

In the Pursuit of Knowledge

by Fervesco

In desperate need of some answers, Hermione sets out on her own course of study.

Chapter One

Chapter 1 of 2

In desperate need of some answers, Hermione sets out on her own course of study.

Hunched over a table in the drawing room of Grimmauld Place, Hermione's cheeks flushed pink, her hands surreptitiously covering the entire book before her, bar the thin strip of words she was currently digesting. To those around her, it would appear she was once more working on research, with the overly zealous enthusiasm she always held for her work. And it was true, she was researching, but this time she was doing some slightly more personal study.

Over this past summer, with school finished and Voldemort defeated, it had become quite clear to her, through the rusty creaks of the bed upstairs in Harry's room, noises that mysteriously only occurred when Ginny coincidentally disappeared, and the loud knocking against the wall of her own room when Ron and Katie Bell were busy 'going over Quidditch moves', that, for once, her friends had one up on her. When it came down to it, Hermione was utterly ignorant to the inexact mechanisms of the birds and the bees. And that was why she was currently cradling *Clitoris Confidential* like it was made of porcelain.

Hermione Granger's worst fear was being accused of being ignorant. She'd gone to great lengths at times to make sure she knew everything anyone could possibly strike up a conversation about. Five hours spent plodding her way through *Quidditch Through the Ages* may not have been the most thrilling way she'd ever spent a Thursday afternoon, but she now knew all the theory, all the moves behind it. Not that it had stopped her from being utterly useless at it, but no longer did she have to wonder at the secret language Ron and Harry sometimes seemed to speak in. It had all been a bit of a waste of time in the end though, really. Her theory had been correct: it was just boring Quidditch moves.

So absorbed in her personal research, Hermione startled when a shadow fell over her book. She glanced guiltily up, like an ironing house-elf caught skimping on the starch.

Above her loomed the ominous shadow of her current Order of the Phoenix assignment, and a dim assignment it was. She'd have taken fighting Voldemort over this any day.

"Fifty points from Gryffindor, Miss Granger." Snape glowered down at the witch as she rushed to cover up her book with her hands.

"Fifty points?!" Hermione exclaimed, before realising his punishment was empty. No longer was he her teacher, and for that matter, no longer did she gain or lose house points.

"Yes. Fifty. Five-zero. Forty-nine plus a bonus," he said wryly, looking satisfied.

"Before I point out to you that I am no longer a student at Hogwarts and nor are you a professor, perhaps you could tell me why?" Hermione demanded, incensed.

As it was deemed a secret, it was therefore fairly common knowledge that whilst Snape awaited his trial as a Death Eater, Minerva had wrangled him out of Azkaban. She had done so only under the condition he did not to step a foot outside the house in Grimmauld Place. They'd all, every Order member, taken turns watching him, making sure he didn't break the rules of his release. Hermione had, up until today, managed to weasel her way out of it one way or another (research was a very good excuse for

getting out of Snape-sitting). As the weeks had worn on, he'd got all too irritable, and Hermione now wished she'd just done her duty in the beginning.

"Because you were turning the pages of your book too loudly. And as well aware as I am that I can no longer take points from you, it's that or curse you from here to kingdom come."

Hermione sat there dumbstruck.

"Do close your mouth, Miss Granger."

"But I was just reading!" Hermione protested.

"As was I until your incredibly inconsiderate page turning drove me to distraction!" Snape bellowed.

"This is a study," Hermione replied, waving her hands around the room at the numerous bookshelves to illustrate her point. "It is for studying!"

"Yes, studying, not for deafening page turning." His next move appeared in slow motion to Hermione, her heart leaping to her throat in abject terror as she realised what he was doing, but her hands could not move fast enough to stop him. In her enthusiasm to protest his argument, she realised she had unwittingly uncovered the page she was reading. Snape's eyes wandered to the page, and a satisfied smirk touched his lips. "Nor is it a sanctuary for pornography."

Hermione's cheeks flushed magenta. "I was just doing some research..."

"Most teenagers do that sort of research behind the Quidditch changing rooms, and not out of a book," Snape replied nastily.

He had hit a chord. She was most certainly lacking in volunteers for the 'behind the Quidditch changing rooms' method. "I prefer to get my facts straight first," she said, though she felt as if she were trying to convince herself more than him.

Snape raised a sceptical eyebrow at her, before picking up the book and fingered the worn pages. Her cheeks glowed hot and her chin dropped in shame as he returned to the page she'd been reading, methodically taking his time with the text, leaving her to squirm in her seat with intense embarrassment. Finally he snorted, then shook his head as he let the book fall open on the table. He leant across it.

"So very clinical. I pity the boy you intend to use this on." His voice was filled with disgust.

"I do not intend to use it on anyone!" Hermione exclaimed, then slapped her hand over her mouth, too late to take the words back.

"Oh, yes?" he said with silky disbelief. "Then why the research?"

The tatty bookshop docket Hermione had been using as a bookmark caught his attention, and he plucked it from the pages.

"Purchased four months ago," he glanced up at her, "at a Muggle bookshop, no less." Snape flicked to the cover and read the title. "Honestly, Miss Granger, you are silly enough to believe you can learn about sex from a book?" He contemplated for a moment. "Though that doesn't really surprise me," he said, a smirk curling the edges of his mouth as he surveyed her. "Perhaps if you ever pulled your bushy head out of your books you wouldn't need to resort to such measures. What strikes me as moronic, even when I consider it is you, is your idiocy to believe that some Muggle author could possibly prepare you. Did you not think that if you had to learn this from a book, that at least one written with some knowledge of sex in the wizarding world would be prudent?"

"Well, I supposed there wouldn't be any difference..." Hermione muttered, frowning. She didn't want to do it, didn't want to ask him, not him of all people, but her incessant curiosity over took her embarrassment. "Is there?"

"Is there any difference?" He laughed at her, a dry, twisted chortle. "Tell me, Miss Granger, what would you do if your partner cast 'necto arma' or perhaps 'papilla habeo'?"

Hermione thought hard, but nothing came to her. Not even an inkling. "I have no idea," Hermione replied, berating herself for this gaping oversight.

"Do you even have any idea of magical contraception?" Snape asked scathingly.

"No," Hermione said, hanging her head again.

"Well then," Snape said, drawing his wand. He pointed it at the book in front of her, which flew across the study in a flash of green sparks and a horrifically loud bang that made her jump. "I suggest you at least find out the answer to that, and then try some practical work, Miss Granger. By now you should have concluded that all the theory in the world is not worth a sickle until you have placed it into practise."

"I don't have anyone to practice with," Hermione retorted, as a last resort to justify her lack of action. It only left her feeling even more embarrassed though, admitting to Snape, of all people, that as of yet no boy had shown the slightest bit of interest in her since the war ended, and those before had made dismal efforts indeed.

"Then," he said with a sly smirk, "I suggest you find one."

Hermione continued to read through her (now rather singed) book once again that night in the sanctity of her room, but her mind kept drifting back to Snape's advice. He was right. Potions, Charms, Transfiguration, heck, even Muggle Studies was all wonderful in theory, but it never made complete sense, could never be perfected, until put into practise. She needed to find herself a test subject; preferably one who knew what he was doing. She began running through the options:

Harry and Ron both obviously had their own partners, and besides, after all this time, it would be more disturbing than shagging her own brother, if she'd had one. Then, realising that most of the boys she knew weren't likely to have a great deal of experience, and hence not a lot of knowledge to offer her, she began thinking about the older options; someone who could actually teach her a thing or two.

The thing was, this didn't leave a lot of choices, even with the holidays on, filling Grimmauld Place almost to the brim. She doubted Arthur Weasley would ever do such a thing to hurt his wife, and besides, the bumbling man seven children notwithstanding would probably not be any more use than his son (Ron had never made it past dribbly kisses and the odd fumble in the general vicinity of her chest and that had been the highlight of her years at Hogwarts, at least as far as romance was concerned).

There was Remus not a bad prospect. He was certainly old enough to have the knowledge she so desired; it was just a matter of coaxing it out of him. He'd be a hard one to convince, mind, but she thought perhaps

Oh, but there was Tonks.

Similarly, Bill Weasley was off the list. Hermione preferred not to incur Fleur's wrath, thank you very much.

Charlie Weasley? He was a little younger than she would have liked, but then again, he was definitely more likely to be a willing candidate, were he to take at all after his elder brother. If the rumours were anything to go by, Bill's repertoire of women before Fleur beggared belief.

Hermione stuffed her book under her pillow and crept down the stairs. She found herself standing outside the room Charlie was sharing with the twins.

Hermione jumped, banging her elbow on the doorframe and cursing quietly as a voice broke through the darkness of the hall behind her.

"Don't tell me you're going to use either of those two incompetents as your test subject."

She turned and glared up at Snape. "Hardly. I was looking for Charlie," she hissed back defensively.

He was really starting to piss her off now. She knew he was bored, but she did not want her lack of a love life to become his entertainment for the rest of his confinement in Grimmauld Place.

"Charlie Weasley?" He raised one eyebrow at her. "Miss Granger, if Master Weasley is your intended victim, I meant of course, your intended amour, I should perhaps inform you I have suspected for some time that that particular young man *flies for the other team*."

She rounded on him, her eyes glittering with triumph. Five interminable hours spent trudging through chapter after chapter of *Quidditch Through the Ages* were not to be wasted after all.

"The other team, Professor? Why then, I shall simply have to ensure I seize my Snitch before he's so much as grasped his Bludger."

"Fine then," said Snape. "But I think you're wasting your time."

"Did I ask you?" she snapped.

Snape shrugged, then headed off up the hall towards his room. "I suppose not. Enjoy yourself," he called back along the dim hall. "He's in the kitchen." Something in his tone, a slight hint of amusement, stopped her for a moment. He's just being an arse, she finally convinced herself, pushing his words aside and forcing her goal back into her mind.

Hermione headed off down the next flight of stairs to the kitchen. Sure enough, sitting at the table nursing what appeared to be a mug of hot chocolate, sat Charlie Weasley.

"Good evening, Charles," Hermione said in what she hoped was a sultry voice.

He looked up at her and smiled softly. "Oh, hey, Hermione. You all right? You sound like you've got a cold."

Hermione's face flushed. So much for sounding sexy, she thought. "No, I'm feeling just perfect thank you. And yourself?" she inquired, slipping herself as close as she could next to him on the long wooden bench.

"I'm just drowning my woes in my hot chocolate. But they're hardly worth mentioning," Charlie said, with a dismissive wave of his hand.

"On the contrary. Anything you want to talk to me about?" Please gods, don't let it be erection trouble, she thought. Though she had read some very interesting suggestions in *Clitoris Confidential* that would be intriguing to try....

Charlie looked at her, then smiled, shifting to make himself comfortable. "Well, all right then, since you don't mind. It's just that I'm missing Romania. I mean, it's nice to be back with the family for Christmas, and I suppose I would've been there by myself anyway; what with Alex back home as well. I guess when it comes right down to it, I miss Alex. Gets a little lonely at night..." Charlie blushed and glanced nervously at Hermione. "Sorry, I shouldn't be discussing this with you."

"It's perfectly all right, Charlie. Perhaps I can help you feel not quite so lonely," she suggested, tentatively dropping her hand to his thigh.

Charlie smiled, placed his hand on top of hers and gave it a squeeze. Hermione felt her hopes rise. Yeah, he wasn't too bad looking. And at least with this Alex in Romania he'd more than likely had some experience. "Well, it would do me good to talk to someone about him. I mean, Mum and Dad certainly don't voice their opinion of our relationship, but I know they're not comfortable about the fact that I'm with another man, and Merlin knows it hardly works in with Bill's usual banter..."

Hermione sat there feeling completely stupid. Her only thought as Charlie proceeded to prattle on was, 'Oh. *That* other team.'

AN: *smooch* to my darling beta, Warty, for her work on this one! Much appreciated, hun! :-*

Chapter Two

Chapter 2 of 2

In desperate need of some answers, Hermione sets out on her own course of study.

Well after midnight, Hermione finally managed to escape Charlie. And although now thoroughly enlightened with regards to Alex (everything from his taste in flowers to his favourite cure for the 'Romanian Runs', as Charlie had so delightfully put it), she was no further along with finding herself a test subject.

That was it, then. Two hours, one book and plenty of humiliation later and her entire day was a waste of time. More than a waste of time; she now felt like she knew even less on the subject than the day before. All because of bloody Snape. Well, stuff him, she was going back to bed and going back to her old plan. She'd read everything she could find, bury her head in books and pretend it didn't bother her that no red-blooded, heterosexual man wanted to be within ten feet of her.

No, that wasn't going to work. She wasn't going to sleep. She was too angry. She found herself coming to a halt outside Snape's bedroom door. And that's where it hit her, why he'd said what he'd said, why he'd let her go to Charlie. It was so obvious she couldn't believe she hadn't seen it before he wanted to be her tutor! There was no other reason for it; normally he avoided her like the plague, but today she hadn't been able to get rid of him.

Biting the inside of her cheek in thought, she came to the conclusion that in the name of research she was going to have to take one for the team.

She knocked sharply on his door.

"What?" came the grumpy bellow from inside.

Invitation enough, Hermione thought. She pushed the door open and began ranting, barely taking in his form rising from the bed with only a towel wrapped around his middle.

"Thank you so much for the warning about Charlie, it was so unbelievably helpful." As she spoke she began undoing the buttons on her winceyette shirt, tugging irritably at

the top one until it popped undone. "Two hours!" She tugged at the next button on her pyjama top, tugging it free. "Two hours I have sat down there listening to him dribble on about Alex the oh-so-brave dragon-keeper." Her winceyette shirt was tossed angrily to the ground into a puddle of pink-and-white plaid. "You couldn't have just come out and told me, could you?"

Snape opened his mouth in reply, but Hermione never gave him a chance. "No, that would be far too useful. Instead you have to drive"

"Miss Granger," Snape tried to interrupt again, tucking the end of his towel more firmly around his waist, but she continued on, tugging up her thick woollen under vest.

"Drive everyone mad with your bloody greater than thou attitude. I swear, the moment you are found innocent and you're out of here with be the greatest day this house has ever seen!" She fought on, wriggling heroically with the tight vest. She gave up as it caught under her breasts and instead kicked off her slippers, each one hitting the wall with a thud.

"Miss Granger!" Snape called again.

"Now I finally see why Harry finds you so bloody irrit" Hermione went on, finally managing to get the vest over her head.

"Why the blazes are you in my room undressing?"

She finally stopped and looked up at him. Hermione stared at him for a moment before glancing at her hands, struggling to get her arms free of the thermal vest, looking at her fingers as if they weren't her own. Her brow furrowed. "Um, this is what you wanted, isn't it?" she asked, a little confused.

Snape snorted. "Hardly."

Hermione's felt the searing heat of embarrassment flood over her, her stomach knot and angry tears stinging at her eyes at the indignation of it all. "And why not?"

Snape took his time replying, that odd evil smile touching his lips. Finally he spoke. "Because, without getting personal, as you pointed out earlier, my days of having to teach you are over. I have no wish to continue to do so voluntarily. In fact, I'd rather have to face a dose of Alex's famous run medicine."

"Oh!" The word hung the air between them. Hermione felt one tear slide down her face and sniffed. "Oh."

Snape sighed, rubbing at his forehead, all the time looking pained. Finally he picked up one of her slippers and handed it to her. "Here."

"Oh gods," she muttered, the full devastation finally hitting her as she stood there clutching her shoe. She'd just walked straight into Snape's room, greasy git of the century's room, and even he'd rejected her. More tears followed the first one, and try as she might to wipe them away, they just kept coming. Never had she been so embarrassed before, and she was sure Snape would let the entire world know about this. She'd never live it down.

"What the hell are you crying for?" he demanded.

Hermione sniffed. "I can't believe even you won't touch me!" she wailed. "It seems everyone else is having sex but me! All I want is to know what it's like so I don't look like an idiot and do you think I can find anyone who's willing to volunteer their services?"

Snape winced, pinched the bridge of his nose and drew a deep breath. "All right, fine. If it means that bloody much to you."

Hermione beamed at him.

"But for pity's sake, pay attention."

"Thank you!" she squealed, then her smile disintegrated a little. "This is, of course, on the understanding that no one hears about this. The last thing I need is Ron and Harry knowing I had to stoop to you."

He snorted at her demands, at her ungratefulness. "Then I suggest you close the door. Besides, Miss Granger, I have far more to lose than you. Your good name might be at stake, but my deplorable one, oddly enough, is far more important to me. If anyone finds out I've been *in flagrante delicto* with you they'll say I've gone soft." He paused for a moment. "Not to mention what Minerva would do to me."

Hermione went to protest, but finally decided she probably deserved that. And even if she hadn't, it wasn't going to get her research done standing here arguing. "All right then."

She stood there just staring at him for the longest time, him glaring more and more at her.

Snape finally raised one eyebrow at her, and when she didn't move, he commanded, "Well, don't just stand there..."

"Sorry," she muttered, her fingers reaching for her vest, still trapping her arms, trying to remove it, squirming as she struggled.

Snape sighed. "Honestly! You're even worse than I could have imagined." She looked up at him, confusion plastered over her face. "Merlin, girl," he said exasperatedly. "Come here."

Hermione began to make her way across the room, but with each step doubt niggled further and further into her mind. Why had she even thought that he would.... He was her ex-Potions professor! The most detested man in all of Hogwarts, if not entire wizarding world. Still, he was her best option, her only option. And when it came down to it, knowing everything was far more important to her. She came to a halt about halfway to him.

"Closer, Miss Granger. Sex is generally more effective if your partner is at least in the same time zone." He sounded irritated already, not a good start.

Hermione blushed and scuttled across the remaining floor space between them, stopping right in front of him. She'd never really noticed what an imposing figure he struck before, but now standing here, craning her neck to look up at him she instantly felt very small.

Snape eyed her for a moment, before reaching out and sliding his hands across her shoulders under her vest, slipping the garment easily from her shoulders. Oddly, his touch put her at ease, didn't repulse her as she thought it might. He was strangely gentle and soft. And his skin felt, well, not exactly lighting hers on fire like those Muggle novels her mother read would proclaim, but it wasn't a bad feeling.

"Lesson number one, Miss Granger," he said softly in her hair as his fingers trailed down her back, sending a shiver up her spine. "It is far more intimate to take your time undressing each other than to simply turn up in someone's room and start tossing your slippers about."

"Oh!" Hermione replied, realisation dawning. Excitedly she reached for the quill and parchment in her back pocket and began scribbling down notes.

"Oh, good grief," he muttered under his breath, his fingers deftly plucking the offending objects from her hands. "Note taking, last I knew, was not the normal procedure either."

"Well, how am I supposed to remember?" Hermione protested, looking longingly at the parchment as he placed it on his desk. When she looked at the quill, her fingers twitched.

"I assure you, you will find this unforgettable."

Hermione pulled a face and laughed. "That's awfully arrogant for a man who's spent the majority of his time locked away in a dungeon."

"And that is awfully condescending for a girl who has to turn to a surly old git like me to teach her the ways of the world." He raised one eyebrow as if to ask if she was quite finished. Hermione shrugged in defeat. "Then we shall proceed."

Hermione nodded as eagerly as a first year waiting for sorting.

"First things first, Miss Granger," he commented, then dipped his head, his lips meeting hers. His tongue traced along her sealed lips, trying to urge her to part them, but Hermione kept her mouth tightly shut; the last (and only) time she'd done this was with Ron and she couldn't bear the thought of being covered in drool ever again.

Snape not so subtly yanked on her hair. As she went to protest, he pushed the back of her head, pulling her to him and delving inside her mouth. When nothing proceeded to dribble down her chin, Hermione relaxed and started to take note of what he was doing. His lips glided against hers, teasing the nerve endings; his tongue stroked firmly, exploring her mouth; as she began to feel her lungs burn for air, she paused for a moment, wondering how he was managing to breathe, then, as a soft breeze teased her cheek, she stopped holding her own breath, drawing one in through her nose. Her olfactory senses went into overload. He smelt like clean sweat; musky and damp, yet fresh. Like a spring shower. Far better than dirty Quidditch robes on a boy who probably hadn't seen a shower in a month.

Lesson Two, she thought, make him have a shower first.

As she became accustomed to the sensation of his mouth on her own, and with the hope that she wasn't performing too idiotically, she allowed her mind to wander to the rest of him. One hand tangled in her hair, tilting her head back, the other rested on her lower back, the slight pressure holding her to him, pressing her chest lightly against his. The damp heat from his recently showered body seeped through her clothes, producing a far greater reaction than Hermione had been prepared for. She let out a tiny moan.

His hands left her body for a few moments, purposefully grasping her wrists, which hung limply at her sides, placing one firmly on his back, the other under the damp hair at the base of his neck, before he returned his own fingers to their previous homes.

Hermione wondered at the skin beneath her fingers. Never had she touched someone so intimately. His hands were buried in her curly hair, fingers pressing against her skull each time he moved to deepen their kiss. Supposing she should do the same, but all the while wondering why he hadn't moved her hand higher into his hair, Hermione ended up fiddling with a few errant strands.

Snape pulled away from her mouth. "Quit dallying about. I assure you it's clean, Miss Granger. I just had a shower."

Desperately wanting to prove that she wasn't a complete imbecile, Hermione snaked her fingers through his dark hair, pulling him back down to meet her lips. Eager to discover what that bare chest that was warming her so delightfully felt like beneath her fingers, she slid them around from his back.

She began at his collarbone, tracing the prominent bone down one side, then down the other. Having not been told off, she continued her journey, releasing her other hand from his hair and allowing it to join the first, one hand over each pectoral, taking in the coarse hair with her palms, then, out of curiosity, raking her nails lightly over his skin. Snape's reaction was immediate; hoisting her from the ground, with Hermione quite aware that his hands were now on her buttocks, he dropped her onto his bed.

Bending over her he whispered silkily in her ear, "Five points for finally showing some initiative." His voice turned to a low, irritable growl as he continued, "Ten points off for taking so bloody long to do so."

AN: *smooch* to Wartcap, my fantastic Beta. Shall be a lovely Snape shaped packet under your Christmas tree this year, dear :D