

Colors

by orm irian

Rec'ced by Know It Alls! HG/SS one shot romance - a little dark. Addiction can be a frightening thing, but it doesn't have to be lonely...

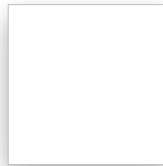
One shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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* For Triskell, who really wanted a dark Hermione.



"It's done," she stated flatly.

He nodded, pivoting sharply, causing his black robes to flare around him like a dark aureole. "Stay here," he ordered as he headed for the door. "I'll return after I inform our master."

Up the rickety steps, down the dingy hall, through the creaking door, to kneel on the tattered, threadbare carpet in front of the Dark Lord.

A high, cold voice spoke, "Get up, Severus. What have you to report?"

"The final potion of the series has been administered to Potter, my Lord. He will be powerless when you confront him."

"Is this the Mudblood's work?"

"It is," Severus confirmed.

"You have done well as her handler," the skeletal figure before him shrielled. "I shall reward you both for your efforts."

"My Lord, I ask only one thing: your decree of security for her; she must be inviolable to your followers."

An awful pause ensued.

He had spoken confidently, since his Lord had assured him this would be granted. But in his heart he was far from certain; the Dark Lord was a capricious master to say the least. Severus restrained the impulse to shift his feet and caught himself only a millisecond before he bit his lower lip in apprehension. *Damn the girl! Now I am picking up her habits!*

Finally, the Dark Lord broke the brittle silence with his inhuman cackle of laughter. "Yes, Severus, I will grant your request, as I promised." He narrowed his eyes thoughtfully at the dark man before him. "The *Junctus Potentia* is an extraordinarily rare phenomenon," he continued. "When we have subdued the Ministry, I wish to study the two of you." He turned away. "You are dismissed for now."

She was standing before the dirty windows when he returned, the rays of the setting sun casting an orange-yellow glow around her. He crossed the room as she turned to face him. Severus regarded the young woman before him for a moment. Her expression was pensive, as if she was unsure of the reception her news and deeds would have received. *How can she be in doubt!* he thought incredulously. Aloud, he hastened to reassure her. "He is pleased. With both of us." He reached for her hands. "You will be protected," he whispered as his long fingers closed around hers. She felt the surge of energy radiate through her body, bringing on a near-orgasmic pleasure. Closing her eyes, she released her own power, felt it flowing into the man before her. Unconsciously, they both gasped as the effect intensified, redoubling upon itself until they were lost in the joining.

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It had been a chance meeting in Muggle London, six months after Dumbledore's funeral. Hermione was fighting her way through the throngs of Christmas shoppers on Camden High Street when she spotted Snape only a few feet away. He was dressed in Muggle clothes and his hair was longer, but there was no mistaking him. A moment later, he glanced up, his eyes widening with the shock of recognition. Like a striking snake, his hand shot out, grabbing her wrist as she reached for her wand. In reaction, she lunged for his other hand, trying, in turn, to prevent him from drawing his wand. They struggled silently. But although he was stronger, he couldn't succeed in dislodging her grasp on his wrist.

She felt an odd tingling in her fingers. Then, a moment later, as if a barrier had been breached, a sudden rush of power flooded her body. Immobilized by the electrifying sensation, she lost awareness of her surroundings. She felt herself falling, hitting the pavement, and grunted as a heavy weight knocked the wind out of her.

"Hey! Go home and sleep it off!" A voice bellowed nearby. "Goddamn drunks," the voice added as it receded.

Hermione opened her eyes. Snape was mostly on top of her, just beginning to stir, but still out of it. She tried to push his dead weight off. If she could free up her arm, then she could get to her wand. They were out of the main crush of people, up against a store front. She had no idea how they had got there. *Stumbled, I guess*, she supposed. Snape was moaning and groggily shaking his head. Suddenly, he seemed to realize he was on top of her. He looked down, his eyes finally focusing on Hermione.

Frantically, she wrenched her arm free, going for her wand as he moved to push himself away. "No!" he rasped. "Don't pull that here, you fool! Every Muggle in London will see it!" he hissed.

"I don't care," she whispered fiercely, drawing her wand and moving to block any view of it from the passing pedestrians. "You bastard!" she swore. "What did you do to me?"

"What did I do to you?" he sneered. "I was the one knocked out, Granger. What filthy new spell have you dug out with your incessant research?"

"Hand it over," she whispered, gesturing for him to give up his wand.

His hand twitched.

"I will hex you very painfully if you try anything, Snape. Now give it here!"

Breathing hard, he raised both hands, palms spread out before him. "All right. Take it," he conceded, his eyes flicking to his jacket pocket.

Slowly, she reached toward it with her free hand, never taking her eyes from his. As her hand closed around the grip of his wand, both his hands dropped to capture her smaller ones. She squealed, drawing the momentary attention of a few passers by.

Again, they struggled silently. He was gripping both her wrists when the power surge hit them simultaneously.

This time, she was collapsed over his legs. He was out cold. She felt nauseated. *What the hell is going on?* she wondered shakily. It was clear that something totally unfamiliar was happening to both of them. Her curiosity was awakened. "Snape," she called, shaking him slightly.

He stirred. Groaning loudly, he opened an eye. "I think I'm going to be sick," he grumbled toward the pavement. He did not attempt to move.

*Perhaps he hit his head*, Hermione thought. She checked for contusions while he was still incapacitated, but found nothing. "Can you get up now?" she asked after a few minutes.

He nodded, pulling his feet underneath him in preparation. Hermione rose easily and waited a moment, then reached for his arm.

He pulled it away irritably. "I don't need your help!" he said with a ghost of his usual sneer, levering himself off the pavement with some difficulty.

"I suggest we talk, Snape," she stated boldly, looking directly into his cold gaze. "No drawn wands. No threats. No Aurors or Death Eaters. I want to know what just happened to us! Agreed?"

Amazingly, he had agreed. They had retreated to a local coffee shop where, with typical thoroughness, she had dissected every action and reaction that had passed between them.

"If I knew what it was, I'd harness it as a weapon," he scoffed after she had exhausted her store of questions.

"The problem is," Hermione drawled, "that you seem to get the worst of it. Not a very effective weapon from your perspective, I would think."

He favored her with a sour look. He had put forth a few hypotheses himself, but nothing that either of them could think of seemed to fit.

"Would you... how about a controlled experiment?" she asked hesitantly.

He raised an eyebrow. "Such as?"

"Take my right hand with yours." Nothing.

"How about my right with your left," she proposed. No reaction.

They tried all the possible combinations, but got no result.

She bit her lower lip. "Both hands," she finally suggested in a hushed voice.

"What if it causes us to lose consciousness again? This is a public place. We could get arrested for drunkenness," he cautioned.

"Well, there aren't very many people around. Perhaps they won't see us right off," she temporized. "At least the booth will cushion the fall if we flop over again."

After a disdainful sneer, he placed both his hands on the table between them. Slowly, she reached out with her right hand and clasped his left. Swallowing audibly, she slid her left hand across the table toward his right, stopping an inch shy of her goal.

Snape tore his eyes from their hands to look at Granger's face. She was afraid he could see it in her eyes. He stretched his hand forward and completed the connection. For a second there was nothing. He was about to let go of her hands when she spasmodically tightened her grip.

"I feel tingling," she breathed.

And he felt it too. As the seconds ticked past, it swelled rapidly to a vibrating energy stream that traveled deep into the core of his being. He looked into Granger's wide eyes, seeing his own awe reflected back. The effect continued to build until they were both panting, the power resonating between and within them, until it reached an almost painful peak of pleasure.

"Would you like something else?" The voice of the waitress intruded between them.

Hermione blinked. Abruptly, Snape disengaged his hands. With the connection broken, the energy faded immediately.

"Yes, bring us each another coffee," Snape answered for both of them.

Grey, she thought, her mind strangely blank. *Everything seems a bit grey after that.*

The girl across from him looked shell-shocked. She wasn't even asking questions absolute proof that her mind was in chaos. He didn't feel very clear himself, for that matter. But something stirred in his memory. *Something about power binding... what was it?*

Finally, she inquired softly, "Have you ever heard of anything remotely like that?" She looked hopefully across the table.

"Yes," he answered in a muted voice. He swallowed. "If my guess is right, we have experienced the *lunctus Potentia*."

They sat in silence until the fresh coffee arrived. Severus sipped thoughtfully. Finally, she roused herself to ask questions. What? How? Why?

"I know little about it," he informed her, "except that it is rare: no more than a handful of incidences have been recorded in wizarding history."

"Did... did you notice that colors seemed to be... almost alive?" she stammered. "During the... when the effect was happening, I mean. Everything was more vibrant, more real." She looked at him almost pleadingly, as if seeking confirmation.

He nodded fractionally. He had noticed. And the resonance of their combined power glorious was a tame word for the feeling. But he was accustomed to obscuring his feelings, not expressing them. He said nothing.

He finished his coffee in silence. "I believe we should both attempt to learn as much as possible about this phenomenon," he said, "before we meet again."

"Meet again?" she asked blankly. "So you can set a trap for me? What makes you think I would agree to that?"

He scowled darkly. "Granger, this effect isn't..." He broke off. It was useless. *Let her research it and find out for herself*, he determined sourly. "We should leave," he snapped shortly, moving to rise.

"Wait! Before you go... I'd like..."

Snape regarded the girl in surprise; she was blushing furiously. He settled himself back into the booth.

She took a deep breath and gathered her composure. "It's not likely that we will meet again," she stated, looking him in the eye. "So, before we part, could we... try it once more?" Almost as an afterthought, she added quietly, "I want to be able to remember what those colors were like."

Again, he placed both hands on the table, palms up. She extended hers smoothly this time, grasping his hands firmly. How long they stayed in that pose, she had no conception. Seconds or minutes she could never be sure later. She remembered only the brilliance of her vivid impressions.

Hermione did, of course, research the *lunctus Potentia*. Extensively. What she found frightened her. Frightened and elated. As Snape had said, it was an uncommon and extraordinary phenomenon: a binding of two individuals' magical energy. The dry recital of the physical effects was accurate, but conveyed nothing about the depth and wonder inherent in the experience. There were no known practical effects. That is, it did not confer either superior magical power or any sort of non-verbal, telepathic connection between the participants. They were not soul-mates. Pairings had been recorded both between and within genders. One known pair had been brothers. No one had ever determined what stimulated the binding or why two individuals were compatible.

At first, she felt a bit euphoric at the thought that she had been thus singled out. Very few wizards or witches had experienced what she had that powerful, bright joining. It was verification that she was, indeed, special in some way.

But there were side effects. Once the compatibility of the participants' magical energy was firmly established, partners inevitably developed a dependence on the effects of the binding. Actually, from the description, 'dependence' was a serious understatement. Prolonged separation of the bound pair caused symptoms not unlike those suffered during narcotic withdrawal. In effect, you became addicted to the physical effects of the binding. The number of power merges needed to irrevocably establish the bond varied from pair to pair: anywhere from four to ten.

*Oh God!* she thought desperately. *What if my bond with Snape is already set?*

And that was not the worst of it. In an established pairing, the magically stronger individual was invariably the dominant partner. The descriptions didn't imply coercion, but in every case, one individual (the less powerful) altered the path of their life to suit the other.

*Fuck. That settles it. I have to prevent this bond from being established, no matter what.* The possibility that her first encounter with Snape had been enough to do the damage was slim. *We really only did it twice*, she assured herself. *But what of those two initial, less pleasant instances?* whispered a small, doubting voice in her head. Would they contribute to the bond? There was no way to know, and she found nothing that could explain those jarring occurrences. *I simply will not meet with him again.*

A week elapsed after her run-in with Snape and she noticed nothing untoward. She began to relax; she was safe! Amid her feelings of relief, she missed the subtle turn of her thoughts. As the second week passed, without realizing it, she began to dwell more and more frequently on those bright memories: the vivid colors, the feel of his hands in hers, the thrum of power in her very bones! *Ah! That was alive.* Toward the end of two weeks, she developed a runny nose and watery eyes and believing she had caught a cold, took a dose of Pepperup. It was the failure of the Pepperup Potion that opened her eyes to the fact that she was, in reality, experiencing mild withdrawal symptoms. By two and a half weeks, her hands shook and she spent her days feeling alternately hot and cold.

An owl arrived at the Burrow for her. The note said only: *Coffee shop, tomorrow noon.* She threw it in the fireplace. *I am strong enough to resist an addiction. The symptoms will eventually go away.*

They did not. By the end of the third week, Hermione felt continuously ill. She received another note from Snape but ignored that as well. Endeavoring to hide the extent of her symptoms from her magical friends, she returned home. She told her parents that she had the flu. Frantically, she searched the magical literature for some sort of antidote, but found nothing that was applicable to her situation. Nor could she discover any indication that the withdrawal symptoms would ever abate.

Five days later, another owl arrived. Snape's spiky script was nearly illegible and prompted her to consider her own shaking hands for a minute. He had written: *I beg you, if not for my sake, then for your own, meet me at noon tomorrow in the coffee shop. S.*

That evening, when her father discovered she had both a fever and an elevated pulse, he sent her to bed and called her mother into the living room. As she left, she heard them worriedly talking of hospitalization. *That's it then. No choices left.* Her decision to meet Snape the next day seemed to calm the worst of her symptoms, as if the mere idea of renewing the bond somehow appeased her body. Perversely, she wished for them back. She wanted to be as physically miserable as she was emotionally.

Snape arrived fifteen minutes early, shaking all over and breathing rapidly. He took the same booth they had shared more than three weeks earlier. "Are you sure you want coffee?" the waitress asked him, scowling dubiously at his shaking hands.

"Yes. Two. I'm expecting company." With his eyes riveted to the door, he saw her the moment she entered the shop. He stood automatically as she made her way towards him. She looked terrified: her eyes wide and glassy, face chalk white. She slid into the booth across from him. Neither knew what to say. After a strained silence, he slowly lifted his hands and placed them, palms up, on the table. She stared at them as if they were vipers. Gradually, she brought her hands up to grip the edge of the table in front of her. A minute passed. She drew in a shuddering breath, steeling herself, then reached out to him. Their shaking hands met with a shock of magic; it felt like recognition, like coming home. Power hummed along their nerves, filling their senses with a resonating thrum.

When they released one another, several long minutes later, all evidence of sickness was gone from them both. Erased as if it had never been. Snape sighed in relief. Hermione burst into tears. Loudly. Standing, he quickly threw some money on the table and gathered the girl into his arms. Hustling her out of the shop, he ducked into the nearest alley and Apparated to his house.

He let her cry, huddled on his decrepit sofa, her tears soaking the front of his shirt. He tried to be gentle. Merlin knew, this had to be the most traumatic thing she had ever faced. After a long while, her sobs turned to sniffles. He stroked her hair repeatedly and murmured her name, "Hermione, Hermione, shhh," as if she were a small child. She looked up at him and the fear that still lay behind her eyes made his heart contract. "I won't hurt you," he whispered. "I won't ever hurt you."

"I know," she said softly. "I believe you. You can no more hurt me than I could hurt you." She swallowed. "But you will use me. It's inevitable."

She was right. Beyond a doubt, the Dark Lord would use their bond to his own advantage. And he would obey his master. There was little choice. But he would not allow harm to come to her. He would be cast in the role of her subverter, but he knew, as did she, that it was only together that they could survive. "We will both be used. Here, come to me," he said, taking her into his arms once again and caressing her hair. "Your regrets will disappear. This pain will fade away. It is the nature of the bond."

She nodded against his chest. Yes, she saw this too.

Instinctively, he knew that it would not be long before they became lovers. Her nature was open and affectionate. And he needed her. Their co-dependence operated on a level they hardly understood. Already, she was as necessary to him as breathing.

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The stairs in the Riddle house creaked loudly, encroaching between them.

"Enough!" Hermione cried, her face a mask of ecstasy or was it agony. They released one another, stepping back slightly, both panting. The last rays of the setting sun bathed them in an eerie red glow. "Severus," she crooned, reaching out to touch his face. "Make love to me."

"Here?" he questioned, softly, sardonically.

She looked around the room, taking in the filthy, dilapidated bed. "Do we have time to go to your house?" she asked in return.

"Yes, my love," he answered. "We have all the time in the world."

This story has a companion story called 'Human Touch' archived on this site.

Author notes:

**My sincere gratitude goes to Larilee for betaing this story.

--*Iunctus Potentia*: iunctus = joined together; potentia = power (via an online Latin to English translator). This is a phenomenon I concocted, rather than a spell. Kind of an uncontrolled reaction and bond that forms between two people in very specific circumstances. It has no basis in HP canon.