

# The Belladonna Day

*by ladypod*

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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It was easy now, looking back, to pinpoint the moment it all started. Something so small, so utterly unremarkable to anyone who would have noticed, started something so important in their lives. Roughly passing her belladonna in class for a sleeping draught in her fifth year, the tips of their fingers touched. In that brief moment their eyes met and the left corner of her mouth turned up. She was fifteen years old, and he knew.

The everything and nothingness of that one moment was something he had pondered for two years.

It was a year and a half before he would touch her again. Of course, Severus Snape was not a man prone to flights of fancy, or a man who gave in to his more base impulses. He was still her teacher and the most feared teacher at Hogwarts, two positions that he held to a high standard.

Good breeding and a deep sense of propriety had kept him at an appropriate distance. He was not a pervert nor a criminal. The mere thought of taking something not ready to be taken turned his stomach. A wizard of his caliber knew that if what he had sensed that day in class was true, he could wait. He thought of it as a seed sleeping in the ground, waiting for spring. One day, the seed would be a plant and then a flower. Then he would be allowed, finally, to love her.

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The effects of that day, "The Belladonna Day" as they came to think of it, started almost immediately. While he still took great pains to be the bastard that she and her friends knew him to be, there was a softening to her that began in that moment, germinating in time with that imagined seed.

Her mind had intrigued him in spite of himself from the moment she first appeared in class. That steel trap of a memory, her eagerness, her brilliance at potions... none of it had gone unobserved. Though he punished her for her proximity to The Boy Who Bothered Him, she had been his favorite student. In a sea of dimwits and bunglers, she saw the delicacy of a potion slowly simmering to perfection and, like him, appreciated the subtle beauty of it.

After their brief touch, he had begun to loan her books to read for extra credit. Her voracious mind digested them at a speed that delighted him. She would come to him during his office hours, and they would discuss what she had read.

Nothing in those conversations was improper; the duration of those consultations was unremarkable enough that no one noticed. Hermione Granger always was doing extra reading, extra inches on her essays, extra credit projects. It was only in passing that her fellow students remarked that she was crazy to spend one more minute with

Snape than necessary. Among his fellow faculty members, their beginning went entirely ignored.

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When she was in her sixth year, they began to do extra credit potions projects. The way her mind found problems and sought their solutions fascinated him. Their experiments began by following course curriculum. If they made a memory draught in class, together they would expand the principle until the potion created photographic recall.

It was all very proper and all very explainable if the student was Hermione Granger. And still, what was happening was overlooked to all around them save for the "God, Hermione... how can you stand him?" that had always accompanied his name.

Their conversations took a different turn that year. As they sat and waited for their creations to simmer, they began to converse as people. Telling each other about books they liked, their families, their tastes and preferences, they slowly became friends. She was surprised to find out that in addition to all of the reference volumes that he read, he also liked Muggle fiction. They loaned each other more books, and their conversations about those books became more personal. Friendship was budding and they tended it with care.

Looking forward to their class time together was a given in her sixth year. When he would insult her in front of the class, he would toss in phrases from their private conversations together to soften the sting. He had to insult her in class; he was still Severus Snape, and she was still the best friend of Harry Potter.

Playing to the social appearances that they had created for themselves had buffered them from prying eyes. That year was wonderful; every moment together was precious in a way that they couldn't put their fingers on. They hadn't touched each other the entire year - amazing given the time that they spent in each other's company. When she got on the Hogwarts Express at the end of the year, they exchanged only a look and a smile. That summer, they missed each other.

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The excitement at the thought of her return churned in his stomach as he looked down to Hogsmeade and saw the train arriving. Hastening to take his place at the head table, he waited for his first glimpse of her.

There were doubts in his mind, of course. Their age difference bothered him, as did the student/teacher relationship that must be maintained. But more than anything, what troubled him that day was the idea that the previous year had been nothing more than the wishful thinking of a middle-aged man. Perhaps she didn't feel they way he did; perhaps she was just a bubbly and delightful student; perhaps the depths of the emotion that he felt would go unreturned and the friendship that had bloomed would wither with his rejection.

The crowd of returning students flowed into the Great Hall with typical cacophony. Shouts of greeting, hugs and summer stories were exchanged as the students found their house tables. Where was she?

The unmistakable red hair of a Weasley stood out in the crowd, and he knew she couldn't be far from it.

Suddenly, she was there. Jostling along with the crowd, laughing with her friends, his Hermione was finally there. The evidence of a summer outdoors was apparent in the sun streaked curls and spray of freckles across her nose.

"My God," he thought, "she's beautiful."

Jarred by that thought, he adjusted in his seat. All of her remaining coltishness was gone. In a summer's time she had become a lovely woman.

He watched her laughing with her friends and felt lonely. Apparently he had been put aside in her mind. The foolishness of his anticipation was obvious to him, and he felt as silly as the fourth-year girls that he saw whispering and giggling.

The dejected feeling did not last long. As she moved through the room in conversation, her eyes scanned for something, finally landing softly on him. Seemingly embarrassed, she dipped her head and offered him a shy smile. He returned her smile (carefully, though... Severus Snape could not be seen smiling) and saw hers broaden in response. Relief bathed him and he quickly looked away to be able to retain his Snapely scowl. She hadn't forgotten him!

The realization of her returned feelings carried him through the yearly tedium of speeches and sorting. Tomorrow classes would begin, and they could continue their friendship and see if it bore fruit.

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The first day of classes was the longest of the year for him. Every year it was the same. The returning students behaved towards their potions as if they had been struck by a memory loss charm, and he found himself repeating lessons from previous years. Those students, however, were only marginally more tolerable than dealing with a fresh batch of first years.

He did his best every year to try to instill in them a respect for the subtle art he would try to teach them. Every year his efforts were returned with bumbling and lack of proper respect for the subject matter. He had made a game of trying to pick out "this year's Longbottom" on the first day.

By the time the seventh-year students arrived for their Advanced Potions class his mood was sour and his face deeply scowled. All of it melted away as she walked into the room like a gentle breeze. She found his face and met his eyes as she seemed to glide (How can she be so graceful carrying that load of books?) to her seat.

All through his opening lecture she only broke her gaze to look down at her parchment and scribble notes. The little smile that never left her lips was as warm as the magical fire that fueled their cauldrons.

He had assigned them a fairly difficult potion that first day deliberately. It wasn't the ingredients or their method of inclusion that made this potion tricky, it was the stirring. He had picked this potion on purpose, hoping for a chance to do something he had never done with her.

Patrolling the aisles between the tables, he watched his students concentrate on the wrist movement required to turn the black sludge that currently filled their cauldrons into a shimmering lavender brew. He was grateful that Neville Longbottom had not scored high enough on his O.W.L. to continue studying Potions this year, dismal as he had always been at the subject. Rounding the corner to the table that Hermione was sharing with an apt Ravenclaw boy, he paused to watch them.

She felt his eyes on her and moved her wrist in such a way that could only be a deliberate mistake. He knew then that she knew. Though it had taken a year and a half since "The Belladonna Day," she had caught up to him now.

"Miss Granger," he said brusquely, stepping behind her, "let me help you with the proper wrist technique." He placed his hand on her slim wrist and guided her arm, moving it for her in the proper sequence.

Her skin was so soft compared to his rough hands. Potions work was not a profession that softened the skin. Her reaction to his touch was amazing to him. She was enjoying the feeling of his hand on her arm. He knew it as well as if they had shared Veritatoria. She wanted his touch as much as he wanted to touch her.

Exciting as that thought was, he quickly removed his hand and moved on about the classroom. The realization that she was still his student and still underage (though not for long) crashed down and forced him to move away. He had waited a year and a half already. A man who had the patience and precision to brew potions could surely wait longer. Still, he was undeniably happy. The seed had taken root and was spreading its leaves.

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They readily resumed their extra credit potions projects. The potions that they chose this year were decidedly more advanced and their conversations more personal in proportion. Instead of expanding on curriculum, their projects now were chosen solely for interest and experiment.

Her birthday was tomorrow; she would legally be an adult. He had helped her choose a special potion project for the day, something difficult and of personal interest to her, but with an ingredient that was of particular importance.

The Wolfsbane Potion that they had chosen was suitably complicated, but the thought of helping her friend Remus Lupin focused her mind on the project. They were having a good time, brewing the potion. They chatted and joked even as they gave the task its proper attention. Only one more ingredient to add... He was eager to gauge her reaction.

"Well, Professor," she said cheerfully, "we're almost done with the first phase. We can add the final item."

She looked away from her cauldron and let her finger trace down the page of the Potions book until it landed on the final component.

Her reaction was everything he could have hoped it to be. She smiled and closed her eyes as she breathed the word, "Belladonna."

He passed the herb to her, and once again, the tips of their fingers touched. In contrast to their previous exchange of this particular element, they did not move their hands away. Standing by the cauldron, they remained for a few moments, joined by their fingertips. They met each other's eyes and he felt as though an entire, very intimate conversation passed between them.

He broke their touch before she could and directed her to add the flowering herb to the potion. The potion changed to a silvery color, and it emanated a moon-like glow.

They moved the cauldron to a corner in his office where it would need to cure for one lunar cycle to reach potency. Returning to the lab, she began packing her books more slowly than usual. She seemed to want to prolong the time they were spending together today. Finally, with her bag packed, she heaved it onto her shoulder and prepared to leave.

"Miss Granger," he said, closing the distance between them. She turned to face him. They met each other's eyes as he reached down and took her small, soft hand into his older, roughened one.

"Happy Birthday," he said simply, then raised that hand he was holding to his lips and kissed her fingertips. Her cheeks bloomed with color.

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The power of that small gesture plagued his thoughts for the rest of the day. She had left the lab moments later without a word. Though he only saw her at mealtimes for the rest of the day, he felt that she was never far from him.

As he paced his rooms that evening, his thoughts were consumed with her. That small kiss on the tips of her fingers ignited emotions in him that he did not previously think he would find the opportunity to feel.

He had, of course, been with women, but all of those sexual encounters put together didn't hold a candle to that brief kiss. Oh, God, how he wanted to touch her again. Severus found himself at a loss.

Bound as he was to professional standards, he found that his mind was restless. He was in uncharted waters now. It wasn't that he merely wanted to have her. There was so much more than that.

The emotion that he was feeling when he thought of her overrode the carnal desire on the surface. He loved her. Fleshly longing for her was only a symptom of what they were obligated to keep at a distance.

Moving to his bathroom, he disrobed and stepped into the enclosure, intending to subject himself to the Muggle cliché of "a cold shower" to quell his yearning. Instead, he stood there for a moment with his hand on the tap, feeling his erection throb. He turned on the water and adjusted it to a warm setting.

Tentatively he touched himself and began to indulge in something that he had not succumbed to in all his years at Hogwarts. Severus masturbated while fantasizing about a student.

In his mind he caressed down the slim curves of her body, kissed her nipples and thighs, tasted her skin and folds, and then slowly and gently entered her, made love to her until they both reached a climax together. The fantasy had left him feeling content, if not satisfied, and he readied himself for bed.

Eight floors up in the Gryffindor Tower, Hermione Granger had been succumbing to the same thoughts and actions. Each of them was wondering what the other was thinking. Though stories separated them, they fell asleep together that night and dreamed of each other.

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The embarrassment that flushed both of their faces at the start of class passed quickly. Neither Severus nor Hermione knew what the other had done the night before, so there was no need for it. Class proceeded uneventfully. She hung behind her fellow students after the lesson, and they talked briefly, as they had for the past year, and made plans for the completion of the Wolfsbane and projects for the future.

Fall seemed to pass quickly. They continued their work, but something was decidedly different. The conversations that passed between them now were becoming more intimate. Surpassing merely likes and dislikes, they now talked about their dreams, their fantasies and their hopes. Both of them skirted the issue of their feelings for each other, though in every exchange it was there, just below the surface, impacting everything they said.

Severus and Hermione had fallen hopelessly in love with each other; the brief exchange on her birthday standing as their only kiss. Somehow in the tangible world it was enough for them for now. They never spoke of it, but they both were dreaming of each other regularly and sensed the other was as well.

Fall became winter, and they talked and brewed new and experimental potions as the snow fluttered outside, the cold of the world in contrast to the warmth that they felt together. He felt the season slip quickly past. The holiday break was upon them before they knew it. While she was gone from the school visiting her parents, they were apart for weeks. The delicate ache of loss they had experienced over the summer was now an undeniable longing.

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Classes resumed on January 9th. Palpable relief was the only way he could describe what he felt when she walked into his Potions lab. She was back, near him again.

At the end of class, she approached his desk. He had wondered if she remembered. Drawing a small wrapped gift from her bag, she handed it to him, shyly saying, "Happy Birthday, Professor."

Love for her tightened in his chest as he accepted her package and unwrapped it. Inside the small box, carefully swathed in tissue was a small, perfect branch of belladonna, with the first berries of the season forming at its apex.

"You know, Professor," she said with a mischievous smile and flirtation in her voice, "the effect of belladonna has been called 'a living dream'".

She leaned into him, standing on her toes. Before she could lose her nerve and he could lose his composure, she leaned in further and lightly kissed him on his surprised lips. She pulled away with a small tremble and was out the door of the lab before he could respond.

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Those two precious birthday gifts made his entire body tingle with want and love and anticipation. He had to be more careful now as the days until the end of term passed. Though the infractions were small, he knew that they had crossed the line between teacher and student twice now. In spite of the depths of their emotions for each other, he knew that their behavior had been inappropriate.

As if she could read his mind, Hermione maintained respectful distance. He was grateful that her exams were approaching and they could no longer spend much extra time together. That small and fragile kiss had broken the dam, and he knew that if they were alone together for long, he wouldn't be able to stop himself from taking her and showing her how much he truly loved her.

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In previous years the coming of spring was something that Severus looked forward to with much anticipation. Not only did the warmer weather engender growth and fresh potion ingredients, but he began counting the days until the students left and he could be at peace in his lab without the muttering half wits that marked his days of the term.

This year was, of course, distinctly different. The first fresh green of the season and the early blooming bulbs made him think of her, his flower. The countdown to the departure of the Hogwarts Express filled him with a sense of doom. Each day that passed left him feeling like a large clock was ominously tolling midnight.

They spent as much time as they reasonably could together. Mercifully, no one was suspicious of their moments together. Why would they be? Their extra credit work had been interrupted numerous times over the past two years by students and faculty alike. No one had witnessed anything more salacious than the Potions master and his pupil inclined towards one another, poring over recipes.

April came with showers and tulips; beauty was all around them, but how could anything he had ever seen compare to how beautiful she was to him now? Certainly there was nothing in the world more beautiful than the feelings that they had for each other, unspoken and waiting?

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Though the distance was equally painful to them both, without a great deal of regular communication, he found himself the victim of doubt. Perhaps he was just a schoolgirl crush to her; perhaps she was only enamoured of him because he was her teacher; perhaps she would get on the train in a week and be out of his life forever. The blooms of their emotion would wither on the vine and be no more.

He stayed in his classroom on that final day of term. Upbraiding himself for his childish behavior, he hid in his lab and puttered around, putting things to rights for the summer. Above him he could hear the students shouting their goodbyes to each other and the carriages pulling away to Hogsmeade towards the waiting train.

Of course he had hoped that she would come down to the lab and find him. He had hoped that she would skip her train and seek him out.

"I am a fool," he thought to himself. "I was deluded to think she ever truly wanted me."

Seeking to calm his troubled thoughts, he went into his office to get the sprig of belladonna she had given him. He would crush a minute quantity of the leaves and add it to his tea. He would let her precious birthday gift soothe his thoughts.

Leaving his office with that small branch in his hand, he found that he could not stop smiling even now at the thought of her. He looked up, ready to wave his wand to Nox the lights in the lab before heading to his private quarters.

She was standing at the front of the room, leaning on his desk.

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He rushed to her then, pulling her into him and giving her the kiss that they had wanted to give each other for so long. They held that kiss for a long time, neither wanting to part. Everything that they couldn't do or say to each other poured out of them and into one another. The emotions were clear and true; a Muggle could see them, much less an accomplished Legilimens.

It seemed funny to him that now that they were no longer teacher and student and could say everything that they had wanted to say for so long, there simply wasn't a need. The kiss that they shared spoke more eloquently than any words.

Unable to wait a moment longer, he led her by her previously kissed hand to the entrance of his private rooms. Neither spoke, both knowing where they were going and feeling the intensity when they reached their destination.

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He gently laid her on his bed. Their kisses never ceased, and they undressed each other with tender haste. With more love than they could contain, they began to embark on their living dream together.

The taste of her sweet mouth was nothing compared to the delicious skin of her breasts. He teased and laved her nipples in turn, loving the feeling of her hands in his hair. He moved down her body slowly, cherishing her flavor. He thanked the Gods in heaven that he was not a randy teenager that would rush to enter her and waste the miracle of her body.

He felt her shudder as he reached the curls between her legs. His tongue danced across her folds and tickled her pleasure point, causing her to moan with desire. Caressing her with his tongue, he gently probed her. He tasted her nectar and felt his need growing.

He crawled up the length of her body, leaving a trail of kisses. She had tried to push his head back down between her legs, but he wouldn't allow it. Severus wanted to see if they could cast a very special spell.

The tip of his penis touched her wet entrance, causing them both to moan with need and craving. He slowly entered her folds, rocking his body gently so as not to cause her unnecessary pain. She moaned and pulled him into a deep kiss, and he slipped further inside her.

She was so tight and so wet he wanted to burst. He kept himself in check until he felt that thin membrane that was the last barrier between the girl she was and the woman she had become.

He wanted to be gentle with her, but she grabbed his ass and pulled him into herself, piecing through her flesh until he was deep inside her and they were as close as two people could be. They found a rhythm between them. Her hips moved in time to his thrusts, the love between them building with their pleasure.

He leaned back, pulling her up with him until she was seated astride his lap. With their arms around each other's waist they rocked back and forth. Love poured out of their eyes to each other. Their bodies communicated all of the feelings that they had not been able to express. The warmth in their loins was spreading through them, bringing them closer to climax. The spell he hoped they could cast seemed a trivial thing to him now that he was inside her and she enveloping him.

Their rocking became more intense as he thrust and she pulled him deeper, deeper, deeper. An orgasm rose between them, starting in the hot, wet place they shared and moving up their bodies. He sensed a change in the room. The lighting seemed to have a pinkish cast to it. Severus wondered briefly if the spell was happening or if it was just the sun setting through the enchanted windows.

Wrapping their arms around each other and pulling themselves together until their chests were pressed against one another, their mutual climax overtook them. For one ephemeral moment the air seemed to crackle before they felt a rush of warmth circle them. As their climax ebbed, a feeling of profound intoxication overtook them, drawing them into unconsciousness.

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They awoke slowly, instinctively reaching for each other in the fading daylight. Her eyes fluttered as she took in the changed room. Surrounding the bed, covering every surface, spilling around them, were roses.

Drinking in the heady perfume, she looked to him.

"What is this?" she asked breathlessly.

"Don't tell me you haven't come across this spell in all of your studying?" he teased back.

"It must be some sort of potent love spell. Did you do this?" She gave him a quizzing and amused look.

"Yes, you're right, it is a love spell, though one that we cast together. It is called Millefioriamoria. Can you guess what that means?" he challenged.

"Hmmm..." she murmured. He watched her, seeing the gears of her mind turning the word over and over. "A thousand flowers of love?" she asked. "My God, that sounds a bit overwrought."

"Your translation is literal, but correct," he told her, pulling her into his body. "It is a spell that is cast by two lovers when they first allow their love to flower. It only happens when love is true."

"Ironic that it came with my deflowering!" she joked.

Severus laughed with her, too, enjoying her quick wit and lack of embarrassment.

"What does the spell do?" she asked. "Other than prove true love?"

"Well, it is part spell and part superstition. The spell creates these roses as a visible indicator of true love. These flowers will remain fresh until one of us marries. If we marry another, they will wither and die. But, if we marry each other and you carry them on our wedding day, legend says there will be a thousand blessings upon our home," he said. "It's a very old spell from southern Italy. What we think overwrought up here in damp, chilly Scotland is par for the course in warmer climates."

"It's a beautiful spell," she murmured, inhaling the scent deeply. "What shall we do with it?"

"We should marry, and live a life filled with blessings, not the least of which being our very true love for each other," he told her.

"Professor Snape...are you asking me to marry you?" she asked with an impish smile.

"Oh my love, I am asking you for so much more than that," he said, breathing in the scent of roses and her hair. "I am asking you to be my wife, to share our lives together, to let me honor and worship you, to let me witness the person you are now and will become, to let me call you mine and call myself yours and yours alone. I promise to cherish you as my lover and dearest friend. I promise to hold you above all others. I promise to be all you could hope for and astound you as often as I can."

"Oh Severus," she said. "I wa..." He put a finger softly on her lips.

"Though I hope to spend many, many years listening to everything that amazing mind of yours can think to say, right now I need to say this. Hermione Jane Granger, will you do me the honor of marrying me?"

In the pause that followed as he awaited her response, he thought his heart would break. Those few seconds seemed like an eternity in which he was able to play out a million refusals.

"Nothing would make me happier, Severus," she said, smiling softly, then putting her hand on his cheek and drawing his lips to hers.

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Severus and Hermione wed that summer with the roses their love created all around them. They wondered sometimes if the spell was responsible for their happiness or if it was as simple as the abiding love between them. The years together did seem to be filled with a thousand blessings. Two blessings, however, were infinitely more special than the rest: they named their twin blessings Bella and Donna.