

What Happens in Vegas ...

by StormySkize

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's Note: The moderators of The Petulant Poetess have graciously granted me Validated Author status. I am grateful and humbled by their faith in me. In an effort not to 'blow it', I would like to ask my readers to let me know if they find any spelling, grammar, punctuation, or Canon errors that slip by me or my beta. I hope there won't be any, but if there are, and I am notified, I will correct them as quickly as possible. Thanks so much!

This little ficlet is meant as a thank you gift for GinnyWeasley31. Without her diligence and hard work the winter round of the HGSS story exchange wouldn't have happened. This story is dedicated to her.

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What Happens in Vegas ...

As she sat twirling the little paper umbrella that had decorated her drink, Hermione Granger wondered why she had ever let herself be talked into this excursion.

While it was true that she hadn't taken a holiday in more than seven years, she had never felt that she was missing anything. As she glanced around at the darkened lounge, her belief that her life hadn't been lacking anything was reinforced. The dim lighting tried hard to project an image of cosy and intimate, but to anyone with the least bit of discerning taste, it screamed out seedy and disreputable.

There was a pall of stale cigarette smoke hanging over the tables, and it seemed to Hermione that everything she touched was sticky and none too clean. She hoped that the alcohol in her drink would kill any lingering germs.

"Earth to Halle," said a voice in her ear. Hermione started as she realised there was a hand waving in front of her face.

"Oh, sorry," Hermione said with a smile. "I was thinking of something else."

Even after almost nine years, there were still moments she was caught off guard when she was addressed by her assumed name. She still thought of herself as Hermione Granger and sometimes wondered who Halle George was and why she was wearing her face.

"You're on vacation," said her friend Denise. "You're not supposed to be thinking about anything except having some fun."

"And why are we here again? I mean this particular place?" Hermione asked.

"Carrie told me she was here a few weeks ago and saw this illusionist. She said he's as good as David Copperfield."

"David Copperfield?"

"You know, the guy who made the Statue of Liberty disappear?"

"I'm English, remember?" Hermione reminded her.

"David Copperfield is known all over the world. He's a famous magician," Denise explained.

Hermione grasped her glass and took a quick sip. She hoped that Denise wouldn't detect the sudden trembling in her hands. She'd left the world of magicians and magic behind after the Final Battle. She'd been friends with one of the most powerful wizards who'd ever lived. A friend who'd sacrificed his life to defeat another powerful wizard, one with a core so evil he had very nearly destroyed the magical world, and the Muggle world along with it. (Though the Muggles had, for the most part, been blissfully unaware of the danger.) She had no desire to watch some Muggle pretending to be a magician.

"I'm not much into this kind of stuff," Hermione said. "I'd rather go listen to a singer."

"Too late," Denise said as the already dim house lights lowered even more.

Hermione sighed and took another sip of her drink. When a tacky-looking man in an ill-fitting tuxedo stepped onto the small, raised stage, she lowered her head and stared at her shoes, determined to suffer through the evening's 'entertainment' with as little interaction as possible.

Although she kept her head down, there was no way to stopper her ears.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the Argent Lounge is pleased to present the Prince of Prestidigitation, the Lord of Legerdemain, the Master of Magic ..."

Hermione snorted.

"Sebastian Stone!"

There was a smattering of polite applause.

And Hermione was nearly knocked off her chair by the sudden wave of magical energy that passed through the room.

She gasped and lifted her head to stare at the man who now stood in the spotlight on the stage. She slouched down a little bit more in her chair although she didn't believe he could see past the floodlights at the foot of the small stage. Still, she held her breath as his eyes swept over the room.

She'd changed her name and moved to America. She'd locked her wand away, and she lived and worked among Muggles. But there was no way to disguise her magical signature from another witch or wizard.

And there was no doubt that the man on the stage was a wizard and not just any wizard. As incredible as it seemed, the man standing on the dingy stage was Severus Snape.

His hair was shorter, neatly styled in Muggle fashion, and he wasn't nearly as thin as he'd been the last time she'd seen him, standing over the bodies of Harry and Voldemort. When he spoke, there was none of the sarcasm that had been so much a part of his speech when she had known him, but there was no mistaking that deep, silky baritone. The tuxedo he wore fitted to perfection, and he looked quite distinguished.

Hermione watched through narrowed eyes as Snape changed some silk scarves from green to red and finally to white. Then he crumbled the white scarves into his closed fist. When he opened his fist, a dove sat on his palm, calmly grooming its feathers. He closed his fist again, seeming to crush the dove between his fingers. A stray feather floated on the air and then disappeared in a burst of bright red fire. The dove reappeared on a small perch at the back of the stage.

There was another small burst of applause.

Next, Snape invited a man from the audience onto the stage and handed him a pair of handcuffs.

"What is your name, sir?" Snape asked with a genial smile that seemed to Hermione to be quite genuine in spite of the fact that she couldn't recall ever having seen him smile except in a mean, sarcastic way.

"Bob," the man replied.

After asking the man to examine the cuffs and determine that they were, indeed, real and solid, Snape held out his hands and instructed the man to lock the handcuffs around his wrists.

"Are the handcuffs quite secure, Bob?" Snape asked.

"Tight as a drum," the man named Bob replied in a confident tone.

Snape then raised his hands over his head and brought them down quickly. He held his now-freed hands wide apart.

"Yes, they are 'tight as a drum', aren't they?" Snape asked.

Bob held up his wrists, now firmly cuffed together, and shook his head.

The audience applauded more loudly this time.

"I'll see if I can find the key after the show," Snape said with another smile.

The man grinned and resumed his seat.

"Now I need a lady from the audience," Snape said.

Denise applauded wildly, pointing at Hermione.

Hermione shook her head violently and tried to sink down even lower into her seat.

"I see I have a volunteer," Snape said. He stepped off the stage and walked straight over to where Hermione was slouched in her chair.

She looked into his eyes and realised that he recognised her.

"And what is your name, Miss?" Snape asked. He was standing over her.

"My name is Halle George, Mr. Stone," Hermione replied.

Snape grinned, and Hermione had no trouble recognising the sarcasm this time.

"You'll do," he said as he reached out and took her hand in his.

Hermione felt a jolt as their magic collided. She tried to pull out of his grasp, but it seemed he had no intention of letting go of her hand.

Do you really wish to make a scene here, Miss Granger, in front of all these Muggles?

She heard his voice in her mind. He had used Legilimency on her.

Hermione smiled up at him, although she was seething inside.

"How nice that I'll 'do'," she murmured as she got to her feet. There was no mistaking the sarcasm in her tone, either.

Relax, this won't hurt a bit.

Hermione gritted her teeth, but allowed Snape to lead her to the stage.

"I'm going to put you into a trance, Miss George," Snape said as he held his hand in front of her eyes. "I need to concentrate deeply, and your thoughts might distract me."

Hermione opened her mouth, but before she could speak she felt herself become rigid and begin to keel over. The bloody bastard had used a Body-Bind Curse!

Then she was floating a few feet over the stage. Snape held a large metal hoop, and he was passing it over and around her body.

"No wires, ladies and gentlemen," she heard Snape say in a smooth, almost oily, voice. "The young lady is being held up solely by the power of my mind!"

And a non-verbally cast Mobilicorpus, of course.

Hermione could almost hear the smirk in Snape's thoughts.

The applause was even louder and more sustained this time.

When the applause died down, Hermione felt herself being lowered gently to the floor. Snape held out a hand to her just as the Body-Bind Curse was released.

Hermione glared at him, but let him take her hand to help her to her feet.

Meet me in my dressing room, after the show. I'll leave word to admit you.

"Thank you for your assistance, Miss George," Snape said, bending over her hand and placing a kiss on her knuckles.

Snape performed several more tricks. Hermione recognised his use of a Summoning Charm, a Banishing Charm, and a Switching Spell, among others.

Snape's final trick was to enter a box on one side of the stage and to walk out of a box on the other side of the stage just a couple of seconds later.

There was even more enthusiastic applause as Snape bowed deeply to the audience. He then stepped over to where the hapless Bob still sat handcuffed.

"I'll take those now," Snape said as he laid a hand across the narrow chain that joined the two handcuffs.

A second later, Bob's hands were free, and Snape's were cuffed together.

Snape returned to the stage and bowed once again. Then the stage went black.

"Wasn't he fantastic?" Denise asked as they gathered their things and prepared to leave. "How did he levitate you? *Were* there wires we couldn't see from the audience?"

"I was in a trance, remember?" Hermione replied.

"Come on, Halle," Denise said. "You weren't really in a trance, were you?"

"Of course I wasn't. But I didn't see or feel any wires," Hermione said truthfully.

"He's very attractive, isn't he? And that *voice!*" Denise was practically drooling.

"You thought he was attractive?" Hermione asked.

"There's just this compelling aura about him," Denise said. "You know what I mean?"

Sometime during her sixth year, Hermione had realised there was something about Snape that made him ... interesting, even though he wasn't conventionally handsome. After Dumbledore's death, she had made a concerted effort to eliminate those thoughts from her mind, but hearing Denise's assessment of Snape reminded her that she had once thought of him as something other than her dour Potions master.

And he *had* been exonerated ...

"Yes, I know what you mean," Hermione replied. "As a matter of fact, he invited me to go backstage after the show."

"Oh, you lucky ducky," Denise squealed.

"I'm not sure I should go ..."

"Of *course* you should go!" Denise insisted.

"I shouldn't leave you alone," Hermione protested.

"I'm going to take a cab to one of the casinos," Denise said. "After I lose tonight's allotment, I'll take a cab back to the hotel. I'll see you there after breakfast tomorrow."

"I'm not going to stay with him all night, Denise," Hermione said with a blush. "I've just met the man."

Sort of, Hermione thought and realised that in spite of her reservations, she was actually looking forward to meeting with him.

"Hey, girlfriend, what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas!"

"We're in Atlantic City," Hermione said dryly.

"Same principle," Denise replied.

Hermione hesitated only a few seconds more. Having seen him, she knew there was no way she could leave without talking to him.

"I'll be back at the hotel room in an hour or so," Hermione said at last.

"If you say so," Denise replied with a knowing look, "but I'm not waiting up for you."

They gave each other a quick hug, and then Denise headed for the front door of the lounge, and Hermione turned towards the backstage area.

The same man in the ill-fitting tuxedo who had acted as the master of ceremonies at the beginning of Snape's performance now stood guard at the head of the short corridor that led to the employees' area at the back of the club.

"Mr. Stone ... ah ... invited me to visit him after the show," Hermione said when the man arched an inquisitive brow at her.

"Yeah, he told me," the man said. "And I gotta tell you, I was surprised."

"Oh?"

"Sebastian usually keeps to hisself. He don't usually *socialise* with the customers."

"We sort of know each other," Hermione said.

"I figured. You talk funny. He talks even funnier than you do, but I can tell you're both not from around here, for sure."

Henry glanced around, checking that the corridor behind him was still empty.

"Where *does* he come from?" Henry asked, leaning in to whisper in Hermione's ear.

"Gossiping again, Henry?" drawled a voice from further down the corridor.

"I was just about to bring her to you," the man, Henry, replied.

"Of course you were after you pumped her for information." Although the words were spoken a bit sharply, Hermione couldn't detect any malice in Snape's tone.

Henry shrugged, not bothering to deny Snape's accusation.

"You're a man of mystery, Sebastian," Henry said. "I'm just trying to figure you out."

"You'd do well to remember that some mysteries are best left unsolved," Snape said as he moved forward and brushed passed Henry.

He had changed out of his tuxedo, but the dark, woollen trousers and the black turtleneck shirt he wore fit him just as perfectly as the tuxedo had.

"I see you decided to accept my invitation, Miss ... George," Snape said as he took her hand in his and bowed over it slightly. Hermione was shocked by the jolt of energy that passed between them when his lips brushed her knuckles again.

"I'm intrigued by your mystery, as well," Hermione conceded.

"I usually have a light supper after the show," Snape said. "Will you join me?"

Hermione hesitated.

Then she felt Snape slip into her mind once again.

Where is that vaunted Gryffindor courage? Surely, you're not afraid of little, old me?

Mindful of Henry, who was diligently pretending not to listen to every word they said, Hermione swallowed the comment she'd been about to make.

"It will be my pleasure to join you, Mr. Stone," she murmured.

What a delight it is to see you so ... amenable.

"Splendid," Snape said. "Shall we?"

He held out his arm and smirked as Hermione took it and allowed him to lead her out of the lounge.

They left through the employees' entrance at the back of the lounge. When they were standing in the deserted parking area, Hermione dropped her hand from Snape's arm.

She turned and faced him, her hands on her hips, and her brows drawn together.

"How *dare* you invade my mind? How *dare* you use a Body-Bind Curse and then a *Mobilicorpus* on me without my permission!"

"If I'd asked your permission, would you have granted it?" Snape asked.

"Of course not!"

"Well, there you have it," Snape said in a quite reasonable tone.

Hermione sputtered. "Why you ... you ... arrogant, obnoxious, slimy, conceited, self-righteous prick!"

"Please, Miss Granger ... surely not slimy. I'm using a different shampoo these days," he said as he patted his hair.

Hermione's jaw dropped and for one of the few times in her life, she was left speechless. Suddenly, the absurdity of the situation grabbed her, and she began to laugh.

When she had herself under control, she reached out and took Snape's arm again.

"I believe you mentioned supper, Mr. Stone?"

"I did indeed, Miss George. I did indeed."

What happens in Vegas ... is now up to you!

~Mischief Managed~

Author's Notes: The idea of a 'real' magician doing magic is something that has been niggling at the back of my mind for a while. I confess that I 'stole' the idea of Snape's final trick from the movie, *The Prestige*. In that movie the trick is called, 'The Transported Man.' I won't reveal how the characters in the movie achieved their results, but I will say that Snape manages his feat through Apparition.