

All in the Family

by averygoodun

When Hermione leaves her boyfriend rather suddenly, Harry invites her to stay at his place, much to the irritation of his other flatmate - Severus Snape.

Prologue

Chapter 1 of 5

When Hermione leaves her boyfriend rather suddenly, Harry invites her to stay at his place, much to the irritation of his other flatmate - Severus Snape.

Harry had a rough time of it those last years of the war. First was the loss of his godfather. Then Dumbledore. Then Ronald Weasley. Then Ginevra Weasley. Then, when all was said and done, he found out I was his natural father.

Lesser men would have killed themselves.

"Harry?"

Hermione checked Harry's pulse while McGonagall conjured a glass of water and smelling salts.

"Harry, please wake up!"

Harry moaned slightly as he revived. Opening his eyes slowly, he saw Hermione and McGonagall hovering over him, worried looks in place.

Then everything came back, and he fainted again.

The next time he came round, the women gave him a bit of room until he tried sitting up when Hermione rushed in to help.

He remembered everything but looked to Hermione, hoping it was all a horrible, horrible joke. Unfortunately, she just looked at him pityingly and nodded.

McGonagall did much the same.

Moaning again, Harry rested his head on his hands.

"How? How can I look so much like my dad... like James when I'm not..." He couldn't finish. It hurt too much.

"Harry, have you looked at yourself lately?" Hermione asked very tentatively. Harry shot her an angry look, which faded as he realized he hadn't looked in a mirror since Ginny's funeral. At the time he'd thought he'd looked so harsh and sallow from grief. Since then, he'd done things that made him shy away from looking himself in the eyes.

He shook his head, then rested it upon his knees again.

"Dumbledore cast more than just one charm on you as a baby, Harry," came McGonagall's sympathetic voice. "Lily was pregnant before she and James married. And just

because you weren't his own doesn't mean James didn't love you as his son."

Harry looked up. "How... I mean... Did my mum and da...James love each other?"

McGonagall's face smoothed out as she smiled. "Yes, Harry. They loved each other very much."

"Then why did she sleep with SNAPE?"

"Why did Ron sleep with Lavender?" came Hermione's very soft reply.

Harry looked over at Hermione, stricken by her words. He'd forgotten about that. Hermione had been so devastated, but somehow, she and Ron had made up. They'd even started talking about marriage before Ron had...

Changing tack, Harry whispered, "But he hates me!"

"Harry," McGonagall said, "Severus hated James. You've looked just like James the entire time he's known you a constant reminder of bitter childhood injustices. And then... See it from Severus' perspective. James was pureblood, handsome, wealthy, and had a happy home to return to every holiday. He was clever, popular, and in the end, he got the girl Severus was smitten with. Not only that, but Severus owed James a life debt.

"Severus thought he had nothing besides his intelligence. It made him bitter, angry, and vengeful. I think in his mind, James is the reason he took the Mark. Your looking like James... it reminds him of how unfair life is."

Harry looked up at McGonagall. "That doesn't mean he doesn't hate me." He looked down and muttered so softly that only Hermione heard, "I've had enough of hateful relatives."

Hermione gave him a hug and whispered, "You owe him your life, Harry. Give him a chance."

Shrugging off her embrace, Harry got up, anger writ across his face.

"Fine. I'll talk to him. But just because he donated his sperm doesn't make him my dad!"

He then stormed out of the room, leaving Hermione and McGonagall looking at each other, very relieved at the outcome.

"Well, if Severus' sense of survival is still intact, he may just survive."

Hermione nodded at the Headmistress' words, hoping that Severus did indeed want to survive.

I'll admit it was a shock seeing Harry that first time. He was so changed... He was almost the spitting image of Lily, except for his dark hair and sallow skin. There was no trace of James left in him. At first I thought it was the war that had changed him, but no...

I think I took the news of the truth rather well, though.

Considering.

"Wake up, Snape." Snape felt a sharpish jab in his ribs and groaned, trying to roll over. There was some terrible thing that was hanging over his head, but he couldn't remember what it was.

He opened his eyes to see a pair of vivid green ones staring down at him, only the face was wrong somehow. Then he remembered.

"Oh, *fuck!*"

A snort from above brought his attention back to the present.

"You can say that again. In fact, I think that's why I'm here."

Snape glared up at Pot...Harry. "There's no need to be crude."

Harry gave him a smirk that was too familiar for comfort. "Well, I'm gratified that at least we both agree this situation could be better."

It was Snape's turn to snort, and he did. "I do believe that if you practiced, you could one day become adept at the art of understatement, Po...erm, Harry."

Harry gave a wry grin, then offered his hand. With much reluctance, Snape took it, surprised that Harry helped pull him up. Now standing, Snape brushed himself off with as much dignity as he could muster, which, considering his garb and location, wasn't much.

He sat down on his cot, leaving Harry to stand. Harry didn't seem to mind, deciding that leaning up against the wall was as comfortable as anything.

After a long stretch of silence, Snape realized Harry wasn't going to be the one to break the silence, so he asked, "Why did you tell me?"

Harry shrugged. "Hermione and McGonagall convinced me to, mostly. Something about owing you my life and other shite."

Snape snorted and leaned back against the wall, shivering slightly from the cold contact.

"Yes, well, I believe you've paid your debt in full, so you're more than welcome to leave now."

Harry narrowed his eyes at his former professor and newly-acquired father. "Is that what you want?"

Snape sighed and squeezed his eyes shut. "Harry..."

"I can get you out of here, you know."

Snape's eyes shot open, panic and hope warring within him. Looking at Harry, he could see the boy, no, man, was in earnest. "Why would you do that?"

Harry shrugged, suddenly looking defensive. Snape had the sinking feeling he knew what was behind the offer.

"Just because we are related by blood does not mean I will suddenly be filled with fatherly affection and dote on you like everyone else does."

Harry merely looked out the tiny window and said, "I've already lost two parents, Snape. I'm not about to condemn another one to die out of spite." He turned and looked at him through angry eyes. "After all, I'm not my father."

Damn, but the boy knows how to throw a sucker-punch, Snape thought.

Resigned to his ignoble fate, he replied, "What is it you want from me?"

Harry shrugged, once again looking out the window. "Tell me about my mum. Tell me why she slept with you. Tell me why you switched sides."

Snape laughed, a harsh sound and not at all happy. "You don't ask for much, do you, boy?"

Harry looked at Snape with impatience. It really was disconcerting seeing Harry look so much like her.

Considering it was his life or his pride, he shoved the pride to the floor and promptly starting grinding it to dust.

"Your mother was beautiful. She was funny. She was kind and witty and very, very clever. She didn't put up with anyone's shit, and that was... admirable, even if it did backfire on me more than once. That she was forgiving... well, she was easy to fall in love with."

Snape paused, gathering his thoughts and examining memories he'd tried to forget.

"We were friends at school. I was hopelessly in love with her, although I never said anything. I was a fool in many ways, but I did know enough to keep my counsel where she was concerned. However, she must have known how I felt because whenever I came crawling back to her for forgiveness after I'd done or said something stupid, she always looked at me with a smile and told me she'd always forgive me."

"In our sixth year... that year she took pity on me. We never dated openly, but she seemed to care for me a little more than previous years. Our friendship became more... intense, and I thought for a time there that she loved me as much as I loved her. Or almost as much."

"Then I did the unforgivable. I was poor, unpopular and... many other things that were not acceptable in my mind. For some incomprehensible reason, I thought that she couldn't like or love me as I was. So, over the summer, I blindly believed the propaganda and took the Dark Mark. And, idiot that I was, I told her about it. I told her that I did it for her."

Harry snorted mirthlessly. "I bet she took that well."

Snape's lips curled up in self-mocking amusement. "Very. She hexed me six ways to Sunday and tossed me out of her life. The way she looked at me before she slammed the door in my face... I'm fairly certain I broke her heart that day. I don't know that she ever forgave me for that. Not fully."

Snape rolled his head back against the wall. "The next year was pure torture. I'm pretty sure she started going out with Potter just to get in my face, but it became obvious, over the course of the year, that she fell in love with him. By the time of the Leaving Feast, the rumor was that he had a ring on reserve and was going to ask her to marry him after he met her parents."

"Obviously she accepted. I thought that that was that. She obviously loved Potter, had forgotten me, and I was doomed to toady up to a madman for the rest of my miserable life."

"Then one day she came to me. She was in tears. Potter had done something stupid, she never did tell me what, and she had left him. She came looking for the comfort of our old friendship, but, well..." Snape broke off, looking ashamed and a touch embarrassed.

Harry looked at him harshly. "You took advantage of her!"

Snape nodded curtly. "By morning I realized what a fool I'd been. I'd put her in so much danger just by letting her into my flat, and then, as you say, I'd taken advantage of her in her distressed state. I felt ill and even worse when she woke up. She started crying again, and this time I knew I was the cause. In the end, I Obliviated her and sent her back to Potter. They were married the next week."

Snape took a deep breath, feeling ill at having revealed so much, but also a little relieved. He hadn't told anyone besides Dumbledore what had happened that night.

"The evening of their wedding, I went to Dumbledore. I told him everything. I knew she was lost to me, but I also knew my soul was on the verge of being lost as well, and I couldn't bear the thought of losing what little of the light she'd given me that I had left."

Snape stopped talking, having answered all of Harry's questions. Harry was still staring out the window, his back to Snape. It had helped when Snape was telling his story, but now it was irritating him.

"So, I answered your questions. The next move is yours," Snape said, adding a little maliciously, "son."

Harry shuddered a bit, but turned and looked at him. It was a hard look, full of loathing, although Snape could see traces of sympathy lurking at the edges.

"I'll testify for you. After that, I never want to set eyes on you again."

Snape could barely believe his good luck.

Luck never was on my side. Never. But at least my bad luck seemed to be rubbing off on Harry, so there was some equity in the situation.

Harry testified and I was cleared, but I was not completely free. I was put under house arrest, and as Harry was my sole living relative, I was remanded to his custody.

Humiliating doesn't even begin to describe the situation.

But, as I said, Harry was none too pleased either, so that made the judgment a little more bearable for me.

And that's how I came to be living with Harry for the last five years. Our relationship has evolved, of course; one or both of us would be dead otherwise. I wouldn't say we have a father-son relationship, but we have seemed to come to some... mutual understanding. I no longer want to kill him anyway.

But that's just the beginning of the story. The real story started when Miss Granger broke up with her boyfriend and came to find comfort from Harry.

AN: *This is going to be a quick-hitter. Complete in five chapters (including this one), although I could have made it into a one-shot it's so short.*

Thank you to both Southern and Keladry for humoring me and checking this story over. Any mistakes there might be, however, are mine alone.

This is based on prompt #30: After 5 years together as guardian/father and son, Severus and Harry are looking forward to a quiet summer together when Hermione needs a place to stay after the sudden breakup with her boyfriend (Ron or other). What starts out as just for a few days turns into several weeks and Snape soon realizes he is developing feelings for one of Harry's best friends. How does he handle that? Does Hermione feel the same? How does Harry react?

When Hermione leaves her boyfriend rather suddenly, Harry invites her to stay at his place, much to the irritation of his other flatmate - Severus Snape.

I suppose the story starts the day Miss Granger appeared on our doorstep. Her eyes were red and puffy, and she was holding a sodden handkerchief to her nose as she sniffed miserably. She was the very picture of a broken-hearted girl.

It was a rather wet and messy picture.

Snape had just closed his eyes for a quick nap when a knock on the front door interrupted his progress. Annoyed, he tried to ignore it, but it came again. Salesmen and missionaries rarely stayed to knock three times, so when the rapping occurred once more, he got up to confront the hapless visitor.

Opening the door, he was suddenly attacked by mound of bushy brown hair.

"Oh, Harry!" the hair wailed, clinging to the front of his robes.

Snape pulled his head back as far as it would go, trying to make out any distinguishing features. Slowly it dawned on him who it must be.

"Miss Granger?"

The effect was instantaneous. The brown-haired witch jumped back and looked up at him, her watery eyes wide with mortification.

"Professor! I'm sorry, I thought..."

"Yes, it is fairly obvious what you thought," Snape said, cutting her off. "I think it is a safe assumption that you are here to see Harry?"

She sniffed and nodded her head, bringing the handkerchief up to wipe her nose. Snape tried not to be obvious in his disgust, but he quickly stepped back and gestured for her to enter.

She stepped by him quickly, and as he closed the door, he heard her yell for Harry.

Harry appeared looking quite alert and worried, even though only his head and one arm were through his t-shirt and his hair was not even close to being a style other than bedhead.

"Hermione! What's wrong?"

Without warning, Hermione sprang at him, nearly knocking him over as she started sobbing on his partially-covered chest.

Harry looked to Snape, who indicated he knew nothing, before looking back down at the sobbing girl in his arms. Stroking her hair away from her face and his he made soothing noises and rocked her gently until she started calming down.

When she was back to sniffing, he gently asked, "What happened?"

Snape could see from his angle that Hermione was ready to start sobbing again and felt it expedient to distract her from such an annoying activity.

"Shall I make some tea?" he asked.

Hermione started, looking over at Snape as if he were a boggart, but nodded all the same.

"Yes, please," she whispered at the same time that Harry nodded gratefully.

Snape made his way into the kitchen while Harry led Hermione over to the sofa. Sitting down, Hermione curled up next to Harry, resting her head on his chest again as he wrapped his arms around her. She didn't say anything for a few minutes.

"I found Roger in bed with another woman," she finally whispered, not noticing that Snape had returned with the tea.

Snape raised his eyebrow in interest. Normally he didn't care about the affairs of others, but he'd been isolated for a long while, and this was looking to be a distraction from the mundanity. Besides, it would probably be more interesting than EastEnders.

Harry, meanwhile, had tightened his grip on Hermione as a fierce look came over his face.

"After I... That sorry son of a bi..."

Hermione sat up, cutting him off.

Her chin wobbled. "Did you know about this, Harry?" she asked accusingly. Snape observed Harry closely wondering how Harry would extricate himself from this one. He never had been good at dissembling.

"No. I suspected, but I never had any proof," Harry said honestly.

Hermione surprised Snape by accepting that with a nod before curling back up onto Harry. He had thought Harry was in for it. Of course, he hadn't observed Harry's relationship with Hermione this closely before, and Hermione was admittedly very different from the other women who passed through Harry's life, in both relationship and personality.

Hermione sniffed again, bringing up the linen to wipe her nose awkwardly while still firmly burrowing into Harry's chest.

"She was beautiful, Harry," she whispered miserably. "Perfect hair, perfect breasts, perfect smile... she had everything I lack."

Harry seemed at a loss for words and looked to Snape for help. Sniggering very quietly at the irony of Harry asking *him* for help on such a matter, he smoothly said, "And I am sure you have everything she lacks: intelligence, honor, bravery, loyalty..."

He stopped talking as Hermione looked over at him once again as if he were her worst nightmare. It was getting rather insulting. She gaped at him in silence, and he responded with a raised eyebrow.

Realizing she was staring, she turned back to the comfort of Harry's chest before letting out a big, shuddering sigh and then raised herself up into a proper sitting position.

Wiping her eyes with her wrists, she collapsed onto the sofa back, looking at the wall with blank misery.

"Well, it doesn't matter if he realizes she's a twit or a tart. There's no way I'm going back to him."

"I should hope not!" Harry said forcefully. "You're more than welcome to crash here till you've recovered."

Hermione smiled wetly up at Harry. "Really? You wouldn't mind?"

Snape tried to catch Harry's eye to tell him *he* minded, but to no avail. Harry was studiously avoiding looking his direction.

"Not at all. I'll even go over and collect your stuff, if you want."

Hermione smiled more fully before starting to cry once more. Through her tears she managed to say, "Thank you, Harry! I would really appreciate that."

Harry nodded as if it was a done deal and then looked at Snape with a hard glint in his eye. Snape was suddenly glad he wasn't this Roger fellow and was oddly proud that Harry was his son.

After a strengthening dose of tea, Harry left for Miss Granger's to collect her stuff and probably a few of Roger's more personal items as well. Unfortunately, that meant that Miss Granger and I were in the flat together. Alone. And she was still sniveling.

She sniffed. Repeatedly. She was trying not to, as it was embarrassing enough to have broken down so completely in front of Snape of all people, but she couldn't help it.

She knew she looked like one of those foolish, heart-broken women who can't understand why the world is such an unfair, horrible, no-good place, and why did it have to pick on poor little them, but in reality, she wasn't heart-broken. Mortified, angry, humiliated and disgusted, but not heart-broken.

Roger had seemed like a nice enough fellow, and he'd been fantastic in bed, but their moving in together had been his idea. He'd been the one to pledge his undying affection. He'd been the one who wanted to pick out china patterns. He'd been the one who had fooled her into thinking he gave a damn about her while living up to his name with who knows how many others on the side.

She felt like an idiot. A clueless, brainless, naive, dolt of an idiot, and that just wasn't a nice thing to feel. The worst bit was that she had really believed him. She had believed every lie he'd uttered about her being beautiful to him, him loving her brains, her being perfect just as she was... She couldn't have been more gullible.

No, she was not suffering from a broken heart. She was suffering the loss of her pride, which was much, much more painful.

And then, to top it off, the one person whose respect she'd always yearned for and had always been denied was watching the most humiliating moment of her life. The only way it could get worse was if she looked up to see him pitying her, so she didn't look up. She kept her eyes fastened on the thoroughly-soaked handkerchief in her hand and tried to stop her sniffing.

"Is *Roger* really worth such misery?" Snape said, startling Hermione out of her avoidance. She looked up and was surprised to see Snape smiling sardonically.

In her misery, she had forgotten that Snape was incapable of pity. She'd also forgotten that pity was not the worst thing in the world to suffer when vulnerable.

Quickly looking away so as not to either hex him which would have been unfair as he was still wandless or burst into tears, she bit her lip and tried to compose herself.

After only a few moments, she responded, "Obviously not, but that doesn't mean I can just shut off my emotions, sir." She had calmed herself enough to look over at him again and found he was now looking bemused.

"I thought you learned Occlumency during the war."

Hermione pursed her lips angrily, but then closed her eyes. When she opened them again, her face was devoid of emotion.

"The problem with Occlumency, sir, is that while I may be able to hide my emotions from others, it doesn't stop me from feeling them." Her face became suffused with anger, resentment and suffering once more as she dropped her shields. "It just adds to the burden right now, and I can't be arsed to do so for your comfort alone."

She was surprised when he chuckled and relaxed back into his chair.

"Well, it was worth a try anyway," he said, lifting the teacup to his lips in a surprisingly dainty move.

She snorted, but decided to copy his action, albeit with a little less grace as her hands were trembling slightly.

They sat there in relative silence for a few minutes before Snape once again broke through her thoughts.

"If you want revenge, I know of a few that are quite potent."

She looked up at him in surprise, which quickly turned to distrust.

"I'm not going to poison him."

He raised his eyebrow and curled his lip in obvious amusement. "And I would never suggest something so crude, unless by poison you are referring to *any* potion. Dosing him with Amortentia so that he falls in love with the twit would be a very suitable revenge I expect, although it would take quite some patience to see it come to a satisfying conclusion."

She raised an eyebrow, thinking it over with interest before slowly shaking her head. "No. What if he's already in love with her? It would be a shame to waste a potion like that when I could just watch with a clear conscience."

He bowed his head in acceptance, though his sly smile was still in place.

"Well, in that case, the revenge that first came to mind is seemingly perfect." She waited a long moment for him to speak, and just when she thought she'd have to ask, he smiled deviously and said, "Be happy. It is a truly excruciating torture, especially if he does have feelings for you. Even worse would be to be happy on the arm of someone else."

She looked at Snape really looked at him and came to a few surprising conclusions, although she shouldn't have been surprised knowing what she did about his past.

"That's quite devious."

He bowed his head graciously.

"But it seems to me that it would only work if he really felt something for me."

"Are you upset at him because he broke your heart?" Snape asked, and it seemed he was genuinely interested.

Hermione fidgeted slightly and admitted, "No, not really. I was fond of him, but I'm more upset because he managed to pull the wool over my eyes."

Snape smiled. "Precisely. If you find a man, or woman," he added thoughtfully, "to parade around with immediately, then you will essentially be doing unto him what he did unto you."

Hermione looked down at her tea thoughtfully. After a moment of watching the translucent liquid, she sighed.

"It does have enormous appeal, but at the same time..."

Still focused on her tea, she didn't notice Snape raise an eyebrow in curiosity until he asked, "At the same time?"

She looked up at him resolutely. "But at the same time, that would put me on his level. I have no wish to be down there."

She took another sip of tea and looked up again. "No, I'll do one better. I'll forgive him and wish him the best of luck."

Snape smiled sardonically. "Do you really think that's a revenge?"

She eyed him shrewdly. "Why do you think Lily forgave you?"

She knew she had hit her mark when he dropped his smirk rather suddenly and glared at her.

"Fair enough," he said.

Snape looked at her and tilted his head just slightly to the side. "So how do you go about forgiving an unfaithful boyfriend?"

Hermione blinked. That was not a question she would have expected Snape to ask, but then again, this was not a conversation she had ever expected to have with him. Harry had obviously been a mellowing influence on him. She almost regretted having avoided their home for the most part.

Shaking herself out of her stupor, she shrugged and sipped her tea. "Well, I suppose I'll go over there and tell him so." When Snape raised a skeptical brow (she wondered if that muscle got more exercise than any other), she smiled artfully and added, "After Harry has brought back my things, of course. I wouldn't want to interrupt any delicate undertakings that might be going on."

Snape smiled approvingly. "Of course. Packing is a rather private occupation for most people."

Her smile had a rather sharp edge to it as she nodded politely and replied, "Yes. And it tends to be terribly messy."

She was amazed at what a difference a full-blown smile made to Snape's face.

I'll admit I had underestimated Miss Granger. I almost wish I had volunteered to go with her just to witness Roger's reaction to the Forgiveness Revenge, but as it would have been misconstrued as concern for her well-being, I refrained.

However, I did manage to arrange being in the same room when she told Harry the tale. It seems she went one better than just forgiving the idiot; she made overtures of friendship to his lingering bedmate. From how she told it, that made Roger wince, a fact that neither of the women missed.

I'll admit to being curious as to what Miss Granger had in mind when she befriended the twit, so I wasn't as upset with the prospect of her company over the next few days as I had been at first. Of course, none of us knew her stay would be an extended one. Nor did any of us foresee the consequences that it would bring.

2

Chapter 3 of 5

When Hermione leaves her boyfriend rather suddenly, Harry invites her to stay at his place, much to the irritation of his other flatmate - Severus Snape.

I didn't notice it at first. The water was boiling around me long before I knew what was happening. That is my only defense, poor though it is.

Miss Granger had unofficially moved in by the end of her first week's stay. By the end of the second week, she and Harry had made it official. She was now our flatmate. She actually had more rights than I did because she was paying for the privilege of staying there whilst I was still a prisoner, not that either of them treated me as such, of course. That wouldn't coordinate with their garish cloak of Gryffindor pride.

"Severus?" Hermione called out from kitchen. He sighed as he put his book down. She seemed to have an infuriating knack of interrupting just when the story was getting interesting. He made his way to the kitchen as slowly as possible, knowing it would annoy her.

"You is calling, Miss?" Snape said mockingly.

She shot him an irritated look, and he smirked.

"I was wondering if you would get the sherry down for me. I need to keep stirring this, and I'm just slightly too short to reach it from here."

"I would have thought you would know better than to start a recipe without having all the ingredients ready," Snape sneered as he edged in behind her so as to reach into the cabinet over the stove, cursing the cramped space for the umpteenth time. It really was a pitiful space. If it weren't a Muggle flat, he would have sworn it was designed for house-elves.

She ignored his taunt with a smile and just kept stirring, holding out the other hand expectantly.

As he leaned forward just that little bit more to reach the elusive bottle, his chest brushed against Hermione's hair, and he suddenly became very aware of her body, which was only inches from his own. The rush of desire that came with that awareness was completely unexpected, and he nearly reeled from it.

Quickly gathering his senses, he grabbed the bottle, gave it to Hermione and then made a hasty retreat.

Back in the front room, he collapsed into his chair, breathing heavily. Running his fingers through his hair, he tried to deny what had just happened, but it was impossible. There wasn't a need to figure out what had happened, as that was obvious; he lusted after Hermione Granger. His son's best friend. A woman only slightly older than his son. Whom he'd taught and could still remember as an obnoxious first-year, waving her hand and trying to prove that she was worthy.

Feeling like a pedophile, he swallowed and tried to calm himself down. It wasn't a disaster. He hadn't acted on his desires, and it was unlikely that she knew.

"Are you all right, Severus?" a soft voice said by his shoulder. He nearly jumped, but managed to calmly look over at Hermione's worried face. She was kneeling by the arm of his chair. "You rushed out of there so suddenly. And silently."

He swallowed again, realizing that it was more than lust. Seeing her looking at him with such concern made something in his chest clench; it made him want to kiss her.

"I'm fine."

"Are you sure?" she asked, still looking worried. She leaned forward and reached out as if to touch him, but he flinched. She stopped short with an embarrassed blush. "You look a bit flushed. I know Harry's been fighting a cold... Maybe you should take some Pepperup just in case?"

Just what I need, Severus thought facetiously, *more steam.*

"I am fine, Miss Granger! Don't you have something on the stove that needs minding?"

She'd rocked back on her heels looking displeased but thoughtful. "Back to formalities are we, Professor?" She gave him a long, shrewd look but got up at the end of it and answered rather softly, "Yes, I expect the potion *does* need me right now." She then turned and walked off to the kitchen without a backward glance, which was fortunate for Severus, as he broke out into a sweat at her words.

Groaning very softly, he shifted in his seat to get a little more comfortable before putting his head in his hands.

She knew.

I didn't take the revelation well. In the end, I remained in bed for the next week, coming out only for meals and to use the loo. Unfortunately, Hermione (I was unable to think of her as Miss Granger anymore, much to my consternation) must have told Harry something of how I acted that fateful afternoon, and so by the end of the week, they dismissed my assurances that everything was fine and called for help.

"Knock, knock."

Snape looked over at the door, his eyes wide and disbelieving.

"Poppy?" he nearly whimpered.

She smiled heartily and entered the room fully, closing the door behind her with a quiet click.

"Harry and Miss Granger are very concerned, Severus. They think you're being stoic and refusing to admit to being ill." She conjured a chair by the bed and sat down, giving Severus a once-over before offering him an exasperated look. "You don't look ill to me, so what are you sulking over this time?"

He spluttered indignantly. "How dare you come..."

"Severus," she said sharply, cutting him off and giving him a quelling look over her glasses, "I have known you for more than thirty years. I know a sulk when I see one. So what is it this time?"

Snape nearly pouted, and certainly looked petulant, as he crossed his arms and looked away from the mediwitch.

"I've become mentally unbalanced," he finally muttered when he saw signs that Poppy was about to lose patience. "I've obviously been cooped up in this wretched place for too long, and I've gone mad. I see no reason to submit my son and Hermione to my madness, nor put up with their maddening company either."

Poppy leaned back in her chair and smiled.

"*Hermione*, is it?"

Snape looked at Poppy coldly, although a shiver of fear went down his back. "She has been our flatmate now for quite some time."

Poppy's smile got larger. "A little defensive, are we?"

Snape's cold look turned into an outright glare. "I don't know what you mean."

She laughed. "Of course you do, Sevvie. So why don't you just tell her you fancy her?"

He hoped he wasn't goggling too obviously, though her chuckle wasn't reassuring. "She is my *son's* best friend! She is almost half my age! She is a ruddy Gryffindor, Poppy!"

Poppy was now laughing outright, but when she finally calmed down, she looked at him with honest sympathy.

"You know as well as I do that the heart doesn't take age or House, or even magical ability, into account. So the only matter left is Harry. Do you think he will mind?"

Snape snorted and muttered with bad humor, "What's not to mind? He loves her." Poppy's eyebrows went up to her hairline, and her mouth puckered into an 'o' of comprehension. Realizing what she inferred, Snape hastily added, "As a friend. I haven't seen any indication that they are or ever have been romantically involved. They act more like siblings than anything, and that makes it feel even worse than simple pedophilia, as I should feel more fatherly toward her, not..." Snape suddenly deflated, realizing just how deep in it he was. "Not this way."

Poppy was trying not to laugh. "Severus, Severus, Severus..." she said in a tone that would have been exasperated if it hadn't held so much humor. "First, you aren't a pedophile, unless of course, you've felt this way about her since she was in school." She looked at him sharply for the instant it took before he showed the proper disgust that idea raised.

"Second, you aren't her father. You aren't related in any way but by secondhand emotion, and that does *not* incest make. And third, you are worrying yourself over nothing.

She might not be interested at all."

Snape shot Poppy a look that clearly indicated he did not appreciate that thought.

"Yes, and that would be so good. After all, if I tell her I fancy her and she says, 'Ew, gross,' then I have more or less made it impossible to continue our cohabitation comfortably, and since I cannot move... No, that's not a worry at all."

Poppy abandoned the chair to sit on the bed next to Snape. Placing an arm over his shoulder, she said in as comforting a voice as possible, "She is concerned, Severus. She obviously cares about you on some level, and it might even be in the same vein as your feelings. Withdrawing as you have won't do any of you any good for any amount of time."

Snape looked unconvinced.

With an exasperated sigh, Poppy added, "Let me put it this way, Severus: Whether you tell Hermione or not is your business, but either you rejoin the society of your house-mates or Harry and possibly even Hermione herself will force the issue. After all, being Gryffindors, they probably lack our subtlety."

Snape shuddered at the possible outcomes of such a confrontation and reluctantly gave in.

"Fine, but not one word from you," he said, glaring and pointing at Poppy.

She let out a long held chuckle. "Wouldn't dream of it, my boy."

Snape grumbled incoherently, though "bloody" and "Dumbledore" were among some of the words he used.

Although I may have been forced into rejoining society, as it were, I chose not to tell Hermione of my newly discovered ardor. It didn't seem like the most prudent thing to do, especially when there was nearly six months left on her lease, and a year on my sentence.

I tried to go back to how I had treated her before. I thought I had succeeded until Harry confronted me one day several months later.

"So, Severus," Harry said in a deceptively casual tone. "I was wondering something."

Snape looked up from his book to find Harry watching him warily.

Sighing, Snape snapped, "Well?"

Harry's expression darkened at Snape's tone. "What are your intentions?"

Snape looked at Harry quizzically. "Intentions?"

"With Hermione."

Snape's stomach dropped to his feet very suddenly, leaving him feeling slightly nauseated.

"What do you mean?"

Harry sat down with an annoyed expression. "I've seen the way you look at her, and the way you two skirt around each other. Don't tell me there's nothing going on."

Snape almost chuckled. Hermione had been avoiding him as well? "I'm afraid that is exactly what I'll tell you."

Harry's gaze hardened a little more, and Snape could see he was creeping up on the limit of his patience.

"I won't have you hurting her."

This time, Snape did laugh out loud, though he kept it brief when he saw Harry's look turn thunderous. "Harry, I'm not in a position to hurt her, and I doubt I ever will be."

Harry calmed down fractionally, but he was still in a dangerous mood. They sat there in a silence which Snape refused to break for a few minutes. Finally Harry said, "Why do you watch her?"

Smirking, Snape responded in as sarcastic a tone as possible, "Haven't you figured it out, Harry? I'm *desperately* in love with her." He snorted dismissively and picked up his book. "I don't have many activities to amuse myself with, as you well know, so I'm taking advantage of having a new person to observe." Looking up again, he saw Harry was still suspicious. "I promise you, Harry, that your friend has nothing to fear from me other than the occasional acerbic insights which you've learned to love over time," Snape joked.

Harry didn't laugh, though.

"You aren't watching her in private, are you?"

Snape started, feeling as if the boy had punched him. "Of course not! What do you think I am?"

Harry relaxed fractionally and shrugged. "A former Death Eater."

Snape stood up suddenly, his jaw clenched in anger, although it was mostly at himself for allowing Harry's words to hurt. For thinking Harry's opinion of him had changed.

"Former is the key word, there, boy."

Snape made to stalk off, but Harry's next words stopped him cold. "*Do you love her?*" His tone was incredulous, which didn't help soothe Snape's nerves.

He didn't turn to face Harry, but stood stonily for a second too long before admitting, "I don't know." He didn't look back to see Harry's eyebrow rise in amazement, or see Harry's anger fade to thoughtfulness.

3

Chapter 4 of 5

When Hermione leaves her boyfriend rather suddenly, Harry invites her to stay at his place, much to the irritation of his other flatmate - Severus Snape.

I had hoped that my infatuation with Hermione was a passing fancy. I had hoped that after observing her more closely than I had been, I would discover that she was, in fact, still the annoying person I had previously thought her to be. I had hoped that after finding out how Harry felt about the matter that I'd be able to lay my feelings to rest.

Of course I should have known better. Hope has never sat beside me with any ease.

Hermione surreptitiously watched her two flatmates ignore each other. They'd been at odds for more than a month, and it was now beyond uncomfortable. The first few months she'd lived with them she had found out, to her surprise, that they had formed quite a bond. She wouldn't have called them affectionate, but there was a familial interaction that belied their feelings more accurately than their words did.

In the last couple of months, though, something had changed. At first, Harry became a bit more distant, watching Severus carefully, almost suspiciously. Then something had happened, and now Severus was ignoring Harry completely, and Harry... Harry was watching her. And to make it even worse, both had withdrawn from her, treating her more as a guest than a friend.

It was uncomfortable, and it hurt. She had been really enjoying both men's company, especially getting to know Severus away from Harry's mixed-up filter, but the strange dynamics had reached the point where she just wanted to spend as much time away from home as possible.

It was past time to do something.

"Guys," she said, "I have something to discuss with you." She was a bit amused at how both men reacted to her words. Severus went very still and was looking at her warily while Harry flushed guiltily. Neither moved from where they were until she motioned them over to the table.

"My lease is coming due in a couple of months, and I've decided that it would be best for me to move out."

Severus almost sagged with relief, and Hermione was hurt that he wanted nothing more than for her to be gone. She'd thought or she'd hoped anyway that he liked her at least a little.

Harry, however, looked upset. "What? No! Why do you think it's best?"

Hermione cringed. Biting her lip, she looked down at her hands as she fidgeted. Swallowing, she looked up and said nervously, "I don't want to get between you two any more."

Both men started and then Harry said, "What do you mean?"

Hermione shook her head in exasperation. "This is the first time you've looked at each other in weeks. You've been ignoring one another, and it's obvious it's something to do with me because you've both taken to treating me like you barely know me. It's uncomfortable, and I'm not going to take it anymore. I refuse to feel like a guest in what's supposed to be my home!"

Harry looked down at the table, his brows knitting while Severus leaned back, looking troubled. To Hermione's surprise, Harry didn't respond to her but turned to Severus.

"Hermione's my friend, Severus."

Hermione cocked her head to the side, wondering why Harry was stating the obvious.

She was surprised when Severus answered without biting sarcasm, but rather in a resigned tone. "Yes, I know you are ~~and~~ friends"

Hermione's eyes widened, realizing that their argument wasn't just something to do with her, but had everything to do with her, though she still wasn't quite sure how she fit into it. Severus' tone made it sound as if he disapproved of Harry being friends with her, but that didn't make sense. He'd been friendly enough before he'd started avoiding her. In fact, she'd almost thought he'd felt for her something along the same lines as she felt for him... almost.

Unless he was implying that she and Harry...

She looked at Harry with wide eyes.

Harry nodded his head slowly, still looking at Severus almost beseechingly.

And if he thought she and Harry were...

Snape nodded curtly and made to stand up, but Harry stopped him with a hand on his arm. "But it's more than that."

Oh, God! Was it because Harry had said something? Did Harry love her?

For the first time since their little conversation started, Harry looked at Hermione. She noticed that Severus wasn't looking at her but at his hands.

"I don't want you to move out," Harry said baldly.

Did Harry love her? Was Severus jealous?

Hermione shook her head minutely, panic and hope growing in tandem. "Harry... I..." Her eyes flicked to Severus again, and she noticed he was suddenly tense.

Harry smiled uneasily and reached for her hand. "I want to live with my family, Hermione. You and Severus... you're all I've got. Please don't leave."

Both she and Severus looked at Harry in surprise.

"Harry?"

"Hermione, you're my sister and I love you. Please..." He took a deep breath and let it out shakily. "I'm sure we can work through *any* problems. We've dealt with worse before, right?" He smiled shakily, and she smiled back, although she felt as if she was missing some vital piece of information.

Harry then turned to Severus.

"Severus... I'm sure we can work through this, but... I hope you understand why I..."

She watched as Severus nodded to Harry gravely, relief radiating from him. "Yes. But it's not up to just me, Harry. It never has been."

Hermione looked between the two and, for the first time, really saw them as family. Perhaps their relationship was more fraternal than paternal, but the way they understood each other now was rather touching.

Harry nodded and suddenly stood up, shooting a meaningful glance at Severus. Severus nodded, though his energy suddenly went from relieved to nervous.

Hermione watched all this with a growing suspicion and hope that was confirmed when Severus finally locked eyes with her once Harry had left the room. He didn't say anything, though. He just looked.

When he finally did say something, it wasn't what she expected.

"I don't want to hurt Harry."

She blinked. Then blinked again. "Pardon me?"

He sighed and ran his hand through his hair nervously. "Before you came, Harry and I... we had an understanding. We made up a list of things we wouldn't do to deliberately annoy each other. At that point it was purely for survival. About three years ago, I noticed that it was no longer habit to bait Harry and, two years ago, that I didn't even think about baiting him anymore.

"We will never be fond of each other, or have touching father-son moments, but since you came to live with us... you have made me realize that it is more than just an understanding to me, now. Harry is my blood, and I've unexpectedly become rather protective of him."

"I know," Hermione said, wondering which direction he was going to go.

Severus sighed, then swore and got up to pace the room like a caged tiger.

"I don't know whether to thank you or curse you, Hermione," he said plaintively as he stopped pacing and held onto the back of the chair he'd been sitting in.

Hermione smiled at him. "Harry's right, you know. We can work through just about any problem."

"I'm not sure I can, though."

Hermione's smile faded as she watched Severus struggle with whatever he was feeling or thinking. She hated that he was so conflicted about this.

"Tell me what it is, and maybe I'll be able to help?"

He offered her a fleeting smile that really was no more than just a twitch of his lips.

"I love you."

I hadn't intended to make such a bold declaration, but looking at her earnest face so full of concern for me, I let the words just slip from my mouth. If I wanted to be pathetically sentimental, I would say that my heart took advantage of my brain's slight confusion and undertook a coup d'état but I'm not the sappy sort.

I will say it was the longest moment of my life, waiting for her reaction.

She looked up at him surprised and a little breathless. She blinked up at him, trying to come to terms with his revelation. Unfortunately, one part of her brain, the part connected to her mouth, was already reacting.

"I can see the problem."

He winced, and when she realized what she'd said, she had to credit him for not storming from the room.

"It would be a little tricky if we ever broke up, especially if there were bad feelings involved, which given our temperaments is very possible, but I don't see it as an insoluble problem."

He goggled at her.

"You say that as if you... we..."

She smiled at him more fully, then got up and approached him very slowly, sensing he might flee at any moment. When she reached him, she took his hand in hers, threaded her fingers through his and squeezed.

"We're a family, Severus. At least, I hope we are..."

He smiled down at her, a real smile this time, and squeezed her hand back.

"It doesn't bother you that I'm your brother's father?" he asked with a glint in his eye.

She shook her head mischievously. "I'm obviously adopted, so I don't see the problem."

AN: Thanks once again to Southern and Keladry for their sooperdooper betaing skillz.

Only the epilogue left, which will go up tonight.

Epilogue

Chapter 5 of 5

When Hermione leaves her boyfriend rather suddenly, Harry invites her to stay at his place, much to the irritation of his other flatmate - Severus Snape.

I will admit that I had qualms about having a relationship with Hermione besides those involving Harry. I was old enough to be her father, as evidenced by my son. Even though I was attracted to her, I hoped she wasn't expecting me to behave like someone her age.

I was also leery of her being young and inexperienced enough to think she could change me. I think that thought more than any other was what worried me.

Of course, it also worried me that she wanted me to meet her parents.

"Hermione," Severus almost whined again.

"Oh, shush, you! How often do I have to tell you not to read anything into it? I like you. I like my parents. I like to introduce the people I like to other people I like, especially when I think they'll like each other."

"So you'll be introducing me as a *friend*?"

Hermione shot him a look, but said in a neutral tone, "If that's what you'd prefer, of course. If you want, I could introduce you simply as my flatmate." At Severus' alarmed look, she rolled her eyes and added, "They know who you are, Severus. I have been living here for more than a year, and you have come up in conversation before."

Severus' alarmed look didn't fade, so she crossed the room and hugged him.

"I'm not asking you for anything beyond meeting a couple of people whom you might like. That's all, I swear. You don't even have to eat with us if you don't want to."

Severus hugged her back, but she could feel he was still tense. She shrugged and gave him up for a lost cause and went to the bathroom to shower. Just after she stepped into the water, she heard the doorbell ring.

Groaning something about persistent earliness, she called out, "I'm sorry, Severus, but would you please let them in?"

Severus debated with himself for five seconds before giving in to Hermione's request. It would be best if her parents were not upset when they met him.

Opening the door, he was perplexed to find only Mr. Granger there.

The older man smiled amiably and asked, "Hello. Is Hermione here?"

Severus responded with a curt nod of his head and motioned the man inside.

"She's just getting washed up at the moment, but she'll be out shortly." He held the door open, trying to look outside for any signs of Mrs. Granger's approach. Mr. Granger looked at him oddly, though, so he decided to just act the host.

"If you hadn't already guessed, I'm Severus."

Mr. Granger shot him another odd look, but nodded politely and extended his hand. "Nice to meet you, Severus. I'm Roger."

Severus wondered about Hermione being romantically involved with someone who had the same name as her father, but merely smiled and shook Roger's hand.

"Would you care for some tea or coffee, or would you prefer to wait for the ladies?"

Roger blinked and looked rather confused, but quickly covered it up with a smile. "Coffee would be wonderful, if you don't mind?"

Severus shook his head and made his way to the kitchen. He wasn't terribly impressed with Roger; the man seemed to be a bit dim, and Snape wondered why Hermione thought he would like him.

He heard the shower stop with a breath of relief, knowing he could make his excuses and retreat in only a few minutes. It made taking Roger his coffee more bearable.

"So, if I remember correctly," Roger said after thanking Severus for the drink, "You are Harry's father?"

Severus nodded. Roger was about to ask something else when the doorbell rang once more. Severus was surprised when Roger didn't even acknowledge that it would be his wife and thought even less of the man.

Of course, it was Severus' turn to look confused when he answered the door and was confronted with two people who were unmistakably Hermione's parents.

"Mr. Snape, I presume?" Mr. Granger said merrily to a blinking Severus while extending his hand.

Severus nodded. "Mr. and Mrs. Granger?"

They nodded happily, although their looks turned a bit wary when Severus' expression darkened. Severus must have realized this and quickly smoothed out his face.

"Please come in. Hermione should be out in just a moment."

Three things happened in quick succession at that point. Upon entering the flat, Mr. Granger caught sight of the man upon the couch and *his* face darkened. Mrs. Granger, seeing the same sight, grabbed onto Mr. Granger's arm, even as Mr. Granger was trying to lunge forward. Roger, meanwhile, had stood up and his ingratiating smile had turned to worry at seeing the expressions of the men before him.

At the same time, Hermione entered the room and saw Roger standing there.

"Roger?" she asked, her eyes narrowing suspiciously. "Why are you here?"

Roger turned his attention to Hermione with a nervous smile.

"I..." he swallowed, "I've learned my lesson and have found there's no one to compare to you, love." Then, much to the surprise of everyone watching, he got down on one knee. "Hermione Jane Granger, will you marry me?"

"She most certainly will NOT!" roared both Severus and Mr. Granger at the same time. Both Mr. and Mrs. Granger looked at Severus curiously upon hearing his outburst while Hermione shot all three men equally disgusted looks.

"Daddy, I love you, but you have no say in the matter," she said stonily before turning to Roger. "Roger, I think it would be best if you left now."

Roger, who wasn't dim at all and had heard what *wasn't* said, looked at Severus with loathing, a look being returned with interest. He looked over to Hermione angrily. "You left me for him?" he said with disgust, pointing a finger at Severus.

Hermione's lips thinned, and she advanced on Roger. "No, I didn't leave you for him, Roger," she said quietly. "I left you because you were a cheating son of a bitch who doesn't know how to keep his name separate from his avocation. Now, if you'd kindly leave..."

Roger shook his head. "I'm not leaving you here with that criminal!" He turned to the elder Grangers and implored, "You can't approve of your daughter dating a murderer, can you?"

Mrs. Granger looked at Severus and saw him wince just slightly, though he was otherwise remaining as still and tense as a soldier.

Turning back to Roger, she said, very seriously, "It would appear that murder is far more serious a crime than philandering, but mitigating circumstances for murder are more likely than for messing around. From what I've heard, Severus was forced to kill. Were you, dear Roger, forced to fuck?"

Severus looked at Mrs. Granger with respect, although amusement and relief were also present.

Roger looked from Mrs. Granger to Mr. Granger to Hermione, and then back to Mrs. Granger's sardonic disapproval.

He didn't say a word more, but Disappeared from where he stood.

At his disappearance, Mr. Granger lost it. "The nerve of that man! Coming here and assuming you'd take him back after all he did, not to mention after all this time! What did he think, that you were sitting around and pining after him? And then, on top of that, to insult you!" he said, turning to Severus.

Severus offered Mr. Granger an appreciative smile before saying, "My abject apologies, sir, for mistaking that man for you. I do hope you will forgive me in time."

Mr. Granger huffed ominously before offering a smile. "That's a pretty serious offense, young man. Perhaps you'll make it up to me by explaining exactly what your intentions are toward my daughter?"

"Dad!" Hermione objected. She didn't notice that both men were smiling, albeit subtly.

"That sounds like an appropriate penance."

"Severus!" Hermione objected. She didn't want to find out what her boyfriend's intentions were by way of her parents.

"I will gladly offer reparations, sir, but I do ask that I have the chance to speak with my counsel about it first?" Severus said, looking over at Hermione fondly.

Mr. Granger gave Severus a big, toothy smile of approval and clapped him on the shoulder. "I think the sentence can be deferred for a bit."

Severus nodded gravely, then made his way over to Hermione, putting his arm about her waist.

"Perhaps, my dear, now would be a good time for proper introductions?"

Hermione smiled up at him in amusement.

"Severus, these are my parents, Harriet and George. Mum, Dad, this is my *friend*, Severus."

Hermione smiled rather brilliantly when Severus led her parents into laughter.

Hermione says that's when she knew I was the man for her. I suppose it must have been a pivotal occasion because I, too, lost all my qualms that day. I can now believe her when she says that she loves me for who I am.

I also hope now and fervently do that Harry's luck has rubbed off on me rather than the other way around. Or if it hasn't, perhaps his and Hermione's luck combined will outweigh mine. I can hope anyway.

I will end this story by saying that I imagine those who sought to punish me never guessed how liberating prison would end up being. It was designed to humiliate me, but instead it gave me a family.

The end.

Now go away.

AN: Severus can be sentimental for only so long before he loses his patience, it seems. ;-)

Thank you to both Southern and Keladry for your kind eyes (though mistakes are always my fault alone), as well as to those of you who read this, especially those of you who have let me know what you think. I appreciate every word.

It isn't my best, but I do hope you enjoyed this fluff as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Cheers!

~averygoodun