

Evening

by ickle duddykins

Severus Snape contemplates his relationship with Hermione Granger during his evening routine. Short and sweet Hermione/Snape goodness. Hope you like it and thanks for reading.

Chapter One

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Author's Note: Hello all. This story is post-Voldemort and, though it was written after I read *Deathly Hallows*, I've decided to twist some major plot points to make this little ficlet work. You'll recognize immediately that a certain character death is disregarded. Anyway, I hope you enjoy reading this because I really enjoyed writing it. Releasing those little plot bunnies into the wild is so liberating, wouldn't you agree? And if you choose to review, let me say thank you in advance! I love that fanfiction can bring people together and create a little more love and happiness in the world, isn't that just awesome? So read, enjoy, review if you can, and have a peaceful and Potter-filled day.

I write just for the hell of it, not for money or to step on toes. Thanks to JKR who created and owns all of it and who allows us to play around in her imaginary world.

Very often she falls asleep right here in the sitting room. Why she does not remove herself from my divan before drifting off, I haven't the slightest, nor will I inquire. Few people are relaxed enough in my presence to willingly lose consciousness, but I suppose this apprenticeship has drawn up closer. Loath as I am to verbalize it to my colleagues, she has grown on me. I am not entirely adverse to conversation with the girl now that she is a bit tamer. Minerva seems to think I am "losing my edge," but the truth of the matter is that Miss Granger returned to Hogwarts with a much more palatable disposition. Of course, it could very well be due to the absence of Potter and Weasley, who have pursued careers outside the world of academic achievement. On occasion they do visit their female counterpart here at the castle, in which case I venture into Hogsmeade or perhaps indulge in a dosage of Draught of Living Death. It is truly unbearable to watch her lower herself to their level. They have neither her intelligence nor her maturity. I briefly considered putting a stop to social calls from those two imbeciles, but, for reasons far beyond my comprehension, it seems she enjoys their company.

Tonight she fell asleep with *Scamander's Guide to Ectothermic Tetrapods in Water-Based Solutions* sitting on her left thigh, held open by the very tip of her littlest finger. There is always a book, whether it be on these quiet evenings we spend together or anywhere else for that matter, Miss Granger is constantly with literature. She will deny it, but I did once find her with a copy of *The Quibbler* magazine laid across her chest. Whatever her choice of reading in the evening, it will eventually end up teetering precariously on her person while she snores gently on my couch. She has her own quarters not twenty yards down the corridor, with a four-poster, warmed and turned down for her use, but it seems she prefers to slumber here, twisted into awkward positions.

I set down the composition I am reading and remove my glasses. That was a great source of amusement for her, my use of reading glasses. She seems delighted with each new discovery she makes in regards to my private life. For instance, ever since Miss Granger happened upon me with a bar of Honeydukes Finest 60% Cacao Chocolate, she has made a habit of placing one in the uppermost drawer of my classroom desk every other Monday morning. I would tell her that I prefer the peppermint humbugs, but I appreciate the gesture far more than the sweets.

Our working situation is, in turn, a lesson for me in the everyday life of Hermione Granger. She is early to rise and early to bed, she prefers stone to citrus fruit, her cat sheds on every surface it can reach, and having a strained relationship with her parents upsets her more than she will admit.

I pick up the leather-bound tome and mark page 206 before setting it down on the table next to her cold tea. She is lying on her side, her left hand now resting across her torso while the other is splayed almost entirely covering her face. In the heel of her right palm, she bears the weight of her chin, and as uncomfortable as this position appears, she does not stir to adjust herself.

In the past I've contemplated moving her, but she so frequently ends up dozing here that I fear my back would give out in a week's time. I suppose one could say that I am reluctant because I also enjoy her company. For so long, it has been me alone in these dungeons and the presence of another is a welcome change. That is not to say I would be agreeable to any old fool in this castle sharing my rooms at night. Things are peaceful when she is around, either awake or asleep as she is now, and truly, I cannot think of another who brings me this placidity.

Minerva suggested to me in the Great Hall during breakfast several days ago that perhaps I care for Miss Granger more than is strictly necessary as her Master. At the time, my only response was to let my contempt for the idea register on my face, as is the custom. However, loath as I am to admit it of Minerva, she is right. I care deeply for the girl, and if I am not mistaken, she reciprocates the feeling on some level. Four months ago, Poppy demanded bed rest of me for two weeks after a particularly nasty spill in my private lab. Miss Granger was a constant fixture at my bedside. She administered the Healing Paste to my wounds three times daily, shared passages from books she thought would interest me, and took her meals alongside mine. It was a more pleasant reprieve from my usual routine than I can remember having in all my years of teaching.

There is one blanket I know she prefers that, prior to her living here, lay folded and forgotten in the back of my linen closet. It is pinstriped blue and white cashmere with fringe on one end, a gift from Filius years back. Now it is kept draped on the back of an armchair in my study, where Miss Granger sees fit to place it upon waking, in stark contrast to the black, worn, supple leather of the furniture. I retrieve it and let the soft fabric fall open while I carry it back into the sitting room. I take a moment to admire the scent, hers, and pull a hair from the weave. It immediately springs back into a spiral once free.

As I place it over her form, Miss Granger makes a small, unconscious murmur that indicates this is to her liking, grasps the edge of the blanket with the hand that was propping up her head, and wiggles a bit into the couch. This never fails to make me smile. It genuinely pleases me that I am able to provide her more than just an education, even if it is only a small comfort.

In the morning I will find the couch empty, imprinted with her figure, the cashmere blanket placed neatly in my study, a few more brown curls caught in the threads, and the book she abandoned the previous night gone from the table. But for now, she is here, within my reach.

While I clear away the cold tea, forgotten composition, and glass of sherry that I did not finish, the hour grows late. I bend to Miss Granger and kiss her forehead light enough so as not to rouse her, pull the soft throw down to more fully cover her toes, and whisper a goodnight in her ear.

As I make my way across the room to the threshold of my sleeping chambers, I consider the possibility of one day pulling the duvet over the both of us, lying in a bed we share. For a moment I allow an acute sense of loneliness to override my other emotions while I study the empty bed before me, austere and cold. This desolation and anguish, however, is quickly replaced. A small smile turns my lips upwards, the second of the day that I owe to Miss Granger, when I realize that tomorrow is Monday, bringing with it a bar of dark chocolate tucked in my desk drawer and a chance to show proper gratitude to the witch who slumbers in the next room. This sense of anticipation and hope brings me a peaceful night's sleep.