

Haunted Dreams

by Adelaide

Hermione meets a shadowy figure one night in the Three Broomsticks, can he help her to forget all that has happened?

Warning: This first chapter is rated pg-13. Sucessive chapters, however, are rated R.

Prologue

Chapter 1 of 5

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Disclaimer: They all belong to the wonderful mind of JK Rowling.

It was 9:38 on a Friday night in the middle of October.

Hermione Granger took a deep breath of the warmly scented autumn air and entered the Three Broomsticks. She felt her stomach clench as she recalled her last visit to Hogsmeade and tried to ignore the feeling. Looking around, she was surprised to see Ginny Weasley waving to her from a small table at the back of the room.

Hermione waved back and ordered a Firewhisky and a Butterbeer from the bar. She wound her way over to Ginny's table.

"Hermione! I'm so glad to see you!" Ginny chimed, her voice sincere.

"Of course you are, Ginny," Hermione said, giving her a small grin. "I brought drinks with me."

She set the bottles down and Ginny swiped at her. Hermione smirked and took a sip of the Firewhisky.

"Are you waiting for someone?" Hermione asked. She didn't feel like having company right now.

"Yes, actually. Lee and I were about to leave." Hermione stared at Ginny for a moment before asking, "Lee Jordan? The twins' friend, Lee Jordan?" Ginny smiled and nodded her head.

"Hermione..." Ginny started, but the young woman in question shook her head.

"It's just a bit surprising, you know?"

Ginny patted her friend's hand and looked up as she felt a hand on her shoulder.

Hermione gave a small smile. "Hello, Lee. You both should get home before Gin's mum starts to worry."

Ginny smiled back. "All right. I'll see you tomorrow at the Burrow then?" Hermione nodded and watched the redhead walk out of the room, hand in hand with her new beau. She sighed. She didn't want to attend the Order meeting tomorrow.

She looked around the small room and was surprised to find the place so crowded, yet so silent.

As she scanned the room, she felt a queer sensation that someone was watching her. Looking behind her and seeing no one, she scanned the room again, and her eyes met with those of a stranger.

She stared at him and expected him to break contact, but his eyes never left hers. She was mesmerized by their blackness. She felt a burst of emotion in her stomach: fear, sorrow, happiness, passion. She quickly looked away, her heart pounding. She looked back at him, noticing he wore a black cloak with the hood pulled over his head. Hermione stared when he stood up and moved away from the table. His movements were fluid and she watched him vanish into a crowd.

She took a large sip of Firewhisky, trying to quell the emotion inside her. She sighed and was about to take another sip of the warm liquid when she felt a hand rest softly on her shoulder. She jumped and turned around, her heart pounding.

She saw the black folds of a cloak and looked up into a man's face, hidden in shadows.

She got lost in those raven eyes again; she felt as if she were drowning in darkness. As if in a haze, she saw his face moving toward hers. She gasped when his lips softly brushed against hers. Regaining her senses, she saw his mouth curve into a smirk before he turned around and faded into the shadows. She smelled Firewhisky as he pulled away and realized that he was probably drunk, though how someone who was drunk could move so cat-like, she didn't know.

She followed his movements with her eyes, and when he paused, she felt her heart quicken, hoping he would look at her again. But he never turned around. When he left the room, Hermione slumped back into her chair, placing two fingers on her lips where his had been only minutes ago.

'I don't even know who he is,' she raved at herself and took another swig of the burning Firewhisky. 'We never even spoke!'

'But you kissed,' another voice answered.

'Our lips touched. It doesn't mean anything!'

'You felt something,' the voice calmly announced.

"But what?" she muttered aloud.

'Passion.'

Passion? How could she feel passion for a stranger? She sighed again at the inward battle she could never win and finished her Firewhisky before ordering another.

By the time she left the pub, she had downed three more mugs of Firewhisky and was decidedly unsteady. She took a cooling breath of air and, looking around, Disappeared.

Since the Final Battle, Severus Snape had spent most of his weekend nights sitting in the Three Broomsticks, drinking Firewhisky. This Friday night was no exception. His day had been tedious. The Hogwarts Headmaster, Minerva McGonagall, always felt obliged to place Slytherins and Gryffindors together in Potions. Friday was their long block. It was an understatement to say that the Potions master was in a foul mood.

Severus scowled at two students inappropriately behaving in the hallway and took twenty points from each. He smirked as they scurried away from him and continued on his way to Hogsmeade. As he left the school grounds, he pulled his cloak over his shoulder length black hair.

Upon entering the Three Broomsticks, he ordered a glass of Firewhisky and swept off to his table. He looked around the bar and was surprised to see two of his old students present. He recognized them instantly and scowled.

Sitting on the other side of the room was none other than Ginevra Weasley and Lee Jordan.

Sighing, he consumed two more glasses before glancing up again. Jordan had disappeared, but the damned Gryffindor know-it-all had joined her friend at the table. He really didn't want to meet with The Golden Trio, and where one was, the others were never far behind. But Potter and Weasley weren't anywhere in his sight.

Turning back to the two girls he noticed Jordan approaching them. Ordering another Firewhisky, he saw Weasley and Jordan bid their friend goodbye and walk out of the room, hand in hand.

Severus took his time, looking at the girl – woman – seated on the other side of the room. She had dark circles around her eyes, and her skin seemed sallow. Her bushy hair was pulled back carelessly and her robes were disheveled. As if feeling his eyes on her, she turned to look at him. As his eyes met hers, he was surprised to find that the sparkle of curiosity that had always been there was gone. She looked away first, blushing, and Severus, not wanting to look into her eyes again, looked away.

He could feel her eyes on him and silently got up, moving toward the door. Placing his bottle on the counter, he glanced back at his once-student. Not knowing why, he made his way over to her. Placing a pale hand on her shoulder, he saw her jump and spin around. His eyes locked with hers and the despair he saw almost overwhelmed him, yet he saw lingering hope.

Unaware of what he was doing, he leaned down and brushed his lips across hers. The contact sent a spark through him, but, realizing what he was doing, he pulled away. Granger sat in front of him, her eyes wide with shock. Smirking to himself, he turned around and made his way out of the pub, feeling her eyes on him the whole time.

Surprises

Chapter 2 of 5

Hermione sees a black-robed man at the Order meeting. Could it be her mystery man?

Disclaimer: All of the characters belong to J.K. Rowling, although the situations are mine.

The next day, Hermione got ready to leave for the Burrow. She'd barely slept the night before, the man's eyes haunting her whenever she closed her own.

She shuffled through her closet, not really paying much attention to what she was grasping. Grabbing rich green summer robes, she absentmindedly pulled them over her head.

Glancing at herself in the mirror, she paused and pulled the robes off her thin body, tossing them carelessly onto the bed.

She rummaged through her closet again, looking more carefully. She pulled out two robes, both with long, sloping sleeves. She glanced at herself in the mirror, holding up one robe then the other before tossing them both on the bed.

She focused on her reflection in the mirror. Her once chubby body had become stick-thin, and scars marred her torso. Her eyes moved down to her black panties, clinging to her like a second skin. She brought her eyes to her bust. Her black bra stood out against her sallow skin.

She sighed and reached again for the robes on the bed, her eyes catching sight of the lines on her arms. She grasped the black robes and held them up to her, her already pale face turning almost invisible. She moaned in despair and dropped the garment on the bed. Looking once more in the mirror, she reached for the second robe.

She pulled on the deep brown robes, which her parents had given her too many Christmases ago to remember, claiming they brought out the color in her eyes. She used to smile when she remembered that Christmas – her mother's smile when Hermione opened the box which held the robes. But they were gone now, along with so many others, and Hermione no longer enjoyed remembering.

She looked at herself in the mirror one last time, doing a quick inspection. Over the years her bushy hair had flattened, so she now had a head-full of tightly wound curls, which she had left loose and disheveled. Satisfied that her appearance wasn't too careless, she Disappeared.

When Hermione appeared in the kitchen, Mrs. Weasley stepped out of the way with obvious years of practice.

"Hermione, my dear, how are you holding up?" Hermione had barely gotten her feet on the ground before she was smothered into Mrs. Weasley's warm arms.

Hermione mumbled incoherent words into Mrs. Weasley's robes and returned the hug awkwardly. When she was released, she heard feet thundering down the stairs.

"Hermione!" She turned and saw a red-headed comet shoot at her. She was almost knocked off her feet as Ron embraced her tightly. She squeezed him back quickly and pulled away, looking up at him.

"Ron!" she exclaimed when she noticed his hair. Ron's face turned red.

"You don't like it?" he said, patting his hair.

"It looks like Bill's," she said softly, looking away. Ron placed an arm over her shoulders, trying to comfort her. Ginny came out of the living room and smiled at her.

Hermione's lips turned upward in a smile. "Did you get home alright, Gin?" she asked, pulling away from Ron.

"Yeah." Ginny glanced over at her mother before moving closer to Hermione and whispered, "Mum was as angry as a Howler when I wasn't back by curfew though." Hermione raised an eyebrow, and Ginny fought to hold back a giggle.

"How are your studies going?" Ron suddenly asked.

Hermione glanced at him and then Ginny. "Well, I finally decided what I'm going to major in." A frown appeared on her face, and she stared at the wall.

Finally Ron said, "Well?"

"Well what?" asked Hermione, snapping out of her trance.

"What have you decided?!" Ron said with an audible sigh.

Hermione looked at him in surprise. "Oh! I'm majoring in Potions."

Ron's mouth fell open, and Ginny looked between the two, starting to laugh.

"Look at his face!" she shrieked, her eyes watering.

Ron continued to stare at Hermione. She sighed. "What is it, Ron?"

He closed his mouth and opened it again, but no words came out. He croaked out, "Potions?"

Hermione's gaze never left his as she spoke. "Didn't you hear me? Yes, Ron – Potions. You don't approve?" *'Oh, I forgot, I don't care,'* the voice in her head snapped.

He shook his head, "How could *anyone* like Potions after *Snape*?"

Hermione gave an exasperated sigh. "Ron, just because you and Harry disliked Snape – *dislike* Snape – doesn't mean that the rest of us do. He's brilliant. He led us to Voldemort, *and* he risked his life to save Harry's."

Ron stared at her as if she were mad. "You're off your rocker to think that that greasy git was *brilliant*, Hermione. What's wrong with you?"

She scowled at Ron and left him standing in the kitchen. Ginny followed her out of the room.

When they reached the living room, Hermione turned to Ginny. "Where's the meeting being held?"

"Grimmauld Place," Ginny said, examining a fingernail. Hermione gave an inward moan and plopped ungracefully down on the plaid couch. Ginny gracefully sat down next to her in silence. Mr. Weasley came in a few minutes later, telling them it was time to go.

Standing in front of the fire, Hermione took a pinch of Floo powder and threw it in, turning the lapping flames emerald. "Twelve Grimmauld Place," she said clearly, stepping into the fire. As she stepped out into Harry's living room, her heart started pounding wildly. Standing not twenty feet away with his back to her was a man in black robes. Moving slowly forward, she approached him tentatively.

"Excuse me, sir?" The man in front of her turned around and her breath caught in her throat.

"Yes, Miss Granger?" he said with a sneer.

"P... p... professor?" she stuttered, taken by surprise. "I'm sorry, sir; I didn't realize it was you," she continued truthfully.

The man smirked at her again. "Of course, just a little misunderstanding on your part. I would have thought you could come up with a better excuse than that, Miss Granger."

Ron appeared in the fire and gingerly stepped out. Spotting Hermione, he rushed over to her. "Excuse us, Professor Snape. I need to talk to Hermione for a moment." He grabbed her arm and pulled her away. Hermione yanked her arm out of his grasp and looked at him.

"You needed to speak to me?" she asked, her eyes glinting.

"Yeah," Ron said, standing straighter. "Just because you're taking Potions at the University doesn't mean that you have to go around conversing with *him*," he said, exasperated, and added as an afterthought, "the dirty bat."

Hermione glared at Ron and was about to snap at him when she heard, "Hermione!" She turned to see Harry walking towards her, smiling deeply. "Harry!" she exclaimed and gripped him tightly when he embraced her.

"How are you, Hermione?" Harry pulled away and looked at her, his face portraying that he saw something he didn't like.

"We can catch up later Harry," she said, moving away from him.

"Alright. Is every one here?" he asked, looking around.

Hermione glanced around, too. She saw most of the Order members, but her eyes stopped on a figure in the corner of the room. Her heart skipped a beat, and she moved closer to the door. He had a lean body and pale blonde hair falling past his shoulders.

Before she could leave the room, Harry started speaking, "I'm so glad that all of you could be here. We are here to restore old friendships and to make new ones." The members of the Order murmured.

"I would like to introduce you to someone who has been working silently with us all along." Harry motioned towards the corner, holding out his hand. The young man stepped forward and grasped Harry's hand in his own. Ron started to cry out in outrage, but Ginny elbowed him.

The room was silent until Snape's cool drawl cut through the air like a knife. "Draco Malfoy."

Revelation

Chapter 3 of 5

The Order meeting ? from a different point of view.

A/N: Once again, thanks to my beta, RobisonRocket. :-D

Disclaimer: They are not mine, and they never will be.

(The night before)

Severus entered his dungeon chambers and fell into his black leather chair. The cold air helped to clear his mind, so he didn't bother to light a fire. He began to ponder over Miss Granger. "Hermione," he muttered, his own voice startling him.

"Hermione," he said again, closing his eyes and leaning his head back in his chair.

Severus awoke sweating, and as his dream came back to him, a dull flush crept up his face. Groaning, he heaved himself out of the chair and made his way to his potions cabinet for a hangover potion. Drowning it in one gulp, he returned to the chair. He rested his head in his hands and started to fall asleep once again.

He was started out of his calm by a warm voice flooding through his chambers.

"Severus? Severus Snape, do *not* make me come out of this fireplace to get you."

Severus sighed. "I am so sorry that I was not available at your every beck and call, Molly," he grouched, lifting his body from the chair and making his way towards his sitting room. Glancing at the fire, he saw the head of Molly Weasley looking impatiently at him.

"I have a family to feed and *do not* have the time to listen to your sarcasm," she said, huffing. Severus glared at her. She glared right back, but finally gave in. "There is a meeting at Grimmauld Place today, and I expect you to be there." Severus continued glaring at her. Molly was unfazed. "I will see you at one then, Severus. Have a good morning. And take a shower, you smell terrible." And with that she disappeared from the fire.

Severus groaned; he didn't know why they kept holding the damn meetings anyway, or expected him to show up. The war was over, Voldemort gone, and he wanted to live the rest of his miserable life in peace.

Instead of making his way to his bedroom and sleeping again like he wanted to, he found himself walking to the bathroom. Peeling his robes off his tired body, he folded them, placed them a neat pile, and turned the shower on. Glancing around the room, he caught a glance of himself in the mirror; his once too-thin body was now lean and covered with muscles; old scars were at last fading. He smirked at his reflection before entering the boiling water. '*Not too bad for forty years*,' he thought to himself.

Entering through the fire at Grimmauld Place, he looked around the brightly lit room and scowled. He disliked the light, and unlike some rumors, it was not because he was a vampire. He simply did not enjoy the feeling it gave him, like he was out in the open for anyone to see. Moving towards the shadows, he stopped to study a painting on the wall and was only snapped out of his trance by Hermione Granger's soft voice. "Excuse me, sir?"

He turned around and a look of surprise swept across her face, soon followed by embarrassment.

"Yes, Miss Granger?" he asked, sneering at her expression, his heart racing.

"P... P... Professor?" A red flush crept up her neck. "I'm sorry, sir; I didn't realize it was you." Severus ignored her words, looking at her. She was much paler than she used to be, something he hadn't noticed the night before. Her cheeks seemed gaunt and her eyes still void of all emotion. His eyes wandered down her body, taking in what he could with her robes covering her frame.

Snapping his eyes back to her face, the corner of his mouth curled up as he saw despair written across her face. "Of course, just a little *misunderstanding* on your part. I would have thought you could come up with a better excuse than that, Miss Granger."

Anger and sadness swept across her features. Severus opened his mouth to say something else, but Weasley hurried over to them. "Excuse us, Professor Snape. I need to talk to Hermione for a moment," he said, pulling the girl away.

Severus watched her closely as she pulled away from Weasley and quickly departed after greeting Potter.

He was worried about her. He stood in shock as the thought crossed his mind. Why should he be worried about her? *It was because she was my student*, he told himself.

He made his way into the dining room where everyone had gathered. Sweeping his eyes across the room, he missed the figure standing alone in the corner opposite from his own.

Potter stood in the doorway to the living room, the Order members gathered in front of him.

"Is everyone here?" he started, glancing around the room. Concluding that every one was, he continued, "I'm so glad that all of you could be here. We are here to restore old friendships and to make new ones. I would like to introduce you to someone who has been working silently with us all along." Potter held out his hand for the young man, and he grasped it with something Severus decided was loving care.

"Draco Malfoy," he said, sneering at the younger man. "What a surprise. I thought that you would be off spending your inheritance."

Potter glared at Severus, and Draco smoothly answered, "I've already spent it, Severus."

Severus snarled at the use of his given name. He stepped forward. "I *never* want to be addressed so informally again. Do I make myself clear, Mister Malfoy?" Draco never wavered.

"Certainly, Professor," Draco answered. Severus swept out of the room, feeling more than one pair of eyes on him.

He could hear questions from the other room and Potter laughing. "Yes, actually, we are."

Severus sat on one of the few chairs in the kitchen and rested his head in his hands.

"Professor?" The timid voice made him glance up. Hermione was standing in front of him, looking quite shy.

"Yes, Miss Granger?" he said, standing.

"Sir, since I am no longer your student, you can call me Hermione," she said, giving him a small smile.

Severus' heart started to beat faster. "Alright, Hermione. Did you want something?"

Hermione's smile faded and Severus cursed himself. "Actually, Professor, I'm not doing too well in my class at the University," she blushed, "and I was wondering if you could help me?"

"Surely you can't be doing any worse than an E?" Snape drawled, wondering if the woman was using grades as an excuse to spend time with him.

Hermione's blush deepened, and she looked at the floor, playing with the sleeve of her robes. "Actually, sir, I have an A."

Severus' eyes widened in shock. The girl who had passed her Potions N.E.W.T.S. with an O only achieved an A at the University? "Surely the University courses can't be that difficult, Miss Granger – Hermione."

The woman lifted dead eyes to look at him. "No, of course not. Thank you for your time, sir." She turned, her brown robes spinning around her. But Severus wasn't looking at her robes; he was looking at the sleeve, which she had pulled at.

"Miss Granger, come here immediately." The woman tensed. "Hermione," he said more gently, "please come here." She turned around to face him again and slowly made her way over to the chair he was standing next to.

"Yes, sir?" she mumbled.

"Please, sit down," Severus said, pulling a chair over for her. Once they were sitting, Severus reached out and grasped her hand. Her eyes opened in shock, and she tried to pull away, but Severus held on. He slowly pulled up her sleeve, revealing three deep gashes, still red and faded scars. Severus glanced at the woman's face, but it was turned away.

"Hermione, please look at me." She turned her face towards him, and he saw tears in her eyes. "Talk to me, Hermione." The tears started to fall.

"It's just so difficult," she moaned. He mindlessly stroked her hand, muttering nonsense words to calm her. They were still in Potter's house, he realized. Hermione probably wouldn't want her friends to see her in such a state.

"Hermione, let's go," he said, standing up. She followed and he led her to the fireplace. Taking a pinch of Floo powder, he threw it into the fire.

"Severus Snape's quarters, Hogwarts."

Tears

Chapter 4 of 5

What happens when Hermione lets Severus take her back to his quarters?

A/N: I'd like to thank RobisonRocket. She is an amazing beta!

Disclaimer: I do not own the characters...

Hermione did not understand why she had broken down in front of her former professor or why she had allowed him to bring her back to his personal quarters without a struggle. It mattered not at the moment though. She was clutching Severus Snape's hand, and he had not pushed her away yet. The truth be told, Hermione felt a sense of comfort in his presence, and she had no desire to be deprived of it anytime soon.

Hermione gave a tentative smile up to Snape, and to her surprise, the corners of his mouth turned up.

"Are you feeling better, Hermione?" the professor inquired, not unkindly.

"A smidge, Professor."

"Well, Hermione, if I am to call you by your first name, I insist that you address me as Severus."

"Hermione," he paused and cleared his throat, "I would like to know what happened to your arm." Hermione's gaze dropped. She removed her hand from his and didn't answer.

"Hermione," his voice was softer, "tell me what happened." He assumed the cuts were self-inflicted, but he hoped he was wrong.

Hermione muttered something inaudible.

"Who did this to you?" Severus demanded.

Hermione sighed. "I did."

"May I inquire as to why?" he questioned. Tears came to her eyes as Severus' disappointed voice reached her ears.

"The pain," she mumbled, her tears starting to fall, "I can't bear it."

"Excuse me for pointing out the obvious, Hermione. You are inflicting this pain upon yourself. If it hurts so much, why do you continue?"

Hermione glared at him, her eyes shining with tears. Sobbing, she fell on the floor in a heap.

Once her tears had stopped flowing, Hermione muttered, "I need to use the loo." Nodding, Severus led her to the bathroom.

Entering, Hermione locked the door and cast a Silencing Charm on the mahogany door. Looking around, a small smile threatened to pull at her lips. *'Typical Severus,'* she thought.

The room was made of black marble, which reflected a faint image of herself. The clawed tub was silver, as well as the toilet, sink, and cupboards. The towels were made of forest green terry cloth.

Moving quickly, she reached into her robes and pulled out a silver blade. A grim smile formed on her lips as she lifted it to her arm. She pressed down and dragged it across her translucent skin. The skin parted like butter, and her red blood trickled out of her arm, dripping onto the marble. Hermione moved to the sink and, wincing, placed her arm under the running water. After rinsing the razor off and placing it back in her robes, she *Evanesco'd* the blood on the floor and opened the door.

Severus was still standing where she had left him five minutes ago. "Are you ready to answer my question now?" he asked once they returned to the living room.

Sitting in a chair facing away from Severus, Hermione began. "Not what I inflict upon myself, but what the world inflicts upon me. My parents died before the war when Death Eaters raided our house. So many have died since: Lavender, Parvati, Dumbledore, Cho, Fred, George... Bill. They all meant so much to me, and they just disappeared, and there wasn't anything I could do about it. I know that others have lost loved ones as well, and I'm not so weak to think I couldn't handle their losses. But after the war, after all that tragedy, after what he did to me..." Hermione paused, and Severus urged quietly, "Go on."

"Lucius Malfoy had escaped from the Ministry. I was walking to my flat from Grimmauld Place when he found me."

Severus' heartbeat quickened.

"I had been drinking and wanted the night air to bring me back to my senses, otherwise I would have Apparated. The bastard saw me and before I saw him, he had my wand."

Severus closed his eyes, not wanting to hear the rest, but knowing he had to.

"He caught me from behind, and the harder I struggled," Hermione's voice broke, and Severus wanted to hold her and tell her everything would be all right. Instead, he held his head in his hands, listening.

"He raped me and then left me there to die. I somehow made it back to my flat. I was going to kill myself. Then I thought of what Bill would say if he were still alive. He'd tell me that I still had friends. If I took myself from them, Malfoy would win. So I didn't. Things haven't improved. Harry has drifted away over the years, Ron is trying to turn into Bill to be closer to me, but I've only pushed him away."

Severus could hear her slump down in her chair, and he moved into her view.

"You need to rest. You can sleep in my bed." Hermione's eyes flew open. "I can rest out here," Severus amended. She nodded wearily. Sighing, he picked up her small form and carried her to his bedroom. She was asleep before he lay her down.

Transforming her robes into a suitable nightgown, Severus looked more closely at her now bare arms. Some of the scars looked quite old, and some were new – too new. Leaning closer, Severus saw an open cut on her arm. Mentally cursing himself for letting her leave his sight, he placed her wand on the table next to the bed and flicked off the lights.

As if Nothing had Happened

Chapter 5 of 5

Hermione wakes up with no memory of where she is.

Thanks to my beta RobinsonRocket!

I own none of the characters, despite how much I love to steal them.

Hermione's eyes fluttered open, revealing utter darkness. Looking around cautiously, her heart pounded; she had no idea where she was. She reached under her pillow for her wand, but no comforting handle of wood brushed her fingers. Searching more frantically, she finally realized that she was unarmed and alone.

Her breath was coming quickly now, and she closed her eyes—trying with little luck to calm herself. When her breathing evened out somewhat, she opened her eyes again. She ran her hands through her robes, feeling hopelessly for her wand.

Resigning herself to the fact that she was unarmed, she took in her surroundings. She could tell that she was in a bed; the wooden frame was smooth, and the sheets were silky and cool to the touch. It was difficult to see much in the dark room, but her eyes were slowly adjusting. She noted that the room was large, and there was a dim light at the far end.

Pushing the covers off herself and swinging her legs off the bed, she felt cold stone beneath her bare feet. She shivered but stood up. Slowly approaching the light, she noticed that it was coming from under a door. Her hand reached for the handle despite the warning in her head that it was probably warded. A cold sweat breaking out over her body, she tentatively touched the handle. She pushed it down, and the door swung open.

The room was suddenly bathed with light, and Hermione felt blinded. She stumbled back.

"Hermione?" A deep, rich voice questioned, "Are you alright?"

Hermione took a few calming breaths and forced her mind to concentrate—she knew that voice!

"Professor Snape? Is that you?"

"Who else would it be?" he answered. Hermione felt a shadow fall across her, and she looked up towards the thin form of her old Potions master.

A feeling of safety washed over her, and she tentatively smiled at him.

Looking at him standing there, tall, dark, and fearless, Hermione tried to see herself through his eyes: frightened and cowering. *You're pathetic*, she told herself.

Digging her fingernails into her hand, she looked up at him, defiant. "Sorry, Sir. I didn't mean to bother you."

He looked at her, his face contorted with confusion, and said "It's no bother, Hermione; I was coming to check on you when you opened the door. You looked so frightened." He reached toward her but she pulled away.

"I'm perfectly alright, Professor. I'm sorry that you thought I was frightened. You were mistaken." She squeezed her nails harder into the palm of her hand.

Snape looked taken aback by her cold attitude and muttered, "Of course, I must have been mistaken. Just a trick of the light. I'll let you get ready for the day. The bathroom is through that door." He pointed to another door in the bedroom. "And your wand is on the bedside table if you haven't seen it. Lumos." The lights in the room flared, and Snape whirled around and left Hermione alone once again.

After he left, Hermione ran to the bedside table and hugged her wand to her like a lifeline. Warm tears ran down her face, and she angrily wiped them away.

Hermione made her way to the bathroom and splashed her face with cold water. Still seething at herself, she reached into her robes, only to find that she was in a nightgown. Muttering under her breath, she transfigured the gown back into her robes. She reached once again into her robes only to find that her razor blade was gone.

"Damn you, Severus!" she cursed. Looking around the bathroom, she scowled.

She locked the doors and grasped her wand tightly, whispering '*Diffindo*.' Her pale skin spit open, and blood splattered the floor.

She cursed again and looked around again, spotting a towel hanging next to the skin. She crossed the floor and grabbed the towel, pressing it to her arm. Glancing back, she couldn't see the blood on the black floor, but she pointed her wand in the general direction and whispered, "*Evanesco*."

It was at that moment that the door banged open, and Severus Snape burst into the bathroom, fury written all over his face.

The look on her face when she saw me was pure relief. Why was she so angry? Severus thought to himself. He was sitting at his dining table when he heard a curse from the bathroom. He shook his head, amused, and returned to his breakfast.

Suddenly he remembered the evening before and Hermione's trip to the bathroom. He shoved his chair back and stalked over to the bathroom door, whispering, "*Alohamora*." The door swung open, and he stepped into the room, angry that he had left her alone again.

She was standing near the sink, a towel clutched to her arm.

"What the hell do you think you are doing?" he roared.

"What the hell do you think you're doing? I locked the door for privacy, not so you could barge in!" she bellowed back.

He scowled at her and marched over. "Show me your arm," he demanded.

She glared at him. "No." At his look of anger, she growled, "You can't force me."

He continued to stare at her. Neither was at the point of giving up when they heard a voice call from the other room "Severus! I want to talk to you. Now!" It was Molly Weasley.

Severus sighed and, glaring once more at Hermione, stalked out of the bathroom promising, "We'll finish this later." When he had assured Molly of Hermione's safety, he returned to the bathroom to find his towel back next to the sink and the young woman gone.