

Parody: The Amazing Marriage Law

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The Marriage Law has hit Hogwarts once again. Hermione and Severus are tossed together--to their delight.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 2

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Disclaimer: All characters are owned by J.K. Rowling. I own nothing here except the plot. Happy reading!

A round of thanks goes out to amsev, who is amazingly good natured and has a fun sense of humor.

SW's Note: As the title says, this is a parody of the Marriage Law. When I first discovered the challenge and read many of the stories out there (back before canon had changed so much and became so important to me), many of the things that I read resembled what's included in this story...the off characterizations, plot, and dialogue. Hahaha! Have fun and don't forget to snicker.

Hermione Granger sat in Dumbledore's office, her eyes full of tears. "How could they do such a thing?"

Minerva McGonagall pulled her into a tight embrace. "There, there," she soothed.

"Headmaster, I don't see how they could force me to marry someone I do not love. Can this be possible? What can I do to avoid it?" Hermione asked through sobs. Severus Snape walked forward and gave her a handkerchief. "Thanks," she mumbled absently.

Albus frowned and shook his head. "They have deemed to pass this law, though I do not see their reasoning to be valid. They feel that the purebloods need to be taken down a notch after what Voldemort tried to do. They are forcing all purebloods to marry Muggle-borns for the next five years to ensure that they know their place in society. No wizard is greater than another simply because of the blood flowing through his veins."

McGonagall coughed. "Albus, they are blaming infertility on the inbreeding, as well as the rise in Squib births. They feel that alone is reason enough. I don't agree with their laws either, but surely she doesn't have to marry right away."

"She became eighteen two months ago on the day Harry killed Voldemort. She is of the mandatory age. Her name, along with others, is on a list. These lists will be reviewed by all, and then offers will be made. She will have one month to decide which wizard she wants to wed, or she will be jailed," Albus said sadly. "Or, worse, Obliviated and banished."

"Ridiculous," Snape thundered. "She helped Potter take down Voldemort! She is the cleverest witch of the age. They can't force her to do anything really, now can they?"

"I am afraid this is out of my hands, Severus, until we can get it appealed. I asked you here because I would like for you to give me a list of all purebloods over the age of

eighteen in residence at the castle. You should know almost all by name and character. Maybe we can get one of them and Hermione to share an affection. If that is the case, at least it won't be as if she were auctioned off," Dumbledore said firmly. "I don't know if we can stop this law in time, Hermione, but we will try to. You have a month to decide after your first offer. If you get one and only one, then you, by law, will be forced to marry him."

"What about Ron?" she asked immediately. "I'm not in love with him, but he is a pureblood. He's a good friend to me and would do it."

"Ron is not yet eighteen," McGonagall said softly. "Though I wish for your sake he was."

Hermione groaned loudly. "Some Christmas present, isn't it? Forcing me to marry when I had plans to come here to teach and do private research. I just can't bear it." She sniffed loudly. Then a glint of hope lit in her eyes. "Headmaster, maybe nobody will offer for me. Everyone knows that I am too much of a studious girl, not very fun at all, and I am rather plain."

"Nonsense," Snape hissed, then blinked. "You would be a prize catch for most pureblood families. You are the cleverest witch of the age, and you helped to bring down the Dark Lord. That shows merit. You could be only half as attractive as you are, and they would still want you."

Had he just told her she was pretty in a roundabout way? She met his eyes for a moment before he turned away.

"Though I hate to say this, your bringing down Voldemort may be a motive in itself. There are some families who may wish to inflict pain and horrors on you. I should ask you to choose wisely, and I will give you advice on those that may have been loyal to the Dark Lord."

"Oh my!" Hermione exclaimed. "You mean to say, they would rape, torture, and possibly murder me as pay back?"

"I do," he said evenly. "I do not wish to scare you, Miss Granger, but there are many less-than-honorable wizards who would enjoy a chance to make a sport of this law. They would abide by the law, and then you would be theirs to do with what they will."

"Severus!" McGonagall admonished.

"He's right, Minerva. Hermione needs to think this through. She can try on her own to entice a match, or she can sift through those who offer for her with Severus to see where she would be treated best." Dumbledore sighed. "I fear these are dark times draining away the light we've recently been able to see."

Hermione wiped her tears away and raised her chin proudly. "I will succeed in this, sir. Do not worry for me. I will get through this, though I hope nobody will want me."

Snape smirked. Gryffindor courage shining through at last. He knew that there would be offers for Hermione, and he could only hope the witch would find a suitable match. It wouldn't do for her to fall into the hands of someone like Lucius Malfoy, who had weaseled his way out of Azkaban once again. He would surely break her down within the year if it were his desire. Snape had worked with Hermione side by side for three months creating a strengthening potion for Harry and other members of the Order to ensure a victory for their side in the Phoenix War. She was extremely intelligent, very pretty, and well balanced. He could only hope for her sake some young boy here would offer for her.

"I am glad Mum and Dad aren't around to see this," she whispered softly. "If they hadn't been murdered, this would have killed them anyway." McGonagall embraced her tightly again, allowing tears to fall from her eyes as well.

Snape could take no more of this feminine show of emotion. "I request to be dismissed so that I may start on our list of possible candidates for Miss Granger, Albus." Albus nodded and went to hug the young witch as well. Snape spun on his heel and swept through the door. He mentally cursed all the way back down to his dungeons. *Damn Ministry! They are a right bunch of fools. Hopefully, we can find a way to rid the world of this law before Miss Granger has to choose a husband. Before any young witch has to endure this.* It was more like enslaving women.

It's the MLC for SS/HGWeehee***

That night at the evening meal, he watched her as she spoke to her friends. He could see the pain in her expressions, though she tried to be strong about it. They were trying to keep her spirits up. He didn't blame them. There were only a handful of students of pureblood and of the correct age that Hermione could choose from. He knew she would not like most choices. Most were from Slytherin. Nonetheless, he had compiled a list for her of all who could possibly be approached. He would never admit it out loud, but he had come to respect her. She was very intelligent, had patience, was practical, and saw things through to the end. He knew she had a bright future and would be able to make a difference in the world.

After the meal, they met again in Dumbledore's office. "Can I see the list, Severus?"

"Of course, Albus, though I fear it's not a very large one." He handed the parchment to Dumbledore but never looked at Hermione. He watched as his mentor read over the list once, then handed it to McGonagall. She looked grim as she handed it over to Hermione.

Hermione sighed. "Of course there would be no one on here that I am friendly with or who isn't involved with someone else. I'll just keep hoping that no one will offer for me."

Dumbledore pulled out a second parchment. "There have been two offers for you already that were sent this afternoon. I am afraid that you have one month from today to start deciding. You can choose from either of these two offers or any others you may get before the deadline."

Hermione's face went pale as she read the two names. Draco Malfoy and Gregory Goyle. "Oh my! Sweet Merlin! I expect they are doing this to... to do as Professor Snape says! I would die first."

Severus walked forward to look at the names. He, too, paled. "Surely there will be others, Miss Granger. You need not worry about these two right now. You have time."

McGonagall asked, "Albus, what exactly are the requirements of a marriage? Maybe one of them could be reasoned with."

The headmaster sighed. "Minerva, they expect consummation on the wedding night, and the witch must become pregnant within the first two years or else the wizard will be able to divorce her. Contraceptive potions are forbidden, and the Ministry reserves the right to test occasionally to see if any are in the system and that attempts are indeed being made."

"Well, that might not be so bad, Albus. They could pretend to consummate and then live separate lives until the two years are up. By then, someone else would be of age that she could marry."

"Ha!" Severus said. "You don't think either of these two would agree with that, do you? They will do one of two things. The first being to use her repeatedly for those two years while finding a way around contraceptive potions and not allowing her to conceive or..." He closed his eyes and rubbed his face. "Or they will be sure to abide by the 'law' and get an heir and a spare... then be done with her somehow."

Hermione gasped. Minerva gave him a stern look. "Well, thank you, Severus, for destroying what little hope we've had."

An owl swooped in, and Dumbledore took a parchment from it before sending it off. "Another one. Marcus Flint," he said. "He was here your first couple of years."

Hermione nodded. "I accidentally killed his father in a duel on the final battle. I guess we are safe to assume that I will not be choosing him."

The room was quiet for a while. "Hermione, are you a virgin?"

Her face went red. "Yes."

"Well, that's one less embarrassment then," Dumbledore said softly. "They check you before and after to be sure the wedding has been consummated. If you wouldn't have been, they would have put an official in the room to watch. How old timey!"

Snape felt sorry for her. She sat back in her chair with her head bowed as if in thought. She wasn't crying, but he could see that she wanted to. *Damn, stupid Ministry morons!* His chain of thought was broken by Albus. "Severus, this list is incomplete."

"Headmaster, I put all that I knew of on there. Whom did I miss?" he asked, moving forward.

"Your name is not on here," Albus said with a twinkle in his eyes.

Snape froze. "Well, I... that is because..." He didn't know what to say. He was a professor and nearly twenty years older than she was. Surely, she wouldn't want to marry him. He never expected to marry. Not for a long time. He had given up on that long ago.

"You are a pureblood, Severus, and still well within the marrying age. You've not yet reached your mid-life. You won't be there for another what, forty years or so?" Minerva prodded.

He turned to eye her. They had been scheming, hadn't they? This entire time they had hoped that he would offer for Hermione. That had to be the real reason that they made him work on the list. Albus could have easily checked the books and made his own list. Snape did not like being manipulated. Surely, the girl would never approve. He glanced at her. She was shocked, but was that a look of hope in her eyes?

"I am her professor! It's unethical. Not to mention that I am much older than she! We've only just begun to be able to tolerate each other within these past six months!" Snape said angrily to his meddling headmaster. He sneered at the thought. One of the damned Golden Trio permanently attached to him? No way.

Minerva scoffed. "Why, Albus is fifty years older than I am, Severus. He and I have found that keeping company is to our advantage. Age is just a number in the Wizarding world after all. Think of the service you would be doing her. She wanted to teach here anyway and do research. She would be able to continue that dream if you would do this, and you would be able to get an heir. It might not be a love match, but I am sure you could work something out."

"I will not be forced into this!" Snape spat. "I like my solitude! I have done enough horrors in my past without inflicting any more pain on anyone... especially not her."

"Professor..." Hermione began timidly. "I would accept if you would offer." Her voice was so soft he had to look at her to be sure she'd said something. "I would try not to get in the way of your... privacy."

Snape's mouth dropped open. He tried to find his voice, but he couldn't. Had she been a part of this? No, of course, she hadn't. She couldn't even meet his eyes. He was just a way out. A way to stay at the castle. *Hell, no!* Without another word, he swept out of the headmaster's office.

Hermione bit her lip. She knew that he had gone. "I guess that's a no," she said, trying to sound brave.

"He'll come around, Miss Granger. You have one month to decide. We'll send petitions and attend meetings and do what we have to do to get rid of this stupid law." He smiled. "I think if you, perhaps, had a talk with Severus, it would change his mind. He probably feels as if he is being pushed into this. He wouldn't want to force you into anything."

"Right, dear. Don't be offended by him. Give him a little time," McGonagall soothed.

"All right," Hermione said. "Thank you for trying." She accepted one last lemon drop from Dumbledore and made her way back to her common room. He'd turned her down even after she'd told him she would accept him. She could understand, though, why he had refused. He didn't want to be forced into anything any more than she did. She knew she wasn't much to look at. If she was, then why hadn't more guys noticed her or offered for her?

How would she feel being his wife? Could she actually do it? Of course she could. She'd had a crush on him since they'd started working together. He was graceful when he worked, his hands and voice were mesmerizing, and he had risked his life over and over to save them. He was handsome in his own right: dark hair that he kept shoulder length, dark eyes that could look into one's very soul, sensuous lips. She felt herself blushing. She would never try to force him in this though. If she did, then she would be no better than the Ministry.

Once in the common room, she made her way to Harry and Ron. They were sitting near the fire in their favorite spot. "Well? What did you come up with?" Harry asked.

Hermione sighed, and she began to explain the ones available. She saw them crinkle their noses and make faces. Then she told them the three that had so far offered for her. Ron went mental. "Damn Slytherin trash! You can't let them, Mione. I think banishment would be easier than to cope with them."

"Easy for you to say, Ron!" Hermione said roughly. "I don't want to be banished, and I certainly don't want to go to Azkaban. I can only hope that someone else will accept me."

"Who?" Harry asked through narrowed eyes.

"Professor Snape is eligible," Hermione said softly.

"Snape!" Ron nearly shouted. "You don't want that overgrown bat offering!" Then he paused. "You do, don't you? You're still on about how decent and noble he is, aren't you?"

Hermione said nothing. Harry spoke though. "Ron, leave off. Don't you think that he would be better than those louts trying to offer for her? At least he wouldn't try to... take advantage of the situation."

"Wouldn't he though? I could just see him now, greasy hands pawing all over Hermione's skin! He's probably just been waiting for the chance to pounce on her!" Ron said hotly. "I wish I was old enough!"

"Thanks," she said softly. "I told him if he would offer that I would accept, but he got mad and left."

Ron swore indignantly. "Well, what the hell is that about? He is right lucky that you would have anything to do with him, selfish prat! He's lucky you would even consider him!"

Harry started laughing. "Ron! You should make up your mind. You were just accusing him of taking advantage of the situation, and now you are mad because he actually isn't."

Ron's tirade was paused. "Bloody hell. I just don't know what to think aside from the fact that the law is ludicrous! What about... Fred, Hermione? I am sure he would marry you."

"No, Ron. I am not going to force any friend into a life like this. I would like to at least feel something for the person I marry. No offense to Fred of course, but I know he fancies someone else anyway. I would not do that to him," she said bravely.

Harry smiled. "You think he will change his mind, Snape?"

"Dumbledore thinks so, but he seemed set against it. I wouldn't mind at all," she said. "I could stay on here and do what I've always dreamed of."

"I know you wouldn't. Not since you already respect him the way that you do. Could you grow to love him?" Harry asked softly. Neither was taking note of Ron's undisguised horror.

She sighed. "I think I could, Harry, but you know he doesn't like to have anyone close to him. I don't think he would let me." She got up. "I think I'll go for a walk. Wow! It is near curfew already. Can I borrow your cloak, Harry?"

Harry went to get his cloak, and she made her way to the second-highest tower in the castle. Not many people came to this tower, as it was across the school near the library. Most of them went to the Astronomy tower since it was closer to the dorms. She loved the peaceful night air. It wasn't very windy, though it was cold and crisp. No snow was falling either. She made her way to lean against the thick ledge all the way to the far left. She had a beautiful view of the forest and part of the lake from where she stood. Something always drew her here when she needed time alone. When she used to want to come here to brood over the latest happenings in the war, this was where she would come. When she was upset because Ron or Harry acted like prats, this was where she would come.

She thought about Malfoy first. He had mellowed out since his father had bought his way out of Azkaban, but he was never overly friendly. Although he was attractive, and she did not fear him, she could never marry him because of his father. She knew the type of man that he was. He would probably take matters into his own hands and rape her... torture her. Draco would do nothing to stop it, being the weak git that he was.

Her thoughts then went to Gregory Goyle. What was he doing offering for her? It was probably a ploy of Lucius' as well. Knowing she would likely not accept Draco, he felt someone close was the next best thing. Goyle's father and mother had been killed, and he was now staying with the Malfoys.

Marcus Flint had never been a Death Eater as far as she knew, but he hated her for killing his father. She hadn't done it intentionally. She had Stupefied him, and he'd been impaled on an iron fence from the force of the hex. She had cried about that and still felt guilty. It was the first time someone had died by her hand. Flint had as much as told her that he would avenge his father's death somehow. Maybe this was his attempt. He would definitely try to do all those things that Professor Snape had said.

Severus Snape. He was tall, dark, and handsome...or so she thought deep down. Even if his nose was a bit large, it only added character to his enigmatic face. His voice alone could melt her on occasions. He was very intimidating, yet very approachable outside of the classroom. She had thought they had become 'friends' while working together. Why would he turn her down now? Did he have someone that he fancied? They could really be great partners if he would at least try.

"Out for a little walk in the moonlight?" Snape's voice cut into her thoughts. She turned to stare at the object of her thoughts. She had run into him here more than once.

"Yes, I just needed time alone to think. Away from the common room, that is," she said softly. He simply nodded and looked out on the grounds as well. For a long time, they just stood near each other in silence. Each lost in thoughts.

"Miss Granger, about earlier. I apologize if I sounded..."

"Don't worry about it, Professor. I don't blame you for not wanting to be locked up with someone like me," she said softly. "I understand."

He looked at her oddly. "What do you mean?"

"Well, an insufferable, too young, know-it-all, Gryffindor, Mudblood, of course. Not to mention plain features and unruly hair. I am sorry they put you in that position. I honestly didn't know they were on about it," she said, not able to look at him.

"I assure you, Miss Granger, that I no longer care about one's bloodline. Nor do I feel you are insufferable. We did get on quite well. I have come to... respect your intellect. However, it is a shame that you are a Gryffindor." At this, he smirked mischievously.

She grinned and looked at him. He had just tried to make a joke. "Well, Slytherins aren't high in my book either, sir, no offense, but it does seem I am destined to marry one."

"Touché," he said softly. "Your hair is not all that bad. It could be worse. You could be stuck over potions all day and have it constantly oiled."

"I like your hair, Professor. It's so black it appears blue," she said and then blushed, realizing she'd just paid him a compliment.

He took no notice. "I have to wash it daily to rid it of the chemicals from the potions."

"And it smells good," she mumbled to herself, hoping he didn't hear her.

He'd heard her though and brought his piercing eyes to meet hers. "Miss Granger, whatever you may think, I am not a nice man. I have never loved anyone before aside from my mother. I have done many horrible things in this life in the name of a good cause. I would not tarnish you with my past." He hoped this would let her down easy. If she only knew what he had done in his life, she would forget that she would want to marry him as a last resort.

"Professor, I know more about you than you think, and as far as I am concerned, you have paid for any sins you have committed...before and after you joined Dumbledore's side. Without you, it would have been harder for us to win this war. You are everything I would have wanted in a husband. In truth, I care about you already. I suppose it was all those hours we spent working on the Order's potion." She sighed. "I don't know. But, if you would have me, I would be with you for always."

He was stunned. No one had ever told him such kind words. Well, Albus and Minerva had... His mother had when he was younger, but no woman had ever said she cared. He saw the truth in her eyes and could hear it on her voice. She was too young... and a student! He had to make her see things his way. "I have killed people."

"So have I," she rebutted.

"I have raped people," he said menacingly, eyes lowering.

She grinned wickedly. "I have thought about it."

His eyes snapped to meet hers, and he almost smiled, but he was too surprised. "Whom?"

"You, of course," she said, giggling.

"Miss Granger! I was being serious."

"I know, sir. And I know that you... had to do those. It is forgiven, but you don't need my words," she said softly.

"I did some of those things before I turned over a new leaf, so as you see, at some point, I did like who I was."

"But you changed."

"Did I? How can you know that I am still not the sinister man that everyone else sees?" he questioned, eyebrow raised.

"Because you wouldn't do all the things that you do otherwise. Besides, I trust you completely."

Trust. That was something that had been hard for him to gain for a long time. Albus had been the first one to grant him that once he had come back to the good side of the war. It had all happened when he had found out that Voldemort was after the Potters. He still owed James a life debt, and he had become fond of Lily for her intellect and

good nature, though they had been only slightly friends at one point. He had gone to Dumbledore, and with his information, the Potters had been able to escape three times, but he had not been able to stop the final visit Voldemort had paid to them. He had been on another mission for the Dark Lord at the time, and he had known only at the last minute where the Dark Lord had gone. He had found out their location even after they had taken a Secret-Keeper. By the time he had gone to warn Dumbledore, it had been too late. Lily and James had been killed.

"I have slept with men," he said, trying a new tactic.

She shrugged. "I have kissed a girl."

"What?" He was shocked.

She grinned mischievously. "Ginny and I wanted to practice a bit for our dates one night. She was going to Hogsmeade with Harry, and I was going with Ron. Unfortunately, Ron did not kiss as well as his sister."

"Miss Granger, you surprise me! I would have never known." Indeed this was a surprise. Did she fancy witches then? "Is a witch more to your liking?"

"No, I don't feel anything for her. Like I said, it was just practice. Not that I have used it since, mind. I kissed Viktor on the cheek in my fourth year, I snogged with Ron in my sixth year, and I have kissed Harry a few times, but that is about it," she said, blushing.

"Potter kissed you?" This was interesting, yet ghastly.

"Well, friendly kisses, more like. Then one night we had some spiked butterbeer, and he said he wanted to kiss Ginny, but he was afraid that he didn't kiss good enough. He was remembering some mishap with Cho from the year before," she said with a grin. "So, I told him to have a go at it. He kisses better than Ron."

Snape chuckled. "I saw his kiss with Cho during the Occlumency lessons. He was quite nervous and shocked if I recall."

"Do you prefer wizards?"

Caught by surprise, his mouth gaped open. Why that little chit! She was using his method against him. "No, I do not. Voldemort had ways to break us, and then we had ways to break new members. And when we were sent to do things, gender made no difference." He smirked when she blanched. Now she was finally understanding things.

"I'm sorry you had to go through that," she whispered and looked out toward the night.

What the hell? "Miss Granger... this would not work." How could he make her see what he was saying? "I am too old for you for one. And..."

"Stop right there. You are only twenty years older than me. My dad was sixteen years older than my mum, and that is a big difference in the Muggle world. Our world is different. You heard McGonagall. You won't be middle-aged for another forty years, Professor." She shook her head. "Stop making excuses and just say you don't want me."

Something clicked. How long since he had been with a willing woman that he was attracted to? One this fresh, innocent, smart, beautiful? If he thought of it that way, it was never. "But, I do want you..." he murmured and pulled her roughly to him. He brushed back a stray hair that had blown onto her face before none-too-gently kissing her. His lips were demanding and unrelenting as they crushed into hers. He was pleased that she didn't back away, and she was submitting to his ministrations. She was even doing her best to kiss him back. When he felt himself harden, he pushed her away. *Damn! Lust after a girl... woman... who is a student!* "I am not a gentle man."

She bit her lip as he'd seen her do many times in class. Nervousness? Fear? Thoughtfulness? "... I don't mind," she said softly, although he saw the wonder in her eyes.

"All right, Miss Granger. You win. If you get no other offers to your liking, I will offer for your binding to me in a Wizard's Ceremony. Though I will not change anything about myself, I expect you to be loyal to me, and you will not interfere in my personal affairs nor my work, understood?" She nodded shyly. "And I will not request that you share my bed except of course on our wedding night. If you decide you want a child, then you can approach me. All clear?"

"Yes," she breathed, barely a whisper. She smiled brightly then. "Will I be able to teach here and do my own private research?"

"I do not see where that would be a problem. I do admire that you would still like to work even though you don't have to. Remember what I said. You will be loyal to me and do nothing that would bring me shame." He bowed slightly. "Good evening."

"Good night, Professor," she called to his retreating back. He had kissed her! He really had kissed her! She could still smell his cologne, some fresh woody scent. She touched her lips softly. She could feel his lips. Taste the liquor that was on his breath. He would marry her. He wanted her. She smiled. "My hero," she said, looking up at the stars.

Severus slammed into his chambers and summoned another drink for himself. "Damn!" he cursed. Why had he let himself become carried away like that? She was a student! He was fighting a losing battle. He could no more send her off to wed one of those little arses than he could keep himself from wedding her himself. All she requested was to be able to work even though they were married. He secretly hoped she had no other offers to her liking. That one kiss had changed the way he saw her. She was a prospective mate now. She responded to him and had agreed to his terms. She could... no, would belong to him. Soon.

It's the MLC for SS/HGWeehee***

"What are you smiling about?" Ron asked thickly, chewing breakfast sausages.

"I have a better outlook on my future suddenly." She lowered her voice to a whisper where only Harry and Ron could hear. "Professor Snape said that he would have me if I found no one else that I liked." She beamed brightly.

"I'm glad, Mione," Harry said immediately.

Ron swallowed his food. "Er... I guess that's good then?"

"Of course it is!" Hermione said crossly. "He didn't seem to really want to, but I think maybe he took pity on me. He will allow me to work and continue with my own research!"

"No wonder he is sitting up there looking all smug today. He's getting a wife. Who would have thought?" Ron said, sucking more food in as he spoke.

"Does he?" Hermione asked, not wanting to turn around.

"He seems pleased," Harry said. "I think that he will be good to you, Mione. I really do. Things have changed between us this past year, and I have much more respect for him now. I wish you luck."

"Thanks, Harry," she said sincerely.

Suddenly, the morning owls came. One of the school owls swooped down on her and left when she took the parchment. She opened it up to find a letter from Professor Snape! She smiled and read it quickly.

Hermione, I have already put in the offer for you. I think it is imperative that we wed before your month is out. I caught a portion of a conversation between Mr. Malfoy and Mr. Goyle. It didn't bode well for you. I think you would be safer if we did our binding ceremony soon. As I said before, I am not a very loving man, but I will see that you are protected and happy. Please let me know immediately if you would like this or if you have, indeed, chosen another suitor. Yours, Severus

She felt the heat rise in her cheeks. He wanted to wed soon. She had a suspicion that he might have decided he truly wanted her and was afraid that someone else would come along. He needn't worry about that. Her decision had been made, and if he wanted to be wed soon, for whatever reason, then so be it. She turned toward his seat at the high table and met his eyes. She nodded and could have sworn she saw a smile on his face before he nodded in return.

"What's that?" Ron asked.

"Just a note," she said. "I'll explain later." She got up quickly to head back to her dorm. She wanted to go read over the note again in private. She slipped it into her pocket and walked out. Not far from the hall in a corridor just off Gryffindor Tower, she walked into the path of Goyle. "Pardon me," she said as she made her way around him.

"Where do you think you're going?" he asked menacingly.

"To my common room, if you please," she said as nicely as she could muster. She loathed him.

"We don't please," Malfoy said, stepping out of the shadows. "You need to choose which of us you want before he and I start fighting. My father told us he put in for you from each of us. Go on then. Which of us will it be?"

"Neither," she said calmly. "Do you not think I had other offers?"

"Are you mad? Flint will kill you," Malfoy said incredulously. "And, besides, Father said he would not let anyone else have you. You are too good of an alliance to the family to pass up, what with all your Order, Ministry, and Potter ties."

"I didn't say I was choosing Flint either," she said. "Please let me pass." She had no fear of Malfoy or Goyle. She would duel with them if she had to, but she would rather not.

"Who is it then? Tell me, and I will duel for you," Malfoy sneered. "I never thought I would say this, but I don't think I would mind much having you around to shag. At least Flint's dirty hands wouldn't be on you."

Before she could answer, she heard a cold voice from behind her. "Wand at the ready, Mr. Malfoy." Snape had followed her and must have heard at least part of the conversation.

"What, sir?" Malfoy asked numbly. "I was saying that I would duel her suitor, not her."

Goyle guffawed.

"I heard what you said, Mr. Malfoy, and I trust you now realize your error," Snape said, stepping forward menacingly. "No?" he goaded when Malfoy didn't answer. "Let me explain. Hermione is going to be my wife. Therefore, that makes me her suitor. Did you not just request to duel against me?"

"No, sir. I did not realize that it was you. I decline a duel. I am no match for you," Draco said, looking completely surprised and a little afraid.

Snape raised an eyebrow at Goyle. The fat lug shook his head. "Not me, sir. I don't care much to be married anyway."

"Do send my regards to Lucius, Draco," Snape said before taking Hermione by the arm to lead her to her common room. Once they were out of earshot, he asked, "Are you all right?"

"I am. Thank you," she replied, meeting his gaze.

"Now do you understand my desire... er... need to move this forward?"

"Yes. All you need to do is let me know when, and I will be ready," she said bravely.

His gaze softened slightly as he took her hand in his for a kiss. "Tonight then. The headmaster will oversee us. You will need one wizard to give you away and one witch to stand for you. I have accounts for all shops in Hogsmeade. I can give you leave to go today and get what you will need. Charge it to me. I only ask that you bring Potter and Weasley with you. They are the only ones that I trust would protect you at all costs," he said, sounding like he was closing a business deal. "I will make arrangements for Arthur Weasley to be here as the witnessing Ministry Official. Would you like his wife to come?"

"I would very much like that," she said, feeling nervous.

"I am not sure that they will allow Madam Pomfrey to be the one to check... your body today and tomorrow. They need to be sure that we have consummated our binding. If you are truly untouched, then nobody need witness our act," he stated.

"Oh," she said. "I am not spoiled."

Yet, he thought wickedly. But that night she would become his wife in all senses of the word. "I believe you, though the Ministry doesn't want to be made a fool of." He paused at her look of fear. "Are you all right, Miss Granger?"

She nodded, but then decided it was best to be honest. "Sir, what if... what if you don't... like me?"

"I tolerate you now. I find we got along well these past few months, so as long as you don't interfere with my private work, I see no reason we can't get on well," he said, unsure of why it mattered to her suddenly.

"No, you misunderstand. I don't know... what to do. Tonight," she said, blushing furiously.

He leaned forward and whispered in her ear, "I am an excellent teacher if nothing else, Hermione."

She smiled nervously when he moved away. "What are the other arrangements?"

"You will live with me of course as my wife. I will not stop you from seeing your friends. I will still allow you to take my classes, though I will request that Albus grades you. I don't want anyone questioning your grades."

"All right. Where do I meet you later?" she asked, suddenly feeling very brave.

"I will come for you around five and escort you to Albus' office where he will bind us. Have your two choices ready by then as well. After everyone eats the evening meal, the hall will be cleared, and he wants to host a little party for us. After that... we'll go down to my chambers," he said, tracing the curve of her cheek with one finger. "Until then." He leaned forward to kiss her lips softly.

She watched him walk away and felt as if she were about to faint. This extraordinary man was going to be her husband. He was not expecting anything from her and had as much said that he didn't mind that she was inexperienced sexually. In fact, he seemed to like it. Energy burst through her suddenly. She had so much to do and so little

time to do it! She ran back toward the Great Hall and met up with Harry and Ron as they were coming out. She quickly explained everything. They made their way to the front gate and Apparated to Hogsmeade. She went to three different clothing shops before finding what she wanted. They picked out a cream-colored silk robe with a matching dress. The dress itself clung to her body, showed a touch of cleavage, and made her look at least ten years older. She bought a matching pair of satin slippers to accent her wedding clothes.

"Wow," Ron said appreciatively.

"It's beautiful, Mione," Harry agreed.

"Thanks," she said. The saleswitch raised her eyebrows when she told her to put it on Severus Snape's account, but she didn't say a word as Hermione signed the parchment. "I can't believe I am going to be married," Hermione mused on their way back through town. "He will still allow me to visit, you know. That's how I know this is the right choice. I won't be hidden away someplace. I will still be able to have a life."

"We'd come and break you out if that was the case," Ron said. "Lucky git."

"Harry, since you and Professor Snape are on better terms than he is with Ron, would you... give me away tonight?" Hermione asked suddenly. Ron smiled, though he did look put out. Harry beamed.

"I would be proud to, Mione."

"All right then. Get ready, you two. He'll be coming for us at five this afternoon. I still have to get ready and ask a witch to stand in for me."

"You going to ask Ginny?" Harry asked.

"No, I think that Professor McGonagall is the closest thing I have to a mum. I would like it to be her. Do you think Ginny will be offended?" Hermione asked quickly.

"Not at all, love," Ron said before Harry could. "She can come along with me to witness it."

The trio Apparated back to the gates without any conflict. Once in the building, she went to McGonagall's office.

After only one knock, her mentor answered the door. "Come in," she said graciously.

"Professor, I am sure you know, but I am to be married this evening."

"Yes, Albus told me earlier," she said with a smile.

"I would like it very much if you would... if you would stand in for me. You are the closest thing I have to a mum, and it would mean a lot to me," Hermione said quickly.

Those words touched Minerva more than she could have ever said. "Of course, I will Hermione. You are like a daughter to me as well. Shall I meet you in your rooms then?"

"He said he would come to me around five this afternoon. Could you come sooner than that?" She was relieved that she would have someone there to instruct her on the way of things.

"Yes, and I will escort you to Albus' chambers. Severus need not see you until we get there. Who is giving you away?" she asked, eyes shining with unshed tears of joy.

"Harry," Hermione said simply.

McGonagall nodded. "Off with you for your bath. Have you someone to help with your facial and hair?"

"I was going to ask Ginny to help me. Do I need anything else?" Hermione had no idea how Wizarding weddings went.

"You will need a couple of flowers in your hair. I will bring those when I come. I will meet you to help you dress at about four. That gives you three hours."

"Thanks!" Hermione said, smiling softly.

Ginny was more than happy to help Hermione get ready. First, she instructed Hermione to soak for nearly an hour in a tub full of body oils. One was for relaxation, one was for softness, and one was for arousal. Ginny got in with her to wash her hair for her and scrub her back. "You are going to smell and taste divine!" She giggled.

"So will you," Hermione teased. "I think that Harry will be quite pleased."

Ginny laughed again. "I am so happy for you, though I can't believe Professor Snape is actually human enough to do this for you. Who knows? Maybe you will be a love match in the end."

"I hope so as well," Hermione admitted.

"It's time. Your skin will be soft to the touch. You will be completely relaxed, and you will definitely be in the mood." A knock on the door interrupted. "Oh, that's Madam Pomfrey."

Ginny went to the door to let the mediwitch in. "This will just take a moment, Miss Granger."

Hermione got out and dried off. She let the mediwitch go about her business. When she was done, Madam Pomfrey smiled. "I have it documented. You are a virgin. And, might I add, congratulations to you on your binding ceremony. I am pleased for the both of you."

"Thanks," Hermione replied.

Once they were alone again, she panicked. "Ginny, he is so much more experienced than I am. What if I mess things up?"

"You won't. It's called instinct. You will see what I mean. I felt the same way when I had my first time. Though I can see where you would be uncomfortable. I am sure he understands that virgins are innocent to the ways of sex." Ginny kissed her cheek. "You are beautiful, Hermione. Trust me. He will like it when he sees this." She gestured to Hermione's still naked body.

"I suppose we need to be off to do something with my hair and face then. Let me just throw on a robe." The pair walked back to Hermione's dorm. After an hour and a half, they had Hermione's hair and make-up neatly applied. Hermione couldn't believe the difference it made. Her hair was long and straight, reaching down past her waist. "It's so much longer without all the curls," she commented. Ginny nodded approvingly. She had learned a spell to add highlights as well. Hermione turned around to see all of their hard work. She had light golden highlights perfectly added throughout her hair. "I love it!"

"I think you look beautiful. I think he is a lucky man. And I would wager that he never imagined he would ever have a woman as lovely as you to call his own," Ginny said.

Professor McGonagall came not long after they were finished. She took two small strands of hair from each side of Hermione's face and pulled them to the back of her head where she bound them with a small cluster of silk flowers. "Very nice," she murmured. "You look so much older, my dear."

"I think she looks like a fairy now with her hair like that," Ginny commented.

"What have you got on there?" McGonagall eyed her Muggle knickers and bra.

"These are my underclothes."

Smiling, McGonagall pulled out a small bag out of her purse. Inside the bag was a silky white slip. "You should wear this on your wedding night under your dress. Much less to take off. He will appreciate it."

"It's beautiful," Hermione said, taking the slip. It was made of silk and had a small amount of lace near the bosom. She chanted a spell and her undergarments were replaced. It fit perfectly. Ginny stepped aside as Minerva helped her put on her dress and her robes. She even laced her slippers for her.

Hermione saw her wiping tears from her eyes. "I am so proud of you for taking this so well. And I want you to know that I think you and Severus will ultimately make a dashing couple. He's a good man under that unapproachable exterior. I am happy to call him a friend."

"We'd better be on," Ginny said, noting the time. She quickly put on her dress robes and led them out. Ron and Harry were both waiting in their dress robes near the portrait hole.

"What's going on?" Lavender asked when she saw them all dressed up. Even McGonagall had on dress robes with her hair down, flowing gently with her gait.

"You'll see," Ron said mysteriously.

They made their way to Dumbledore's office. Any students they met did a double take. She even heard one Hufflepuff saying something about Hermione must be marrying Ron because of the marriage law. Nobody spoke a word as they entered Dumbledore's office. Ginny and Ron scurried off to seat themselves near the side of the room with the rest of the staff. McGonagall was standing in front of Hermione to block Severus' view. Hermione was holding Harry's arm.

Harry whispered, "Snape's got Lupin standing for him."

They exchanged a smile. The two once-enemies had become quite good friends. Hagrid began blubbering when he saw Hermione behind McGonagall. A collective gasp went through those seated. Harry and Hermione stopped about ten feet from the headmaster while McGonagall made her way forward. They watched her bow to Severus before moving to the side.

The first time that Hermione's light brown eyes locked with Severus' dark black eyes, she became even more nervous. Harry tried to steady her as he felt her begin to tremble. They moved together slowly. She could see a faint smile on her Potions master's lips, and she saw the adoration in his eyes. He must approve of her attire. She smiled back tensely when they were only a few steps away.

"Who gives this bride away today?" Dumbledore asked.

Harry replied proudly. "I do, sir."

"And what is your relation to this witch?"

"I am Harry Potter, and she has been my faithful friend for seven years. I am representing her family since they cannot be here."

Dumbledore nodded. Harry placed Hermione directly in front of Snape and put her hand in his. He noted that Snape's hand had a slight tremble as well. He kissed Hermione's cheek and shook Snape's free hand. "I wish you both well, sir."

"Thank you, Harry," Severus said in a low voice. Harry went to stand with McGonagall. Hermione took in her groom's appearance. He was dashing. He was wearing black trousers and a black, fancy shirt with silver buttons, but his dress robes were of dark Slytherin green and lined with silver. She felt his thumb stroking her hand to try to calm her and relaxed immediately.

Dumbledore began reciting incantations and going through the marriage rites. "Minerva... the ribbon." Hermione's mentor moved forward and bound Hermione's hand with a cream-colored ribbon. "Remus... the ribbon." Severus' friend came forward with a black ribbon and bound the groom's hand. Dumbledore flicked his wand, and the two ribbons entwined magically, clasping their hands together. As Dumbledore continued, she could feel heat building between her hand and Severus'. Then a bright blue light burst forth and began encircling them. After repeating a few lines after the headmaster, he declared that they could seal their union with a kiss. Severus took his free hand to cup Hermione's chin while kissing her. Her free hand rested on his chest.

The kiss was long and passionate. The pair was never aware, but their binding light had created a dome around them, and they could barely be seen. "That'll do," Dumbledore said, clearing his throat, eyes twinkling. The newlyweds broke apart and smiled at each other softly. To the guests, it appeared that they had been in love for years. With a twirl of his wand, the ribbons that bound them together fell away to the floor. "May I now announce Lord Severus Snape and his bride, Lady Hermione Snape nee Granger?" The small gathering applauded merrily. Dumbledore had them sign a marriage parchment, bound the ribbon to it, and gave it to Arthur Weasley to sign. "Shall we move on to dinner?" Dumbledore suggested. Everyone began moving out while Severus and Hermione stood gazing into each other's eyes.

"Ready to face the world, my Lady Snape?" he murmured silkily. Yes, he would start with his seduction right away. He had to have this beautiful creature, and he wanted to please her. Maybe she would want to share his bed each night. She looked so exquisite and much older than her eighteen years. He felt like he was getting the best part of the bargain. He was proud that this was his wife. His very own little know-it-all lioness. He smiled softly. He could still feel her trembling. She was nervous. He would set her at ease though.

"Yes, Professor," she replied automatically.

He chuckled. "Hermione, you are my wife. Surely, you could call me Severus now?"

"I am your wife," she repeated, then beamed brightly. "I can't believe I am married!"

He gave her a broad smile. "Neither can I." He cupped her face in both hands and kissed her lips again. He was pleased by her response and opted to deepen the kiss. They remained that way together until, finally, someone cleared his throat. His eyes sent daggers to Harry Potter.

"Sorry, sir. Dumbledore would like to have McGonagall and me enter the hall right before you and Hermione. Remus will already be in up at the head table. He wants to announce to the school before we enter," Harry said.

They followed him out and met Minerva at the bottom of the stairway. "I say, Severus, but you and Hermione seem to be made for each other. It's been long since I have seen such a binding. Congratulations."

"Thank you, Minerva," he said, pleased that his colleagues were accepting Hermione as his wife. He had one moment of fear. He thought maybe they would see him as some... child stalker. He never looked on her as a woman until recently. And, now, she was his wife. No one could say he'd made any unwanted advances.

They could hear Dumbledore talking as they approached the hall when Harry and McGonagall went through the doors. "...and I would like you all to congratulate our newest couple to be married. Our very own Head Girl, Hermione Granger, has become the wife of our Potions master, Severus Snape." They laughed as they heard the shocked silence and then the loud buzz of chatter.

"I think they are as shocked as we are," Hermione said, giggling.

"Indeed. Shall we?" he asked in a courtly manner. She nodded. The doors opened for them as they made their way to the head table. All conversations ceased. They could see the gapes, surprise, and incredulous expressions on everyone's faces in the hall. As they passed the Slytherin table, every student there rose and nodded at their Head of House and his new wife. Hermione noticed that even Draco seemed pleased. Nearly each student murmured, "Congratulations, sir." She smiled at the respect they showed their leader. She looked to the Gryffindor table and saw a few smiles. She waved to her friends, and they began clapping. The entire hall followed suit. With all eyes upon them, Severus pulled out a chair for Hermione and helped push her in. He took the seat to her right. Harry was on her left next to McGonagall. Ron and Ginny were seated on the other side of Snape.

Hermione grinned when she heard what Ron had to say. "Well, Professor, I must say I am a bit shocked, but I guess it's all right for you and Mione to be together. Good luck. And might I warn you: a right bad temper, she has. Be careful."

"I'll keep that in mind," Snape said icily, though he shook Ron's hand. Maybe they could be on friendly terms one day. Harry and he had certainly come a long way.

The feast went nicely, though Hermione could barely eat. She mostly pushed the food around in her plate. She was miffed that Severus could eat everything that they put before him without so much as batting an eye.

"Hermione, you need to eat something."

"I can't make myself. I am a little... nervous," she admitted.

"Well, trust me. You will need to eat to keep your strength up for later," he whispered in her ear. She blushed wildly. "I have great plans for you this night."

"Oh my..." she said softly and began nibbling on her food. She felt one of his hands rest on her thigh while he sat back drinking his wine. His touch was sending tingles through her body. She said a silent prayer to whatever god might be listening that she could please her husband.

After Dumbledore proposed a final toast to the couple, he told all years from fifth on down to return to their common rooms. The sixth and seventh years would be allowed to stay and have drinks and a few dances. Professor Flitwick charmed some instruments to play pleasant tunes. Severus led Hermione to the dance floor. He pulled her close and wrapped his arms around her waist while she put her arms around his neck. Ever so slowly they danced, each enjoying the feel of the other's body pressed against their own. Their eyes locked, and every so often, he would kiss her lips softly.

"Albus, do you see what I see?" Minerva asked her husband.

"I believe I do. They are falling in love with each other before our eyes. I would say this match was well made," he said softly, eyes twinkling. "Let's dance."

Though they wanted to, no one dared cut in on the new couple's dances. Anyone could see that they didn't want to be disturbed. Hermione rested her head on his chest, and he lowered his head to place kisses in her hair before resting his chin on her head. "Hermione," he said softly after a few songs. "I would like to retire now. How do you feel about that?"

She shivered. "I'm ready."

He stepped back and offered his arm to her. They left the hall without a backwards glance to anyone.

Southern's Notes: Geez. What's wrong with this picture? LOL Shall I start a list? Snicker. And the thing is, I used to love this kind of stuff. Ah, well...

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 2

The Marriage Law has hit Hogwarts once again. Hermione and Severus are tossed together--to their delight.

Disclaimer: Still borrowing characters.

Thanks again to the lovely amsev for daring to read through this. LOL

SW Says: Same thing as before.

The closer they got to his chambers, the more she shivered. "Are you cold?" he asked in an amused voice.

"N-no," she stammered.

"Welcome home," he said softly as he opened the door to his sitting room in his chambers. His chambers resembled McGonagall's chambers; only his were green and silver, the colors of Slytherin. He had four large bookshelves, and he noted how her eyes lit up. "You can go through them another time." He warded his door and placed a Silencing Charm. He walked to a cabinet near his desk and took out a liquor bottle, pouring them each a glass. "Here. I want to propose a toast to my wife." She smiled and took her glass. "Hermione, I want to thank you for accepting my offer of marriage. Just being with you these past couple of hours makes me feel like a different person. Thank you. You have brought hope into my life. I hope that I can one day be everything that you ever wanted."

She tapped her glass on his, and she took a long drink. She coughed only a bit before grinning. "This is some strong stuff." He only smiled and downed his drink. "I know you didn't really want me, but I promise that I will try to make you happy." She downed the rest of her drink, and to her amazement, she didn't choke.

Severus set his glass on the table and was upon her in an instant. "I told you I wanted you," he said before pressing his lips to hers. As she lost herself in the kiss, her glass was forgotten, and it landed somewhere near her feet on the floor. He picked her up and carried her to his bedroom.

He let her stand just before his bed. With piercing, dark eyes, he gazed over her body once before unbuttoning her outer robe. He let it drop to the floor, and she stood before him clad in only her wedding dress and slippers. Severus set her on the bed and knelt before her. He unlaced one shoe and then the other. He moved them aside, and both of his hands glided up slowly, caressing her skin beneath her dress. When he got mid thigh, he ran his hands back down to her ankles again. He stood, bringing her up with him. He kissed her forehead softly before turning her around. He unzipped her dress and pushed the sleeves down to let it fall on the floor near her robe. She was clad in only a sheer slip. She still had her back to him, so he took a moment to appreciate her long, lovely hair. He gathered two handfuls and brought it to his nostrils. Her scent was intoxicating. Severus ached to be in her, to have release. He turned her slowly around to face him.

Hermione's wide-eyed expression of innocence met his lustful one, and he grinned. He had so much to teach her. Severus kicked off his shoes. He watched her face fill with wonder as he slipped his own outer robe off. One by one he began slowly unbuttoning his shirt until he finally slid that off to land on the floor. He unbuckled his belt and unclasped his trousers, sliding them down to mingle with his shirt. He was standing before her with nothing but his silky, dark green boxers. She gazed at him, and he detected that she liked what she saw. Kneeling before her, he placed his hands on the bottom of her slip. As he slid the garment up, his thumbs traced her bare flesh, and he rose as it did. She gasped as they passed over her breasts. He tossed the garment behind him. Looking her in the eyes, he stepped away from her. Finally, he lowered his gaze to take in her naked body, and he groaned. Perfect. Long, muscular legs, soft stomach, ample breasts. "You are a goddess, Hermione," he said seductively.

He could take no more. He captured her lips with his as he pushed her back on the bed. He kissed her until she was writhing under him, and then his lips traveled quickly over her neck and to her breasts. She was moaning and squirming already. He became intimately familiar with each breast before nuzzling her stomach. He positioned himself between her legs, and his mouth and fingers went to work. He needed to loosen her up a little before he would be able to sheath himself inside her. His tongue swirled and licked her sensitive nub until she was convulsing and whimpering. She finally shrieked in full orgasm. At some point, he had slid out of his boxers, so in one smooth move, he positioned himself to enter her. He kissed her soundly. "Look at me," he commanded. Her eyes never left his as he plunged in. He stilled for a moment as she cried out and her nails dug into his back. He felt her move after a few moments, and he took that as his cue to continue. He gathered her legs around his waist, and when she locked them there, he pulled all the way out and plunged in again. This time she moaned with pleasure from the sensation. He was lost in everything Hermione. He ravished her neck, her lips, her breasts... anything his mouth could reach as he pounded into her.

"Gods, Hermione, you were made for me," he murmured. He heard her breath catch, and then he felt the internal quivering. "Look at me," he whispered, as she had closed her eyes. Stroke after stroke she met him until her body arched off the bed trying to allow him in deeper. She convulsed around him.

"Sev... ver... usssssss," she shrieked. He slowed his motions as her feelings subsided. When she got that dazed look in her eyes, he began again. Hard and fast he thrust into her until his own orgasm claimed him.

"Her... mioneeee," he groaned and collapsed on top of her. Once he was breathing normally again, he looked into her eyes. "Are you all right?"

"Yes," she said, kissing his lips softly. Her arms held him in place when he tried to move. "Stay," she whispered. "I've never felt that way before. Something just came and took over me."

He chuckled and kissed her nose. "No woman has ever felt so good to me. I want more." She nodded, and he felt himself harden again within her. Slowly, he rocked back and forth, enjoying the sensation of being buried inside her. Before long, they were both reaching their peaks again. This time, he lay on his side and pulled her into his arms. He marveled at how well she fit against his body. They drifted off to sleep for a while, but once he woke and realized she was with him, he began caressing her until she was begging him to make love to her. The last thing he remembered before he drifted off to sleep the second time was thinking that marriage wasn't so bad.

Hermione awoke first the next morning. Or should she say afternoon? It felt like she had slept for many hours. She had been content and peaceful all night. The warm chest pressed against her back made her sigh in contentment. She lifted the hand near her breast and kissed it. She immediately regretted it. What if things went back to the way they were before? Hadn't he said he only expected her in his bed on their wedding night? But he'd seemed to really want her. They had made love three glorious times. She'd never known that sex could be so intimate, so emotional. She had caught herself twice wanting to tell him that she loved him, but she knew it was too soon for that. She was probably just caught up in the midst of swirling emotions.

She moved his arm to rest on his side so she could sit up. The sheet fell to her waist, and she noticed bloodstains on the under sheet. "Oh, no," she said softly. How come he hadn't collected her virgin's blood? A Potions master should have wanted something so precious. *Maybe he can use magic to get it from the sheets.* "Damn." Then she realized that she was not the only person awake. Her embarrassed eyes met the amused eyes of her husband. "Hi," she said, smiling shyly.

"Good morning, my lady," he murmured.

"I think I messed up your sheets," she said for lack of not knowing what else to say.

He smirked. "I do believe that was to be expected. Are you feeling well this morning?"

"I am a little sore," she said, eyes raking over his thick, hairy chest. She hadn't really been given the chance to admire him the night before. She suppressed the desire to yank the sheet away. It was spread just over his waist shielding her from viewing any other part of his body. He sat up and stretched. She watched the muscles in his arms flex and grinned. His robes sure did hide a lot. His hair was tousled slightly by sleep, but it didn't look too out of place.

He leaned forward to place a chaste kiss on her lips and ran a finger down her body. "You are lovely, Hermione." It was then that she realized she was exposed. She looked down at her chest and blushed. "I'll be right back. Don't move," he said, getting up. He walked across the room completely naked, and she watched hungrily. His body was perfection. Smooth, slightly pale, muscular. He was well endowed, and from the looks of it, he was ready yet again! How can men do that?

She lay back on the bed and pulled the sheet up over her. The thoughts that she was married and was no longer a virgin kept swirling in her mind. She'd married Professor Severus Snape! No other woman could say that she'd accomplished that. What did her future hold for her? Could he fall in love with her? She already felt as if she was falling for him. She wished that she could read his mind. Being a Legilimens sure would be a handy thing.

He walked back to the bed with a vial in his hand. A black bathrobe covered his nakedness. "Drink this," he said. "It will ease your aches."

She did as she was told. It was strawberry flavored. Her favorite. "Mmmm. Thanks. It's very good."

He nodded. "I... made it for you yesterday. I thought you might need it."

"I love the strawberry taste," she offered.

"I know." He kissed her lips softly again, but he pulled away abruptly. "I am going to go run a soothing bath for you. That will help you as well. Do try to hurry though. I'll have a lunch sent up to us. After that, we might want to go see Poppy."

"Severus..." she said.

"Yes?"

"Nothing. I just wanted to say your name." She smiled. He did not reply, though he softly caressed her cheek. He nodded and left the room. She smiled to herself as she crept toward the bathroom. One look in the mirror told her that her hair was still straight and hardly tousled. She removed her flowers that McGonagall had given her and placed them on his sink; then she slipped into the tub. Miraculously, her body felt renewed. All of her aches had disappeared with that potion. She smiled. He had given it a strawberry flavor. How had he known that she would like that?

Suddenly hungry, she washed as quickly as she could. After getting out, she cast a drying spell on her body and let her hair down from the makeshift bun she had put it in before her bath. She had no clothes! How had she forgotten to have her things brought down? She put a crack in the door to see if Severus was in the room. One quick glimpse told her that he was not. The only piece of clothing that she saw was her slip near the bed. She hurriedly put it on. What had he done with her wedding dress and robe? She walked toward the sitting room and peeked around the corner. He was sitting at his table, sipping on coffee, reading the paper.

"Um..."

"Yes, Hermione?" he asked, looking up from his reading.

"I didn't bring my clothes. Can I wear my slip?" she asked uncertainly. She didn't feel so badly when she saw that he was still clad in only his bathrobe.

"Of course. You can wear anything or nothing at all." He gave an impish grin.

Mustering all the dignity she could, she walked over to the table and sat across from him. He continued reading his paper and ignored her while she ate. She felt a little put out. After all they had shared, he could at least try to talk to her about something... anything. After she ate a few slices of toasts, she tried to have a conversation.

"Professor?"

He folded down one corner of his paper and glared at her. "My name is Severus, Hermione." He flipped his paper back up.

"Sorry," she said, disappointed in herself for making things worse. She bit her lip and almost wanted to cry. He had warned her though. He would not change. She would just have to be strong about it.

"Well?"

"I just wondered if you could have an elf bring my trunks here. They are packed already, and then I would like to see Madam Pomfrey to get that over with."

"Very well," he agreed.

There was a knock on the chamber door, and Hermione heard Harry's voice. "Mione?" he was calling.

"Oh! It's Harry!" she said excitedly and went for the door.

"And, just what, might I ask, do you think you are doing?" His eyes were cold and narrowed.

"I was just going to... answer the door," she said, unsure why he would be upset about this.

"Wearing only that sheer garment?" His voice was almost a whisper.

She looked down at herself. "I'm covered. It's only Harry."

He slammed his paper down. "Only Potter? You are my wife now. As such, you will behave accordingly. You are not to gallivant in front of any other male in something as inappropriate as that. Go to your room!" he bellowed.

She felt like a reprimanded child, but she scurried off to the bedroom anyway. What had she gotten herself into? He had been fine earlier. He had been so tender and concerned. She couldn't hear what was being said since she'd closed the door, but she wished she could hide. He would probably come in here and say more nasty things.

Minutes later, he came in with her trunks. "Potter sends his regards," he said curtly before turning on his heel and going to the bathroom. It could have been worse she supposed. She hovered her trunks to the far corner before digging into them. She pulled out a matching set of undergarments, jeans, and a sweater. Hurriedly, she switched her clothes using magic. She didn't want him to walk out while she was naked. She felt too vulnerable as it was. She put on her socks and shoes and sat on the bed obediently. She replayed the morning's events in her mind to try to see what she had done that was so wrong. She could see his point about being dressed immodestly in front of Harry. She was married now. She would just have to get used to it. She was seething internally, though, at being sent to her room like a child. Is that how he saw her? She thought after last night he would have realized that she was a woman. Maybe he found her lacking after all.

Well! That was fine! He didn't want to bed her anymore anyway. He had made that clear when he had agreed to offer for her. And he had warned her that he was not a nice man. She would just have to tread carefully. She could make this work. They had done so well working on those potions for the Order, hadn't they? It would be easier, though, if she hadn't let herself have feelings for him. She was attracted to him before this, she realized, and after last night, she could see herself falling in love with him easily. Damn!

Severus came out of the bathroom fully dressed, lacking only a robe. He didn't even look at her as he put on his black robe. She felt so small, sitting in his large bed with her knees pulled up to her chin, waiting for some sort of acknowledgment. She found none as he busied himself with his boots. He strode out of the bedroom door without a backward glance. Could she leave the room? Was she... punished? This was ridiculous! He came back in and said, "Perhaps you would be so kind as to join me in the infirmary?"

She got up and followed him silently, feeling dejected. She could almost feel the anger radiating from him and had wisely chosen to keep her mouth shut. She didn't want to be on the end of any of his tirades. They spoke not one word to each other until they got to the infirmary. "Sit," he commanded. She glared at him for a moment, but she sat down. First, he treated her like a child... now, like some puppy. He glided over to where Madam Pomfrey was. She was beckoned forward.

Severus was instructed to wait outside the screens while Poppy checked his wife. He could see that she was uncomfortable about the entire thing. He didn't understand why Poppy couldn't just take his word for it instead of putting Hermione through the humiliation. He listened closely as the mediwitch tried to lower her voice.

"The hymen is gone, and I conclude that your marriage was consummated. Are you hurting?"

"No," Hermione answered.

"Are you sure, child? There are bruises there that weren't there yesterday," Poppy said in an accusing tone.

"I am fine. I had something for soreness this morning. I don't know why I would be bruised though," his wife said innocently.

Ha! She was a lot smaller than he'd thought. There were naturally a few marks to be seen, even though he had taken the pains to be gentle. The first time anyway. He narrowed his eyes at what he heard next.

"All right, then. I can give you a contraception potion if you would like...just this once. It would be sure to clear up anything that may have seeped through last night, and it lasts for a month. After that, you aren't allowed any, as per the Ministry."

"No, that's all right," Hermione said.

He wondered why Poppy was trying to push the potion off on her, and he was privately pleased that his wife had declined.

"Are you sure, dear? You still have next term left of school. I would hate to see you in the family way while still here," Poppy prodded.

"I'll not take something that would kill life that might be inside me. I'm sorry," Hermione said shortly. "It's just how I feel. If it is meant to be, then it will be."

He smirked. He was feeling better than he had been earlier. So, she would not object to a child right now if their union last night had proved successful. How would he feel about that? A child so soon? His child? The thought wasn't as displeasing as he'd once thought it would be. Motherhood, like everything else, would be mastered by Hermione. Just as she had mastered the art of making love. This morning, after she had gone to take her bath, something unsettling had come over him. He had 'feelings' for her. That had not been part of their deal. He knew he wanted her... desired her. He wanted to possess her... to own her. Not love her.

The way her name sounded on his lips had given him chills. His wife, Hermione, had upset everything he had thought normal. He never spoke before having coffee, yet this morning he was up fetching healing potions and running bath waters. He would not become soft. No matter the cost. Then after, she had come in trying to have conversation before he was ready. He could see that she was nervous, and being the hateful man that he was, he liked it. It was good to know that he wasn't the only one whose life had been turned upside down. He had been contemplating how he could go about getting her in his bed again when Potter had shown up with her trunks.

She would have answered the door in her scantily dressed state! 'It's only Harry' indeed. She would learn that no male would see her as he had seen her. Nobody but he would hear her cries of delight when she was so passionately aroused. He could tell that he had overreacted of course. He had treated her like a child when he'd sent her to her room. He would have to learn subtlety. In time. Severus had no patience at times. He had seen the hurt and defiance in her glare, yet here she was defending him to Poppy. That made him angry as well. Why did she have to be so forgiving?

"She's healthy as a tick, Severus. You've a strong wife there," Poppy said, guiding Hermione out. "I want to see her in a couple of weeks if her monthly cycle does not start." He nodded and led Hermione away.

"We need to go to Diagon Alley," he said suddenly. To his dismay, she said nothing. She merely followed him to the outer gates where they Apparated near Madam Malkin's. He stopped and took in her appearance. Yes, she was angry. So, was he to finally see explosives as Weasley had warned him? This should be interesting. "We are ordering you some new clothes," he stated.

"What's wrong with these?" she asked, looking at her Muggle attire.

He smirked. "My wife does not wear things for comfort. She wears things fitting her station. Though you are little more than a child yourself, I would like to feel as though I have a mature witch at my side. It is hard to continue that line of thought seeing you dressed... like a student," he explained.

"But I am a student," she said numbly, looking into his eyes.

"You are also now Lady Snape and married to the head of a very old, aristocratic family. I suggest that you humor me in this," he said coldly, pulling her into the shop.

Once inside, he instructed the saleswitch to find her at least ten finely woven robes of whichever colors she chose, a couple of dress robes of black or green, and whatever other necessities she required. After everything had been purchased, he Flooed them to his chambers so they didn't have to carry the packages around. He also had her put on one of her new robes over the clothes she'd been wearing. At least now she didn't look like such a... Muggle. Her hair was still gloriously tamed as it had been the night before with her highlights brightening her appearance. Severus approved as he looked at her.

"Very nice," he murmured and thought he saw a small smile on her face. His heart flopped. Damn! What spell was this little nymph weaving? "Do you require anything else, Lady Snape?" he asked formally, offering her his arm.

She took it. "I would like to go to my vault at Gringotts if you don't mind."

"You don't need any of your money, Hermione. You can use my accounts for whatever you need," he said firmly.

"I would like to buy Christmas presents for my friends. I am sure you would rather me not spend your money on those items," she snapped, though her voice was not bitter. "And I wanted to get something while I am in there."

"As you wish," he murmured. He led the way to the bank and rode with her below through the mazes, twists, and turns of the tunnels. Finally, the cart came to a halt. The little goblin took her key and opened the vault. He was impressed by the amount of money she had stacked in the corner. It seemed that her parents had been very well off for Muggles. He was more impressed, however, with the other things he saw. She had many books lining the walls, boxes of non-moving portraits, and other items that could have only come from her family's home. She must have taken all that meant something to her and placed it here to be kept safe. He watched as she dug through a chest and retrieved a small box after she had filled her medium-sized pouch full of Galleons.

"I'm done," she said. He had been examining her books that lined the side of the vault. She had a large mixture of Muggle books as well as Wizarding books.

"What have you there?" he asked casually as they rode the little cart back to the surface. She turned to him, eyes burning with unshed tears.

"I will show you later," she said, nearly sobbing. He nodded and let the conversation drop. Apparently, it was something that had meant a great deal to her. Perhaps just being amongst her family's things had brought on sentimental feelings. Perhaps... maybe she was regretting their marriage already. He nearly jumped at the thought.

They were bound together of course, and the ceremony could not easily be undone. It bode well to remind himself that she was only eighteen, and he should not be so hard on her. She had not asked for the ridiculous law any more than he had asked for it, though he seemed to have gotten the good part of the bargain. After they made their way back to the streets, he asked, "Would you like to eat here in town?"

"If you are not too embarrassed to be seen with me, I wouldn't mind," she said, voice barely above a whisper.

Is that what she thought this was all about? He pulled her to the side of the street to look at her. "I am not embarrassed of you. I just like to give the public a proper display of my heritage. The same heritage that is now yours. One day you will understand that," he said in a low, reprimanding voice.

"So it matters not that I am a Mudblood?" she asked, something akin to defiance flashing in her eyes.

"I have not used that word since the misspent days of my youth, and I abhor it. Do not refer to yourself in such away!" he spat angrily. "Besides, the Ministry is changing everyone's views on that, now aren't they?"

She nodded and allowed him to lead her just outside a large restaurant. The person she saw nearing them gave her a feeling of unease. Marcus Flint was walking slowly toward her. Had he not seen Severus with her? He seemed to be seeing nothing except her. She had been standing there while Severus perused an item some peddler was trying to push.

Flint sneered and bared his grotesque teeth. "Granger. What are you doing all alone here? Don't you know it's unsafe? You filthy little murderer!" She stepped back as he inched closer. "I got a return owl saying that my offer was denied. How very fortunate for you that you found some brainless oaf to take your hand! I assure you I would have done my best to break you and that damned intolerable aura of goodness."

Suddenly, two hands had woven their way around his neck. His startled, bulging eyes met the piercing, deadly gaze of Severus Snape. "How dare you even speak to her!" Snape said, his voice a deadly hiss. "You will apologize." The death grip on the younger wizard was released.

Hermione took an involuntary step toward her husband as Flint gasped for air. "Professor Snape," he finally managed. "I didn't know they reduced you to chaperoning Gryffindors."

"That's my wife, you insolent, little blackguard! You will apologize or face me in a duel," Snape said. Hermione had seen his eyes flash this angrily only a few times before. He had been engaged in battle each time.

Suddenly, with a swish of black and silver fabric, someone was at Severus' side with his wand drawn, pointing it toward Flint. "Is everything all right, Severus?" a cool, drawing voice questioned. Hermione cringed. Lucius Malfoy!

Severus' eyes never left Flint's. "Yes, I am awaiting this lout's apology, or he shall face me."

Lucius' eyes danced with entertainment. He slipped his wand back into his cane and took a step closer to Flint. "Surely, you don't mean to go against Severus Snape?" he hissed, encircling his prey. Then, his eyes met Hermione's fearful gaze. "Ah. Lady Snape, a pleasure of course," he said bowing slightly. She felt an involuntary tremor go through her.

"Forgive me, Professor and Lady Snape," Marcus finally said, looking extremely uncomfortable.

Lucius stepped closer. "Is that all you have to say?" Hermione saw the younger wizard flinch. "You see, I know of your plans for her. It's the reason my son asked for permission to offer for her. I sent in two. One for him, and one for Goyle. At least she would have had a choice that way. Luckily, Severus was there to save the day, eh? Good Lord, man. Speak!"

"Mr. Malfoy has told me that my father's death was an accident, and I have not been able to accept it... until now," he squeaked. "You will not be bothered by me again." Hermione watched in silence as he all but fled away from the pair of ex-Death Eaters.

"Congratulations, old boy," Lucius said evenly. "I see you have come to your senses and finally wed." His eyes roamed over Hermione. Only a few people intimidated her the way this man did. One being her husband, one being her headmaster at school, and the other being an angry Harry Potter. She bit her lip as he assessed her. "She's turned into quite a fetching woman." He took her hand and kissed it.

"I'm so glad you approve, Lucius," Severus said dryly.

"Well, of course, Severus. Only the best for an old friend." Lucius nodded. "Good day, then."

Hermione never realized she was trembling until her husband's arms surrounded her. He Apparated them back to the gates of Hogwarts. "It's all right. Do not be afraid," he murmured in her hair. "He won't try anything stupid. I'm sure of it. Not when he knows he would have to deal with either Lucius or myself." The unshed tears from earlier came rushing back; though she did not sob, she let them glide down her face.

"I've caused you so much trouble, and it's only been a day," she said sadly. "Why even bother with me?"

"It is no trouble, Hermione. I will protect you and make you happy. Or, at least, I will try... Once we become used to each other, it will be easier," he said firmly.

"What was Malfoy playing at back there?" she asked, swiping at her tears.

"He was speaking the truth. I used my ability to tap into his mind. Perhaps he truly is trying to turn over a new leaf. Though he does owe me," Severus said.

"Owe you?"

"Yes, I am the reason he did not spend his full term in Azkaban. I helped him snake his way out so to speak."

"Why?" Hermione asked incredulously.

"He reminded me of me. Caught up in lies and a power struggle with no way out but death. Lucius could never have been a double agent. He is a terrible Occlumens. I persuaded him to give me names, locations, plans, and in return, Dumbledore spoke on his behalf." He smiled ruefully. "Though no one ever knew of course. I did not know if it was wise of us to do that. I never knew if it would come back to haunt me or not. Apparently, for once, I have done something right."

She noted the bitterness in his voice, and she placed a kiss on the hand holding hers. "You have been my hero for nearly three years now, Severus. I think you have more than made up for anything you've done in the past. You've saved both Malfoys and probably even Goyle. And, me."

"I am sorry," he whispered, his voice strained.

"Don't be. I wanted to marry you. Trust in that," she said softly.

"This morning... I was harsh. I am not a morning person, and I had a lot on my mind. Maybe we c..."

She brought a finger to his lips. "It's all right. We'll work something out. As far as Harry, I just didn't think about it. He's more like a brother to me than anything. I just want us to work, and if I have to... change, I will."

Hermione couldn't read the emotions brimming in his eyes, but she thought that it suspiciously might be respect. Or something deeper. "You are an amazing woman," he said, looking as if he wanted to say more.

"I'll try to not embarrass you or your name. I just need guidance," she said, kissing his lips softly. Where had she found the nerve to do that?

He seemed surprised and pleased. "Keep that up, and you'll not be safe from me this night," he said silkily.

"You aren't really going to make me sleep somewhere else are you?" she asked suddenly.

"Do you want to?" His piercing eyes were questioning her.

"No, I thought my place was at your side."

He growled and scooped her up for a long, passionate kiss. "I think you will be my undoing," he whispered as he broke the kiss. Then straightening, she saw him glare hatefully at someone behind them. She turned to see a smirking Draco Malfoy walking toward them. "Yes?" Snape questioned in an annoyed tone.

"Professor, Lady Snape." Draco nodded. "I was hoping to find you. I wanted to make sure that what happened yesterday..."

Snape held up a hand. "It's quite all right, Mr. Malfoy. I am certain your intentions were honorable, though a bit extreme. Rest easy." Draco nodded and moved back toward the castle. Snape saw her pulling the little box out from her robes. "What's in there?" he questioned curiously.

She opened the box, and he saw two dazzling rings. One was a silver and gold band with three small diamonds cut into it. The other was a matching band with three large diamonds protruding from it. "Uh..." she said nervously. "These were my parents' rings. Being part Muggle, I suppose I am a bit... sentimental. I would like to wear my mother's ring in memory of her and in honor of our vows."

"All right," he said softly.

"Severus, I would really like it if you would wear my father's ring. I have no right to ask you, but I just..." To her surprise, he picked up her father's ring said a chant to enlarge it and slipped it on his left hand.

"I would be honored, Hermione. Your parents have reared an intelligent, beautiful creature," he choked out emotionally. She had touched him more than she knew. He took her mother's ring, said the same chant, and slipped it onto her finger. The sparkle in her eyes and the smile that lit her face enabled him to swallow his pride and not feel so bad at allowing her to witness his moment of emotional weakness. She began showering small kisses on his face.

"Thank you so much," she said happily.

It's the MLC for SS/HGWeehee!***

Later that evening, he began poring over last weeks' class assignments. "Imbecile dunderheads!" he said darkly. He had fallen behind, as he had been caught up in his personal affairs. Hermione brought him a cup of tea and sat quietly across from him.

"Severus?"

He raised an eyebrow. She knew he didn't want to be disturbed while he worked. "Yes?"

"In your class, do I... am I a better student than you've led me to believe?"

He grinned. "You know you are, minx. Brewing Polyjuice Potion at thirteen years of age? Helping Potter through my potion riddle at age twelve. Brewing the things we did together for the Order. Learning to make Wolfsbane at eighteen? I dare say you are more than a capable student, though I never thought to bestow my thoughts to you."

"Thanks. That means a lot. I thought I was, but then... you always made me feel inadequate."

He smirked. "Is this going somewhere?"

"I would like to propose something." She eyed him warily.

"Go on."

"Would you allow me to help you with years one through four? I have had enough of your scathing comments on my own papers to know exactly what you are looking for, and I feel that my help would lighten your load." She smiled. "Please don't think I am trying to intrude. I just thought maybe..."

He smiled. "You want to be my apprentice, don't you?"

She laughed. "I'm just a wife hoping to help her husband."

He nodded. "You know, you may be on to something. I could then concentrate on my fifth years and prepare them better for their O.W.L.s., and I would be able to concentrate on my advanced classes for those in sixth and seventh years."

"Really?" she asked, excitement flowing through her.

"Yes, so long as it doesn't put you behind in your studies, though I don't doubt that you could pass your N.E.W.T.s on the morrow," he said, smiling appreciatively. The fates had finally been good to him. They sent a goddess into his life, into his bed. More sternly he added, "I, of course, will be sure to check over some of the essays and assignments that you peruse for me just to be sure that the Snape tradition does not waver."

She giggled. "Well, hand some of that over then." He split his stack with her, and they worked in silence for the rest of the evening. Near midnight, they were done. While she wanted nothing more than to crawl into bed, he announced that he was going to make his rounds.

"Do you ever sleep?" she asked in awe.

"I have never been much for sleep... hence my need for silence early in the morning." He grinned wickedly.

"Can I come?" she asked suddenly.

"Why, Lady Snape, dare you leave our chambers after curfew? I could easily take points from Gryffindor." He sneered playfully.

Her brows furrowed. "I hadn't thought of that. Do I still have a curfew? Who do I answer to? You? Minerva? Where do I sit for meals?"

He grinned. "I am sure if you are with me, no curfew would descend upon you. As for the other questions, yes, you answer to your husband first, then to your Head of House. The meals... I should like to have at least one meal with you each day. Perhaps the evening meal?"

"I would like that. Do I sit with you?" she asked.

"Of course! You don't think I would dare grace the Gryffindor table, do you?" he asked indignantly.

She laughed at the thought. She could see Neville passing out, Harry grinning, and Ron's expression of horror. "I would like to sit with you then, sir. And I appreciate that you will allow me to sit with my friends at the other two meals."

His gaze dropped to the ring on his hand. "I've never been one for jewelry, though I must admit that I rather like this ring."

"I'm glad." She got up and kissed his cheek. "Go on with you then."

"What? Not braving curfew?" he asked, teasing her.

"Certainly not without Harry's Invisibility Cloak. You never know what professor might be lurking out there, ready to take points."

"Rule breaker!" he called at her retreating back. As he made his rounds, he thought about the day's events. Things would be all right. There was light at the end of the tunnel for once in his life. He could feel his feelings deepening for her. He was indeed falling in love. Something he'd never thought possible. How had a slip of a woman gotten into his heart so quickly? He could see that she cared for him. She would love him. It was in her nature. He fingered the ring on his hand. *Forever*, he thought happily. When he finally got back to their chambers, she was sleeping soundly. He didn't have the heart to wake her, nor was he sure that his advances would be welcome so soon. She was probably still tender. He contented himself with holding her sleeping form to him all night.

It's the MLC for SS/HGWeehee!***

The next day had been uneventful. Hermione noticed much whispering in her direction. She had breakfast with Ron and Harry as usual. Lunch as well. They asked if she would be able to go down to Hagrid's hut with them after the evening meal, and she told them that she would. Although she hadn't let her husband know just yet. Surely, he wouldn't mind. She would talk to him that evening during dinner. She had seen him for a few moments after lunch as he walked her to her Advanced Arithmancy class. The students stared slightly at the sight of their foreboding Professor Snape walking with his arm looped through hers, but they scattered the moment he turned his eye on them. He had told her to meet him at the entrance to the Great Hall before the meal so that they could walk in together.

He was waiting for her as she made her way to the hall from the library. "Hi," she breathed softly, kissing his cheek. He nodded and took her hand in his. Together they made their way to the head table. They shared an enjoyable conversation, though they were the objects of many stares. She even saw Harry and Ron sniggering. "Severus," she said softly. "Would you mind terribly if I went with Harry and Ron to visit Hagrid after we eat?"

The glass he had been bringing to his mouth paused in mid action. He turned to look at her and then to the Gryffindor table. "I don't suppose that would be a problem." She could tell that he didn't like it.

"Er... would you ... would you like to come?" she asked softly. Although she wanted to spend time with her friends, she didn't want him to be upset. They had gotten on so well yesterday evening.

He smirked. "No, thank you. I have potions to test and essays to look over."

She felt guilty. "I won't be long, and then I will come help you."

"All right," he agreed. She felt a tingle in her stomach as he laid a possessive hand on her thigh while she finished eating. It was as if he was trying to mark her so that no one else would approach her. Well, he needn't worry. She never was a man magnet, though she rather appreciated Draco's gesture to help her even though he had gone

about it all wrong. She squeezed his hand tightly before heading to the Gryffindor table.

"Ready?"

"Sure, let's go," Harry said. They made their way to Hagrid's hut, and they heard all about his latest 'cute' pet. Eventually, they made their way back to the castle. Hermione stood talking to her friends before they had to separate. Them going above and her going below. They were just about to part ways when she heard a scathing remark from someone she thought was a friend.

Roger Davies stood with his arms crossed. "Well, I guess we finally see why you have such good grades, don't we? How long have you been shagging the evil Potions master?"

"What?" She couldn't believe her ears. And Hannah Abbot was standing there not saying a word. "Is that what you think?"

Hannah shrugged. "Well, sorry, Hermione, but I mean nobody ever got good grades in Potions except you."

"You two best sod off," Ron said angrily. "Everybody knows Mione studies harder than anyone in school. She always has."

"I beg to differ. I study just as much, yet my grades are nowhere near hers," Davies commented.

"Maybe you're a dense git," Draco's drawling voice said as he came nearer. "Snape never laid a finger on her before they were married."

Ron, Harry, and Hermione exchanged glances as Malfoy, Goyle, Zabini, and Parkinson circled around Hermione and her soon to be ex-friends. "What's it to you, Malfoy? You don't like her anyway," Davies pointed out.

"She's a Gryffindor," Hannah commented.

Smack! Pansy Parkinson slapped Hannah on the face. "She's our Head of House's wife. You will respect her."

Hannah was holding her face and near tears when Roger pulled her close. "How dare you?"

"Oh, but we do dare," Draco drawled. Zabini and Goyle each pulled Davies away from Hannah. "Wand at the ready, Davies. You won't get away for these insults."

Ron and Harry had come down from the stairs as well to watch the duel. They would be sure it was fought fairly even though they hoped Davies would be flattened. "Get his arse, Malfoy!" Ron called. "Wanker!"

Davies gulped but bowed to Malfoy. They took their paces. Each turned around. Zabini counted down. "Three, two, one..."

Davies hexed first, but Draco shielded himself. He then sent a Jelly Legs Hex to Davies that hit him in the chest. Davies didn't drop his wand and accidentally sent a Serpensortia to Draco. He looked smug as Draco backed away. Draco sent a Disarming Hex to Davies and won the duel, but the snake was still sliding toward Draco menacingly.

Harry stepped forward and started speaking in Parseltongue. The snake stopped, looked at Harry, and then quickly made his way to where Davies and Hannah were now standing. Hannah ended his Jelly Legs Jinx and had picked up his wand. But both made haste to get away from the snake. Those remaining were laughing wildly.

"Good one, Potter," Draco said grudgingly.

"Thanks," Harry said. "See you, Hermione."

"Good show!" Ron called.

Hermione made her way to the dungeons with the group of Slytherins. "Er, thanks," she said before making her way to her new chambers.

"We take care of our own," Draco said.

"When Snape took you in, we all did," Pansy commented. Hermione smiled and nodded understanding. She felt elated until she walked into her chambers and met Severus' angry face.

He was seething. She had been gone for over an hour. That was more than enough time to visit blubbering Hagrid. Had she been 'practicing' snogs with either of the two boys? Jealousy raged through him. "Tell me, where have you been?" he demanded. "I let you go without a female, deciding to trust you, and this is how you repay me?"

She gulped. "... I went to see Hagrid. You said that I could go, and then..."

"You said that you would not be long. I assumed maybe thirty minutes at the most. It has been nearly two hours now!" He was in a rage. His lips were white with anger. She had been inconsiderate! Didn't she know that he had been waiting all day to spend time with her? "Have you been doing anything that you shouldn't have been?"

She couldn't believe this! He was accusing her of being disloyal! She had had enough. "He was showing us his new pet, and we listened to him. He doesn't have many visitors! How dare you accuse me of being inappropriate! Do you know that people I thought to be my friends just verbally attacked me? They accused me of sleeping with you for good grades! If it wasn't for your Slytherins, I'm sure Harry and Ron would be in deep trouble right now!" She was screaming loudly now and shaking with rage. "I have only ever slept with one person and that wasn't until I was married. Now everyone thinks I have loose morals?"

She made to storm toward the bedroom, but he grabbed her arm, roughly pulling her to him. He enjoyed the feisty spark in her. It made him want... no, need her. He crushed her lips with his and picked her up. He didn't stop until they reached his bed. He dumped her unceremoniously onto the bed before chanting a spell to remove both of their garments. He chanted a Lubricating Spell on her before dropping his wand to the floor.

Hermione couldn't believe this! He'd yelled at her, she'd yelled back, and now he wanted her? So much for the honeymoon! She felt wetness begin to pool in her nether regions and realized what he was doing. She scooted back, but he pulled her under him with all the grace of a mad man. Forcing her legs apart with his knee, he positioned himself over her. As he gave her another bruising kiss, he slammed into her. Her muffled cry didn't go unnoticed as he stopped his movement for a moment and kissed her a little more softly. The moment she began to kiss him back timidly, he began thrusting into her over and over until she was about to burst. All of her anger was slowly draining away and was being replaced by another blissful emotion. Crying and panting, she finally succumbed to the feeling and shrieked out his name. She felt him lose himself within her and collapse onto her.

"I am sorry, Hermione," he choked out before springing away from the bed. He threw on his robes and stalked out.

What the hell had just happened? It had happened so quickly. She shakily sat up and pulled the top sheet around her. He had been rough, unfeeling, demanding... and she'd liked it. From the look of horror on his face just now, she knew that he probably thought he had raped her. Had he? Well, no, he was her husband. Her body was his right...just as his was hers. And she had consented. Hadn't she? She'd wanted him. She loved the feelings that he brought out in her. She stood up shakily and pulled on jeans and a tee shirt. She threw a set of new robes over them and went to find him. She was now throbbing between her legs from his roughness, but he had felt good to her at the time...after the initial thrust anyway...so she pushed those thoughts away. Making her way to the lone tower above the library, she found him. His arms were crossed in front of him as he stared out into the night. The icy wind blowing his hair wildly as the moonlight silhouetted him made him look so... beautiful. He was hurting. He thought that he had hurt her. His words had hurt her some, but she would be sure to let him know that his actions were not unwanted.

He must have sensed her because he went rigid just before she circled her arms around his waist from behind. She pressed her body and head to him tightly. "Why are

you here, Hermione? Why would you want to be near me after... that?"

She placed a kiss on his back. "Because I want to love you...already do care a great deal." She felt him release a deep breath. Then she felt him shudder slightly. Was he crying? She wanted to look into his face, but she knew he would be uncomfortable with that. She just tightened her hold on him and placed a few more kisses on his back. Finally, his arms reached back behind him to clasp at her sides.

"I don't deserve you," he said. "I deserve no one."

Suddenly, comforting him became the most important thing in the world to her. "Deserving or not is a moot point. You have me. And I want you. All of you. Snarky Potions professor, evil Death Eater, loyal Order member, Severus the gentleman, Severus the hero. You are mine, Severus. I will not let you go, nor do I want you to think that anyone else could ever tempt me away from you. No one compares to you."

He turned around and looked into her eyes. She could feel some tickling in her mind. He was trying to see if she was telling the truth. 'Well, let him look,' she thought. 'Let him see how I feel.' Then her heart melted. He gave her the softest smile that she'd ever seen him give. His features softened so much that he looked half his age. His eyes were no longer piercing but... loving. "I adore you," he said softly before kissing her gently. Those were not the three little words that she would have wanted him to say, but they would do. For now. Love would come. Love had come. She knew that. He wasn't ready to say it yet, probably didn't completely feel it yet, but she knew that he would. She gave a silent thanks to whatever idiot had come up with the marriage law. It had given her the man of her dreams.

Severus held her closely after their lips parted. He had delved into her mind, and he had seen many things. Her mind was filled with flashes, but they were mostly of him: him sneering at her many years before, yelling at her, and putting her down; him from last year when they had worked amicably together; him from Order meetings; him in battles they had fought in; him dancing with her on their wedding night; him making love to her. He felt the love emanating from her. It overwhelmed him. Yes, he adored her. Deep down, he knew that he was falling in love with her. How could he not? She had changed him after all. Something he had vowed wouldn't happen. They would survive. She would be the mother of his children. He would live his life protecting her and his family. And even her ruddy friends! "Let's go home," he whispered and led her into the castle.

****And they lived happily ever after...with triplets who each had a hard to spell name and with many cherished friends****

Southern's Notes: I just want it stated for the record that I've always had a soft spot for Marriage Law stories. No offense to anyone is intended. I just like to snicker about things sometimes and hope others can be entertained as well.

Confession time: I wrote most of this years ago, and gasp!!! I meant it as a serious story. LOL Now you can see why I never posted it. I figured adding some things in and cheating it up some would make for a good parody. Hope you've had fun, mates!