

The Plushie Problem

by PlaidPooka

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This fic was written for the Hermione/Severus Gift Exchange. It was a gift to HogwartsHoney, and she came up with the premise. The requirements were as follows: "An accident in the 6th year Transfiguration class has turned Substitute-teacher-for-the-day, Snape, into a 6' bright pink stuffed flamingo, complete with knobby knees and black eyes. I'm not specifying whose fault it was, but Neville deserves a break, y'know what I mean? The class has to walk around with the flamingo to cover up the incident until someone figures out how to turn him back. Minerva MUST NOT be consulted!"

Now, this premise absolutely terrified me at first. In the end, I had a great time writing it, and I hope you will enjoy reading it as well.

It was beta read by the fantabulous Vaughn. (Have I mentioned that she rocks?)

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

Farce treats the improbable as probable, the impossible as possible.

-George P. Baker

Comedy is unusual people in real situations; farce is real people in unusual situations.

-Chuck Jones

It was shaping up to be one bloody hell of a day. As if Severus didn't have enough to do--what with trying to keep an eye on Draco Malfoy's ridiculous plans to do Albus in. Now thrice-damned Minerva had to go and get herself bitten by one of Hagrid's insufferable pets. It wasn't too bad, as far as Malaclaw bites went. Albus had surmised that Minerva would only be dangerously unlucky for a day or two. In the meantime, Minerva had been cosseted in a padded room to avoid injury and Severus had to cover her sixth year Transfiguration class.

As he swept into the Transfiguration classroom and caught a glimpse of the horrified faces of Minerva's students, Severus had only one thing on his mind.

What I need is a fucking vacation. I spend most of the year at the beck and call of these pubescent imbeciles, and then, do I get to spend my summers lounging on some beach drinking rum out of a coconut? Oh no! I get to be toady boy for fucking Moldywart. How the bloody hell did I ever let Albus talk me into this? Maybe I'll just skip out for

a few days. Go someplace where there aren't any blasted children and get completely pissed. I could always tell Albus that Moldywart suddenly called me away.

Silencing his bitter inner musings, Severus strode to Minerva's desk and made a turn carefully calculated to cause his teaching robes to flair out dramatically. Giving the startled class his most malevolent glare, he snarled, "As it has fallen to me to teach this class while Professor McGonagall is *indisposed*, perhaps one of you dunderheads could convey to me what today's assignment is meant to be." It was no surprise that Granger immediately held up her hand. Biting back a sigh, Severus snarled, "Yes, Miss Granger?"

"We've been working on turning birds into goblets filled with liquid. Professor McGonagall usually takes off points for--"

"That will be quite enough, Miss Granger. I hardly need a treatise on the matter. I assure you that I am neither so old nor so blind that I can't identify a proper goblet."

"Yes, sir," Hermione replied, lowering her head to stare at her desk.

"Now then, class, from what Miss Granger told me--before she began to blather--I assume that you have tried this spell before?" As several students nodded, he continued. "Then what are you waiting for? Have at it, and do try not to blow anything up!"

As the students dutifully went to the cages that lined one wall to collect their animals, Severus sat at Minerva's desk and drew a holiday brochure out of his robe pocket. Hopefully the students could keep themselves busy without too much fuss on his part. Gazing longingly at the brochure, Severus wondered if he dared to disappear for a couple of days. That little wizards' inn at the top of the Alps looked just the thing. Cozy. Quiet. Nothing to do all day but sit before the fire, gazing out the windows at snow-covered peaks, and get stupifyingly drunk. Looking again at the front of the brochure, Severus stifled another sigh. He supposed that most people wouldn't buy The Most Boring and Insignificant Inns of Europe in order to choose a place to holiday, but for him it seemed perfect. No headmaster doing his martyr act. No students prattling away at him until his head pounded. No humiliating himself in front of dark overlords. Just him, a quiet inn in the mountains, and a few dozen pints of stout. It sounded like heaven.

A sudden snicker alerted Severus to a possible problem. Looking up sharply, Severus was just in time to see Malfoy lob a balled parchment at Granger's head as she was casting. Startled, Granger's wand hand raised as she cast; and she pointed her wand straight at Snape.

"Uccello Inabile al Volo!" Hermione said.

A strange, numb feeling came over Severus. Slumped in Minerva's chair as if he'd suddenly gone boneless, he tried to make sense of the words that had flown out of Miss Granger's startled mouth. They were not any incantation that he had ever heard. What the hell had the blasted girl hit him with? He opened his mouth to speak, only to find that his mouth wouldn't open. With every ounce of his will, he tried to move, but he didn't manage a twitch. What was wrong with him? At least he could still see, and what he saw in front of him was a class full of gobsmacked students. Even Malfoy had gone pale. That wasn't a good sign.

There's no sense in my getting upset over it. Accidents happen in class all the time. Soon, one of the dazed imbeciles will go fetch Albus and he'll get it sorted.

"Hermione," said an aghast Harry Potter, "what did you do?"

"Oh, bugger!"

Remind me later to take house points for language unbecoming to a student, Miss Granger.

"I've been studying Italian," Hermione continued. "That was one of the phrases I've been learning. It means 'flightless bird.' But flamingos aren't flightless."

"That one is. Snape's a six foot tall stuffed toy, for Merlin's sake! Fabulous," Draco snapped and then let his head fall onto the desk with a loud thump. "He's going to kill me if we don't get this sorted."

For his part, Severus was trying to get his mind wrapped around the fact that Granger had turned him into a giant stuffed flamingo and wondering when one of his dunderheaded students would finally go to fetch help.

"Do you think he's in there?" Ron Weasley asked curiously as he approached the desk and stared into Severus' eyes. "I mean, can he hear us...see us?"

"Oh, no," Hermione replied in a matter of fact fashion. "He's all fabric and stuffing at the moment. I doubt that he's aware of us at all."

No! Don't listen to the Muggle-born bane of my teaching career! For heaven's sake, Miss Granger, I don't need a brain to be aware; it's fucking magic! Now, one of you idiots go and get me some help!

"He's not aware?" Malfoy said, lifting his head from his desk. "Well, that's all right then! All you have to do is get him set to rights and he'll never know what happened."

"Why are you acting so helpful?" Ron said distrustfully.

"Don't be daft. Snape saw me throw that paper at Granger. If he knows what happened, then he'll be bloody furious."

"He'll be more than furious at me," Hermione said shakily. "He'll get me expelled."

"Then it's in all of our best interests to get this fixed before anyone finds out about it," Draco said firmly.

Believe me, Mr. Malfoy, if I ever get out of this mess, you can count on me to wring your pureblooded little neck!

Addressing the rest of the class, Harry said, "Can we trust you all to stay silent? You heard what Hermione said; Snape will never know."

"But, Harry," whined Neville, "what will we say when the teachers ask where Snape is?"

"We'll say that we finished the class as normal and we haven't seen the old git since."

That will be five points from Gryffindor, Mr. Potter. When I can manage it.

"But what am I going to do with a six foot stuffed flamingo in the meantime?" asked a frustrated Hermione. "I can't just leave him lying around, something might happen to him and then we'll be in real trouble."

So kind of you to worry more about your foolish hide than to have any concern for me.

"Look," Ron said, "this is the last class of the week. You'll just have to keep him with you. I'm sure that you can get Snape sorted before Monday."

"And how will I explain my sudden flamingo fetish?" Hermione asked petulantly.

"Crooks!" said Harry. "Ron and I will hide Crookshanks in our dorm room, and if anyone asks, you can say that you made a mistake and Transfigured Crooks. If any of the teachers offer to help, you can say that you prefer to work it out on your own. They'll believe that of you."

Damn and Blast! I am in grave danger of spending the rest of my life as a colossal stuffed waterfowl. Not to mention the indignity of being carted around by Granger for the foreseeable future. I am in hell, and Miss Granger has been sent by Lucifer himself to torture me.

"I don't think that this is a good idea, Harry," Hermione said. "What we should do it take him straight to Madam Pomfrey, not carry him around all weekend like a carnival prize."

Now you're talking. Quite a sensible plan, Miss Granger, and I assure you that I will be none too pleased if you decide to carry me about. By all that's holy, take me to Poppy!

"Hermione," Harry said fiercely, "do you *want* to be expelled."

"No," Hermione said quietly, dropping her head in defeat, "I don't want to be expelled."

"Then brace up and let's get on with it!"

Severus' view of the room suddenly changed as Hermione came to Minerva's desk and wrestled him out from behind it. Standing with her arms wrapped tightly against Severus the flamingo's waist and with his back pressed tightly to her front, Hermione wobbled a bit as she tried to manage him. Severus' long neck bent down, and he was treated to his first sight of himself as a stuffed toy. What he saw was feet. Ridiculously large, webbed feet attached to comically thin legs with knobby knees. Severus could just barely make out enough of his stomach to see that he was a lurid, stomach-turning pink. He also appeared to be rather furry.

Great galloping gnomes! I look absolutely ridiculous! When word of this gets out, the rest of the staff will never let me forget it. Bloody hell! They will never let me forget it! They're still going on about Longbottom's blasted boggart, and that was years ago. As much as I hate to admit it, perhaps I'm better off with Miss Granger sorting this out herself. The students won't talk, not if they want to stay out of trouble. And at least this way I won't have Albus giggling over it like a schoolboy.

At this point, Severus suddenly realized something else. Not only could he see and hear, but he could feel as well. In fact, his skin...for lack of a better term...seemed strangely more sensitive than normal. He could feel Granger's arms banding his waist and her hair tickling his neck. Hell, he could even feel where her breasts were pressed firmly against his back. It felt uncomfortably nice, actually. In fact, Severus could feel the stirrings of a completely inappropriate reaction to the situation, considering that the person holding him so closely was a student. At least his present form wasn't anatomically correct...at least he hoped it wasn't! Giving a mental sigh of relief, Severus decided that he need not worry on that count. If he was sporting a pink, fuzzy erection, the whole class would have been sniggering by now.

"This is never going to work!" Hermione snapped. "Professor Snape is taller than I am! Some of you lot are going to have to help me carry him."

Harry, Ron, Neville, and Seamus all gathered around Hermione. Taking the gigantic toy flamingo from her, they carried Snape, two to a side. They looked for all the world like a group of small boys with a pink and fuzzy battering ram. All they needed was a large stuffed toy door to smash down. Staring straight up at the ceiling and being manhandled by four young Gryffindors was not Severus' idea of a good time. Awkward as it had been, he'd greatly preferred being carried by Miss Granger. The boys had rough hands and grasped at his sensitive, if plush, body far too harshly. Seamus had a hold of one of his sticklike legs in a grip so firm that it felt as if his foot was going to pop off.

"Where to, Hermione? The common room? The library?" Ron asked.

"Well, as much as I hate to say it, it's dinnertime," Hermione said. "If I don't show up in the Great Hall, it will look more suspicious than if I show up with a huge flamingo. We'd best go eat. The sooner we get the fake Crookshanks story into circulation, the faster the professors will leave me alone so I can get this sorted."

"Good plan," said Seamus. "Besides, I'm starved! Off we go then!"

The next thing Severus knew, he was bouncing uncomfortably while the boys hurried through the corridors on the way to dinner. Miss Granger, his only hope of salvation in this nightmare of a situation, trailed along behind them. Long before they arrived at the Great Hall, the odd procession came to a screeching halt that caused Severus' thin legs and floppy wings to be wrenched painfully.

"Well, children," said a voice that Severus was suddenly very glad to hear, "what's this delightful toy that you are carrying about?"

The uninteresting view of the ceiling was suddenly blocked by the amused face of Albus Dumbledore as he leaned over Severus' face. Immediately, Hermione started in on the Transfigured Crookshanks lie.

No, Albus! Don't listen to the wench! It's me! Damn it, Albus. You're practically omniscient; surely you can tell I'm in here? I know that I thought it would be best to keep this quiet, but I've changed my mind! You can laugh at me all you wish. You can come back and haunt me from the grave just to snicker about this story--you can take bloody pictures if you want! Just get me out of the hands of these torturous Gryffindors!

Unfortunately for Severus, Albus seemed to believe the ridiculous tale. All he did when Miss Granger finished it was to wish her luck restoring her pet, and to offer his assistance if she ran into trouble. Then, giving Severus a sly wink that made the Potions master turned plushie absolutely furious, Albus Dumbledore went calmly along his way, leaving Severus to his fate.

And a dreaded fate it seemed to be for the next hour, as he was propped up at the Gryffindor table only to be poked and prodded by what felt like a thousand curious hands. When the eternal dinner hour was finally finished, Severus was again treated to the gruff indignity of being carted through the halls by rough hands. This time, they headed up to the Gryffindor dormitory. Once there, Miss Granger's roommates helped her carry him into their bedroom before they returned to the common room.

Propped up in what was assumedly Miss Granger's bed, Snape found that he faced a mirror that hung on the wall opposite. The sight that met his eyes was worse than he had feared. The six foot tall flamingo had little in common with the bird it was supposedly fashioned after. The body was indeed a lurid pink and fuzzy in the extreme. The overly long neck was as ridiculous as the exaggerated, thin legs that he had already seen. The small head was dwarfed by the gargantuan crooked beak protruding from it. The beak was constructed in such a fashion that he seemed to be permanently smiling. Then there were the eyes. Shiny, black button eyes with dots of pink to highlight them. He looked cute. He looked cuddly. It was enough to make a grown man lose his dinner.

The cause of his nightmare was currently pacing back and forth at the foot of the bed, muttering to herself. After twenty minutes of this behavior, Miss Granger suddenly halted and turned to face Severus. The expression of her face was full of concern.

"I know that you can't hear me, Professor," she began.

Like hell I can't.

"Even if you can't hear me, I want you to know how sorry I am that this has happened."

Sorry that you may be expelled, at any rate.

"After all that you've done for us...after all that you've risked...you don't deserve to be treated so abominably."

What's this, then? The girl obviously thinks that I can't hear her. I expected to be treated to a long list of my shortcomings and a myriad of explanations as to why the chit thinks that this situation isn't her fault. She talks as if she actually cares about what happens to me.

"I know that this is my fault. I'm supposed to be a witch! I should be better at ignoring distractions when I'm casting, especially when Malfoy is around. I know that you won't thank me for it...you'll probably never even know, but I promise you that I'll do whatever it takes to put this right. And I won't let you out of my sight. I won't let anything happen to you while you can't defend yourself!" she finished fiercely.

This impassioned speech was not at all what Severus had been expecting. He found himself wondering if it was all an act, perpetrated on the off chance that he was indeed aware of his surroundings. No, that was far too Slytherin a manner of thinking for this young Gryffindor. It was just possible that Miss Granger was not quite the pompous encyclopedia that he had always taken her for. What did he truly know of the girl, after all? For the first time since he'd been flamin'g, Severus looked at the situation as something interesting rather than simply a torture to be endured. Curious, he wondered what the young witch would do next.

"Well, pacing is not going to fix this," Hermione stated firmly. "Let's start with the obvious and go from there." Drawing her wand, Hermione pointed it at Severus and said, "Finite Incantatem." She gave a disappointed sigh when the spell made no difference. "I didn't think that it would be that easy," she said with another sigh. "Good heavens! I'm almost glad that it didn't work! How in the world would I explain to you how you ended up in my bed?"

How indeed, Miss Granger. And may I add that you blush most prettily.

"Hmm...I also don't want to risk hurting you by trying out spells willy-nilly."

I think that you actually do care about what happens to me. How very odd.

"I know! I'll recreate what happened, if I can, and then I'll have a test subject to practice on. That's certainly the safest way to proceed. I'll have to get something to try it on; an inanimate object simply won't be affected in the same way."

Hmm... Apparently, Miss Granger does not simply repeat facts by rote. She appears to actually have a brain under all of that hair.

Tilting her head to the side, Hermione stood quietly thinking for a moment. Raising her wand, she said, "Accio feral rat."

Severus was impressed. Not only was Miss Granger not such a Pollyanna as to think the school was rodent free, but she was astute enough not to simply say 'rat' and retrieve some poor first year's familiar. Most wizards were rather careless when they used a spell to fetch something. It seemed that Miss Granger was as precise in this as she had always been in her potion brewing.

Soon, an irritated rat drifted into the room. Not waiting for it to complete the journey to her hand, Hermione repeated the spell that had caused all the trouble. "Uccello Inabile al Volo!"

A small, stuffed penguin fell to the carpet. As she reached down to scoop it up, Hermione said, "Well, this one is a flightless bird, to say the least. The spell must be a little wild. It achieved a similar effect, but not an identical one." Looking up at Severus, she gave a small smile and said, "Not to worry, Professor. The effect is close enough to suit our purposes. In fact, this tells me that I should probably stick to spells that would restore you to your true form rather than try to reverse the original spell."

Her logic is sound. The girl is showing a decided knowledge of magical theory that I didn't realize that she possessed. I begin to think that she will find a way to fix this after all. It's strange. I'm not nearly as angry about this mess as I should be.

For the rest of the evening, Hermione tried all the standard restoration spells that she knew of, and a few that she found in the back of her Transfiguration textbook. It was all to no avail. Tired after her efforts, Hermione decided to turn in early and attack the library first thing in the morning. Severus, who had begun to grow seriously bored, suddenly found a new point of interest. Showing no more concern than she would have if she had been in front of a real stuffed toy, Hermione undressed and prepared for bed.

Good Lord! I shouldn't be watching a student undress! Especially not a curvy, barely of age student. I should close my eyes at the very least. Oh for fuck's sake, what am I thinking? I haven't got any bloody eyelids at the moment. The hell with it. Albus can't fault me for this; there is absolutely nothing that I can do about it. Nothing I can do but admire that smooth clear skin...the gentle curve of her hip...those pert breasts. Have I ever seen a naked woman that young? I certainly never had a girlfriend when I was that age. Oh, for Merlin's sake, get a hold of yourself man! Not only are you watching this unwitting striptease, you're perving over the poor girl. Damn! She's putting a top on. Well, I must say that those skimpy knickers and that tiny knit top don't leave much to the imagination.

Severus' uncomfortable musings were interrupted by Hermione climbing into bed and closing the curtains around it. She then rather awkwardly managed to draw down the coverlet and lay Severus flat on his back with his head on the pillow right next to her. After tucking him in, she shocked him further by leaning over and giving him a quick kiss right on his enormous beak.

"I doubt very much that you need to sleep in the state that you are in, sir. Nor do you probably have any awareness of whether you're sitting or lying down. But I don't fancy the idea of you sitting there so uncomfortably all night. Goodnight, Professor."

Severus didn't know if he needed to sleep or not. All he knew was that he was beginning to feel extremely confused. He also decided that it was an uncommonly pleasant experience to have a nearly naked young woman tuck one into bed. As he was musing on the novelty of that, he fell deeply asleep.

Waking unusually early the next morning, Severus, at first, didn't understand what had awakened him. Dawn had barely broken, and the light that made its way through the curtains of Hermione's bed was very weak. However, when one has no eyelids, even the dimmest light is enough to disturb one's sleep. Being unable to close his eyes was not the only thing which was disturbing Severus. In her sleep, Hermione had cuddled up to Snape's plush body as if he were her own personal six foot teddy bear. Lying on her side, her legs were nestled up to his stick-like ones, her arm was curled snugly around his rather rotund pink stomach, and her head was resting just under his. In fact, her head was an oddly comforting weight, nestled under what would have been his chin--if flamingos had chins. All in all, it was an unprecedented experience for Severus, who had never woken up in the arms of a woman in his life.

While Severus was no stranger to sex, he had never gone to sleep with a woman in the bed with him. Between his naturally distrustful personality and his experiences with the Death Eaters, he'd never had sex with a woman he trusted enough to fall asleep next to. To be quite honest, he'd never realized that such trust was even possible, let alone something he might desire. Suddenly, while he lay trapped half under a snuggly student, Severus realized that there truly was a possibility for such trust in his life. After all, he was absolutely helpless at the moment. He was completely at her mercy. If Miss Granger wished to, she could have deluged him with a flood of unspeakable atrocities. Yet had she done so? No, she hadn't even spoken to him with anything but concern. The girl had vowed to protect him, seen to his comfort, and now she snuggled up to him like a lover.

What would it be like to have such a lover? How strange and wonderful it would be to allow himself to gladly fall asleep in the arms of a woman that he could trust. With a mental sigh...the only sort of which he was now capable...Severus tried to put the matter out of his mind. Knowing that he was often an unpleasant man and always a rather difficult one, it occurred to Severus that he was highly unlikely to acquire the interest of a woman who was capable of such loyalty.

Though he did his best to ignore his personal epiphany, Severus was now aware of the possibility of such a trusting relationship, and so his perspective changed on the matter. There was indeed one woman whom he could already trust enough to sleep with. From that point forward, any thought that Severus had about Hermione Granger came accompanied by a strange and fierce yearning. It was the sort of hopeless yearning of a man who has, at last, discovered exactly what he wants out of life, but knows very well that it is completely out of his reach. To have such feelings towards a student was inappropriate. To believe that such a kind young woman would ever see him as anything but her nasty old professor was impossible.

Putting the matter firmly out of his mind, Severus determined...in true Slytherin fashion...that he might as well enjoy the present situation, as it was unlikely to ever happen to him again. The weight of Hermione's arm around him was both a comfort and an enticement. The scent of her tangled hair was bewitching. The feel of her soft breath on his neck stirred more than the pink fur he was covered with. It was altogether intoxicating. Perhaps this was not the wisest way for Severus to wile away the time before his sleeping partner woke. It was disconcerting, to say the least, to feel as if one was burdened with a cock as hard as stone and not be able to do anything to relieve the situation. Not only could he not move, but Severus had no cock at all in his present form, not even a pink, fuzzy one. It was maddening to have all of the desire but none of the appropriate equipment.

It was another hour before Hermione gave a sudden, soft cooing noise and then slowly awoke. When she opened her eyes, she appeared confused for a brief moment.

Then, catching sight of the huge, pink flamingo beside her, she gave Severus a brilliant smile.

"Good morning, Professor," she murmured cheerily, leaning over him to once again give him a smooch on the beak. "I feel much better about things after a good sleep. I'm sure that we'll get you sorted today!"

Drawing the curtains, Hermione peeped out and saw that her roommates were still fast asleep. Not a very surprising turn of events so early on a Saturday morning. For a moment, Hermione seemed indecisive. Then she shook her head and gave Severus a rather sheepish grin.

"I'm just being silly. I promised you that I wouldn't let you out of my sight, and I won't. You'll just have to escort me to the loo. After all," she said with a giggle, "it's not as if you can see, so you're hardly going to watch me pee!"

As Hermione wrestled Severus out of the bed and struggled with him to the nearest lav while trying not to drag his feet too much, Severus found his thoughts hopelessly muddled.

Merlin's bollocks! I have never in my life watched a woman relieve herself and I hardly want to do so now! The very thought is disgusting! Good lord. If it's so disgusting, why does my nonexistent cock seem so bloody intrigued by the idea? I must be going barking mad; that's all I have to say on the matter. I don't want to go to the loo with you, Miss Granger! Do you hear me? Well, most of me doesn't want to go to the loo with you. Apparently, some assorted bits of me think it's a grand idea.

Luck was with Severus. When Hermione sat him, propped up in the corner on the floor of the lavatory, he was at such an angle that he could not see the toilet. He was further distressed by the fact that he seemed disappointed by this. So, though he could hear what Miss Granger was doing, he was neither forced nor treated to a view of the event. He did, however, have a clear view of the girl getting ready for a quick shower. He stopped thinking altogether when he was once again faced with yards of creamy, naked flesh all topped off by pert little nipples. By the time Hermione finished her shower and dried off, making her jiggle in all sorts of interesting places, Severus was a babbling wreck of his former self.

When I finally get out of this mess, assuming that I get out of it with all my bits and bobs intact, I'm going to have to lock myself in my rooms and have a good wank or two...or a dozen. Damn, but she does look enticing. I don't suppose it's proper to be tossing off over a student, but what's a man to do when he is so terribly provoked!

Shower over, Hermione dragged Severus back into the dormitory and propped him once again in her bed. While she got dressed, she seemed lost in thought. At last ready to face the day, Hermione took the time to pop the small stuffed penguin into her satchel before she turned to regard Severus.

"I suppose that I should ask the boys to help me carry you, but I didn't like how they treated you yesterday. I know that there is no way that you're aware in your present state, but that's no reason to handle you so roughly. I thought that Seamus was going to rip your poor foot clean off!"

So did I, Miss Granger. So did I.

"I'll just have to manage some way to carry you on my own." Walking to the bed, Hermione managed to get Severus situated with only a little fuss. When she was done, Hermione was carrying Severus on her back. His slender legs were wrapped around her waist and she held them there with one hand. Her other hand was stretched up, holding onto his neck and bending it slightly over her shoulder. It looked, at first glance, as if Hermione was carrying a very large pink and furry knapsack.

While far more comfortable than having a herd of boys cart him around, Severus found the position distracting in the extreme. Not only did it allow him a rather close view of Miss Granger's jumper covered breasts, but it was alarmingly similar to one of his favorite sexual positions. There was nothing to be done about the matter, he decided. Now that he had seen the young woman naked, it was simply impossible to view her as a child, student or not.

The trip to the library was uneventful, and Hermione spent all morning looking through a myriad of Transfiguration books and making copious notes. When the library clock struck one, Hermione realized just how hungry she was after having skipped breakfast. Wrestling Severus into the piggy-back carry, she headed for the Great Hall. Once there, she joined Harry and Ron at the Gryffindor table. She soon regretted her choice.

"I see that there is no change in tall, dark, and slimy," Ron said.

"Oh, I don't know, Ron," joked Harry, "I think that I prefer Snape this way!"

"Ronald Weasley!" Hermione snapped. "Just because the man is currently unable to take points, that is not Carte Blanche for you to be rude in his presence. And as for you, Harry Potter, it's Professor Snape. I've been telling you that for six years. One would think that you would remember to speak of a Hogwarts professor with the proper respect!"

The argument between the three friends went south from there, but Severus was not paying much attention to it. To be honest, he was trying to wrap his mind around the fact that not only was Miss Granger defending him to her friends, but apparently she had been doing so for some time. The argument sounded like an old and familiar one. It was obvious that it was a bone of contention between the three friends.

Once Hermione had grabbed a quick bite and said a few last strongly-worded phrases to her friends, she hefted Severus onto her back again and headed for an empty classroom. When Severus had been comfortably seated, Hermione retrieved the small penguin from her satchel and began trying out the spells she had researched. Though she worked all afternoon and well into the evening, not a single one of the carefully chosen spells had the slightest effect on either the penguin or Severus. He was still a six foot tall, lurid pink, stuffed flamingo. Lugging him back to her thankfully deserted dormitory, Hermione flung him onto her bed before she plopped down half atop him and proceeded to drench his fuzzy pink fur with a multitude of tears.

Is this for me? Is this kind-hearted young woman crying her eyes out on my behalf? I've never been the beneficiary of such tears in my life. It makes me feel oddly protective of the lass. I've never had much experience with comforting weeping women--my Slytherins are a fairly self-sufficient lot--but if I wasn't a damned flamingo, I swear that I'd try my level best to halt Miss Granger's tears.

Eventually, the weary witch cried herself to sleep, still draped half over her Potions professor turned flamingo. With so many thoughts spinning round in his head, it was a long time before Severus also found sleep. When this whole fiasco had begun, Severus wanted to be restored so that he could avenge himself on the students who had dared to cause him trouble. Thought he was still angry at Malfoy, and disgusted by Weasley and Potter's willful lack of respect, he could find no comfort at all in the thought of punishing the young witch who had worked herself to tearful exhaustion for his benefit. She was a clever little thing. He now held no doubt that she would find the solution to his flamingoed state. But what in the world would he do when she freed him from his pink and fuzzy prison? Finding no satisfactory answer to that dilemma, Severus slid into sleep.

The next morning began much as the morning previous, with one rather eventful change. As Severus stared at the canopy of Miss Granger's bed, waiting for her to awaken, Hermione suddenly opened her eyes.

"I've got it!" she said with a smile. "I've got an idea and I'm certain that it will work!"

Once again a willing--albeit guilty--audience to Hermione's morning ablutions, Severus couldn't help but hope that his ordeal would soon be over. As interesting as it had been to learn more about the young woman he'd always thought of as intelligent but rather dull, Severus was anxious to remove himself from the awkward situation. As pleasurable as it was to have a pretty little witch show him so much care and consideration, it made him painfully aware that soon it would end. There was no sense in getting used to her care. She was a student and he was her unpleasant professor. That was all there was to it.

A brief trip to the library and Hermione found the information that she wanted. When he saw her looking through an extensive tome on Animagi, Severus thought she had lost her mind.

Despite my recent experiences as a stuffed bird, I have never, nor have I ever wished to be, an Animagus. What possible help could that book give us?

Hermione, however, seemed quite pleased with her research. "I once saw Remus Lupin use this spell to force an Animagus into his natural form. It needs to be adapted to suit an inanimate object, but I do believe that this is exactly what I've been looking for."

Taking the small penguin from her satchel, Hermione drew her wand and cast the Restoring Spell. The incantation itself was just as Severus remembered, but Hermione's wand movements were much more complex. There was a brilliant flash of blue-white light and suddenly the penguin turned into a very frightened rat. The rat quickly scampered off of the library table and disappeared amongst the bookshelves. Absolutely joyous at her success, Hermione pulled Severus out of the chair that he'd been propped up in, hugged him tight, and spun him in dizzying circles.

"We've got it, Professor! We'll have you set to rights in no time!"

Packing up her satchel and then wrestling Severus into the now familiar position on her back, Hermione left the library and headed for Severus' DADA classroom. Once there, she set him carefully in the chair behind his desk and then stood before it, looking pensive.

"I suppose that Ron and Harry would tell me to cast the spell quickly and then run before you regained your wits, but I just can't do that. I know that you will be angry, but I simply can't leave you here alone and confused about where the last two days have gone. I'm not sure what I'll tell you to explain that, but I'll have to think of something." With a heavy sigh, Hermione spoke the incantation.

Severus had considered a multitude of ways in which to deal with his eventual restoration. He'd thought of simply pretending that he had indeed been unaware during his time as a flamingo. He'd thought of reacting as she expected, with harsh words and the taking of house points...perhaps even a threat of expulsion. He'd thought of pulling the girl into his arms and kissing her silly, but that would never do. When the light faded, and Severus found that he was once again his old self, he ended up doing none of the plans he had considered. Sitting calmly at his desk, he found himself simply looking at the girl, the expression on his face uncharacteristically sad.

"I imagine that you're wondering how you came to be here, Professor," Hermione said nervously.

"I know exactly how I came to be here, Miss Granger," he said softly. "I am well aware of the events which have passed since our class on Friday afternoon."

The young witch standing before him visibly started and gave a sharp squeak of astonishment. Gazing into his eyes for a long moment, Hermione then said, "You are not angry with me?"

"Believe me, Miss Granger, I was. But after the consideration that you have shown me, and the hard work you put in to set things to rights, I find that I am not nearly as angry as I should be." Dropping his head to stare at the desk in front of him, he continued. "I think, Miss Granger, that the less said about the situation, the better. Just know that I have no plans to punish you for this ridiculous chain of events. You may take your leave."

Though he was still staring resolutely at the desk top, Severus was aware that Miss Granger did not leave immediately--as he very much wanted her to do. Instead, she stood staring at him for several moments. When she did move, it was not towards the door. Coming towards Severus to stand next to his chair, Hermione Granger leaned down and planted a soft, chaste kiss on her nasty professor's cheek.

"Thank you, Professor," she murmured. Then, swinging her satchel back onto her shoulder, she quietly left the room, closing the door softly behind her.

For the better part of an hour, Severus Snape sat behind his desk, staring at a recently closed door. Every so often, one of his hands would wander up to touch the cheek where Hermione had pressed her lips. The expression on his face was one of confusion. When Miss Granger had presented him with that astonishing kiss, a strange emotion had suddenly filled his chest. It took quite a long time before he tentatively put a name to that feeling, but he decided to call it 'hope'.

With a sigh, Severus shook his head and then pulled out his log book.

"Hmm...let's see. That will be five points from Draco Malfoy for disrupting class...ten points from Ronald Weasley for cheek...and ten, no, fifteen points from Harry Potter for not showing a Hogwarts professor the proper respect. Oh, and five points from Seamus Finnigan for manhandling a teacher."

With a wicked smile, Severus Snape closed the log book.