and both became occupied with the task at hand, the silence seemed oddly companionable.

Taking advantage of his student's preoccupation, Severus studied Hermione intently as she worked. He was unsurprised to see that Miss Granger was competent as well as confident. What surprised Severus was the obvious pleasure she took in brewing the simple healing paste. She moved with unconscious grace, hummed softly to herself while preparing the ingredients, and gave the potion in her cauldron a happy smile each time it changed color to show it was progressing correctly. Had he ever taken such joy in the art?

Knowing that he had been just as enchanted with potion making when he was her age, Severus now found that it was more like remembering a dream than an actual memory from his life. That part of who he had once been seemed vague, misty, incredibly far away from the bitter man he had become. Yet watching the young woman show such pleasure in so simple a task lit a spark in his very soul. Perhaps that young man who had seen the beauty and grace in the precision of potion making was not as dead as Severus had thought. Somehow Hermione's enthusiasm for the task was resurrecting his own long lost love of the work. Perhaps joy of the work was not the only thing the young Gryffindor was awakening in him.

As both potions entered a period of simmering, Severus conjured both tea and a spare chair and bade Miss Granger to sit at his desk. After Hermione had politely poured for them both, he decided to find out more about her distrust of flying.

"It seems to me, Miss Granger, that I might better be able to tailor your lessons to fit you if I knew more about why you distrust flying," he began. "Tell me, has there never been any time where you felt secure when airborne?"

"Well, I rather enjoyed flying on a hippogriff..." Hermione broke off in sudden embarrassment as she realized that her Professor might not like being reminded exactly why she had been flying on a hippogriff.

"Oh for Merlin's sake, girl, stop your trembling," Professor Snape grouched. "I've been aware of the truth of that situation for some time; I assure you that the mention of it is of no dire consequence." This he said in such a dry tone that Hermione could not quite hide an amused smile. When her smile caused him to do nothing more dreadful than roll his eyes at her, Hermione continued.

"Flying on a hippogriff was rather exciting, actually. I felt quite safe. A hippogriff seems so much more...substantial than a rickety old broom."

"I see," Severus began and then paused to consider what she had told him. "It seems to me that you have no particular fear of flying per se, you simply distrust brooms in general."

"Well...yes, I suppose that's true. I mean, a broom is something you sweep the kitchen with, not something you fly on..."

"I believe, Miss Granger, that your Muggle upbringing is working against you. It's little wonder you distrust flying brooms if you see them as kitchen implements." Severus said with an amused smirk. "If that is the case, getting over your fear may be easier than I thought. We simply have to show you flying brooms in a different light."

"How will you do that?" Hermione asked excitedly.

"Leave that to me, Miss Granger. In the meantime, I believe your burn paste is awaiting the next ingredient." With that dismissal, they both returned to their work. The brewing concluded without further incident and they finished before dinner. Professor Snape waved her off to the Great Hall with instructions to meet him at the Quidditch pitch when the dinner hour had ended.

Finishing her meal in record time, Hermione hurried to her room to change before her flying lesson. She'd seen other witches fly while wearing robes and skirts, but she knew she'd be far more comfortable in her Muggle jeans and jumper. The sun had barely set when Hermione made her way out to the pitch. There she found Professor Snape, leaning nonchalantly against a goalpost with a single broom at his feet. It seemed that she had changed in vain; Professor Snape hadn't even brought her a broom. Perhaps he meant for this lesson to be a demonstration only. It surprised Hermione that she felt disappointed rather than relieved at the thought that she wouldn't fly this night. Luckily for Hermione, she was quite wrong about the matter.

"I thank you, Miss Granger," Severus drawled, "for having the foresight to don proper apparel. While your school uniform skirt is rather...attractive, it is hardly a sensible garment to fly in."

Was she hearing things? Had her Professor just told her that he thought her skirt... Hermione shook her head to clear her thoughts. She must have misheard him; it was the only logical explanation. "Er...good evening, Professor. Will I be flying tonight?"

"How will we get you to see brooms in a different light if we don't get you up on one?" Severus asked with an amused smirk.

"But sir, you have only brought your own broom..."

"Miss Granger, while I do think you need to get a broom between your legs in order to learn to trust and appreciate flying one, I hardly think that--with your present skills--a solo flight would be suitable to the purpose." Here Severus paused. Taking a step closer to Hermione, Severus regarded her intently for a moment before continuing. "Tonight...you ride with me."

Hermione found herself almost mesmerized by his black eyes and smooth voice. Having been used to hearing his voice either snapping orders in class or dripping with disdain, Hermione was completely gobsmacked at its present tones. It was infinitely crafty, that voice...sneaking gently into her ear only to shiver down her spine and pool

warmly at her... Good gods! She was supposed to be here for a flying lesson and all she could do was stand blinking at the man who was trying to teach her. Professor Snape would not be amused to find he had a complete and utterly distracted...not to mention hormonal...teenager on his hands. Sputtering a bit, Hermione found her voice. "I...I should like that, sir."

"Indeed," he murmured. Breaking eye contact with Hermione at last, Severus summoned the broom to his hand and mounted it. "Mount before me, Miss Granger," he instructed, "and place your hands below mine."

Slipping onto the broom in front of her Professor, Hermione's distraction proceeded apace. Professor Snape's chest was molded to her back; his arms were tight around her as he gripped the broom handle in front of her. Hermione felt completely secure, completely safe, and completely like throwing her professor to the ground and doing her best to snog his lights out. Hermione made a desperate attempt to keep her mind on the task at hand. It failed miserably as Severus dipped his head down to murmur directly into her ear.

"Tonight is not about thinking, Miss Granger," he purred, "it is about feeling. That's not a piece of Muggle wood you have under your hands...clenched between your legs...it is freedom...it is joy...it is...*magic*. Can you feel it, Hermione? The magic thrumming between your thighs?"

"Yes," Hermione managed to mutter.

"Then it's time for us to fly," he murmured as he kicked up off the ground.

As Severus started them on a gentle flight over the Quidditch pitch and out over the lake, Hermione could not help but be enchanted. She felt completely safe while enclosed in his arms. When she could manage to drag her attention away from the delicious press of his body against hers, she began to understand why he compared flying to freedom.

"Faster?" he asked.

"Yes...oh yes! Faster! Faster!" she shouted into the wind, breathless in her excitement.

Encouraged by her enthusiasm, and a bit distracted by her breathless voice, Severus pushed the broom to greater speed. When a small dive only made the young woman in his arms laugh in delight, Severus flew more and more recklessly. As they flew, his low, rich laugh joined Hermione's. It was so like his dream that Severus had more and more difficulty concentrating on his flying. He could only hope that Miss Granger didn't notice that the hardness pressed intimately against her bottom was not solely from the broom.

Eventually all joys must end. Flying the broom up to the Astronomy Tower, Severus lightly touched down and helped Hermione dismount. Standing close to her, he noted the wildness of her hair, the flushed excitement on her face, and the way her eyes sparkled in the light of the moon. The young witch was altogether enchanting. Perhaps there were indeed other joys Hermione could help him rediscover.

"Thank you, sir!" Hermione said, still breathless. "That was unbelievable. I can certainly see why you enjoy it so."

"It did seem especially enjoyable tonight. Perhaps it was...the moonlight. I will leave you here, Miss Granger. Gryffindor Tower is not far. I trust you can make it there without incident?"

"Yes, sir. I shall be fine." Hermione replied.

"Then I will bid you good evening, Miss Granger. We meet on the pitch at eleven o'clock tomorrow for the game in Hogsmeade. Please do attempt not to be late." With that said, Professor Snape re-mounted the broom and soon disappeared into the night leaving a very distracted and confused young witch in his wake.

The next morning found Hermione hurrying to the Quidditch pitch to meet her Professor. When she saw him waiting for her she almost stumbled in surprise. Professor Snape was wearing the scarf she had made him!

"Oh my..." she murmured to herself as she walked up to join him.

So Far Away by Staind

This is my life

It's not what it was before

All these feelings I've shared

And these are my dreams

That I'd never lived before

Somebody shake me

Cause I, I must be sleeping

(chorus)

Now that we're here,

It's so far away

All the struggle we thought was in vain

All the mistakes,

One life contained

They all finally start to go away

Now that we're here it's so far away

And I feel like I can face the day

I can forgive and I'm not ashamed to be the person that I am today

These are my words

That I've never said before
I think I'm doing ok
And this is the smile
That I've never shown before
Somebody shake me
Cause I, I must be sleeping
(chorus)
I'm so afraid of waking
Please don't shake me
Afraid of waking
Please don't shake me
(chorus)

6. Educating Hermione (<i>notsosaintly</i>)

Chapter 6 of 7

Hermione does not like flying - is it because she's scared, or because she's never been properly taught? A SASSY Production, in the form of a Round Robin

A/N: From notsosaintly: Before I begin, let me warn you: I know nothing about Quidditch. Indeed, in real life I am not much of a sports fan. I would rather get carpal tunnel typing on my computer than freeze my ass off at a football game. Some of the wenches ... erm, SASSy sisters ... decided it would be really funny to dump the professional Quidditch game in notsosaintly's lap because she was most looking forward to writing some lemons. Well, I did not get sorted into Slytherin for nothing. Next chapter will be in Jade_Orchid's corner.

Thanks much to the Harry Potter Lexicon and our most esteemed beta, Doomspark. I submit most humbly.

Chapter Six: Educating Hermione

by notsosaintly

He had been standing on the Quidditch pitch for more than five minutes already and the girl had not bothered to show up yet. Grumbling epithets that questioned Albus's parentage, he toed the half-frozen grass, staring at the overcast sky. Bloody meddling fool, he thought bitterly.

Dinner the previous night had been quite the show. The headmaster and Minerva sat tête-à-tête the entire meal, snickering and throwing what he supposed were surreptitious glances at him and toward the Gryffindor table. He knew they were up to something, and he had a fair idea what that something was.

Leaving the Great Hall early was such a common occurrence for Severus Snape that he felt confident the headmaster never even saw him leave. He stalked resolutely down the vacant hallway toward the little alcove at the juncture where Albus and Minerva would go their separate ways. If he was going to confirm his suspicion, he would have to get there before they did.

His patience wore thin waiting for the manipulating old man and his accomplice to finish their meals. Thoughts of simply confronting his tormentors battled with his ennui before he finally spotted the pair approaching. True to form, he caught mention of Quidditch tickets and heard Minerva half-heartedly scolding Albus for once again interfering in the lives of his employees. So the old coot was up to his old tricks again. Severus mentally patted his back at his exemplary observation skills. In any case, he figured, if Albus had indeed set up a date of sorts between himself and Miss Granger, then he pretty much had carte blanche if anything unexpected were to develop.

Not that anything *would* develop, of course. But Miss Granger's cries of "Faster! Faster!" the night before had him more than hoping it would. He could just imagine her exuberance at being taught how to ride more than just a broom.

Ah, but she was a young and naïve little girl. All his of subtle moves, including sharing that broom ride, had been gone unnoticed. He would be damned if he was going to start writing sonnets to the girl like a damned Hufflepuff, no matter that she would probably like it. No.

Dwelling on the density of Gryffindors, he had come to the realization that the perfect opportunity lie in a box that had been hastily shoved somewhere behind some old robes. The scarf Miss Granger had given him for Christmas. He had taken it out of its tissue-lined box and looked at the intricacy with which the green and silver fibers wound around each other. The silver seemed to move as he held it up to the light. Upon further inspection one could see that the yarn had been enchanted to look as though it were slithering like a snake through the grass. The scarf was really a brilliant idea, he had congratulated himself as he put it on. And, if he was right, wearing it would be a more obvious hint of his intentions, yet more subtle than screaming, "Hermione! I want to get into your knickers!"

He had snorted at the decidedly juvenile thought.

Heaving a deep sigh, he threw another glance toward the castle and was rewarded by a figure walking toward him. He straightened into full-professor mode as she got closer, pleased that she hastened her pace when she noticed him waiting. A slight falter broke her stride and, although she recovered nicely, her Gryffindor eyes spoke volumes as she recognized the scarf and realized the implications. Severus could not help but congratulate himself at his success.

~~~~~OXO~~~~~

Hermione composed herself after nearly tripping over her own two feet. The scarf. Oh, my. He was wearing the scarf.

Suddenly she knew why she had felt so off-kilter this morning. The spun green and slithering silver wrapped snugly about Professor Snape's neck summoned the dream, which had been lying just out of her reach, into her consciousness as if it had been Portkeyed there.

*Her snarky professor stood on the Quidditch pitch with his back turned, impatience personified. Quickly she approached, quite out of breath, and tugged on his robes.*

*"Professor. I'm sorry I'm late. I'm ready to go if you are."*

*When he turned, all she saw was the blur of his green and silver scarf before he grasped her shoulders and thrust his heated mouth upon hers. His lips set an unquenchable fire in her belly. There they stood, professor and student, locked in a passionate kiss in the middle of the Quidditch pitch, completely oblivious and unconcerned as to who may see.*

*Professor Snape wrapped an arm around her shoulders and pulled her body in close. The heat of his arousal fused with the heat in her belly. When his hand...finally!...stroked and squeezed her breast through her jumper, she moaned loudly as the fire in her belly spread downward and erupted, jerking her awake.*

Hermione blushed fiercely at the vivid memory, stopping before Professor Snape. His piercing gaze caused her to look away abruptly, slightly afraid that he was going to read her mind and discover the luridness of her dream.

"Precisely on time, I see. In fact, you are so precise you are nearly late. Perhaps you are not as eager to learn about flying as I had originally thought." The words dripped off his tongue like bitter molasses.

Still a little rattled from the dream and the fact that he wore the scarf, she replied, "Yes, sir. I...I mean no, sir. I mean ~~am~~ looking forward to this, sir."

The walk into Hogsmeade was uneventful. At least, Hermione thanked the deities, her professor walked at a leisurely pace and she had no trouble remaining at his side. Focusing on his feet in order to avoid the awkwardness of the situation, she found herself admiring the determined heel-toe of his every step.

The professional Quidditch pitch loomed at the far end of Hogsmeade. Conversation had been sparse and Hermione was feeling slightly ill at ease. It had occurred to her sometime during the walk that this outing had a most decided date-like quality. Doubts began to form in a quiet corner of her mind as to what exactly she was doing with Professor Snape outside of Hogwarts.

A slight pressure on the small of her back caused her breath to hitch as Professor Snape guided her toward the entrance. Hermione's hand shook as she handed over the ticket. Leery of his reaction to her nervousness, she quickly snatched her hand away before he could notice. Fortunately, they found their seats quickly; she wasn't sure if her liquefied legs would hold her up much longer.

Hermione gasped at the staggering view. They really had choice seats, at the precise height and angle to see everything.

"Headmaster Dumbledore has good taste, don't you think?" Snape mumbled in agreement.

Hermione tried not to look shocked as she shot a glance in her professor's direction.

"Yes, Miss Granger," he exhaled dramatically. "Dumbledore is responsible for this ... rendezvous, for lack of a better term. Certainly you do not think I had anything to do with it?"

"Actually, Professor, I thought it was a brilliant idea. I think I will learn much more with you explaining it to me." She was determined not to let him embarrass her.

His humph sounded suspiciously like agreement and Hermione was more than happy to think of it that way.

Suddenly, the stands roared to life and the two teams sped past the stands, lighter than air, each broom an extension of the rider's body. Oddly enough, one team was decked out in dark green and the other in deep red.

From the top of the stands, the announcer's voice boomed out over the crowds, "Entering from the West, in robes of dark green and gold, led by captain Gwenog Jones and hailing from Wales, I give you the Holyhead Harpies!"

Half the crowd burst into cheer while the other half jeered and shouted nasty comments at the passing team.

"And from the other side of the pitch," the announcer continued over the din, "our most beloved team from Scotland, wearing maroon and silver, and semifinalists in the race for the last Quidditch World Cup...I still say that match was fixed...I give you the Wigtown Wanderers!"

The crowd grew even louder as their team circled the stadium. A half-pissed wizard directly behind Hermione performed the Sonorous charm and began booing loudly, making her wince at the loud noise. Snape turned on his heel and gave the shabby-looking man a pointed glance, making him choke. Sputtering some nonsense about free speech being censored in the wizarding world, the troublemaker sat down and quickly lost himself in his bootlegged flagon of mead.

Hermione stifled a giggle as she tried to keep up with the antics of the professional Quidditch players as they dove and spun around each other. A daring pair spun away from the mass and curlicued around the opposite team. One even successfully attempted a somersault. The display was impressive. Before speeding to their respective goals, both Keepers dropped off their brooms and hung valiantly by one hand and foot, stretching tautly as they made their rounds.

Snape smirked at Hermione's gasp of incredulity and leaned closer to explain what the Keepers were doing. He had to get close enough so she could hear him over the din. Purposefully, he let his breath tickle the shell of her ear.

"That is called the Starfish and Stick," he explained. "The Keepers try to cover as large of an area as possible in order to protect their goal."

"It looks dangerous," she said breathlessly, turning quickly toward Snape in her exuberance and colliding with his nose.

An uncomfortable giggle burst forth before she could put a stop to it. Rubbing her nose, she pulled back slightly, barely suppressing an involuntary blush. Knowing it would be in his best interest to quell any embarrassment, he allowed his lip to quirk upward. It shocked her enough that the pink of her cheek paled and paled even further when his black eyes grew even darker. She looked away quickly before the implications could take hold in her treacherous mind.

A piercing whistle signaled the beginning of the match and it started in earnest right off the bat. Professional players were certainly more aggressive than the amateur students of Hogwarts. It was fast and frightening. Hermione found her heart rate speeding up with the excitement of it all.

"Which team do you support, Professor?" she asked out of curiosity, looking down at her program, trying to remember the names of the teams.

"I favor the Wanderers," he spoke, keeping his eyes intently on the game.

"The Wanderers? But aren't they the ones in red? I would have expected you to favor the Harpies."

"I do not favour teams based on the colour of their robes, Miss Granger. The Wanderers happen to be Scottish and they are far superior than any English or Welsh team." He pried his eyes away from the action to pin her with an implicit stare. "Besides, I am not *entirely* opposed to the colour red."

Her heart skipped a beat and blood pooled in her cheeks. His eyes melted black with her own. Oh my, was all her befuddled brain would allow her to think as her heartbeat thudded heavily in her chest. Feeling rather self-conscious, Hermione turned her attention back to the game, feeling him do the same.

The crowd cheered wildly as the Wanderers scored a goal, winging the Quaffle just out of the Keeper's reach. The scoring Chaser did a victory lap around the pitch, corkscrewing and performing various other acrobatics. Hermione was perched on the very edge of her seat.

"See what can be done with a broom, Miss Granger? These men understand the art of flying and they utilize the art to the fullest of their abilities." Snape muttered in awe.

"Did you ever play Quidditch, Professor?" Hermione asked shyly, not certain she should be prying into her professor's past.

He looked at her for a moment, expressionless. "Not for a long time and never for a team," he answered flatly. "To the utmost consternation of my father."

"I don't see why," Hermione retorted impulsively. "You fly beautifully."

"Quidditch is much more than just being able to fly, Miss Granger," he replied, softer than usual. He pinned her with his gaze. "Now, I think it best to return our attention to the game."

The crowd uproariously agreed. Hermione and Professor Snape looked up to see both Harpies Beaters zeroing in on a Bludger. Faster than the blink of an eye, the Beaters both took a swing and sent it careening toward one of the Wanderers's Chasers who was aiming to take another goal. The other side of the stands stood as a single-minded unit as the Beaters succeeded in taking the Chaser down. Everyone held their breath as the felled player spiraled to the ground, medics sprinting out to tend to him.

Hermione had subconsciously slid closer to her professor as the Chaser fell. Crestfallen, she glanced up at Snape, asking weakly, "Do you think he'll be okay?"

Peering down at the commotion on the ground, and trying desperately to ignore the closeness of the girl's body, he replied, "Not to worry. It seems he was only stunned. They will be returning him to the game shortly."

"Was that legal? It looked perfectly horrid," she complained. Honestly, this game was downright nasty in her opinion.

"It is a legal move, yes. Unfortunate for the Chaser who gets in the way, but quite legal."

He made no move to further himself from Hermione. When she had sidled up to him, he felt his stomach knot up, not unpleasantly. She was so close that he could wrap his arm around her if he wanted to. He actually had to subdue the desire to do so.

The game was back in motion with plays coming so fast now that everything was a blur to Hermione. She gripped the edge of her seat, knuckles turning white.

"Pay attention now," a voice drawled in her right ear. "Watch the Wanderers's Chasers. This is one of the Wanderers's famous moves called the Parkin's Pincer; they invented it."

As she watched, the three red-robed Chasers fluidly coalesced into one frame of mind as they bore down on a Harpies Chaser. Coming from three different directions, they surrounded the Chaser and intercepted the Quaffle in one swift move and headed off toward the Harpies goal, scoring before anyone could stop them.

The crowd surged around the pair, standing and cheering, drawing Hermione and Severus up with them and knocking Hermione off-balance in the process. She fell into her professor, whose quick hands had instinctively reached out to right her before she lost her footing as well. He kept an arm protectively around her until they were able to sit once more. Sitting, he kept her close, his thigh flush against hers. The quivering lump that was his beating heart pulsed fiercely in his throat.

Hermione sat with her hands folded in her lap, keeping her eyes determinedly on the game, trying to control a similar flutter in her chest. The leg pressing up against hers seemed to burn straight through her robes. An all-too-familiar heat began to build in her stomach. Desire was beginning to cloud her vision, making it difficult to be very mindful of the game. She shook her head slightly in attempt to get herself under control, to draw herself out of the dizzying fog.

Knowing exactly when to use a situation to his advantage was quite useful. Of course, his body never saw things objectively. In fact, the girl's closeness was becoming nearly unbearable. After catching her, he had no desire to let her go and found his body completely betraying his mind, which was telling him most definitely to distance himself from the girl, his student. There was nothing he could do as the warmth of her body seemed to overtake his senses and he found the tightening of his stomach spreading into his groin.

Thankfully, he did not have long to ponder over his tightening parts. Cheers interspersed with gasps from the crowd sharpened his attention on the field of play before him. And just in time, too. A blur of red was coming straight for him and Hermione, preceded by a golden streak. The snitch.

The Wanderer's Seeker reached out and snatched the little buzzing ball of gold out of the air but could not regain control of his broom. The momentum sent him spiraling into the stands.

Hermione froze like a frightened deer. Severus had no choice but to take control. As he threw his left arm around her shoulders and threw her to the ground sheltering her with his own body, the Seeker plowed through the space in which they had been sitting not a second before and barreled into the stands above them. The commotion of the crowd became pure mayhem and the announcer was shrieking somewhere high above the din that the snitch had been caught and the Wanderers had won.

All the commotion went unnoticed, however, by the girl and the man lying on top of her.

Hermione struggled to come to her senses after having the breath knocked out of her lungs by her much larger savior. She finally managed a deep breath, heaving her chest up against that of her professor who had the strangest look on his face; one she could not place as she had never seen anything like it before. Dark, lank hair framed his features, hiding his expression from everyone except her as he regarded her with deeply coal-black eyes. She fell into their depths as his pupils widened even further. Her breath left her again but this time for wholly different reasons.

The ends of Professor Snape's scarf still swung gently with the force of their sudden movement and tickled across Hermione's cheeks. That damn scarf. He had to wear that damn scarf.

The body, which pressed hard into her own, caused unfamiliar feelings to break free from their moorings. It really was the only excuse she had for doing what she did next. And, really, it was the only thing left to do. Hermione grabbed both ends of the scarf that she had so caringly made for her professor and used it to bring his face closer to hers. Closer and closer, breathing becoming more and more difficult, until their lips finally touched and she kissed him for all she was worth.

She probably should not have been surprised when he kissed back, but she was. But, blast it all/~~he~~ was the one who had worn the damn scarf that practically screamed his desperation to get into her knickers. He took over, kissing her once, twice, thrice. So soft and so gentle were his lips. Then he opened his mouth and nipped her bottom lip, nudging her to permit him access. Allowing her lips to part at his insistence, she closed her eyes and tasted him more fully, giving in to his demand, reveling in the feelings that poured forth from it seemed every centimetre of her body.

His tongue traced the inner edge of her mouth and flicked out to touch her own, coaxing her to follow his lead. Tentatively, she teased his tongue with hers, then gained confidence as his moan vibrated through her head. Suddenly, his kiss grew more intense, more demanding, causing her to ache with need.

Her acceptance drove him nearly insane. He tasted the innocence in her kiss but it did nothing to lessen his pleasure. He met her movements beneath him as she desperately sought more of what he had to give. He twisted and twined his tongue around hers, stroking it and drawing it in and out of his own mouth as though he could make her climax from a simple embrace.



Severus was unaware of how close she actually was. Hermione's body was on fire. She arched her back, pushing her aching breasts up into his chest, forming her body against his, the hardened nipples scratching through her flimsy robe up against the harsh material of his frock coat. He was hard and hard for her, a realization that caused her to whimper into his mouth.

Suddenly, he broke his mouth away from hers, chest heaving with every breath, and trailed kisses along her jaw. Shivers fell down her spine as he traced the rim of her earlobe with his tongue.

That voice. The rumble of his voice in her ear is what did her in. She had always admired the way he could mold his timbre to fit his need, in class and out. The shivers in her spine intensified. His voice touched her in places his fingers could never reach. The pleasure it invoked was purely involuntary.

She pushed her hips up into his and let her muscles finally release against his hardness as his voice played on her eardrum.

"Hermione, let's continue this elsewhere."

---

And because I must, here is a song.

### **You and I**

*by Queen*

Music is playing in the darkness

And a lantern goes swinging by

Shadows flickering my heart's jittering

Just you and I

Not tonight come tomorrow

When ev'rything's sunny and bright (sunny and bright)

No no no come tomorrow 'cause then

We'll be waiting in the moonlight

We'll go walking in the moonlight

Walking in the moonlight

Laughter ringing in the darkness

People drinking for days gone by

Time don't mean a thing

When you're by my side

Please stay awhile

You know I never could foresee the future years

You know I never could see

Where life was leading me

But will we be together forever?

What will be my love?

Can't you see that I just don't know

No not tonight not tomorrow

Ev'rything's gonna be alright (sunny and bright)

Wait and see if tomorrow we'll be

As happy as we're feeling tonight

We'll go walking in the moonlight (we'll be happy)

Walking in the moonlight

I can hear the music in the darkness

Floating softly to where we lie

No more questions now

Let's enjoy tonight

(just you and I) just you and I

Just you and I

Can't you see that we've gotta be together

Be together just you and I just you and I

No more questions just you and I

## 7. Only Waiting for this Moment to Arise (<i>Tarah Fae</i>)

Chapter 7 of 7

Hermione does not like flying - is it because she's scared, or because she's never been properly taught? A SASSY Production, in the form of a Round Robin

### Chapter Seven:

by Tarah Fae

**Disclaimer:** JKR owns the rights to anything you recognize in this fic. I wish I did, but alas! Life is like a box of Bertie Bott's. Sometimes you get chocolate fudge, sometimes you get earwax.

**AN:** HAH! Didn't expect to see me here, did you? I took over from Jade who is taking a break. This is my first foray into the hot, damp jungle that is literary lemons, so I hope I will not disappoint. My unending gratitude goes to my beta, Tevildo, for all his input and vast stores of trivia (it is good to have a male beta at times "wink"). If you're looking for plot, go to one of the previous chapters you will only find wall-to-wall smut in this chapter. Any complaints? \*quirks eyebrow\* Good.

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The planks boarding up the doorway splintered as Severus blasted them away. Hermione had been surprised when he steered her down the right fork in the road just before Hogsmeade station. His hand had been tightly around her upper arm as if he was afraid that she might come to her senses and run away screaming. Escape was the very last thing on her mind. The renewed throbbing between her legs when he, pinning her with that smoky gaze, had offered one of his graceful hands to lead her into the Shrieking Shack, had reinforced her desire.

He had never thought that he would seek out this place, but on this day it was close, it was empty and it was as discreet a location as he could hope for. His erection had flagged a bit on the brisk walk over here, some of the blood that had been devoted to his lust finally being diverted to his brain again.

What the hell was he doing? She was a student! But Albus had practically signed a consent form by giving them those tickets. She was just a little girl! But she responded like a queen in heat... would she yowl as he sank himself into her? He shivered at the thought, his cock hardening again. She could definitely be trained. She had undeniable potenti-... What was he thinking! She couldn't possibly want this. She was just confused, swept up by the excitement of the game and the near miss. She...

His brain stopped functioning as she pressed her body against his in the gloom of the dilapidated building, pulled his face down to hers and, inexpertly but enthusiastically, kissed him. He stumbled forward, steering her further into the murky room, his lips leaving hers just long enough to mutter "*Reparo*" over his shoulder. All evidence of their passing was obliterated as the planking magically sprang back together, bearing nothing but a few scorch marks from his previous spell.

Severus knew they wouldn't make it up the stairs. There was nothing up there but a musty old bed anyway. No... it would be much better down here, their cloaks would certainly be sufficient.

The couple drifted across the room and bumped into the cold hearth before stopping, like a helium balloon that had found the corner of the room. Severus grabbed onto the ledge behind Hermione's neck, wrapping his other arm tightly around her middle, his large hand splayed across her arse and pressing her hips closer to his. She willingly ground against him, her hands tightly holding onto the front of his robes as if she were afraid her legs would give out, eliciting moans from him and echoing them back into his mouth.

Their mouths devoured each other savagely. The taste of her mouth and the feel of her tongue enticingly slithering against his intoxicated him. Breath was rasping in their throats, neither wanting to break the kiss to come up for air. On the contrary, he knew if she stopped kissing him, he would surely suffocate her breath the only air his lungs would accept until the day he died.

Her hands were working at the buttons of his frockcoat now, but he could feel them trembling against his chest. Was she afraid of him? Was she nervous about the implications of what they were doing? Was she... inexperienced? Oh Merlin... would he be her first? A jolt ran from his belly straight into his already painfully-hard cock.

Hermione was surprised when his urgency dissolved into slow, languid kisses. His tongue which had, moments before, been sparring with her own, now teased and stroked hers, luring it out with tentative touches, dancing around it like a matador always there, but never allowing himself to be pinned. Her breath caught in her throat and she could feel him smiling against her lips at her reaction.

Then he was pulling away. For a brief moment, she was afraid that she had done something wrong, until she saw the faint smile still playing over his lips, now slightly swollen from their kissing. He took one step back, making a great show of unclasping his cloak and then spreading it over the hearthrug. His eyes were back on hers now, burning with intensity, as he slowly unwound his scarf, *her* scarf, from around his neck.

He was twining its ends around his hands before he took half a step forward again and slipped the makeshift lasso around her waist. He began reeling her in winding more and more of the scarf around his hands. All she could do was dumbly move forward, until she was pressed against his body again.

She shivered when she felt his hot breath on her neck. "Miss Granger," he purred in her ear. "Do you understand what I want to do to you?" He tugged lightly on the scarf, pressing her more firmly against his evident arousal for a brief moment. "Do you know what you are getting into?"

She nodded. The warm scent of crushed herbs wafted from his unbuttoned collar. She inhaled, taking the earthy essence that seemed to personify this man deep into herself. She understood what he wanted she wanted it too. The thought made her groan softly, the groan rising in volume as he nibbled on her earlobe. Oh gods... how she wanted it.

She looked so enticing... a faint blush on her cheeks and neck, her eyes demurely downcast for now, her lips glistening. Goosebumps raised on her skin when he dragged his fingers lightly up her arm to her elbow. "You are cold," he murmured. "*Incendio*." A fire roared to life in the empty grate, casting flickering shadows on the walls. She had turned her face away, looking at the fire. This would not do...

A light touch on her chin brought her eyes back to his. His fingertips shifted, tilting her face upwards; he leaned in to once more brush his lips against hers. She shivered as his fingers trailed their feather-light touch from her jaw, following the pulse in her neck, coming to rest on the first clasp of her robes. She gasped when a deft flick brought

the still-cool air of the room against her heated skin.

That smile against her lips again.

The nimble fingers began an excruciating stop-start journey down the front of her robes undoing each clasp and then exploring the newly exposed skin with a cool touch for a few moments. Her aching desire had grown with each clasp and she didn't protest when her robes were finally peeled away from her body, violently shaking the sleeves off her arms, allowing the garment to fall in a careless heap on the dusty floor, only her underwear remaining.

Who knew that wizarding robes would be such an excellent wardrobe choice on this day? She had only worn them because she had wanted to appease him. He seemed very appeased when the gentle pressure of his hand on her shoulder turned her slightly toward the flickering light of the fire. Smouldering black eyes raked every inch of her exposed skin, his touch darting here and there to trace over freckles, but shunning her undergarments.

Her skin was pale, not a sickly pale like his, but a warm peaches-and-cream that looked utterly edible. His lips descended to test his theory, his tongue swirling along her collarbone. She inhaled sharply, grabbing at his half unbuttoned coat.

He was overdressed for the occasion. Pressing a kiss to each palm of her hands as he removed them from his clothes, he quickly undid the rest of the buttons with a speed and dexterity that amazed her. Granted, doing this every day for the past thirty years of his life had made him quite skilled at it.

The coat was flung aside, followed by a crisp white shirt moments later. He hadn't bothered with its buttons, just pulling it off over his head. He noticed that she was staring at him now he kept still obligingly, giving her time to take him in, and then, when the tension in her shoulders had lessened, he caught her hand and pressed the palm against his bare chest.

She was ashamed to admit that she thought he would be cold to the touch his fingers were so cool and sure, but his body, dear gods... his body was almost feverish. She could feel his wiry muscles rippling in anticipation as she explored his chest. It was nearly smooth, only a few dark hairs marred the pale skin. Her hands roamed everywhere from his broad scarred shoulders, over his flat nipples (*that* made him hiss in appreciation) and down to his cinched waist.

In a moment of Gryffindor recklessness, she traced the dark line of hair on his abdomen down to the waistband of his trousers. His hand flashed forward like a cobra striking. "If you are going to do that," he growled, his breath stirring the curls against her neck as he leant closer, "do it properly."

He pulled back and placed her hands on the fastenings of his trousers, smirking in silent challenge at her. He was sure no Gryffindor would shrink back from that. He was right. There was a moment of hesitation, but then her chin jutted out in defiance.

Insufferable *man!* He was teasing her. Or was this a test? Well, if she was going to have to unwrap her gift herself, so be it. None too gently, she jerked the two ends of his waistband together to undo the hook at the top. She was about to yank the zipper down when he grabbed her wrist again.

"Careful now. I would be most displeased if anything got caught."

She froze... he wasn't.... A quick glance down confirmed it. A tangle of dark pubic hair was visible from the half-undone zipper, a hint of skin just under it. She swallowed nervously. He wasn't wearing any underwear. She let go of the zipper as if scalded.

"So much for Gryffindor courage," he sneered, but there wasn't any hint of malice in the words, just amusement.

He hissed in surprise when he felt her cool hand slip into his trousers to wrap around the base of his cock. A groan was her reward when she squeezed lightly. The little minx smirked at him. With a low growl, he crushed her to him, his mouth hungrily devouring her mouth, her neck, her shoulders.

"I suggest we get more... comfortable," he said huskily as he came up for air. He kicked off his boots, groaning at his sudden lack of coordination there was just no way of erotically removing one's shoes. His trousers were another matter entirely. Catching her eye, he stretched the waistband of his trousers away from his body, feeling his erection become free. Using just his fingernail, he slowly pulled down his zipper, then let his trousers drop over his narrow hips, stepping out of the pool of material.

She had been giggling as she followed suit, toeing off her sandals. Her breath caught in her throat as she saw him he was completely naked but didn't seem ashamed about it, the arrogant tilt of his hips as he displayed himself for her attesting to that. He certainly didn't have anything to be ashamed of, she thought, her tongue unconsciously tracing her bottom lip, her eyes riveted to his crotch.

He sank down onto his cloak, extending a graceful hand out in invitation. She gulped nervously, but placed a trembling hand into his, allowing herself to be pulled down to the floor. He eased her back onto the cloak, stroking his hand soothingly over her ribs and the dip of her waist. Her eyes were large, near-panic in their depths.

Damn... she was flustered, more than he had bargained on. He had just wanted to tilt her a bit off balance, but she looked almost ready to back out. Reaching out for her, he tried to kiss her doubts away, his hands stroking over and down her smooth back to her behind. Slowly he kneaded the taut flesh, trying to control the urge to thrust his erection against her stomach. Finally her hands snaked up his back and into his hair. She was moaning softly again, her tongue teasing his in a most delightful way. Now or never...

The muscles in her back tensed when he fingered the clasp to her bra, but she didn't move away while he worked to free the ends. She was blushing prettily when he slid his hands over her shoulders and down her arms, taking the bra with them. She brought her arms up to cover herself, but he would not let her.

Her breasts were full, but not large, topped by delicate pink nipples that were contracting in a most inviting way. "So lovely," he murmured, testing the weight of one breast in his hand before dipping his head to lick at the nipple. Rolling her onto her back, he hovered over her alternately sucking, kissing and lapping at her, his mouth exploring her neck, her chest, her breasts.

She was arching up to his mouth when he slid his fingers under the waistband of her knickers on her hip. His hand glided over her hip, his fingers digging into the flesh again. Her arse was so heavenly... so pliant and firm. She whimpered when his fingers slipped between her cheeks and dipped into her dripping heat from behind. His cock twitched violently in response.

"Gods, girl... so wet," he managed to choke out as he slowly pumped two fingers into her up to the first knuckle. She was mewling and squirming against him, her face flushed.

It took a few moments before he realized she was actually speaking no, chanting identifiable words. "What was that, my love?" he murmured, his ear close to her panting mouth.

Her body was on fire, his fingers driving her to distraction, she only wanted one thing and she knew he would give it to her. That voice... that velvety purr reached her ears, working in tandem with those talented fingers, stroking her in unreachable places, making her world spin in a kaleidoscope of pleasure.

"Off..." she panted. He was taken aback, but smiled ferally when she weakly pushed at the waistband of her knickers. "Off... please... more..." she begged.

He fairly ripped the offending piece of material off her shapely legs, dragging an appreciative hand back up along their curves and propping one leg up on his hip. It felt like his cock was lurching toward the wet heat emanating from so close by. Groaning, he tried to gather his self-control around him. He wanted to be easy, wanted her to enjoy this, he had to control himself for a little while longer and then ecstasy would be his.

He yelped in surprise when he was rolled onto his back, the young woman poised over his hips. With an impatient growl she steadied his throbbing cock and impaled herself fully onto it.

Both bodies froze, their faces contorted in pain.

Oh gods! It had been too long since he had been with a woman. She was like molten lava inside, the intense heat on his over-sensitized cock almost unbearable. Digging his fingers into her hips to keep her still, he gulped in a few lungfuls of air, trying desperately not to come right away.

She didn't think it would be like this. She hadn't wanted to be a passive bystander when she lost her virginity. The brief moment of pain she experienced as her maidenhead tore was ebbing away, but the pressure inside her was almost too much. She slumped forward, bracing her hands against his chest, whimpering softly.

Each slight movement drove him insane with need. She had to keep still if she wanted him to help her forget the unpleasantness. He pulled her down to him and stroked his hands over her body, more to calm himself than her.

He rolled her gently, reversing their positions. Her eyes were dark with pain, a suspicious glitter of moisture on her eyelashes. He kissed her once, twice, three times gently and undemanding. He felt the vice grip around his cock relax a little and flexed his hips experimentally.

Hands clutched as his shoulders as a whimper was torn from her throat. He grunted as she tightened around him again.

"Love... I need you to relax... I promise I can make you feel unimaginable pleasure," he breathed huskily into her ear, his tongue snaking out to lave at the tender spot behind it. She shivered then nodded.

Slowly he began to move, only a little at first, stretching her to accommodate him better. He felt a pang of guilt each time he heard her bite back a cry. Patiently he worked, slowing down if he felt her tense up again. He murmured into her ear, soothing her with his voice.

And then... it happened. As he was easing himself back in, she lifted her hips to meet his thrust, a groan of pleasure accompanying the movement. Her eyes were glazed over in lust, her luscious lips parted and panting their soft litany of encouragement once again.

"Faster... faster..."

Moaning, he sped up, relieved at finally being given free rein. He crushed her mouth with his, his tongue penetrating her as roughly as his cock was. Her hands were scrabbling at his chest, arms and shoulders no doubt adding to his collection of scars.

He had started his own worshipping refrain as he hammered into her willing flesh. "So tight... gods...! So wet and hot... can barely... stand it!"

Her legs wrapped around his hips of their own volition, pressing her engorged nub up against the pounding of his pubic bone. A familiar tingle was starting to build in the pit of her stomach, but comparing this burgeoning orgasm to anything she had ever achieved on her own before would be to compare a busker with pennywhistle to a full orchestra. All coherent thought fled her mind when his fingers roughly pinched her clit.

She was yowling as if she had been dunked in boiling water. He howled in something akin to agony when her velvet grip clamped down around him, the sensation fluttering down the length of his cock in waves of excruciating bliss. Jerking his hips forward convulsively, he came, his seed feeling impossibly hot even in comparison to the burning flesh that grabbed at him. His body took over, his mind oblivious to all but the woman writhing in wanton pleasure under him. He buried his face in her neck, riding out the tidal wave of emotion.

She gasped as she felt him pulsing inside her. He was groaning into her neck as if in pain one hand clutching at her shoulder, the other at her thigh, using the grip as leverage to push himself even deeper. His intensity overwhelmed her and she wrapped her arms around him, gripping him tightly to her.

He didn't know whether he had blacked out, but when his senses returned to him, her cool touch was stroking over his back and he became keenly aware of the ache in his knees. He groaned, and, after gently unwinding one of her legs from around him, he rolled them both over onto their sides. He was too bloody old for making love on hard wooden floors.

Severus winced as he extricated his softening cock from her still grasping wetness, his seed now luxuriously cool against his flesh, stifling her gasp with a reverent kiss. He was feeling so utterly spent and tender, so complete and at peace with the world. He gathered her small body to his chest, cradling her head on his shoulder, tracing the curve of her chest, the dip of her waist and the swell of her hip with his free hand, smiling as she twitched in response to ticklish areas.

They must have dozed off, because when Hermione next opened her eyes, his breath was rumbling deeply and evenly against her ear. She propped herself up on one elbow, inspecting his features. She didn't think that anyone had ever seen him like this totally unguarded, no front, no façade, no pretence. He looked so much younger when he wasn't scowling. That boyish flush on his cheeks also helped immensely, she thought to herself, grinning. She reached out to cup his cheek, his stubble prickling her palm, pressing a gentle kiss to his lips as he stirred.

Her hair was tousled and trailed over her shoulder to tickle his chest. Her hand was drawing lazy circles against his skin, a faint smile on her lips, her eyes twinkling. Severus decided that he could definitely get used to waking up to this for the remaining mornings of his life. Bringing her hand up to his mouth, he nibbled at her palm before planting a gentle kiss on its centre. "What are you thinking, you little minx?" he murmured.

Hermione giggled. "You know... in all the romance novels I've ever read, the heroine says 'That was amazing!' at this point in the plot. I know what they mean now."

"Indeed," he chuckled. His laughter ended in a sharp grunt when she fondled his tender penis. Gently removing her hand, he groaned, "Gods, woman... I am not as young as I used to be. Give me time to recuperate."

The small pout on her lips dissolved into a slow smile that raised goosebumps on his arms. Extending her hand over his flaccid member, she said in a loud and authoritative voice, "UP!" They both burst out laughing at the ridiculousness.

The laughter died on their lips as his cock obligingly twitched and started ascending towards her palm, blood rushing to Severus' groin to meet the sudden demand. He flinched as the sensitive flesh swelled out.

"Sweet Merlin..." he moaned, "We might get you on a broom yet."

She slung a leg over his hips, leaning down to nibble at his jaw. "I think I prefer riding this," she said coyly, watching his reaction from under her eyelashes as she rubbed against the smooth head of his erection.

He couldn't agree more.

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Tarah Fae on

[\[The Petulant Poetess\]](#)

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## **Blackbird**

by *The Beatles*

Blackbird singing in the dead of night

Take these broken wings and learn to fly

All your life

You were only waiting for this moment to arise.

Blackbird singing in the dead of night

Take these sunken eyes and learn to see

All your life

You were only waiting for this moment to be free.

Blackbird fly, Blackbird fly

Into the light of dark black night.

Blackbird fly, Blackbird fly

Into the light of dark black night.

Blackbird singing in the dead of night

Take these broken wings and learn to fly

All your life

You were only waiting for this moment to arise

You were only waiting for this moment to arise

You were only waiting for this moment to arise.