

In the Eye of the Beholder

by a_bees_buzz

We all choose the faces we present to the world. With magic, there is more scope to affect those choices. Hermione questions Severus'.

one-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Warning: This is not DH compliant.

A/N: This is the first SS/HG piece I ever wrote, long before I became seriously interested in the ship. It was inspired by a discussion about whether Alan Rickman was too old to play the part of Severus. It occurred to me that perhaps we were asking the wrong question.

The war was over. It had been long and grueling, but they had won. Afterwards, they healed the wounded, buried the dead and drank toasts to the fallen. Lots of toasts. An obscene number of toasts. There were quite a few hung-over ex-warriors in the kitchen of Grimmauld Place the next morning, forcing down potions and coffee.

Hermione was a late arrival. She'd not had much to drink the night before, but had stayed up late dealing with some of the alcohol-induced purging of both the physical and the maudlin emotional varieties. She looked slowly around the room, finally letting her eyes come to rest on Severus Snape's unlovely countenance. "You do realize it's over, don't you. He's not coming back this time."

Severus' jaw tightened while those of the remainder of the kitchen's occupants who could manage it rolled their eyes. Hermione and Severus had been sniping at each other whenever he was in the house for well over a year.

"Your point, Miss Granger?" Harry had become 'Harry' the day they left Hogwarts. Ron had become 'Ronald' a few weeks later. Hermione was still 'Miss Granger'. He knew it irritated her, and she knew he knew, and he knew she knew he knew. They were like that with each other.

She crossed her arms and tapped her foot. "You can take it off."

The room stilled. Nervous glances were exchanged. What in all that was holy was she talking about?

Severus quirked an eyebrow and deigned to grant her an icy stare. "What precisely would you like me to remove, Miss Granger?"

All eyes turned to Hermione.

"Your Glamour. It's about time, don't you think?"

The eyes swiveled back to Severus.

His mouth twitched just a bit. Then a bit more. The eyebrow dropped back into place as his lips finally formed a tight but unmistakable smile. "Very good, Miss Granger. How did you know?"

"Your teeth." She grinned smugly as she replied in her inimitable, know-it-all manner. "I first wondered in my fourth year when Poppy fixed my teeth after Malfoy hexed them." Poppy Pomfrey had been living in Grimmauld Place and fixing up wounded fighters for long enough to be on a first name basis with everyone there. "I realized that fixing teeth was not particularly difficult, especially for a wizard as capable as you are. But it was in sixth year, when I realized that you had been at Hogwarts with Harry's parents, that I really started to suspect. My parents are dentists. I know how long it takes teeth to yellow, especially on someone who doesn't smoke. You are much too young to have teeth that color."

"I drink a great deal of tea, Miss Granger."

She knew he was baiting her with his repeated 'Miss Grangers', but she was determined not to be distracted. "Tea stains brown, not yellow. No, the only possible explanation was that you walk around presenting yourself to the world with the yellowed teeth of an old man on purpose. Once I noticed that, other things fell into place. I've seen you after you have fought a battle. You get out of breath and sweat like the rest of us, but your face doesn't color. Then there's your hair. No one's hair looks like that, not naturally." She smiled and dropped the pedantic tone she had been using for a softer, almost pleading one. "Don't you think it's time you showed the world your real face?"

"Very perceptive, Miss Granger. Very perceptive indeed. I have been wearing a version of this Glamour for nearly twenty years, and as far as I know, you are the only person who has ever seen through it."

He took out his wand and performed a series of complicated passes, first dropping the wards that kept the charms fixed, then one by one dropping each of the separate Glammers that made up his disguise.

"Bloody hell!" Ron was the first to find his voice as Severus' true appearance was revealed.

His hair was still black, but it waved softly around his face with just a tinge of grey at the temples. The teeth were white and even, his eyes were warm, his complexion healthy, and his lips full and sensual. He was an affable-looking, yet ruggedly handsome man.

"Is that better?" His eyebrow quirked again. Rather than intimidating, the gesture now looked roguish, even charming.

"Much. You did overdo it a bit, you know."

He glowered at her. On the new, friendly-faced Severus, it was a warm, teasing look. "I have led an extraordinarily difficult double, nay, triple life. Such things wear a man down, make him look old before his time."

"Piffle," she retorted, chin held high. "Without the glamour you don't look any older than you are. That was just what you wanted people to think. Poor martyred Severus, look how hard his life is, you can see it in his face. It was all just an affectation."

For the first time in many years, Severus Snape laughed out loud. "I don't suppose I could dock you house points for impertinence?"

Hermione giggled. "I think it's a bit late for that."

Ron threw a worried glance to Harry. "What is happening here?"

"I'm not sure, but I think this is some strange form of intellectual flirting."

"We are not flirting," Hermione replied indignantly.

Severus chuckled. "Aren't we?"

"Ewww, that's just..." Ron's words were cut off as Tonks slapped a hand over his mouth. Her other hand was pressed to her heart, and moisture was just beginning to collect in the corners of her eyes.

"We can't be flirting, can we?" Hermione asked in confusion, her eyes never leaving Severus'.

"My dear girl, I am not all that old, as you so cleverly pointed out, and you are no longer that young. You do seem to have given a great deal of thought to my appearance."

"Only because I found it unpleasant to have to look at your sour face every day. It was ruining my meals."

"Ah. Of course. That must be it. Tell me, what transformations did you have in mind for Alastor? Or do you find his countenance more pleasing?"

She shifted nervously.

"I am old enough to be your father." He took a step towards her.

"I'm stubborn and bossy." She moved further into the room.

"I am used to being on my own; I will not share my life easily." He stepped out from behind the table.

"I have never shared mine." She stopped an arm's length away from him, her eyes still pinned to his.

He took one step closer and used The Voice. The one that had given her shivers since the very first time she had heard it in Potions class. The deep, silky, molten chocolate tone that spoke directly to her heart. "Hermione?"

"Yes," she whispered as her head tilted back and her lips met his.

"Well, it's about time," sniffed Minerva from the doorway. The sexual tension had been driving her mad.