

To Have And To Hold

by JestersTear

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Desperate Measures

Chapter 1 of 2

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Chapter One Desperate Measures

Sitting in a damp cell in Azkaban prison, Severus Snape considered the ironies of fate. He had murdered the man who had been like a father to him, at his own request; he had committed unspeakable acts in his service to the Light, and Voldemort had praised him for it. Now his mission was complete, and all of wizarding Britain could heave a collective sigh of relief and get on with its life. He, on the other hand, had no life to return to: his mentor was dead, he had no true friends, and teaching was something he abhorred doing; the Wizengamot was, even as he sat there, plotting a way to altogether ignore the Pensieve Albus had left behind exonerating him. Nothing good awaited him tomorrow when the sentence was read. And yet, irony of ironies, Dementors could still affect him as if he had led the happiest of lives.

Somewhere in Hell, he knew, Voldemort was laughing.

Hermione Granger went once again through her notes, trying to find some other solution to the problem at hand, but knowing in advance that there was none to be found. Minerva had just informed the members of the Order that Severus Snape's fate had already been decided. Although the sentence would only be read, and thus rendered official, the following day, the Wizengamot had finally reached a unanimous verdict that appeased their discomfort over Severus' continued existence. Albus' Pensieve had made sure that both the Kiss and Azkaban were ruled out completely; on top of that, Rufus Scrimgeour was an intelligent man who knew that, while the public wanted Severus Snape's head on a platter, they also wanted Dumbledore's wishes heeded. It was thus that he came to the conclusion that a sentence of five years of house arrest would appeal to those wanting to respect the late Headmaster's will, while a recently passed law which Scrimgeour himself had drafted, and that stated that any such sentenced witch or wizard with no remaining living relatives would be deemed a flight risk and would thus have to be remanded to Azkaban as living alone would put "an unnecessary strain on Ministry resources" would quench the public's thirst for revenge. Five years in a Dementor-infested Azkaban would serve Snape right for all that he had done, the Minister believed. Even if it had been in service to the Light, and even if he had been instrumental in bringing about the fall of He-Who-Could-Now-Be-Named-But-Still-Was'n't. According to Minerva's inside source, the sentence was already written down in magical ink and would be read in fourteen hours' time.

Could she really do this, Hermione wondered. Yes, she could. She had worked on his defence for two and a half years, and she considered him a friend. She cared for him

in a way that, although different, was almost as fierce as what she felt for her two best friends. Hermione pocketed two potions and headed to Azkaban prison. She could pull this off.

Severus was staring off into a darker spot on the wall when she walked into his cell. She seemed more nervous than usual, which could only mean she knew something he didn't. He acknowledged her presence with a curt, "Miss Granger."

"Sir. Professor McGonagall's source informed her that your sentence is already written down. It will be read tomorrow."

"And what, pray tell, have they decided to do with me, Miss Granger?"

"Five years of house arrest."

He laughed harshly, a mirthless sound that chilled her to the bones. "Say no more, Miss Granger, it's a life sentence. As I have no living relatives, they will keep me here, and, once in their full custody, it will be very simple to keep adding years to my time for supposed transgressions. My hat is off to them; they should all have been sorted into Slytherin."

Hermione crouched in front of him, unwilling to sit on the dirty floor. Whereas he had been thin when he had first been imprisoned, he now had barely any flesh left beneath his skin with which to cover his bones. He wouldn't last another year in Azkaban, let alone five. She prayed silently to the gods above for courage, then took his hand in hers.

"I'm not sure you know this, sir, but I consider you a friend. I have come to care for you, and I can't bear..." Her voice faltered as she tried to swallow her tears and failed. "I can't bear the thought of what they will do to you after the trial."

Severus was surprised, to say the least. He hadn't known he *had* a friend. He had always thought she viewed him as another one of her causes, in the same league as house-elves and it touched him to see her tears were meant for him. Someone would mourn his passing, then. Hermione. His friend. He covered her hands with the one she hadn't taken.

"I didn't know. Thank you, Miss Granger, your friendship is... appreciated. Don't worry over me; your defence was more than adequate. There was nothing else you could have done."

"But there is now," she sobbed, "there is now, and I'm afraid you won't let me help you, and, if you don't, I will never forgive myself for not having managed to convince you. Never, never, never, never forgive myself."

Now he was astonished. "Miss Granger, surely you know I would not refuse any help from you. I haven't refused it for the past two and a half years, and I will gladly accept it now if you have devised any means to extricate me from this fate."

Hermione looked at him through her tears. This was hardly what she had planned; she had wanted to come across as the mature, composed 24-year-old young woman she knew she could be, but, seeing him here, impossibly thin, starved in a damp cell, and knowing she might fail to save him, she felt it was too much to contemplate. She steeled her resolve and let the words out in a whisper, just loud enough for him to hear.

"Marry me."

For a few seconds Severus thought he had finally succumbed to Dementor-induced madness. Her words hung in the air, too palpable to be ignored.

Marry me. Two little words that had just turned his world upside down. He could understand her flawless reasoning, of course. By marrying her, she would become his family, thus ensuring that his sentence of house arrest was really only that, and not a forced stay in Azkaban, but why would she subject herself to carrying his name for five years? More importantly, why would she subject herself to the mandatory wedding night with him? Surely he couldn't be considered that good of a friend, worthy of such sacrifice.

"Miss Granger..."

"Please let me do this. Please. Don't let them win; I promise I will be much more bearable company than the Dementors *please*. I can already see a speech coming about you not wanting anyone's pity, but it isn't pity, it's just me helping a friend. I'll never forgive myself if I fail to convince you."

It was something in the way she said it that gave him pause. He believed her. He believed her when she called him a friend, but, most importantly, he believed her when she said she would never forgive herself. If he happened to die, or go mad in Azkaban, she would torture herself with the absurd notion that it had been *her* fault for not having managed to persuade him.

"What about Mr. Weasley?" he asked cautiously, barely believing he was considering the idea.

"Ron and I split up a year ago. All of his faults that I can overlook as a friend I couldn't stand as a lover, and he felt the same way about mine."

"Nevertheless, he is your friend, as is Mr. Potter. Did you bother to inform them of this ill-devised plan? Have you the notion of what would happen to your vaunted 'friendship' if I accepted your proposal?"

"No, I didn't tell them, and yes, I know exactly what would happen, better than you do. They would be incredulous and angry for the whole of six months before giving in to common sense. You did save both their lives, even Harry can't deny that. And no one can deny the evidence left behind by Professor Dumbledore, which is why the Wizengamot has concocted this sham of a sentence rather than just giving you the Kiss. *Please.*"

"If I... If I were to accept this... marriage, we would have to establish the rules beforehand. Have you... Do you... Are you aware of what a wizarding marriage requires in order for it to be legal?"

"Consummation on the wedding night and that it is celebrated by an authorised representative of the Ministry." She seemed to be reading a textbook. "The Auror in charge of this section is accredited to celebrate weddings; I verified that."

"And are you aware that, for your plan to work, you would have to wait until the end of my sentence to divorce me?"

"I am."

"If I were to marry you, Miss Granger, I would of course refrain from touching you other than during our wedding night, but I would insist that you be the epitome of discretion when taking on a lover. This would mean that you would not be able to be seen in public with any such young man for the next five years. Are you willing to risk finding 'True Love' and asking it to wait for you to acknowledge it publicly? Because, let me assure you, I will not become laughing stock. If your dalliances are made public, I *will* divorce you, even if I am sent here the following minute."

"You have my word that no one will ever know if I happen to meet someone. If I find 'True Love', as you put it, it will wait for me to let it out in the open for as long as it

takes. That's why they call it 'True'."

The whole conversation seemed surreal. Severus was having trouble coming to terms with the fact that he was likely marrying her more to spare her the guilt of not having been able to save him than to actually save himself. He let go of her hands and took hold of her face, looking into her eyes.

"And have you the fortitude to endure me this first night... Hermione?"

"Yes," she breathed. He swallowed hard.

"Then I accept your generous proposal. I need to know what you expect of me, though."

She frowned. "What I expect of you?"

"Tonight. Do you want me to... attempt to make it enjoyable, or shall I strive for speed?"

It must have been the effect of the Dementors because, had he been so careless with displays of emotion during the Dark Lord's reign, he would surely be dead by now. He blushed. She blushed in tandem.

"If... If that's okay with you, I would be more comfortable if you would let me take the lead."

"Very well, Hermione." As an afterthought he added, "You are aware that the only house I have to offer you is a dismal place?"

"I thought we might live in my flat in London, if you wouldn't mind."

No, he definitely wouldn't mind. He had nothing but bad memories of Spinner's End; anywhere was a better choice of place to spend five years cooped up in. Anywhere but Azkaban, of course.

She had left his cell to go fetch the Auror then and, after having been scanned for any coercing elements such as potions or spells, had been cleared for the wedding. It was standard procedure when one was marrying a prisoner.

She then requested she be allowed to take her Contraceptive Potion, which had been left with the guard at the entrance to the fortress; if he thought it strange that she'd downed two bottles of differently coloured liquids, he didn't mention it.

Severus Snape was many things, but, while he hadn't been attractive before, he was positively cadaveric now. She hadn't wanted to hurt his feelings by being unable to pretend that night was anything other than a huge sacrifice on her part, so she had brewed a mild lust potion tuned in to his magical signature, but had waited until after the mandatory scan to be able to take it. It wasn't so strong that she would jump him the moment they were alone - he would surely know something was amiss then - but it was strong enough so that she would want him badly, and to ensure she would both give and take pleasure.

The wedding was over in fifteen minutes, with a further twenty-minute wait for the necessary papers to be flooded in from the Ministry. Severus had requested that a batch of more thorough cleansing spells be performed on him, as was the privilege of any prisoner on his wedding day. He was determined to make the whole affair as little unpleasant as it needed to be for Hermione. The Auror in charge drew the line, however, at cleaning his cell; it was not mandatory that he do so, and Severus had neither the connections nor the funds required to ask such a favour. He had to resign himself to taking her in a dirty, damp, dark cell. The three Ds indeed, he thought bitterly.

After the ceremony they were informed that, upon consummation of the marriage, validation of their papers would automatically appear at the Ministry. The Auror locked him in his cell, stating that they had three hours, and they were alone.

Author's Note: A heartfelt thank you goes to my wonderful beta, **moonrevel**. Any mistakes hang entirely on my head.

Consummation

Chapter 2 of 2

Consummation

To Have And To Hold

Chapter Two Consummation

Severus' throat went dry when he heard the lock clicking into place. Thank the Gods she had wanted to take the lead, because he was at a total loss. He backed slowly into a wall while she advanced in on him.

"Hermione," he breathed, as she began drawing his head down for a kiss, "you can still back away, call this madness off."

"Shhh," she whispered gently, placing a finger on his lips, "let me enjoy this."

And she planted a soft kiss on his lips, tentative at first, bolder after a few minutes. It had been so long since Severus had had a woman he wasn't even sure he knew what to do anymore. Her claim that she would enjoy their coupling had been erotic beyond measure, and the Potions master found himself fully hardened.

He inwardly cursed the Auror for not having had at least the courtesy of allowing him a mattress for tonight; he would have to take her on the cold floor where he slept every night.

She pushed him down slowly until he was seated on the floor, back to the wall, and then she sat atop him. Her hands began exploring every inch of his flesh, and he found he longed to touch her.

"May I..." He made a hapless gesture.

"Please do." When he heard the desire in her voice, he knew he was lost.

He kissed her freely then and allowed his hands to roam beneath the buttons of her robes, feeling her skin. He almost lost his composure when she reached down between them to free his erection, but managed to restrain himself through sheer force of will. She had said she wanted to enjoy wedding night; he would not ruin it for her by behaving like a sixth-year. He slid her robes from her easily pausing briefly to wonder where to discard them until realising he really had no other option but the floor and revelled in the sight of her body. She had a woman's curves, so enticing... He brought his mouth down on one breast to suckle it and was rewarded by her moan of desire.

"Oh, Severus..."

His eyes widened in the semi-darkness. No woman had ever spoken his name with such need. He didn't know what had come over her tonight, but he would cherish it and never question it. And never be so foolish, either, as to believe she would ever want a repeat performance, regardless of how much she seemed to want him at the moment. Absurd hopes such as that one would only bring him pain.

He still had his mind preoccupied when she shifted herself, slowly but surely, to welcome him inside her, and then it was all he could do to keep from spilling into her too soon.

Hermione, for her part, congratulated herself on a potion well brewed. It allowed her to remain herself, her mind fully clear, while at the same time wanting him badly. And, she had to admit, he was making every effort to ensure his bedroom skills were up to par. She rocked her hips against him with a fierce potion-induced desire, yet the tenderness in her kiss and in the hand cupping his cheek was all her own.

He was thick inside of her, filling her completely, and held her with a strength belied by his fragile constitution. His voice was also thick, brimming with an emotion he hadn't known he was capable of.

"Hermione..."

Her rocking turned harder, his breathing ragged, and then, finally, they got lost in each other. Severus had never felt so rewarded as when watching her orgasm because of him, his own body shuddering with pleasure. He held her close, bringing her down gently, but, afterwards, it was over, and he didn't know what to say. His hand, seemingly of its own accord, came up to tangle itself gently in her curls, caressing her hair in a rhythmic motion. Without realising it, they fell into a light sleep, nestled against each other.

They were startled awake by a loud bang on the door.

"You have ten minutes left," a guard's unpleasant voice shouted.

Hermione placed one last lingering kiss on his lips before attempting to stand, her legs almost giving in because of the awkward position she had slept in. Severus rose after her, intently watching her dress.

"You have only tonight left in this hellhole," she whispered, brushing his hair away from his face. "I'll pick you up tomorrow, and you'll never see the inside of a cell again."

She graced him with a warm smile full of hope and was off, leaving him stunned and speechless.

That night, when the Dementors came, he found out what it truly meant to be easy prey; his throat was raw from his screams of despair by morning.

"And so, Severus Snape, it is the will of this court that you remain wandless and under house arrest for the next five years. Having understood that you have no remaining living relatives, the court has no other choice but to transfer your sentence to Azkaban prison, as per Wizarding Decree 287/49B, amendment 2."

"Your Honour, if I may?" Hermione's voice cut across Rufus Scrimgeour's before he could bring down his hammer, thus signalling the end of the session.

"It is highly unorthodox that counsel should speak during the sentencing. The time for arguments has passed."

"Yes, Your Honour, but the court's facts are incomplete. There is a living relative."

Scrimgeour blanched slightly. There couldn't be; he had thoroughly researched all of Severus Snape's history at the Ministry no more than two days ago and was sure there were no Snapes and no Princes left. Her next words dropped like a bombshell.

"Severus and I were married yesterday by Auror Collins. Guards Anderson and Michaels stood in as our witnesses; I have all the papers here, for the court's examination."

It was a ruckus after that. The papers were checked and re-checked, but they were in order, and there was nothing the Wizengamot could do now. Everything was perfectly legal, and Severus Snape's custody was awarded to one Mrs. Hermione Granger-Snape.

The newspapers exploded with the tale of love between the reformed Death Eater and his former-student-turned-impromptu-advocate; they dug up the fact that, two and a half years previously, no one had wanted to defend him, which was how a witch who had never studied the law had come to accept that role. They even went so far as to suggest that their illicit relationship had to have begun at that time, while she was still living with Ron Weasley.

And, amazingly, even though the sentence had been read at nine AM, the *Daily Prophet* had managed to have a special edition, that liberally sprinkled fact with fiction, out by noon.

She was told to pick him up at six PM, which meant there was still time for her to go to the Burrow and face the collective outrage of her friends and fellow Order members. She let a sigh escape; this was going to be anything but easy.

The silence that greeted her when she Flooed to the Burrow was, for lack of a better word, deafening. Everyone was there, Harry and Ginny, Ron and Gabrielle, Mr and Mrs Weasley, Bill and Fleur, Charlie, Fred, George, Percy, Remus and Tonks, Minerva McGonagall, Kingsley Shacklebolt, and those were only the heads that she could see at first. She had never seen the Burrow more crowded.

It was Percy, the Pompous Ass, who broke the silence.

"Well, I know I speak for all of us when I say, quite frankly, how could you? You knew the Minister wanted him in Azkaban; how could you?"

"Oh, shut up, Percy!" Ron cut across him. "We couldn't give a rat's ass about what the Minister wants. If it hadn't been for Snape I wouldn't be here, and neither would Harry. And I understand why you didn't tell us before, Hermione, I really do. Life debt or no life debt, we would have done anything to keep you from going through with it, anything but having you spend the night with him. But the deed is done now; it shouldn't go to waste. You always were the best of us three."

Everyone in the room started murmuring their agreement, and Hermione's eyes filled to the brim with tears. She hadn't expected such immediate acceptance, and it filled her with warmth. Soon she was being enveloped by several pairs of arms, and everything was a bit overwhelming.

A few hours later Ginny finally managed to get her alone.

"So, er... do you want to talk about it?"

"What?"

"Your wedding night. Sometimes it helps to talk about traumatic experiences... or so I'm told."

Hermione had to smile at that. Those had been her words to Ginny after the redhead's brief stint in the Chamber of Secrets.

"It wasn't like that, Ginny, it wasn't like that at all. No trauma. I brewed a Lust Potion for myself beforehand," she added, lowering her voice, "so I think we both enjoyed it. He must never know, though; I wouldn't want to hurt him, and you mustn't tell anyone else."

Ginny had confided in Hermione things that no one else, not even her family or Harry, knew about. Hermione felt it was only fair to repay trust with trust.

An appreciative glint shone in the younger woman's eyes.

"Wow, Hermione, that's brilliant! So no trauma at all, then, good. How was it?"

"In a word? Intense. No man ever looked at me in quite that way before, I felt beautiful, empowered. Don't get me wrong, Ron and I loved each other dearly, and I never felt lacking, but he never had that exact look in his eyes either. No one had."

"Hmm..." Ginny let out thoughtfully.

"'Hmm'? What's 'Hmm' supposed to mean?"

"I don't know, Hermione, you're going to be living in pretty close quarters for five years, and, with the way you're talking... I wouldn't be that surprised if you ended up not divorcing him after all."

Hermione laughed easily. "Well, I most definitely would be surprised, Gin. I know I wouldn't have been able to enjoy it if it hadn't been for the potion, Look or no Look."

"Well, if you say so." Ginny shrugged dismissively, turning around to go find her boyfriend.

Before Hermione knew it, it was five o'clock, and she had began the daunting task of saying her goodbyes to so many people before going to pick Severus up from Azkaban. The only person who had yet to talk to her was Harry. He pushed her aside quietly when she made to kiss him goodbye.

"Hermione, I... I understand why you did it, I really do. I know everything Ron said is the truth, just as I know that my father and Sirius weren't perfect, and just as I know it really was Dumbledore who made Snape kill him, and that Snape saved me and Ron. I know all that, and the rational part of me doesn't even wish him harm anymore, but... I hate him all the same. I love you, you're like my sister, you know that, and I will always want to be with you, but don't expect me to drop by your house for the next five years, or even Floo-call there. I'll Floo you at work, when you find one, and we can go out together as always, and we can meet at Ron's, or at my place, or..."

"Harry," she interrupted, "I understand. Your reaction and Ron's too is far better than I had hoped, and I can't tell you how much that means to me. Professor Snape is my friend, you and Ron are my best friends, but I don't expect you both to start liking him or vice-versa." She hugged him. "Thank you for always being there, Harry; I'd miss you terribly if you weren't."

Seemingly out of nowhere a second pair of arms enveloped them both, and she found Ron was attached to them. Her heart was light, as if a terrible burden had been lifted off her, when she finally Flooed out of the Burrow. Even the best of her expectations had paled when compared to the reality of her friends' acceptance. She was truly blessed.

Author's Note: Once again a huge thank you to my wonderful beta, moonrevel. The mistakes are mine, though.