

Return to Me

by GinnyW

Severus learns that Hermione is to be married to Ronald Weasley. He becomes obsessed with stopping the wedding and attempting to convince her to marry him instead. This emotional journey forces him to face his true motives behind his sudden change of interest.

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Chapter 1 of 5

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This story was entered in the Sycophant Hex: Spring Faire Festival under the General Story: I Want to Kiss the Bride.

Disclaimer: I wish these characters were mine, but alas, all credit goes to the great JK Rowling.

Chapter 1

Severus sat in his usual chair at the Head Table, idly picking at his morning meal. The rest of the teachers sitting in the hall were all chatting away in their usual fervor. *Noisy biddies!* Severus thought. His attention was drawn upwards with the arrival of the Post Owls. He paid the ordinary brown owl, which had landed before him, the usual Knut, withdrew his copy of the *Daily Prophet*, and the owl departed. Unrolling the newspaper, Severus idly scanned the headlines.

Former Minister Fudge, Finally Caught!

"It is about damn well bloody time!" he muttered under his breath.

Lovegoods Prove the Existence of the Crumple-Horned Snorkack!

Severus rolled his eyes in disgust.

War Heroes to Wed This Weekend!

"Bloody piece of rubbish," Severus mumbled, as he folded the paper and stuffed it into the pocket of his teaching robes. He rose from his seat and swept out of the Great Hall, never noticing that several sets of eyes were upon him.

Severus had no interest in the whereabouts or goings on of any of his *former* fellow Order members. He had been grateful when the Dark Lord had fallen and the last of the Death Eaters had been rounded up so that he could be rid of the meddlesome groups' company. None of them, save Albus, were what he would call a *friend*. He certainly did not care if any of them had foolishly *found love* and decided to marry.

Severus made his way down to his office in the dungeons and began preparing himself for his first round of dunderheads of the morning, as a dull headache slowly began creeping upon him.

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"Good afternoon, Severus," said the grandfatherly voice which broke Snape from his all too brief respite.

"I just came down to inform you that Minerva and I will be leaving for the weekend." Albus paused to discern if there was a flicker of understanding in the younger man's eyes. "We are leaving tonight," he continued, "thus, you will be in charge of the school until we return." "We have an event to attend on Sunday, and we thought that we would like to take a little holiday beforehand." The elder wizard paused with an amused smile. "That is, of course, unless you have plans, Severus."

The old man smiled. "Yes, it is indeed. You saw the article in the *Daily Prophet* then? Splendid."

"Indeed," replied Albus simply. He flashed another bright smile at Severus and said, "Well, Minerva and I will be leaving at around six o'clock this evening." He turned to leave. "Enjoy your weekend, Severus. Oh, and do try to leave some House points for the rest of the school in their hourglasses whilst Minerva and I are away."

War Heroes to Wed This Weekend!

Mr. Ronald B. Weasley to wed fellow war hero and former Hogwarts classmate, Ms. Hermione J. Granger-Snape, at the groom's parents' estate (Severus could not help but to snort at the word 'estate'. How can they call that hovel an estate?) this coming Sunday. Many long-time Daily Prophet readers will recognize Ms. Granger-Snape from the many articles that this paper has published about this Muggle-born witch from London. Ms. Granger-Snape, formerly married to the Hogwarts Potions Master, Severus Snape, most recently made headlines with her divorce due to the renouncing of the former Muggle-born/Pureblood Marriage Act that was enacted in January 1998.

As a reporter, it's my duty to keep readers aware of the goings on. It was also I that informed the Wizarding public that the young harlot had previously been caught toying with the affections of several different men at the same time during her fourth year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. At the time, the former Ms. Granger had been seeing both Viktor Krum, Seeker for the Bulgarian Quidditch team, and Harry Potter, the Boy Who Lived to defeat You-Know-Who. It would appear that witches do not change their warts, as she has only just left the bed of the aforementioned Hogwarts professor six weeks ago and is now climbing back into bed with one of the key players during the war. One can only hope that the unsuspecting Mr. Weasley realizes the true nature of such a woman before they wed on Sunday.

Severus reached into his desk, grabbing fresh parchment and quill. Quickly jotting a note, he sealed it, and he snapped his fingers to summon a house-elf.

The house-elf was gone as swiftly as it had arrived with a resounding *Crack!*

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"Why was I not informed of this, Albus?" he finally asked after several minutes of intense silence.

It took every ounce of Professor Snape's will to keep his anger curtailed. Through gritted teeth he hissed, "I mean, why was I not informed of Hermione's upcoming nuptials."

"Not concern me, Albus? What makes you think that having my *wife* getting married would not concern me?" Snape growled, completely unaware of Dumbledore's amused look.

"I have not changed my mind, Albus!" replied Snape with a growl as he rose from his chair and began pacing the office. "I merely do not like the idea of my sham of a marriage being thrown in my face in such a public manner! The annoying little chit is purposefully embarrassing me!" Severus stopped in front of the headmaster's desk, leant forward, and continued in a low hiss, "This is her petty way of getting back at me for insisting that the divorce be done immediately."

"Oh, surely you do not think that this is some plot to make the public think less of you, my boy?"

"Don't I? What better way for her to demonstrate how much she loathes me than by marrying the Weasley brat before the ink on the divorce decree is dry?" Severus ranted. Severus forced himself to calm down. He stopped in front of the mantle and narrowed his eyes intently at the fire before he spoke again. "You do realize that by wedding the bloody Potter tagalong so quickly that she is practically screaming to the Wizarding world that she was unfaithful during our marriage and that she could not get away from me fast enough?"

Dumbledore could not hold in a chuckle at the younger man's irrational thoughts. "You know very well that because of the Fidelity Charm that had been in place prevented either of you from being unfaithful, Severus. Not to mention that the entire Wizarding community is very aware as to the nature of your marriage to Hermione, and they never thought that it was anything more than a forced marriage for political reasons and obvious protection."

Severus glared at the old headmaster. "There is more to faithfulness than sex, Albus." Dumbledore raised his eyes in curiosity. The younger man continued, "She has obviously been planning to do this for some time."

"I doubt that you even believe that, Severus." Dumbledore sighed and began examining his fingers intently. "I do not know what led to Mr. Weasley and Ms. Snape's decision for marriage. I suggest that if you are concerned, then you speak with one of them."

"Believe me, I shall," muttered Professor Snape. Forming his resolve, he walked back to the headmaster's desk. "I will not be able to cover for you and Minerva this weekend, Headmaster," he stated firmly.

"Ah, I see. Well, I will inform Minerva. She will be disappointed, of course." Dumbledore looked carefully at his young friend. "Is there any way that I can be of help to you?"

"No." Walking towards the exit, Severus paused with his hand on the doorknob and muttered a quick, "thank you" as he left the room.

He did not hear Dumbledore quietly respond, "Good luck, my boy."

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Chapter 2 of 5

Severus learns that Hermione is to be married to Ronald Weasley. He becomes obsessed with stopping the wedding and attempting to convince her to marry him instead. This emotional journey forces him to face his true motives behind his sudden change of interest.

Chapter 2

It was early morning when Severus finally Apparated to the front walk of number twelve, Grimmauld Place. He had spent the majority of the evening thinking about what he would say or do to the chi...woman. Well, in truth, he had spent more time drinking than thinking.

Severus could not decipher the jumbled mess of feelings that were stirring deep beneath his many layers; those layers were the protective barriers that had been there for as long as he could remember. He remembered them forming at such a young age. Each time his father yelled, forcing his mother to cower, the barrier grew. For every taunt he endured throughout school and for every bout of *Crucio* he tolerated from the Dark Lord, another stratum was placed. The layers of protection, like the bricks of a wall, protected him from the one thing that was most likely to destroy him...his emotions.

All Severus Snape knew for certain was that he could not allow *his* wife to marry another man. She belonged to *him*. Pounding on the front door, he impatiently waited for entry to the former Order of the Phoenix headquarters. "Potter," he sneered with venom when the door was opened to reveal a disheveled looking young man with penetrating green eyes.

"Snape, what the bloody hell are you doing here at seven o'clock in the morning?" Harry spat in return.

"I want to speak with my...erm, Hermione," Severus answered. He then added a very firm, "Now."

"She doesn't want to talk to you, Snape," said Harry protectively while attempting to bar the Potions professor from the house.

Severus pushed himself past the berk. "Excuse me if I do not take your word for it, Potter."

Knowing that he could not win against the insistent man, a disgruntled Harry conceded and stepped back while glaring at him. "Stay here. I'll go find her."

Severus watched as the young man darted up the staircase. Several minutes passed. He had a strong urge to *accidentally-on-purpose* kick the troll umbrella stand just to awaken Mrs. Black's portrait to ease his frustrations. Before he could carry through with that plan, he spied back up the stairs to see a tired and pale looking young woman descend towards him, bushy hair limply moving with each step. He heard Potter call protectively to her, "Hermione, call me if you need anything." Then he eyed Snape closely before threatening him. "If you do anything to her, Snape, you won't be able to walk straight for a week."

Severus rolled his eyes at the young wizard's display of chivalry and fixed his gaze on the young woman walking towards him.

"Severus," she greeted simply as she entered the foyer.

"Hermione," he replied whilst nodding curtly to her and gesturing her towards the library.

She led the way to the musty room and turned to face him as he entered the room after her. "Why are you here?" she asked without preamble.

Severus looked at her intently. He had readied himself to yell at her for trying to make a fool of him, but the words would not come forth. "You do not look well, Hermione," he said calmly.

She narrowed her gaze upon him and folded her arms in front of her chest. "That is not what you came here to say," she replied. "I repeat. Why are you here?"

Severus felt as if he was in a trance. The woman before him was not the same woman that left his life less than two months prior. She was sickly looking, gaunt, and pale. She never had much excess weight on her to begin with, but now she looked as if she was several pounds underweight. Her hair appeared brittle, and her skin looked very

The sickly looking witch stared at the dull hardwood floor. "I don't know," she whispered.

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Less than an hour later, Hermione was up in her room. She had warded the door to prevent any unwanted visitors or well-meaning friends. Was she doing the right thing in marrying Ron? She truly wasn't sure. There were just so many things to think about, so many thoughts swirling through her mind; all of the thoughts revolved around one person...Severus Snape. Their wedding had been nothing but a farce. He hated and resented her for it; she was certain of that.

"I'm only doing this to save your bloody hide!" he had spat at her when he and Dumbledore had informed them of their plan.

"Yes, I'm quite certain that you are gaining nothing from this venture,*Professor*," she had hissed back at him.

Less than twenty-four hours later, she had been escorted to a small clearing near the edge of the Forbidden Forest. Only Dumbledore, Hagrid, and McGonagall had been present. Well, aside from the endearing Professor Snape, of course. The remainder of the ceremony had been a blur with only a few continual thoughts coming forth.

Why couldn't this have been a few months later so that Ron was eligible? Oh, I don't want to know what happens after this. The Ministry is going to pay for this ruddy law!

It had all seemed ridiculous and hopeless.

Hermione hated the Death Eaters that had been stalking her and causing her to do such a thing. She hated the Ministry of Magic and the Wizengamot for passing such a ludicrous law. She'd blamed Professor Dumbledore for his crazy schemes. She'd blamed Professor Snape for allowing himself to be coerced by Dumbledore. Most of all, she'd blamed herself for being selfish in not wanting to leave Great Britain unprotected and for foolishly having the childhood fantasy that 'nothing bad would ever happen to her.'

She grabbed the pillow off of her bed and screamed into it, hoping to purge some of the strain. It didn't help. Why did Snape come to see her? What did he want from her?

His words thundered through her head. *You are mine! Do you understand that? Mine!*

"Oh, God," she said as she buried her head in her hands. One of Snape's character flaws was his possessiveness. He was a conceited and selfish bastard; although, Hermione had never expected him to be possessive of *her*. He seldom paid much attention to her.

When they were first married, she continued to stay in the room that she shared with the other seventh year girls. She only had to go down to his rooms to fulfill the twice-weekly conjugal obligations, thanks to the ruddy marriage contract. However, because of the fact that she had to deal with the snickers and curious looks from Lavender and Parvati, she was almost grateful when the war came to a head, and he forced her to move into the dark dungeons permanently. That is until she deduced the obvious...she would have to share a bed with the man continually.

He wasn't abusive; that wasn't the problem. The problem was that most of the time he was so very cold and distant. For the first couple of months, Hermione had made several futile attempts to engage him in conversation. He would either ignore her or tell her that he had no desire to enter into a discussion about worthless teenage drivel and angst. *The fact that I was attempting to talk to him about the latest Potions research seemed to go unnoticed* thought Hermione bitterly.

Sex had been... *What exactly had sex been?*

It had been merely functional, for lack of a better description. It was the same nearly every time. The only exception had been with the first time, just following their binding ceremony. The memory surfaced, despite her attempts to stifle it. Not for the first time, she wished that she had a Pensieve.

They entered his quarters via a door in his office. It was the first time that she'd ever been to his rooms. She paid little attention to anything as the butterflies roiling in her stomach were enough to keep her concentration on trying to not vomit all over the floor. Severus walked directly to the liquor cabinet in the far corner to pull out two glasses and a bottle of Ogden's Old Firewhisky. He amply filled each goblet and motioned for her to take one.

"I don't think that I can drink that right now," she said.

Severus glared at her as he spoke firmly, *"Drink it. Trust me."*

Hermione eyed him suspiciously, but she obliged and walked towards the table. She downed the drink in three horrible swallows, nearly choking. It burned terribly. No wonder they call it firewhisky!

He looked at her with a slightly amused look and finished off the remainder of his glass. He began to pour her more when she put up her hand to stop him. *"No," she said. "I couldn't possibly have anymore."*

"Very well. That door," he said, pointing to the only other door in the room, "is the door to my bedchambers. Go do whatever you need to do to prepare yourself for bed. I would prefer to get this over with as soon as possible, although I believe that I need another couple of drinks first."

Hermione shuddered slightly, but she attempted to maintain her resolve by walking to the door and entering the room. Again, she cared little about the décor; all she could register was that it was dark. She found her way to the bathroom to complete her nightly ablutions. The alcohol that she had consumed so rapidly was beginning to affect her. She was hot and flushed while feeling a little light-headed. She actually found herself as being grateful to the great black bat for the liquor. It enabled her brain to remain quite unfocused on how much she dreaded what would occur next.

Hermione disrobed and placed her simple gown over a nearby chair and climbed into bed. She didn't know where she was expected to be, but she guessed that Severus, being a spy, would prefer to be closest to the exit. She lay there waiting with the covers pulled up to her chin, trembling as several long agonizing minutes passed. She had to force herself to take several slow deep breaths.

When he finally entered the room, she sucked in her breath and held it, sounding like she was near fright. *"Oh, stop it, you silly girl!" he spat at her. "I'm not going to hurt you!"*

Hermione slowly exhaled and nodded, though she knew he could barely see her. *"Sorry."*

Severus bought his fingers up to his face and pinched the bridge of his nose. *"Just please tell me that you are not a virgin," he said with near exasperation.*

"I'm not a virgin," she lied. Hell, he asked me to say it.

"Thank God for small miracles," he mumbled as he turned his back to her and undressed.

He climbed under the covers knowing that her eyes were watching him closely. He wasted no time. He reached to touch her between her legs, causing her to flinch. It seemed to take him every ounce of control to not lash out at her. He simply gritted his teeth, and Hermione quickly took the hint to unclasp her knees. Really, she had no choice; it was this or someone much worse.

She quietly asked him, *"Aren't you even going to kiss me?"*

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Chapter 3 of 5

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Chapter 3

Severus gradually lifted his head from the hard table on which it had been resting. He had no idea what time it was or how long he'd been like that, though he was beginning to be able to think somewhat clearly again. *We cannot have that now can we?* said a little voice inside of his head. He wiped away the line of drool that was hanging out of the side of his mouth and reached for the bottle sitting on the table.

Damn! It's empty! he thought. He brushed the concern away. It was nothing that a few Sickles would not remedy.

He looked around the room and tried to remember where he was. He had been in and out of every bar in Diagon Alley and Knockturn Alley combined. He slowly allowed his eyes to focus on the dimly lit room. He looked towards a window and saw that it was already dark outside. He was in a private backroom; dawning began to come upon him. He was in the Toil & Trouble. *How fitting*, he thought with disgust.

The only way to remedy his slowly declining state of inebriation was to find more alcohol. He rose from the table and stumbled out of the room in the direction he knew the bar to be. The place was crowded, just as it usually was on Saturday nights. Severus made his way to the bar and slammed down a handful of Sickles. The barkeep did not even bother asking what he wanted. The professor had been there for well over five hours, drinking the same thing. The barkeep placed a bottle of scotch and a clean glass on the counter. Severus left the glass where it was, fumbled with the top of the bottle and took a large swig as he made a staggered trek back to his private corner and considerably fewer people.

He made his way to one of the backrooms and paused briefly outside of the door of the room next to his. There were familiar voices coming from the room. He silently stood to the side of the door and peered inside.

Bloody hell! he thought with disgust as he saw a room full of former Order of the Phoenix members, including the Weasley brat and the ruddy Boy-Who-Lived-to-Spite-Him. He paused only to see if *she* was there and quickly realized that the room was only full of men.

It sickened Severus' stomach when he realized that the group must be there to celebrate the fall of the youngest male of the Weasleys' bachelorhood. If he would have been more sober, he would have quietly stormed off back to his own dungeons at Hogwarts. If he had been more intoxicated, he would have made his way back to his table and silently finished drinking until he lost consciousness again. He was neither.

So, he cast a quick Disillusionment Charm and remained outside of the door, catching brief snatches of conversation. Most of what he heard were congratulatory remarks mixed with the occasional words of mock-pity from the likes of Neville Longbottom and Seamus Finnegan. He stood silently, uncertain exactly why he was still there. Then, he heard Potter and Weasley talking quietly just on the other side of the wall from where he stood.

"I swear! If I see that greasy old bat anywhere near her, I'll make him wish he'd never been born," came the hiss of the Keeper for the Wasps.

"Ron, relax. Hermione's fine," reassured Potter.

"Harry she was such a wreck by the time I got there this afternoon. I can't believe that you and Ginny just let her sit in her room all day long like that! You know she's not been well. She needs to eat every chance she gets. It's not good for..."

"Hush, Ron! I thought the point was to keep the pregnancy a secret," came the harsh whisper of Harry to silence his friend that had been growing louder with each word.

The anger that boiled up in Severus now was nearly uncontrollable. Before he had wanted to curse the redheaded prat for marrying *his* wife. Now, he wanted nothing more than to place his fingers around that youthful throat and squeeze the last breath out of him. Before he moved to do just that the two spoke again, "Yeah, you're right, Harry. I need something more to drink. What do you want?"

"Nothing. Thanks, mate."

Just then the redhead emerged from the crowded room, and Severus took his advantage of the situation and cornered the ruddy git.

"Weasel King," he drawled as he drew his wand and guided the young man down the hall, away from prying eyes and insufferable well wishers.

"Snape, what the hell are you doing here?" asked the young wizard in surprise.

"Drinking, Weasley. What do you think?" Snape spat.

"Well, don't let me keep you, Professor." Severus grabbed the man's robes and pushed him up against the wall. "Not so fast, Weasel King. I want a word with you first."

Ron tried not to appear as frightened as he was. He jutted his jaw and narrowed his gaze at his old teacher and asked, "What the hell do you want, then?"

"Just a question," he replied, as he let go of the young man and took a step back. The anger that had grown anew at the words he had overheard from this wizard and Potter was violently simmering just below the surface. He brandished his wand and jabbed it in the young man's chest. "Now tell me, why are you marrying *my* wife?"

The valor that Ron had been sporting previously, faintly slipped at the feel of the hard ebony that was resting just above his heart. He gritted his teeth and stilled himself. The great black bat wouldn't dare hex him in public. "Your wife? Did you say *your* wife?" he asked mockingly as he pushed the offending wood away from his body. "Interesting choice of words, *Professor*, especially seeing how you couldn't sign those divorce papers fast enough! Now, why is that, *sir?*"

"That is none of your concern!" hissed the now incensed wizard.

Ron had been looking for the opportunity to hurt this man since he first set foot into Hogwarts, he decided to hold nothing back. "Really? Hmm, it seems that you are a little

Chapter 4

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"Fine, then." Severus pulled an emerald green silk handkerchief from the pocket of his trousers and whispered, "*Portus*," whilst tapping it with his wand. He handed the

He leant down and captured her lips once again, but he broke away quickly as he pulled up her left hand. He looked at the small ruby ring that decorated her finger and carefully removed it. "I am sure that Weasley would like this back," he said. Before she could answer, he replaced it with another ring that adjusted itself to fit her finger as

soon as it was in place.

Hermione looked at it carefully; she had expected the token ring from their marriage, the one the Professor McGonagall had picked out for her. She was startled to see that it was something different. "You replaced a ruby with an emerald? How fitting," she said with an amused smile. "Where did you get this?"

Severus' lips formed a small smirk. "To answer your first question, my dear, that is not an emerald. It is an alexandrite. The stone changes color depending on the type of lighting. Many say that it is *an emerald by day and a ruby by night*. To answer your second question, it belonged to my mother. She left it to me when she died, only requesting that I pass it on to my wife."

Hermione's mouth grew into a smile that reached her eyes. This complicated man that she had suddenly found herself in love with just over two months before was surprising her at every turn. "I need to go back and speak with Ron," she said simply.

Severus nodded. He knew that would have to happen. It was unavoidable. "Would you like me to accompany you?"

"No," she replied, shaking her head. "I think it's best if I go alone. Harry will help me." She looked up and saw the worry on the older man's face. "Don't worry. I'll return. Harry knows how I feel about you; that was the only reason he allowed me to come to see you in the first place. He and Ginny both have been concerned that I was not making the right decision. I daresay that he may even be relieved."

A small part of him was afraid that if she left him now he would lose her forever. He wanted nothing more than to hold her there, to keep her tethered to him always. *You cannot do that, Severus. Trust her.* So, he did. "Give me the handkerchief." She complied by pulling the green silk back out of her pocket where she had stuffed it upon arriving to the Snape home. "*Portus*," he muttered as he again tapped his wand to the fabric. He kissed her on her forehead and whispered, "I love you," just as the Portkey activated, and she was gone from the room.

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Chapter 5 of 5

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Chapter 5

1 July 1999

Ms. Hermione Jane Granger-Snape has done it yet again. The young witch, only nineteen years of age, has again married Hogwarts' Potions Professor, Severus Snape, earlier today. You may remember that this young wanton of a woman was engaged to be wed to Mr. Ronald B. Weasley back in March of this year. As the Daily Prophet reported at that time, that wedding was called off as a result of extenuating circumstances. It was yours truly that uncovered the true nature of this cover-up. The marriage had been postponed to allow for tests to determine the paternity of the pregnancy that the young scarlet woman was attempting to cover-up.

If the girl previously had not proven herself to be a two-timing harlot, then this was certainly the eye-opener that was needed for young Mr. Weasley. It is nearly enough to make the witches of our world pity the Potions master, Professor Snape, for having to marry the wench in order to give his child a name.

"Oh, what an utter piece of rubbish!" Hermione shouted as she slammed the edition of the *Evening Prophet* on the dining table.

She felt him approach her from behind her chair and her breath hitched when he leaned down to whisper in her ear. "What is that? I thought there were a few bits of truth littered amongst the rubbish." He nipped at the ear and then guided her to stand whilst turning her around to face him. "Did you not marry me?"

She smiled slyly and answered, "Of course."

He ran his fingers through her hair. "And, are you not carrying my son?"

She reached her hands up to touch his face. "Proudly, yes."

Severus pulled her close to him and purred softly in his silkiest voice. "And, are you not feeling a bit wanton at this moment?"

Hermione did not trust her words to convey her thoughts or her emotions. She lifted her face up to capture his mouth with her own.

He gently bit her bottom lip as he ran his hand down along her bulging abdomen. As his hands rested there they were met by a gentle tapping from beneath the skin. Severus allowed his occupied lips to form a slight smirk at the attentions of his son. His wife pulled back slightly and looked at him curiously. "I believe that we still have the small duty of consummation to make this marriage legal, Madame Snape."

Her eyes shone with excitement as she smiled up at him. "I do believe you are right," she answered sweetly.

How did I wind up in this position? he wondered. She truly loved him, and though he rarely said the words, she knew that he felt the same for her. This woman was his wife, his partner in this crazy mixed-up life. She was every bit a part of him as he was of her. After forty years of loneliness, pity, and self-loathing, Severus Snape learnt that he was a human being.

He had never seen himself as one before. He had always relished the rumors about him being a vampire. *What better way was there to describe me as the undead?* He no longer felt 'undead.' He felt whole. That is the gift that Hermione gave him; she gave him his own life.

Severus was still the same snarky bastard he always had been. The students still feared him, he was still rather anti-social, and he was still commonly referred to as 'the great greasy bat.' No one could take that part from him, as the article had said about his lovely witch months before, *witches do not change their warts*. He was not a witch, but he felt the saying applied to him as well. Severus felt rather lucky, as he had sanctuary from his harsher and colder self, all thanks to her.

After the day he had confessed his feelings for his wife, he'd begun to court her. They'd spent time getting to know one another. She had returned to living at the castle with him, but Albus had been kind enough to offer Hermione her own quarters. Severus had agreed. Their relationship had been fragile enough and cluttered with complications;

compounding those problems with having to live with one another again would not have been ideal.

He had thought that they would wait to marry until after she had the baby. He did not want to rush her into anything that she was not ready for. Then, in late May, whilst visiting Poppy for antenatal care, Poppy had informed Hermione that she was carrying a boy. Hermione had left the hospital wing and rushed all the way down to the dungeons, barging into the middle of the third year Gryffindor/Slytherin Potions class. To save himself from complete embarrassment, because he was quite certain that whatever this young woman had to say would harm his carefully groomed image in front of his students, he'd found it necessary to scream at the class of students so that they would exit the room immediately.

Once they were alone, he urged her to share her news, which she did happily. At first thought, Severus did not understand what the big deal was. The gender of the child mattered little to him. Hermione, however, was quite adamant that it was important that it was a son. She had insisted that this was his heir and important for carrying on the familial line. That was when she told him that she wished to marry as soon as the Hogwarts Express left for King's Cross.

As they had not been sharing quarters prior to her announcement, they also refrained from any intimacy aside from a few kisses. Again, Severus did not wish to rush her. He knew first hand that her sexual experiences had been anything but pleasant. It was yet another reason that he loathed a part of himself and wondered why she would ever want to be with him.

After she had informed him of her desire for a marriage sooner than he had anticipated, he had decided it best to not press her for sexual intimacy. He was pleased when his instincts proved correct. She came to him, saying she still needed time, but she would very much like to consummate their marriage once the ceremony was complete.

Their second ceremony, held in the afternoon, was different than their first. Her mother was present, although still not thrilled with their union. Her friends were in attendance as well. There was no rushing in the middle of the night, no secrets, and no Ministry officials forcing them to sign documents that would force them to comply with copulation requirements. It was a joyous union, not forced. *So, this is what she was referring to when she told me that some people actually marry because they want to.*

Copulation was only required as a magical binding, but there were no time constraints in force. However, his young wife had promised him that the day of the binding would be the day they would become one again. A feral grin grew on his face. "What are you thinking about, Severus?"

"Only how badly I want you right now, my wife."

"Then take me to bed, husband." He gazed in her eyes for any sign of fear or trepidation and was met with only looks of love, sincerity, and passion. Severus needed no further encouragement.

"As you wish," he whispered as he deftly picked her up and carried her to the master bedroom of his small home. He carefully set her on the floor next to the bed. Severus stood next to her and reached down to lift the skirt of her dress robes and guided the robe up over her head. He was pleased to find that she had complied with custom and worn nothing beneath the wedding garment. He leant towards her and kissed her on her mouth, tasting her desire. He trailed the kisses down her neck, marking her as his own whilst he guided her to lie back on the duvet.

His mouth found its way down to her breasts, swollen from pregnancy, but he hoped they were not too tender for his attentions. Severus kissed and suckled on each small peak as she softly moaned in pleasure. He continued his trail down her body, across her taut and swollen belly and settled himself between her thighs. He inhaled her musky scent and began placing his attentions upon that which he had neglected for so long. He mapped her with his tongue, ingraining each morsel of information into his memory...her scent, her taste, and her response to his careful ministrations. Severus slipped one finger, and then a second into her already moistened core. Not long after, he felt her walls squeeze around them as she screamed his name.

He removed his fingers, lifted himself up, and smiled at his wife. She responded by pulling at his arms to join her. Severus wasted no time in removing his own clothing and climbed back on the bed to claim her mouth again. Hermione began to kiss him in earnest as she reached down a hand to massage his throbbing sex. "I want you to make love to me," she whispered softly as she began nipping and sucking his ear.

Severus complied with her wishes as she moved her hands to his back, and he slowly guided himself into her waiting channel, carefully lifting his weight off of her protruding midsection. With his first thrust, he knew he was home. It was a wholeness that he had never felt before, one that he never allowed himself to feel before. With each move, he felt more complete. It was not long before he felt her nails drive into his back as she clenched tighter around him and came again, tipping Severus over the edge into oblivion.

A/N: Very special thanks to my beta, southern_witch_69, she worked on a very tight schedule to help me complete this project. Thanks go to Warlock_Vader_69 for giving this a once over. Also, thanks go to Meredith and Cocoachristy, both gals read through this story giving me both input and encouragement.

The criteria is below:

Summary: Hermione is about to get married when a certain Potions master realizes she should marry him instead. He has forty-eight hours to stop the wedding and get her to marry him.

Rules:

1. *Severus Snape is to be portrayed by Severus Snape. He does not have really silky hair. His nose is hooked, not aquiline. In other words, keep the Snape as close to canon as possible, in both appearance, and characterization.*

2. *Snape does not kill the other canon male involved (i.e. potential groom).*

3. *Snape does not snatch Hermione away from the wedding or some other such rubbish.*

4. *Snape is not to be turned into any of the following:*

- Mr. Darcy

- A fluffy bunny

- A sap

Notes:

1. *Hermione's potential groom may be any other canon character.*

2. *Any characters can be enlisted to help Severus in his endeavor.*

3. *Genre up to the author. The story can be comedy, angst, drama, or any other combination the writer chooses.*

4. *Hermione does not have to end up marrying Snape.*

5. *All standard SH rules and submission policies apply.*