

The Whirl of my Life

by septentrion

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Jo Rowling owns everything you recognise; I only own the pleasure of writing.

Story reread by Somigliana, she's such a helpful beta.

The Whirl of my Life

Harry, Ron and Hermione were in a nearly deserted Diagon Alley, some time before the first of September. They were accompanying Ginny, who was there to buy her school supplies, and to bid her goodbye before they left for the Horcrux hunt.

They were in Flourish and Blotts, browsing through books. Or at least Hermione was browsing through books; the others were merely looking for Ginny's schoolbooks. In an old leather-bound book about ancient charms, she found an empty piece of parchment. Words suddenly appeared on it: "Tell me your deepest desire."

The last time she had heard of a self-writing parchment, it had been a cursed diary. She peered cautiously at the object, wondering what effect it could have. Curiosity was her weakness. She decided that she would try something innocuous. Sure he was a red-head only a few feet from her, she enunciated: "Take me to the perfect man for me."

Ron just had time to turn around before he saw his girlfriend disappear in a whirl of white light.

When Hermione could see again, she was sprawled on dusty tiles, at the feet of a... probably a man, judging by the look of the black boots.

Said man had jumped out of his antique armchair as a white whirl appeared right in front of him. His wand was drawn even before the last spark of white light faded. He watched, flabbergasted, the bushy-haired girl at his feet. His discomfiture, however, only lasted a second, for when Hermione lifted her eyes to see who the man was, she found her nose at the tip of a wand.

A silky voice then resounded in the tiny sitting-room: "Pray, tell me how you found me."

The voice was commanding, and Hermione knew it too well. She had landed at Snape's feet.

"I don't know," was the only answer that came from her. She was too much stunned and afraid to say something else.

The point of a boot made contact rather brutally with her shoulder, and she was forced to adopt a sitting position on the floor. She noticed that he had hardly changed at all. Well, the last time she'd seen him was hardly three months ago. His eyes were hard when he repeated his question. Gingerly, very slowly, she held out her hand clutching the parchment. He snatched it out of her hand and quickly glanced at it.

"Is that your answer, stupid girl? An empty piece of parchment?" Yet the corner of his eye caught movements from it, and his stance showed he was seeing something incredible.

"La Voisin's parchment? Where did you find it?"

"I found it in a book at Flourish and Blotts, sir."

He scrutinised her while she answered, and he seemed to believe her.

"Why aren't Potter and Weasley with you? What did you ask of this?" he said, thrusting the parchment under her nose.

Now Hermione felt embarrassed. Not only did Snape know what that thing was, but moreover her question would dig out forbidden fantasies that she hardly allowed herself to think of.

He grabbed her by her jumper and hauled her up on her feet.

"Speak. Surely you do not want to feel the weight of my displeasure?"

It was not as if she had the choice, so she told the truth:

"I asked it to take me to the perfect man for me."

Severus hardly ever had occasion on which he could be amazed twice in a row, but today he was.

"I bet that you did not think that you would find me, did you?" He sneered at her. Then he wondered what would happen if he was to ask the same thing to the parchment, but thought better of it. He had to dispose of the girl before, but not like that. He knew he should kill her or bring her to the Dark Lord but she had asked to be taken to the perfect man for her, had landed at his feet, and that was enough for him to want to know more. So, first things first, they couldn't linger in the sitting-room; Wormtail could arrive at any moment.

"Follow me," he said brusquely. He headed to the wall, where he opened a concealed door. "Come," he ordered her, seeing that she was rooted on the spot. She did as bid. He led her to a bedroom upstairs, obviously his bedroom.

"Wormtail will not find you here," he explained. "He wouldn't dare put his nose where it doesn't belong. Now let's continue our little chat. Do you know what this piece of parchment is?"

He had unconsciously adopted his classroom voice.

"No, sir."

"It belonged to La Voisin, a French dark witch of the seventeenth century. It was soaked in a potion the recipe of which was lost a long time ago which had the power to make your deepest desire come true by just uttering it aloud. No need to say that parchment was much sought after, and many crimes were committed by people who wanted to put their hands on it. As for me, I'm just curious to know what, or who, did you expect to find when you asked to be taken to 'the perfect man'?"

Hermione felt mortification seize her.

"Ron," she whispered.

"Ah, Weasley. And why would you think Weasley would be the perfect man for you?"

"Ah, he's caring, a very good friend, very brave, and he isn't stupid." Her voice was trembling slightly.

"I see. And, of course, I'm none of those?"

Oh, dear, how to answer that without inducing his ire? She wracked her brain, but her precarious situation had resulted in it shutting down.

"Am I not caring? Didn't I take good care of my charges, Slytherin House?"

She nodded.

"Am I not a good friend? Didn't I do my dearest friends a favour and take care of their son as my own?"

She nodded again.

"Am I not brave, facing the hatred people usually show me, and put on a good face in front of the scorn I receive daily?"

She nodded once more.

"And would you call me stupid?"

This time, she shook her head.

"So, you see, Miss Granger, I meet your requirements."

There was nothing she could answer to that. Noise was heard from below at that moment; Wormtail had come back.

"Don't leave this room," he instructed her before he went down to take care of his "guest".

This interlude allowed Hermione to think over her situation. She regrouped her wits and set her mind to the task. The first, obvious things that came to her mind were questions. Why hadn't he killed her on sight or, worse, taken her to Voldemort? Why hadn't he even taken her wand? Heck! She hadn't even had the idea to use it, as if his presence was so impressive to her that he had made her forget such a simple fact. He went so far as to lead her to a safe room in ... his house?

What was she going to do? To try and escape was risky right now, what with Wormtail hanging around. Strangely, she felt like she should trust her ex-professor and not be afraid of him. She settled down on the chair in one corner of the room and waited for him to return.

Why had he let his curiosity get the better of him? Severus wondered about his own reaction. He hadn't expected the Death Eaters in Hogwarts that night, yet he'd killed

Dumbledore without hesitation, as was the wish of his Master. Why couldn't he show the same ability to react quickly and with a sharp mind with a slip of a girl? Moreover, he could climb still higher in the Dark Lord's esteem if he brought her to him.

'This is infuriating,' he briefly reflected while going down the stairs to meet Wormtail. He remembered how she'd looked at him when Flitwick had fetched him to fight the Death Eaters. He could have gotten rid of her at that moment, and of that strange Ravenclaw girl, but even then, he couldn't. The trust in her eyes was so close to adoration! He had a glimpse of the woman she would become; such a treasure had to be protected. Instead, he'd sent her to take care of his soon to be ex-colleague.

Two hours later, Severus came back and found her idly looking out of the enchanted window. "You're safe for the time being," he said without preamble. "I found an errand for him to do for me. I need to send you back."

She straightened her spine. While she'd been alone, she'd worked up the courage to confront him. If he'd really wanted to harm her, he'd have done it already, so she came to the conclusion that she was rather safe in his company. Or so she hoped.

"Do you think you would be the perfect man for me?"

That question was unexpected, and more unexpectedly, Snape answered it.

"I don't know. I like reading and books. I like potions and the Dark Arts. I dislike dancing and showing off, which you obviously like. I'm not sure we have a lot in common."

In this short list, she only had books and reading in common with him, yet there was something about him, now that she saw him in a different context, something that was compelling.

"Why didn't you hurt me, or kill me, or take me to V your master when I arrived earlier?"

His jaw clenched at her question; he evidently didn't want to answer.

"Well?" she insisted.

She never got her answer. Instead, he grabbed an old trinket on the nightstand, touched it with his wand, transformed it in a Portkey, and two seconds later, she was standing in front of the Burrow. Snape had kept La Voisin's parchment.

She had asked the very question that he didn't want to answer, for the answer would lead to call everything he'd lived for until now into question. She was Muggle-born, for heaven's sake, one that would fall into slavery when the Dark Lord won the war. He could ask his Master to give her to him, had she not been one of Potter's best friends. But her status would guarantee her a painful death. The only way for her to live would be if Potter won against the Dark Lord. In that moment, he took the easy option: escape. The difference was that he didn't physically escape but sent her back to where she belonged.

His meeting with Hermione Granger weighed on his mind a lot afterward. In time, he saw the Dark Lord and his plans for the wizarding world in a different light. He was still a faithful Death Eater, though his actions with the girl proved otherwise, but his heart wasn't in it anymore. Being a Death Eater full time meant he always had to be on his tiptoes; his Master was so easily displeased.

He dreamt of Hermione nearly every night, she hardly ever left his thoughts anymore. She hadn't obviously breathed a word of their encounter either, for he never glimpsed as much as an Auror's cloak in the area surrounding Spinner's End. In the end, he decided that he'd rather take a chance at personal happiness against power sparsely distributed by the Dark Lord. He began to leak information to where his loyalties lay from now on to Hermione Granger.

Time passed. The three friends found the Horcruxes and destroyed them. Harry won his last encounter with Voldemort, to the greatest delight of the wizarding world. The most surprising for all who were there, however, was the look of deep relief on Snape's face when it happened, to such an extent that the remaining Death Eaters tried to kill him on the spot. He barely escaped his "co-workers", the Order's and the Ministry Aurors' spells before he Disapparated away.

Hermione had put her relationship with Ron on hold during the war, more because she was troubled by the revelations of that piece of parchment than because she wanted to focus on the fight, her official reason (she thanked Harry for making this excuse believable!). She never managed to find that book again, and sometimes, she would have doubted her meeting with Snape had even happened if it were not for those rare and anonymous notes which contained information about Voldemort.

She could never bring herself to resume any romance with Ron. He and Harry never understood why, but remained her friends anyway. She was now living alone in a small flat in London.

Several months after the defeat of the Dark Lord, Severus thought it was safe enough to come out of his hide-out with some glamour in place, of course, but he felt renewed to walk in the fresh air again. No one but himself and a young woman knew how deep his treachery against the Dark Lord had run. He was still a wanted man; the law required that he answer for his crimes, but he had no intentions to comply. The time had rather come to take his chance at happiness. So one night, he dug the parchment out of an old case, spread it out on his table, and looked at it intently while waiting for the words "Tell me your deepest desire" to appear. As soon as they did, he took a breath and clearly said: "Take me to the perfect woman for me."

In a London flat, a bushy-haired woman shrieked when a whirl of white light expelled a dark-clad man at her feet.

Thanks for reading my story. I wrote it to answer prompt 11 of the Potter Place Fall 2006 Prompt Challenge. Here is the challenge:

Hermione finds a mysterious piece of self-writing parchment that writes: Tell me your deepest desire. Thinking it's a trick, she says, "Take me to my soul mate," (or man of my dreams or something like that) and she suddenly finds herself at Severus' feet.