

She had scoffed and told him that she was far more worldly than he was. Yes, she thought with a shake of her head. *You sure got yourself into a mess, didn't you?* Now, because of her boasting that she was far more worldly than Ron, she had two choices. Either snog Draco Malfoy senseless or ask the greasy git to dance at the Celebration Ball.

Looking between the two, Hermione felt the urge to go bury herself beneath the Whomping Willow. Draco stood close to Parkinson. The two of them only had eyes for each other. It was obvious to see. If she dared to kiss him right now, then it was a definite that she would be hexed ten different ways to Sunday.

Her gaze moved to Professor Snape. He stood alone, leaning against the far wall, watching the couples dancing with a kind of detached interest. He had been missing from the wizarding world for most of this last year. It was understandable that after it was believed that he had killed the Headmaster, he would have to go into hiding.

Hermione found herself staring at him. His hair had grown longer in his absence. He also seemed larger than he had before. She wondered if he had put on a few pounds while away from Hogwarts? She noted with a smile that it suited him. The hair, although still straight, seemed far healthier. His clothes were missing his usual teaching robes that he had always worn for as long as she could remember.

His wardrobe was still a black ensemble, but it seemed that instead of hanging over his tall, thin form, it clung to him in all the right places. She took in the slacks that fit like a glove over his lower body, and the black button-down shirt that was open at the neck, revealing just a hint of curly black chest hair. She felt a pain in her chest as it became difficult for her to breathe for a moment.

She felt rather shocked at herself. Was she really finding the Potions master attractive? There was something in his stance that she had never noticed before. As if he felt her eyes on him, he turned his face towards her, his eyes finding hers and returning her appraisal openly before he raised an eyebrow and looked back to the dance floor.

"Like I said," Ron interrupted her reverie, "She won't do it. She doesn't have the pluck to do either task, if you ask me." She didn't miss his smirk in her direction before he added, "If it doesn't have to do with reading out of a book, she doesn't know how to do it."

Anger made Hermione fairly tremble. Ron was just being cruel. This whole dare he had masterminded to corner her had nothing to do with her knowledge of kissing or dancing. Instead, it was his desire for revenge for turning him down when he had tried to gain more from her than a simple friendly kiss.

She had cared deeply for Ron. Deeper than plain friendship at one point. But he had continually chosen to share his affection with someone else. He always chose to be with someone else. Then, the night before the face-off with Voldemort, she had witnessed him sharing a rather intimate moment with Lavender, only to turn to her once the other girl was gone and use the same pitiful lines on her.

With a silent glare in his direction, Hermione stood, and with a deep breath, began her journey across the dance floor to the side of the dreaded Potions master. As she drew nearer, she felt her nerve falter. Memories of his cruel behaviors when she was younger made her wonder what kind of craziness she was submitting herself to.

Just do it, Hermione! she scolded herself quietly. *Just go ask him. Let him turn you down. Then return to your seat and know that all you had to do was ask!* Her eyes made another sweep of his body as she drew closer to him. But when she reached his side, words failed her, and she just stood there, taking in the width of his shoulders, the length of his hair, the

obsidian shade of his eyes as they turned to her expectantly. His scent was sandalwood. The smell filled her nostrils, making her knees weak.

Her eyes widened when she realized he was returning her stare. Her mouth opened and moved, but no words came. *Oh God! Don't freeze! Mione, don't freeze,* she told herself inwardly even as she forced herself to take yet another step toward him.

Snape's eyebrow rose, and he looked her trembling form over from head to toe before asking in his low, soft voice, "Miss Granger? Were you going to ask something, or simply stare like a dimwit?"

Brought back to her senses by his words, Hermione gave herself a mental shake, and answered. "Uhm... Yes, sir, actually... I was going to ask... if perhaps you might... That is would you... Sir, would you like to dance?" *There! The words were out! All he has to do is just look down his nose at you and refuse like you know he will. Then you will be free to return to your seat with no humiliation for your attempt to satisfy Ron's dare.*

The dark wizard looked at her and shook his head. "I am here in the capacity of chaperone, Miss Granger. And even if I were not, I don't dance." The barest hint of a smile touched his lips before he added, "But I do thank you for having the courage to ask."

Hermione found herself very nearly smiling as well and opened her mouth to respond, but was cut off when a very besotted, drunken Professor Trelawney stumbled straight into Professor Snape's opposite side. "There you are, you beautiful hunk of a whizzard... Do you have any idea how long I have wanted to get you alone?"

Severus turned an almost horrified look upon the witch who was groping him and tried to extract himself from her grasp. "Madam, I assure you, the feeling is not mutual." He looked over the tippler with some trepidation. He was always trying to avoid Trelawney.

Hermione had started to turn to go; but recognition of the obvious horror her former professor must feel, she turned back. Pushing her own fears aside, she stepped closer and helped remove the witch from Snape's person. "Forgive me, Professor, but Professor Snape just agreed to teach me the waltz." When the elder witch stepped away, Hermione clasped his elbow with her small hand and dared a huge smile up at her somewhat dumbfounded professor. "I think this song is a slow but steady enough beat for just such a dance, don't you?"

He looked back at her for a moment, and she feared he might refuse her help, but instead, he returned her smile and fully offered her his arm. "Yes, you are quite correct, Miss Granger." When she took his arm, he glanced back at the drunken witch. "If you will excuse us, Trelawney," he said softly as he pushed past her, leading Hermione to the dance floor.

A slow tremor pulsed through Hermione's stomach as she let Snape lead her to the dance floor. When he turned and placed a hand at her waist, then offered the other to take her hand, she found herself swept up into the strongest arms she had ever been held in. Slowly at first, he led her through some simple steps. "You already know the waltz," he observed blandly as he led her.

Hermione found herself smiling. "I've taken lessons every summer since I was twelve. I know most of the ballroom dances." She felt the blush rise on her cheeks even as she added, "Although I am a bit rusty since I lack a regular partner."

Suddenly, the music changed, and Hermione, thinking the dance was over, began to pull away, only to find herself swept back into the wizard's arms. The dance steps were the tango. Her breath caught as Severus dipped her low, almost bending her in half, before rising and pulling her after him.

A gasp escaped her as he spun her around the floor in a move that was a classic Tango step. Giving herself over to his lead, she let him guide her in the most intimate dance that could have been shared between a man and woman. Their bodies touched in suggestive ways, leaving little to each other's imaginations as to the contours of their bodies. With a surprised smile, she looked up into the eyes of her Potions master, only to find a look she had never seen in his eyes before. His body molded to hers in the intimate parts of the dance.

Captivated, she found herself following his lead as the dance floor emptied of the other couples. She knew that everyone was circled around the dance floor, watching the two of them with a mixture of shock and awe. Severus led her through the steps, dominating her the way a true ballroom dance partner was supposed to.

She found herself being drawn into the passion of the dance, and when it ended, both of them were winded and grasping each other as those around them stared in stunned silence before overwhelmingly loud applause erupted around the room. When he stepped away from her, he still held her hand as his dark eyes bore into hers.

Stepping closer to her, he whispered in a low voice. "Well, perhaps since we both know the steps, you would consider me a proper partner? I rather enjoy dancing..." His

eyes searched hers. "When my partner knows the steps." Leaning down, he placed a gentle kiss in the palm of her hand before turning and striding from the dance floor, leaving a room full of stunned wizards and witches staring after him.

One witch in particular stood in the center of the dance floor, stunned expression on her face as she stared at the palm of her hand where Severus Snape had pressed a kiss into her palm. A slow smile spread across her face as she remembered his parting words. He had danced with her. And if she had understood him correctly, he intended to do it again. Hermione smiled as the thought came to her. Hopefully it would be sometime soon.

*A*A*A*A*A*A*A*A*A*

A/N: I so loved Melisande88's story that she inspired my own muse to nip at my heels to begin writing this story as well as Mirror's Reflection. This, however is not a one-shot, but a full, in depth story... Chapter 2 should be on the way soon.

Please read and review!

Chapter 2- Insulting Remarks

Chapter 2 of 10

This story is inspired by a one-shot that was written by Melisande88 by the name of **Don't Dance, But Thanks for Asking**. However, this story will be multiple chapters. Hermione is given a choice between two dares. She steps up to the challenge and discovers that Professor Snape knows how to dance... Rated for later chapters.

Disclaimer: Alas, the world of Harry Potter is not mine. JKR dreamed it up before I ever had a chance. Any character you recognize belongs to her.

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

Disclaimer: Alas, the world of Harry Potter is not mine. JKR dreamed it up before I ever had a chance. Any character you recognize belongs to her.

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

Chapter 2 - Insulting Remarks

"What the bloody hell were you thinking?" Ron's voice actually echoed through the halls as he forgot discretion. "Everyone is going to think you want to shag the greasy git now..." He rolled his eyes, feigning disgust. "Dancing like that in public! It was positively indecent!"

Hermione's steps slowed, and a look of hurt crossed her face. "I was only doing what you dared me to do! I don't understand you. What have I done to warrant you saying such hateful things to me?"

Ron turned and glared at Hermione. "I don't guess you have done anything, except maybe become the laughingstock of Hogwarts. I swear, everyone's going to talk! Come tomorrow, there won't be anyone in the magical community that doesn't know about what happened tonight!"

Harry, who had been following silently up until that point, spoke up. "I didn't see anyone laughing," he interrupted softly. "Actually, I agree that they will be talking, Hermione, but I doubt anyone will be throwing jokes your way." At Ron's scowl, he shrugged. "What? Even Draco was drooling after she and the professor finished that Tango. Believe me. I saw him!"

Ron shook his head. "Well, all I'm going to say is don't sit with us in the morning for breakfast. I don't want my name associated with that kind of behavior from one of my friends."

Lavender dropped Ronald's hand at that point and slapped his arm. "You can sure be an insensitive git sometimes. Do you know that? "

Ginny agreed. "Yes, Ron. If Mum could hear the way you're attacking her right now, she'd charm your mouth shut for a month!" She offered Hermione a smile. "I thought the two of you danced beautifully." A dreamy expression crossed her face before she added, "I even saw him smile while you were in his arms."

Lavender giggled and nodded. "Yes, he did. It was very romantic."

Ron turned and looked from his sister to his girlfriend in disgust. Stomping off, he waved a dismissing hand in their direction. "Why don't you all just sod off!" Lavender rolled her eyes and with an apologetic wave to Hermione, took off after him.

Wiping away the tears that had started to fall at his hateful words, Hermione looked to Harry. "I give up. I don't know what to do. He never ceases looking for ways to attack me now, and I don't understand why."

Harry wrapped an arm around her, giving her a big hug. "Don't mind him, Mione. He's just never gotten over not getting to be closer to you."

She threw her hands up in exasperation. "Whose fault is that, Harry? I tried to get closer to him, but he just acts like the only thing he wants is a willing witch beneath him." She shook her head. "I'll be damned if I'll let my first time be with someone that just views me as another notch in his broomstick!"

Ginny sighed and stepped forward to give Hermione a hug. "Ron's just not ready to grow up yet, Mione." She brushed the hair from Hermione's cheek that was now damp with tears. "But he doesn't want to lose your friendship. You just wait. This time tomorrow, he'll be apologizing and worrying that you won't let him live it down."

Harry smiled and nodded his agreement. Hermione hugged them both and kissed Harry's cheek. "Goodnight, guys. Thanks for the pep talk."

Ginny tilted her head. "Do you want Harry to walk you to the Head common room?" She smiled. "I don't mind."

Hermione shook her head. "No, that's all right. You and Harry go on. I'll be fine."

When she parted from them and headed for her own dorm, she paused outside the Head common room. The wizard in the portrait was standing there, wide-eyed. For a moment, she simply looked at him before opening her mouth to speak the password when he cleared his throat. "Uhhh... Perhaps milady would like to use her own private entrance into her own rooms? The... uh... common room has some activities within it that might be ... uh... inappropriate for your sensitive nature."

Asking. However, this story will be multiple chapters. Hermione is given a choice between two dares. She steps up to the challenge and discovers that Professor Snape knows how to dance... Rated for later chapters.

Disclaimer: Alas, the world of Harry Potter is not mine. JKR dreamed it up before I ever had a chance. Anything character you recognize belongs to her.

A/N: As always, RobisonRocket works hard to keep my story readable. Thanks, RR.

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

Ch 3 -The Morning After

Hermione woke to a tapping sound at her window. Groggy, she got up and stumbled to it, only to find a large raven standing on the sill, looking at her expectantly. Tied to its foot was a small parchment. When he lifted his leg, Hermione untied the message. It squawked at her once and took to the air, leaving her staring after it in confusion. That bird seemed familiar, but she couldn't place it.

When she returned to sit on the side of her bed, she opened the missive and surveyed its contents. In the blink of an eye, she was wide awake and staring in shocked wonder at the words that were written elegantly across the page.

Dear Miss Granger,

I thank you for a very enjoyable end to my evening last night. It was a pleasant surprise to find someone that knows the ballroom dances that I, myself, have enjoyed upon too rare an occasion. It is with thoughts of our mutual interest that I would like the opportunity to make a certain proposal to you.

Please do not consider me presumptuous. But if I understood you correctly, you would welcome the chance to enjoy exercising those dances as well as I, with an appropriate partner, of course. Please stop by my offices if you would be interested in taking full advantage of a dance partner that would strive to be your equal in the dance. I shall look forward to your company. Shall we say... two o'clock then?

I eagerly anticipate our next dance,

Severus Snape

Hermione stared at the parchment. She was stunned. Never had she thought in a million years that Snape would dance with her to begin with. But to send her a letter, basically inviting her to come discuss the possibility of doing it on a regular basis? A smile spread across her face as she considered it.

She had always liked him. She thought he was noble and wonderful when it came to light that he was spying for the Order. Some small part of her had begun to have romantic notions about him even then. Rolling her eyes, she shook her head, reminding herself before she got carried away that he was only looking to have her as a decent dance partner.

With that thought, she sighed and began to dress. She would have to tell him about the bet. Just so he would know that she probably would never have bothered him otherwise. It was a strange turn of events that he knew her favorite style of dance. Who would have thought?

Charming her hair into a simple French braid that fell down her back, she then put a moderate amount of make up on to enhance her appearance ever so slightly. Looking in her mirror, she smiled her approval and nodded. She looked mature, attractive and Professor Snape would see that, she hoped.

Satisfied, she turned and made her way down to breakfast. She hoped that Ginny had been right and Ron would be eager to forgive and forget about the previous night. Her hopes plummeted when she reached the Great Hall. The first thing she saw was Ron. He looked over towards her, smirked, then turned to speak with Neville, who was sitting across from him.

With relief she saw that Ginny and Harry were not sitting with Ron, but several feet away, and were gesturing for her to join them at the empty seat beside them. Lavender had even sat with them, instead of Ron.

When she sat, both girls offered her sympathetic smiles. Smiling back, she sighed. "So, he hasn't gotten over it?"

Harry waved a dismissive hand in Ron's direction. "Oh, he might have, but I got so sick of listening to him prattle on about it, that I kicked him out of our room at three this morning."

Lavender giggled. "Yeah, and I was the first one to see him sleeping in the common room." She shook her head. "How do you sleep with all that snoring, Harry?" she asked.

Ginny covered her mouth, laughing. "Oh, Lavender... Imagine being in the Burrow with him! That tiny little house. His snores?" She looked at Harry, adding, "I used to ask Mum if it was earthquakes we were being hit with and they just sounded like Ron's snoring!"

Harry started to laugh, but caught himself. "That isn't very nice. He's still Hermione's and my friend. He's just going through an odd period in his life right now." He looked to Hermione, offering her a small smile. "He just needs us to be patient."

Hermione glanced from Harry to where Ron was sitting. She would always care for him. But she wasn't sure she wanted to wait for him to grow up and realize how hurtful he could be when he groused about things. "I don't know, Harry. I'm not sure I like the man that he's becoming." She blew out a sigh. "The adult he's becoming is almost as cruel as the boy Draco used to be!"

As she spoke that last bit, her eyes moved to the professors' table. She saw Dumbledore sitting between McGonagall and Snape. Her Transfiguration professor was talking animatedly with Albus. But the Potions master was staring directly at her. His eyes searched hers for several moments, and she could feel her heart beginning to trip over itself at the heat of his gaze before he slowly inclined his head to her in silent greeting.

A small smile flitted across her lips in response before she turned back to look at her friends, who had all grown silent. Harry and Ginny were both staring at her. Touching her face, she wondered if she had something on it, asking, "What? Do I have food on the corner of my mouth?"

Harry raised an eyebrow and looked from her to the professor and back. "He's too old for you, Hermione. And even if he wasn't... He's the greasy git, remember?"

Hermione scowled and argued, "He's not that old! And that *greasy git* is also one of the reasons we were able to defeat Voldemort." She shook her head. "I'm not thinking of him in a romantic way, Harry. Someone like him wouldn't want me. He'd be more interested in a more mature, prettier witch."

Harry scoffed and Ginny shook her head. "The way he danced with you last night didn't say that," she said. "By the looks of it, you were the *only thing* in this world that he had any interest in." She glanced up toward where the Potions master and the Headmaster were now conversing. "And it still looked like it just a moment ago," she added.

Hermione's eyes widened and she shook her head. But in her heart she found herself hoping that it would be so. "You don't know what you're talking about," she insisted. "The only reason he danced with me at all was because Trelawney was drunk and trying to throw herself at him."

Harry balked at that and Hermione nodded. "Yes! I tell you honestly, he told me no at first. When I started to walk away, she was there, running her hand down his chest

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

Ch 5 If Only

Severus had stayed in the music room until the dress Hermione had been wearing reappeared. With a broad smile that never made its way to the sight of any student, he had turned and left the room, warding the door to keep any nosy intruders out of a space he now considered private for Miss Granger and himself.

Now, lying alone in his bed, Severus let his thoughts drift to his next plan in her punishment. She had nearly succumbed to his desires by giving in to her own. He imagined she would have if she hadn't been so spooked by them.

The soft silk of the sheets rode low on his hip as he turned onto his back and used his arm to cushion his head. He stared out into the darkness and wondered what his witch was doing right now? Closing his eyes, he let his thoughts continue to drift.

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

Hermione tossed restlessly. Her nightgown felt tight and frumpy. Her body was all jittery, and she didn't understand why. Flipping onto her belly, she blew out her breath in frustration. It was Snape! This was all his fault! Her body still burned in all of the places where his hands had touched her. Her lips felt swollen and full.

Angrily, she got up from the bed and pulled her gown off. Maybe, just this once... if she left her gown off, she would sleep better. Crawling back under the covers naked, she sighed at the feel of the soft cotton against her skin. Yes, this was better.

Closing her eyes, she began to drift off to sleep. When the dream began, she knew something was off...

Looking around her, she noticed she was back in the music room. People lined the walls in medieval dress. Her eyes rounded when she saw Severus standing opposite her. His eyes looked at her with what appeared to be as much surprise as what she was feeling.

When he moved close to her, she shivered when he took her into his arms. He smiled at her response. "I have been waiting for this," he whispered softly. "You look absolutely stunning!"

Hermione looked into his eyes as they began to dance before all the others in the room. She was afraid. Something was wrong. "Why is this happening, Professor?"

He shook his head slowly. "No, my love. I'm not that man here." He smiled and Hermione found herself staring in awe at the transformation on his face. "Here, I am whatever you want me to be."

Baffled, she looked around them. "But, this isn't what I want! I have never desired something like this. I never even imagined it!"

Severus led her through the dance; a waltz that was correct for the period the dream was in, yet unfamiliar to her. After a moment, he asked. "Didn't you?" He shrugged. "This is your dream, so one would assume that you wanted it on some level."

She closed her eyes, forcing herself to remain calm. Then she looked back at him. "But what does it mean? If this is a message from my subconscious, then what in the friggin' hell is it trying to say? Could you translate, because I, myself, am a little confused!"

He smiled, which only served to infuriate her more. "Like that!" her voice rose. "You aren't really Severus Snape! The Severus Snape I know would never smile like that! He hardly ever even attempts a grin. If he does, it looks more like a smirk."

He grew solemn and met her eyes with his. "Perhaps I am not the Severus Snape you know. Maybe I am the Severus Snape that could be... if you loved me."

Hermione stopped dancing. The look in her eyes was positively lost. "L-love you? But you... I... I don't even really know you? All I know is that you are the greasy git that doesn't even know how to pay a compliment when I do a good job in your Potions class."

His arms closed around her, and he drew her closer to him. Before she knew what he intended, she was enveloped in a deep kiss that made her body hot and shaky. When he withdrew, his eyes burned into hers. "Find a way to love me, Hermione. I need you to love me. If you can't, then I am lost."

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

Startled awake, Severus panted in alarm. He had watched his dream self from inside, horrified at the things he was telling the witch, but helpless to stop him. His eyes wide, he groped for his black robe to cover himself with. It was thick and almost as modest as his usual garments, besides offering a slight glimpse of a few chest-hairs. That was of little importance right at this moment. Right now, he had to find out if the library had any information regarding the dream he had just had.

Love him? He'd asked the know-it-all to love him? "What am I, daft?" Either that or crazy! he thought. Hopefully, his fears were not founded, and Miss Granger would have no knowledge of the nightmare he'd just had. Optimistically speaking.

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

Across the castle, in her private room, Hermione lay beneath her covers, tears streaming down her cheeks. She felt the kiss from the dream Snape on her lips. His words stirred feelings within her she couldn't deny. That dream had felt so real. The plea from him was so genuine. *Love me. If you can't, then I am lost.*

Knowing that she must discover the meaning of this dream, she stood and pulled on her burgundy robe her mother had given her for Christmas. It was silk with a soft inner lining that kept it from being see-through. As she doubted that anyone would be awake at this time of night, she wasn't worried about donning anything more appropriate. There were hours left before the rest of the castle awoke.

As Head Girl, she was granted access to any part of the library whenever she had need of it. She knew she would have no more sleep tonight. She had to find out if there was any information about this kind of dream, and why it haunted her so.

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

Severus stood at a section of books, a frown marring his features. He had found nothing on the dream to prove what he feared. Of course, he'd found nothing to disprove it, either. Placing the latest book back in its place on the shelf, he sighed quietly. Maybe it was all in his mind. Perhaps his only true problem was that he was bothered by the Headmaster's suggestion to pursue Hermione. The reason for that was because he knew all too well that he really wanted to do just that.

As he was turning to leave, he heard a very feminine sigh. Quietly, he tiptoed to the end of the bookcase and peered around to see where the sigh had originated from. Unruly, curly brunette hair was the first thing his eyes beheld.

Damning the gods that cursed him, Severus turned and leaned against the end of the bookcase. His eyes stared in shocked silence at an unseen spot on the floor. Well, wasn't this a mess? There was no way to sneak out of the library without her seeing him. *No!* he scowled at the knowledge. *To get out of here, he had to walk past her. Crazy little chit! What was she doing here, anyway? Didn't she realize it was past curfew?*

"Of course not," he whispered in a falsetto voice. "When a student is Head Girl, with perfect scores, she should be able to stay out as late as she wants!" He smirked at how Minerva McGonagall had won that fight fair and square just a few years ago. Damn the old witch anyway! Sometimes he thought she just tried to help her precious Gryffindors find ways around intelligent *school rules!*

he feel anywhere near as nervous about what was happening between us as I did?

Stopping outside the door, she stood there with her hand pressed to the door for a moment. Closing her eyes, she took a steadying breath before finding the energy to knock. When she rapped, the door opened of its own accord, revealing a room lit with hundreds of candles.

Stepping hesitantly across the threshold, Hermione gazed in wonder at the room around her. Soft scents of lavender and myrrh tantalized her, relaxing and calming her simultaneously. Smiling at the nervousness she'd felt, she turned slowly, enjoying what she saw before coming face to face with the man who made all her senses come to life.

Drawing a shaky breath, she whispered, "The room is beautiful."

Severus' lips quirked for only a moment at the hint of a smile before he spoke. "Yes, well, if we are going to be dancing in such ways, we might as well have the correct atmosphere for it."

She found her brow furrowing at his attempt to sound nonchalant when he snapped his fingers. Immediately her clothing was once again replaced by a gown. This one was elegant, but modest. It fit her snugly, coming to her neck in the front, but dipping to her waist in the back. Also, the skirt fell just above her thigh on one side only to cascade well past her calf on the other. The color was dark blue, and the slippers that now adorned her feet matched it perfectly.

Looking from her new apparel to the wizard before her, she was rewarded with a slow smile as he gathered her into his arms. Mesmerized by the way his body seemed to fit so well to hers, she took his offered hand while her other found its way to his shoulder.

His eyes never leaving hers, he said in a low, seductive voice, "Slow rhumba, please." As the music began to play, Hermione found herself holding her breath as he started to lead her through the steps of what she had always considered a nice, but less than sensual, dance.

She found herself having to rethink her opinion as he closed the distance between their bodies, bringing her closer and letting her feel every line of his physique mold to hers. She began to shake as he leaned his head so close to hers that she could feel his breathing against her cheek. Waves of heat began to roll over her internal organs, building a fire that threatened to consume her.

She could feel her body responding to his in ways she had never thought possible. Her pulse raced. Her breathing became hard to control, and she could feel the flush rising on her cheeks as he dipped her down to where the only thing that kept her from falling was the strong arm that held her. Then, he kept her there as if waiting for something. Her eyes were closed, and she didn't dare look at him for fear of seeing any hatred or cruelty in his eyes. *This is where he will warn me never to trifle with his life again and say some hateful thing before sending me on my way.* Her heart broke at the thought.

This had to be some cruel intent on his part. She knew he couldn't possibly look at her in a truly romantic way. She was his student, and more than that, he had never made any effort to hide the fact that he really didn't care for her, or even her efforts in a scholastic sense.

She made up her mind to open her eyes and face him. Let him have his victory by humiliating her. The school year would be over in just another week and a half. Then, she need never feel his scorn again.

But when she opened her eyes and let herself see him, his own emotions were laid bare before her. His eyes, usually so cold and callous, were instead hot and devouring her in a way that made her own pulse beat ever faster.

His lips were open ever so slightly as he drew ragged breaths into his lungs, as if fighting an urge to do something. Unable to resist, she opened her own mouth to ask what he was thinking and why he had stopped, but was unable to do so as she was swept tightly into his embrace.

His lips descended on hers in a way that had her moaning into his mouth as she held to him and returned the kiss. Greedily, he sucked her tongue into his mouth and twined his tongue with hers. Her fingers found his hair, and she was surprised by its texture. It wasn't greasy at all, but instead, soft and silky. She let herself give in to the urge to hold his head to hers as she let him deepen the kiss.

He brought her up slowly and held her body in a way that kept every inch of them touching. Slowly, he let one hand leave her waist and travel down towards the thigh that was partially exposed. When his hand touched her bare skin, he moaned at the contact before releasing her and stepping back.

"I'm sorry, Miss Granger. I had no right to do that just now." He turned away from her, leaving her feeling chilled and rejected.

She stared at his back silently as he refused to turn. She wanted to touch him, but was afraid to. What if he not only rejected her, but went into his normal defense of belittling and humiliating her out loud? *No*, she decided. *This is humiliating enough.*

Turning, she began to slowly make her way from the room before his voice stopped her. "Miss Granger?"

Stopping, she didn't turn, but asked, "Yes, sir?"

There was no answer for her, but instead, she found herself once more enveloped in his arms from behind. "I am an old man, Hermione. I am battle scarred and miserable." He shook his head before leaning to rest it against her cheek, his eyes closed. "Is there any way that an intelligent young witch like yourself could possibly become attracted to the likes of myself?"

He chuckled mirthlessly. "I just cannot fathom it. Dumbledore can. In fact, he is the one that insisted I try to build a relationship with you, but I just cannot seem to believe that you would ever want me."

Hermione found her breath coming in gasps as she turned in his arms to face him. "You are attempting to find a romantic outlet with me because Albus Dumbledore wants it?" Her voice shook and her eyes betrayed her hurt. "Do you *always* do everything that he asks of you?"

She stepped out of his reach and looked down at the dress he had enchanted her into when she had first arrived. In a painfully even voice, she asked, "May I have my clothes back, please?"

Realizing his mistake, he tried to explain. "Hermione..."

"I think I would prefer if you called me as you had before. There is no reason to drop the formality, as I am only a student to you, and you cannot force," her eyes met his, "what isn't really there." She drew a shaky breath before adding, "Please tell the Headmaster that I would appreciate it if he would stay out of matters that involve my personal life."

She looked around the room, feeling as if she had just lost something very precious and sacred. "If it's all the same to you, I think perhaps we should refrain from holding the rest of our detentions in this room."

Severus stared at her, speechless. He understood her hurt. He had unknowingly caused it. Much as he had thought that she asked him to dance only on a dare, she thought he was pursuing her only because of his mentor's request.

Her eyes held his for a moment before looking back at the gown she still wore. She bit the inside of her cheek, refusing to succumb to tears before saying, "Fine... If the clothes decide to magic off of me before I reach my rooms, I shall just have to walk through the halls naked!"

Turning, she ran from the room, leaving Snape's ears ringing at the stifled sob she hadn't been able to hold back.

"I have wanted, for some time now, to be a part of something special for once in my life." His hand traced her cheek, and he frowned at the beginnings of a bruise on the side of her neck. "I have never had the pleasure of being truly happy." He quirked an eyebrow. "Albus saw the potential for the two of us to find the happiness I speak of when we were dancing together." His hands moved to grip hers, and he placed them over his heart. "It was after he spoke to me of it that I realized that being something to you besides your professor was something that appealed to me."

She smiled slowly at that. "You want to be more than someone I remember as my professor?"

His eyes seemed to catch fire as he pulled her even closer. "I want to be more than just a memory to you. I want to create memories with you." He smiled. "And share them together." Almost as if he had gotten carried away with himself, he dropped her hands and stepped back, clearing his throat. "But I want you to be sure first. I want to know that you are happy with such a choice and want it as well."

Hermione nodded and started to step toward him, but her robe opened slightly, and his eyes fell to a huge bruise that was beginning across her collarbone. Severus dropped his jaw as he stared at it.

A mixture of pain and anger lanced across his features before he cleared his throat. "But for now, I think we must get you to the infirmary so Madam Pomfrey can tend your wounds." He took her hand and urged her to walk with him. "I must also speak to you of what has happened to your friend, Mr Weasley."

Hermione drew a shaky breath at the reminder of the attack from someone she had trusted. "I am not sure I would call him my friend, now."

Severus turned to glance at her. "But you must, Hermione. You see, if my suspicions are correct, Ron has no control over what he is doing right now."

Hermione stopped walking and pulled him to a stop along with her. "What are you saying?" Her eyes gave away the worry she felt at his words.

"I'm saying," Severus explained in low tones, "that when we struck Voldemort with the Killing Curse, Weasley was standing the closest to him." He shook his head. "I'm not sure how, yet, but for some reason, all his malicious hatred and anger was transferred to Ron. It has been festering inside of him, and unless we find a way to draw it from him, he may very well be consumed by it."

"Oh, dear Merlin," she whispered as she leaned against the nearest wall. "Will he be okay?"

Severus shook his head and sighed. "I do not know, my love. He may never be the same person again." He sighed and ran his free hand through his hair. "I must admit that I do not know how to go about battling this yet."

Hermione moved closer to him. "You will find a way, Severus." The way she spoke his name made him turn to look into her eyes. She smiled and squeezed his hand. "I believe in you, and I will do anything I can to help you."

Reaching out, he again folded Hermione within his arms and held her tightly for a moment before releasing her and stepping away. "I suppose for a while we will have to abandon our dancing to take care of this more important matter."

She smiled sadly but nodded. "I don't mind if we are dancing, or if we are working on potions, Severus. If we are together, I am satisfied." She winced and placed her hand over her side when she mis-stepped.

Immediately, he turned and investigated the cause of her pain. "At least one of your ribs is broken!" He scowled. "That stupid prat is lucky he's not in control of himself at present." He took a deep breath to steady himself. "It's probably the only reason the idiot is still alive!"

~

When Hermione and Severus reached the infirmary, Draco and Harry were speaking in hushed tones outside a private room. Hermione noted that the two of them were actually being civil to each other, which was a first. Even after the war was over, there had never been anything but cross words between them.

She wanted to join them, but Severus led her to a bed and pulled back the covers for her to get in. "Not one word, Miss Granger..." he teased when she had started to protest. "Until Poppy has had a chance to tend your wounds, I do not want to risk further injury to your person."

Rolling her eyes, but choosing to remain silent rather than argue, she slid stiffly beneath the covers. When Poppy emerged from the room she had been in with Ron, she walked directly to Snape and Hermione. "Miss Granger... I see you have finally decided to put forth an appearance." Glancing up at Severus, she scowled and spoke louder. "Okay, the rest of you may leave now. There is no need for an audience while I assess Miss Granger's wounds."

Shooing them out of the room, she turned back to Hermione. "Now then, my dear. Let's see what that poor demented boy has done to you..."

~

A/N: Okay... This is my second transitional chapter in this story... Now we have a clue as to what is going on with Ron... I wonder if Severus and Hermione can find a way to put him back to normal... I hope you don't mind this chapter that has been put together for the sake of a plot. On a lighter note, I can promise Lemons next chapter! Please read and review!

Chapter 9 - Promises of Passion

Chapter 9 of 10

This story is inspired by a one-shot that was written by Melisande88 by the name of **Don't Dance, But Thanks for Asking**. However, this story will be multiple chapters. Hermione is given a choice between two dares. She steps up to the challenge and discovers that Professor Snape knows how to dance... Rated for later chapters.

Disclaimer: JKR owns all that you recognize. I just like to borrow the characters to play...

A/N: RobisonRocket is the wonderful beta that goes over all my chapters before I submit them. If it wasn't for her catching my mistakes, this story would probably be one gigantic run-on sentence! Thank you, RR!

~

Chapter 9 - Promises of Passion

When Madam Pomfrey let Hermione leave the next morning, Ron was still in isolation. Wards were placed on the doors so no students could enter because his condition seemed to be worsening. As she'd gotten into the hall, she remembered her forgotten cloak. When she went back to get it, she had overheard the Mediwitch telling Dumbledore in a worried voice that she had been given no choice but to place a full paralysis spell on him, as he was becoming more and more aggressive.

" *He even tried to attack me when I was simply checking his vitals!* she had whispered in a worried voice. "I'm telling you, Albus. I do not know how much longer the boy can survive this! His parents must be notified. They must be prepared in the event of his demise."

Hermione had gasped, covering her mouth to catch the sound. Her eyes widened in horror. She knew Ron was in trouble . . . But bad enough to cost him his life?" Not wishing to be seen by the two elders, she had grabbed her cloak and left quickly.

Her heart raced with the panic she felt. Ron was a prat! He had been a pain in her backside more times than not, but the truth was, she cared deeply for him. He was one of her best friends. He always would be.

As she walked blindly, her thoughts were not on her destination. She walked into Severus Snape's office without even knocking and closed the door behind her, leaning against it. She was relieved to see Snape behind his desk.

He spoke without looking up. "Class does not begin until after lunch! You can save your questions until then!" Setting his quill down, he turned to pin the invader of his privacy with the snarkest stare he had ever mastered.

When he saw Hermione before him, leaning heavily on the door and looking at him with worry-filled eyes, he rose from the desk and moved to her side. "What is it, Hermione? What is wrong?"

She reached out and wrapped her arms around his neck, holding on to him as if he was the only thing that could save her. "What's happening, Severus?" she asked shakily. "Why do I feel like my world is turning upside down?"

Severus was completely out of his element. He wasn't very good when it came to showing sympathy or even just listening to someone else's problems. He wanted to help her, but was unsure how he could comfort her. Hesitantly, he put his arms around her and patted her back gently. "I'm not sure what you mean, Hermione. What are you speaking of?"

Hermione pulled back from him, although she didn't let him go. "After Pomfrey let me leave, I heard her talking to Dumbledore. She thinks that Ron might die." She blushed as she looked away from him. "I am upset with him for what he did to me last night. But I know that it really isn't him." She shook her head. "At least, not the Ron I know."

Severus dropped his hands from her, pushing the sudden feeling of emptiness from his mind as he tried to focus on sharing the research he had been doing with her. "I've been looking into this." He walked back to his desk and retrieved several scrolls of parchment before turning to hand them to her. "These go into detail about the different effects of being hit by someone's emotion. Some of them look to be very similar to what we seem to be dealing with."

She looked at the scrolls and nodded. "I appreciate your help with this, Severus. I don't think I could do this alone."

Severus watched her for a moment before saying softly, "You aren't alone, Hermione. I'll never be far." Although they meant far more, he doubted she heard the true point of his words. When she looked up at him and smiled, he cleared his throat. "Now then. You have tests this morning. Classes start in just a little over half an hour, so you should go for now." His eyes searched hers as he added, "I'm beginning the potion for Weasley's predicament this evening. I would very much appreciate your assistance. If you are free?"

Hermione nodded. "Seven o'clock, then?" At his solemn nod, she turned and opened the door, leaving him staring after her.

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

"I just don't get it! How could this have happened?" Harry walked the courtyard angrily. Pausing, he kicked the nearby tree before resuming his pacing.

Scowling, Ginny shook her head. "Well, it isn't the tree's fault, Harry! This wasn't something that anyone could have foreseen!"

He stopped pacing and dropped his head. "I know. I just feel useless! I thought we killed Voldemort! I thought surely all of the negative things were past us." He shook his head. "I just keep thinking surely this is a nightmare, and any moment I'm going to wake up and discover that everything is okay."

Draco sat on a bench across from where Harry stood. Pansy leaned against him and watched the couple, amused. "I have to say this, and then I promise I won't speak another word," she whispered.

Draco smiled and rolled his eyes before answering, "Okay, my pet... Tell me what you are needing to say."

She smiled, happy to be able to be honest about her feelings now that Voldemort was no longer in control of her family and friends. "I'm honestly glad that you and Harry have found a way to co-exist." She looked him in the eye as she said this, watching for any sign that her words displeased him. When he smiled, she relaxed, adding, "And I am glad that Granger turned you down."

He leaned away from her when she would have leaned back into his embrace and questioned, "What?"

Her smile faltered and she sighed. "I know I'm not as pretty as she is, or even as smart." She took a deep breath and looked over at Harry and Ginny again before saying, "But I love you, Draco. I think I always have, and it would really have hurt me if I had lost you."

Draco shook his head. "What I meant was, what do you mean you're glad she turned me down?" He leaned closer to her. "How do you know she turned me down?"

Her eyes lit, and she smiled devilishly. "You don't think Potter's the only one that has an Invisibility Cloak, do you?"

He bellowed, "You were there?"

Immediately, she looked contrite. "I-I j-just wanted to check on you... I don't always invade your privacy."

Draco leaned down, capturing her lips with his own. She moaned as he deepened the kiss and returned it with a tender passion that pulled at his heart.

When he pulled back, he smiled at her. "You know I'm a prat, Pansy." When she nodded, he asked, "You know that I push boundaries?" Laughing, she rolled her eyes, but again nodded. Suddenly, his face grew sober and he squeezed her hand. "And you know I'm gonna marry you, don't you?"

Pansy's eyes grew wide and she swallowed hard. "I- I mean... uhm..."

Laughing, he kissed her quickly on the lips before saying, "I had a crush on Granger forever. I loved to bully her when we were younger." Pulling her to sit in his lap, he whispered in her ear, "But, you've known me forever. You know exactly who I am and what I want out of life. And you are one of my best friends. What luck do you think I would have trying to find anyone else that understands me?"

Pansy opened her mouth to answer, but Harry had walked over and interrupted. "Sorry, but... Draco, do you have any ideas about what we can do to help Ron? I spent nearly three hours at the library after the tests were done for the day, and I've gotten nowhere."

