

In Your Dreams or Mine

by mayadidi

Hermione and Snape both find a magical object that connects them in an unexpected way.

Prologue

Chapter 1 of 9

Hermione and Snape both find a magical object that connects them in an unexpected way.

Tonight was another bad night; she had dreamt of Fred again. Hermione sighed as she rolled out of bed, pushing aside the worn velvet curtains and reaching for her dressing gown. Since the war, nights such as this one had become commonplace for her. It would start with a nightmare, usually a mess of disjointed memories from both the months leading up to and during the last battle, which had taken place at Hogwarts. Most of the nightmares centered on the friends she had lost. After waking in a panic, covered in her own sweat, she knew it would be useless to try to sleep.

She slipped into a pair of comfortable old slippers before leaving her room and quietly shutting the door behind her. It was two in the morning, and the castle was silent and dark. She smiled as she quietly roamed the familiar stone corridors and stairways. In the past she had only done this under cover of Harry's invisibility cloak.

Most of the students from her year had been given the option of returning to Hogwarts to re-sit their seventh year and take their NEWTs. Given that they were older than the usual seventh-year students, they had been given certain privileges, one of them being that they had no curfew, enabling Hermione to roam the castle during her 'bad nights.' Each student had been granted their own room too, for which Hermione would be eternally grateful. She didn't have to worry about waking up a room full of girls every time she had a nightmare. Hermione figured that the headmistress had known what she was doing by giving the returning students their own rooms. The headmistress would have known that those students who had participated in the war would be experiencing nightmares.

Hermione thought of the handful of students who had opted to return. Hermione knew that nobody was surprised that she had jumped at the chance. Neville was another Gryffindor who had also opted to return along with Seamus Finnigan and Lavender Brown. In addition to the four Gryffindor students were Padma Patil and a few more Ravenclaw students Hermione wasn't too familiar with, Hannah Abbot and Ernie Macmillan from Hufflepuff and Draco Malfoy from Slytherin.

Draco had the room right across the hall from Hermione's. The returning students single rooms were all located in the same corridor, taking them away from the petty house rivalries that occurred between the younger students. Hermione couldn't imagine that any of the returning students needed to be in a separate corridor to move past house rivalries. They had all been forced to grow up rather quickly and had matured past those rivalries that had so concerned them all one year ago. Out of all of them, Draco had seemingly experienced the most dramatic changes. He had grown reserved and quiet since the final battle; it seemed to Hermione that he was trying to be as innocuous as possible, hoping nobody would notice his presence.

Hermione was jarred out of her thoughts when she realized that the staircase she had just alighted had started to shift. She stopped as she waited for it to stop drifting, so she could continue her late-night walk. It stopped at a landing she had never noticed before. It wasn't surprising: really, Hogwarts was full of hidden wings and passage ways. She wondered if anyone really had seen all that Hogwarts had to offer. *Maybe Fred and George*, she thought to herself, feeling a wave of sadness and fear as she remembered her nightmare.

Hermione tried to shake her feelings of sadness as she set out to explore this new wing at a determined pace. Maybe if she got enough exercise, she would make herself tired enough to sleep for a few more hours tonight.

It was one hour later when she found anything of interest. The wing had consisted mainly of dusty rooms that might have been classrooms at one time; nothing to hold her interest. She had explored most of the wing in fact when she found it.

It was in a room, dusty like the others but completely empty. There were no old work tables or desks, no chalkboards, nothing. The room was completely empty except for the small glimmer she saw on the floor: something lying on the floor in the middle of the room was reflecting some of the moonlight filtering in through the dirty window panes. She lit her wand before crouching down to examine the item or items closer. She had never seen anything like them. Once she had looked a little closer, she saw that there were two of them, identical and tied together with a slim white ribbon. Each item consisted of thin strips of wood, or maybe dried grape vines, twisted to make a hoop. Thin strands of thread made an intricate web inside of the hoop, and an assortment of feathers and colored beads hung from strings at the bottom.

Hermione bit her lip thoughtfully as she looked at it. It seemed to be innocent enough. She cast a few spells, trying to trace any magic or hexes that may have been cast upon it. Nothing was revealed so she hesitantly reached out her finger to touch it. As soon as her finger touched one of the feathers, the ribbon disappeared. Hermione drew back in surprise, at the same time she felt like it was calling to her. Somehow she knew she was supposed to take the one she had touched. She picked it up, holding it aloft to see the feathers sway a little as they dropped from the hoop. It was quite pretty, and she wondered if it was simply meant to be some sort of decoration, maybe to hang on a wall.

She looked at the other one, still lying on the floor. She wondered if she should take them both. She reached out for the other one, but was... prevented from actually touching it. There seemed to be a sort of invisible barrier around it. For some reason, she wasn't surprised by this. She felt as if the one she held was meant for her. Perhaps the other one was meant for someone else.

She would go to the library tomorrow and research what this was. She yawned as she slowly left the empty room. Perhaps she would go back to her room and take a quick look through her own books. She vaguely remembered purchasing a book on magical items back in her first year. Maybe this hoop with the feathers would be listed.

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Severus scowled and retreated back into the shadows when he noticed the Granger girl walking down the stairs he had been about to alight. He silently cursed Minerva as he restrained himself from barking out a points deduction and giving the girl detention. The new headmistress of Hogwarts had insisted that the returning students be treated as adults, which gave them leave to wander the castle at all hours of the night. This was not the first time he had come upon this particular student wandering through the halls at night. He wondered briefly if her sleep, like his own, was plagued by memories of that day in May when Hogwarts had been under siege. He touched his neck then, sliding his fingertips over the rough edges of the scar. A constant reminder of the nightmares that haunted him. Each night he was re-visited by Nagini biting him over and over again. Severus quickened his pace, hoping to make himself so exhausted that he would eventually be able to sleep without dreams for a few hours before breakfast the next morning.

It was the same almost every night, and he grew tired just thinking about it. After Voldemort had been defeated, Minerva had gone to the Shrieking Shack, only to find that he hadn't died as Harry had supposed. He was still breathing, and she had Apparated him to St. Mungo's, where he had lain for three months before he recovered from Nagini's attack. Potter had apparently visited Snape frequently, proclaiming loudly that he was a hero of the war. In the end, the school's board had begged him to return to Hogwarts to continue teaching, his new popular status causing him to be in great demand among the students' parents.

It was after he returned to Hogwarts that the nightmares had started. Being back in the castle after the last year was enough to send his mind sifting back through the terrible memories.

Severus scowled as he marched through the old unused wing of the castle. He had visited it many times, reveling in the feeling of being completely solitary as he wandered through the dusty rooms full of old desks and scarred work tables. His favorite room, though, was the empty one. Just a large empty room with no old furniture to clutter it. There were windows on two walls...during the day the room would be brightly lit from the sun...but Severus only came at night when the moonlight filtered in, silvery and blue.

The door had been left open, and he grimaced thinking that Granger had been in *his* room. He closed the door behind him and leaned against it, watching dust float in the slim shafts of moonlight. Then he noticed it.

Something was on the floor in the middle of the room. Granger had no doubt left something here. Retaining his position against the door, he waved his hand and *Accio'd* the item to fly into it. He frowned as he examined it; it didn't belong to the young Gryffindor witch. For some reason he felt as if it belonged to himself. He held it by one of the feathered strings, letting the hoop dangle in the air. He had never seen anything like it. Taking out his wand, he cast a series of spells, looking for an indication of dark magic. Nothing; it was clean.

He stuffed it into one of the deep pockets of his robes. He would go back to his rooms and do some research. He had an extensive library; no doubt one of his books would have some information on this strange webbed hoop with feathers.

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AN: I've read a number of stories that involve similar themes to this one. My goal is to take a unique approach to a sometimes over-used (but wonderful) idea. I hope you enjoy it, and please review and let me know.

Thanks to my beta Septentrion who is a star!

Chapter 1: Sleep and Find

Chapter 2 of 9

Hermione and Snape find a magical object that connects them in an unexpected way.

Chapter 1: Sleep and Find

Hermione didn't want to wake up. She tried to hide her head under the pillow and burrow more deeply under the covers, but it was no use. She was awake. She lay still in her bed, trying to recall her dream. *Had she dreamed?* All she could recall was a feeling of contentment that she wanted to retrieve.

With a sigh she swung her legs out of the bed and stood up, only to land on the hardback of a book. She looked down, her book along with the strange hoop item she had found both laying on the floor. She must have dropped them when she'd fallen asleep.

She smiled; a couple hours of peaceful sleep had left her feeling more refreshed than she had felt in a long time. *fell asleep!*

Not only just fell asleep, but she had slept peacefully and felt rested. Her sleep hadn't been interrupted by the constant nightmares that she had come almost to expect when she closed her eyes each night.

She looked at her old-fashioned wind up alarm clock (the only type of clock that would work within the Hogwarts wards), and her smile grew. She had an hour before her alarm would normally go off. She could use the time to conduct more research on her new... toy. She glanced down at it, sitting in a messy heap of feather on the floor. She picked it up and untangled some of the strings, laying it carefully on her nightstand. She would need to be more careful from now on.

After quickly dressing, she hastily made her way down to the library. She could read for about an hour before she would need to get down to breakfast and then classes. The night before she had skimmed through her copy of *Magical Items of the United Kingdom*, with no luck. Today she would extend her search and check other regions.

In the end, it only took her an hour to find the information she was looking for. The hoop and feathers was called a dream catcher. It was in fact a magical item, devised by people who practiced magic in the Americas.

The "dream-catcher," devised by the native peoples of the Americas, is meant to be hung above the bed. It is then used as a charm to protect sleeping children from nightmares.

Good dreams pass through the center hole to the sleeping person. The bad dreams are trapped in the web, where they perish in the light of dawn.

Hermione looked around at the stone walls of the library. She had needed a dream catcher, and it had appeared for her last night. She wondered if the castle itself had provided it for her. She remembered Dumbledore speaking once of the castle as a being in itself. Perhaps he hadn't been too far from the truth.

She felt a spark of satisfaction. The dream catcher had worked for her last night. She would remember to hang it above her bed tonight, and she wouldn't question it further. It had been left for her to use and she would do so.

She remembered that there had been two. *I wonder who the other one was for..* Shrugging to herself, she returned her books to the shelves; it was time for breakfast.

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Severus woke with a start, looking around in surprise. He had fallen asleep in his favorite leather chair in front of a now cold fireplace. He blinked a few times, trying to orient himself. A book lay on the floor at his feet, and he had an ache on one side of his neck. He had fallen asleep! Apparently, he had drifted off without realizing it. He felt amazingly refreshed, as if he had awakened from a full night's peaceful sleep. He had no memory of the usual nightmares. In the privacy of his rooms, he allowed himself a brief smile, feeling cheered by the fact that he could experience sleep without nightmares.

Leaning forward, he scooped the book off the floor and flipped to the middle, trying to remember what page it had been on. The book, *Magical Innovations of the Western Regions*, had a chapter about his new object. His eyes moved back and forth quickly as he read about the dream catcher and what its purpose was.

He sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose as he thought about what he had read. He had experienced a night of good sleep. *Could it be due to the dream catcher?*

He looked over at his desk where he had placed the webbed hoop and feathers. He was tempted to be suspicious of the item, even if it was free of any dark magic. It had appeared just as he had needed it, but that wasn't uncommon at Hogwarts.

He rose in order to start performing his morning ablutions. He would have to hurry in order to make it to breakfast, and he would need at least one cup of coffee before the long day ahead. He supposed for now he would have to wait and see. He thought about bringing it to some of his colleagues to have it checked out. Flitwick would be the best option for detecting any charms on the device. But, no, he didn't want to give it up for a number of days while different professors poked and prodded at it. For some reason he trusted that it wouldn't bring him harm. Perhaps he would start sleeping better if he kept the dream catcher in his rooms.

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AN: I grew up in a state that had a number of Native American reservations. It is hard to say which tribe the dream catcher originated in and I couldn't find out if it was in South or North America.

The Dream Catcher is a common piece of art and decoration and is believed to hold bad dreams in the web, just as Hermione read when she did her research.

Witches and Goblin Kings

Chapter 3 of 9

Severus sees something entirely new and different.

Chapter 2: Witches and Goblin Kings

Hermione was looking at Professor Snape's dead body. He was bleeding from the neck where the snake had bitten him, and his eyes were drifting closed.

She was having another nightmare. Even as she stood watching the man bleed to death, she acknowledged that she was dreaming again. The time she and Harry had watched Professor Snape being bitten by Nagini had been a frequent nightmare of hers.

Another, living, Professor Snape walked up besides her, looking down at his own body.

'Professor Snape?'

'Miss Granger, why are you here?'

'I'm having a nightmare, sir.'

The man next to her pinched the bridge of his nose.

'Why the hell did I addher to my nightmare?' he murmured.

'Sir, Professor, this is my nightmare, not yours.'

'No, Miss Granger, this is my nightmare. I am not sure why you have become a part of it, but it's most definitely mine.'

She turned away from his body on the floor to look at the living Snape standing next to her.

'No, sir, I am quite sure this is mine. I even remember going to sleep this night. I have had this nightmare before. I recognize it.'

'Miss Granger, that body on the ground is my own. This was my experience, which I am re-living in my nightmares.'

'Sir, did you think that Harry was alone in that tunnel? I was there too, watching what Voldemort did to you.'

'Miss Granger, why would you be dreaming about me? It makes no sense.'

'It's because of the guilt I feel.'

Snape scowled at her. 'Explain.'

'Sir, ever since we found out you had lived, I have felt so much guilt. I should have double-checked your body... given you some dittany. I should have done something. But I didn't. Harry said you were dead, and I just took his word for it and followed him out.

Once we found out you had lived, I started to have this nightmare.'

'Nevertheless, this is my traumatic experience and my nightmare. You should leave me to re-live my trauma.'

'No, you should leave me tomy guilt. There is already one of you here, and you're dead, so you shouldn't be alive arguing with me.' She pointed at the dead Snape on the ground.

The live Snape started to pace within the small room. 'Why would you dream that I am dead? If this is indeed your nightmare, and the guilt of my living has caused it, shouldn't I be alive?'

'No, sir. in my dream about your death, it always ends up like this, with you lying lifeless on the ground.'

'Insufferable girl! You were in my Potions class today. I am clearly not dead!'

She rolled her eyes at the older man. Was he purposely trying to misunderstand her?

'Bloody hell, Professor, don't you get it?! That's the reason it's a nightmare!' She flung her arms up in frustration.

He raised his eyes and gestured for her to continue.

'Sir, the reason this is a nightmare and not just a memory for me is because, in my nightmare, you always die.'

He continued pacing as he muttered to himself.

'Damn it, I not only add Hermione to my dreams, but now the dream Hermione cares about whether or not I live or die.'

'Don't talk about me as if I'm not here! I can hear you... Hey, you called me Hermione.'

'This is my dream, I can call you whatever I want. I do not know why I am having a dream about arguing with you, but I hope it does not become a reoccurring one.'

'If you can call me Hermione, then I can call you Severus. Severus, I don't know why I am having a dream about arguing with you because this is my dream. But I, too, hope it doesn't happen again!'

Hermione woke with a start, hearing the shrill rings from her alarm clock. She slapped her hand over it to end the sound and sat up. It was morning. She had slept the entire night through!

What a strange dream. She had dreamt of Professor Snape's encounter with Nagini a number of times, but this time it had been so different. Instead of feeling the anxiety and guilt and waking up in a cold sweat, she had dreamt that she had argued with Snape about whose dream it was. She didn't feel any anxiety, only a bit of frustration at the man she had argued with. She smiled to herself; she would take the frustration any day. She giggled then, remembering her dream. She had called him Severus.

She looked up at the dreamcatcher hanging over her bed. She hadn't had any nightmares, but the dream hadn't exactly been rainbows and flowers, either. Did dreamcatchers have a sense of humor?

She swung her legs over and got out of bed. She only had an hour to shower and get ready. For once she had woken with her alarm, rather than having already been awake from a nightmare. She had double Potions with the seventh year students today, and for some reason, she was just a little eager to see her Potions Professor.

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Severus refused to let himself hope that the dreamcatcher would really work. He had been tempted to try falling asleep early but made himself finish his rounds before retiring to his room. He would not let a feathered hoop change his schedule. Around midnight he finally was able to strip and go to bed.

Severus was standing in the corner of the bedroom of the Shrieking Shack. He watched as Nagini bit him, causing the blood to start spurting from his neck. Severus sighed; it was the same dream. In just a moment it would start all over and continue in this cycle until he woke.

Before the cycle could begin again, someone Apparated into the Shack. He couldn't tell who it was from the corner of the room, but it appeared to be a woman. In all of his dreams, this had never happened before; he was always alone. She stood silently, staring down at his dying body. He approached her and stood by her side. It was Granger! Why was she in his dream?

'Professor Snape?'

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Severus blinked a few times as he woke. The sun was rising, and he could see the faint light filtering into his rooms. He frowned in confusion as he remembered his dream. It had been so unusual. He had thought it would be another nightmare, and then he had dreamt that the Granger girl was there. Why had he dreamt about her?

He hadn't only dreamt she had been in his dream; they had argued about said dream before she suddenly Apparated out, just as quickly and silently as she had come into it. In fact, they had been in the middle of a strangely stimulating argument.

Severus sat up and leaned his back against the headboard of his four poster.

He hadn't experienced a nightmare. In fact, rather than watching the scene with Nagini over and over, he had only experienced it one time before the girl appeared. For the rest of the time, he had been more focused on their argument rather than on the fact that his body lay dying on the floor next to them. He glanced at the dreamcatcher he had hung on his wall near the bed. Was this the result?

He didn't know if an argument with a bossy know-it-all counted as a good dream. At best he had just avoided a really bad nightmare. But why that particular witch? What was significant about her? He swung his legs out of bed. This would require further thought, but he had a class to teach this morning.

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Severus sighed with relief as the staff meeting finally came to an end. Minerva proved yet again that she could be just as long-winded as her predecessor. He gave a curt nod to the headmistress before quickly exiting her office. He didn't have rounds tonight and decided he was due a glass of Firewhisky and an early night.

It was when he was sitting in front of the fire finishing his drink that he came to the solution. He had seen Miss Granger walking through the castle on the night he had found the dreamcatcher. He must have subconsciously connected the girl with his new magical item. That was why he had dreamt of her the night before. It was probably a one time occurrence and he wouldn't have to deal with it anymore.

Severus was in Muggle London heading towards the Leaky Cauldron. He pushed the door open, expecting to enter the familiar, dimly-lit pub. Rather than revealing the well-known establishment, complete with Tom the Bartender, the door opened to a large well-lit room with a checker-board tiled floor. Within the large room were four people whom Severus had never seen before. He drew his wand in alarm and cautiously entered the room. There was one wizard near the far corner in vibrant blue robes who appeared to be a rather poor imitation of Dumbledore, a witch with green skin wearing clothes not unlike Snape's teaching robes flew around the room on a broom, a blond wizard with a ridiculous haircut turned into an owl and back into a wizard over and over again and a witch wearing a saccharine sweet smile and a large pink dress spun in slow circles in the middle of the room. Nobody seemed to have noticed Severus, and he decided he preferred it this way. Had he entered one of the permanent wards at St. Mungo's?

As he stood surveying the room, Miss Granger walked into the room and stood beside him.

'You reminded me of her, the first time I saw you.' she said, pointing to the green-skinned witch flying in circles above their heads.

'Miss Granger, why are you here?'

'Why are you here, Professor?'

I'm dreaming again. Why is she here? 'Miss Granger, I asked you first. I think you should leave.'

'Professor, you are in my dream again.'

'No, I refuse to argue with you once again about this. Just go.'

'Professor, do you know who these people are?'

He turned to face her, feeling confused.

'Do you know who they are?' he asked in a thoughtful voice.

'This is... When I first received my Hogwarts letter, this is what I pictured. These are all wizards and witches from Muggle movies. A movie is a picture but...'

'I know what a movie is, Miss Granger. I was raised as a Muggle. Stop being a know-it-all.'

'Oh, yes, of course. Er... The two witches are from The Wizard of Oz.'

'You pictured this room on the inside of the Leaky Cauldron?'

'My parents were directed on how to get into Diagon Alley. I saw the Leaky Cauldron as my door into the Wizarding World. I knew this wasn't how it would really be, of course, but I couldn't get this picture out of my head.'

He remembered what she had said when she first entered the room.

'I reminded you of that hag with green skin?'

'She's the antagonist in The Wizard of Oz; The Wicked Witch of the West. Look at her clothes. You came slamming into Potions, held in a dungeon no less, wearing her outfit and looking down your big nose and scowling at all of us. What was I supposed to think?'

He folded his arms and looked at the younger witch with narrowed eyes. She had not presented a flattering picture of him.

'I should deduct house points from you for disrespecting a teacher.'

'I can't believe that I not only have dreamed of you twice now, but that I actually have you deducting house points in my dreams.'

'This is my dream, and I find it perfectly acceptable to take away points from Gryffindor while asleep.'

She rolled her eyes at him. 'Whoever's dream this is, the material point is that it's just a dream. Therefore, the point deduction won't count.'

'Who is the wizard that looks like Dumbledore?' he asked, gesturing towards the far corner.

'He is from a movie about the Legend of King Arthur. He is supposed to be Merlin.'

'King Arthur?'

'Morgan La Fey's brother, Arthur. There is a Muggle Legend about his reign as King. The Muggles believe that Merlin served Arthur and that Morgana worked against Merlin to bring his reign to an end.'

Severus snorted. 'I had not heard that Muggle perversion of our history.'

She looked up at him and chuckled.

'Imagine my surprise when I learned the truth in my first year history class.'

His mouth turned up in one corner as if he wanted to smile.

'You know,' she mused, 'I wasn't too far off the mark there. My first image of Merlin does look a bit like Dumbledore.'

'So Dumbledore is Merlin and I am an old hag.'

She flashed him a sheepish smile. 'I guess so.'

'And the owl Animagus?' he said, pointing to the blond wizard who was still shifting back and forth between owl and man.

'That's the Goblin King.'

He frowned. 'The Goblins would never allow themselves to be ruled by a wizard.'

She giggled. 'This is before I ever entered Gringotts. He is from another movie, and he is depicted as the King of a Goblin City; the Muggle depiction of Goblins is much different than reality. He takes human children and keeps them for thirteen hours before turning them into Goblins. If someone wants to retrieve their child, they have to go through a long maze.'

'Preposterous.'

'Yes, well, I loved that movie as a child, and you know... he reminds me a little of Lucius Malfoy.'

Severus allowed himself a small chuckle at that one as he tried to imagine Lucius in the tight trousers, poncy shirt, and the gravity-defying haircut.

'And her?' he said, pointing to the witch in pink who continued to spin in circles.

The Gryffindor witch cocked her head to the side, biting her lip as she considered the woman in question.

'Sybill Trelawney?'

Snape let out a soft snort. 'Hardly. I would stop while you are ahead, Miss Granger.'

'You know, last night in my dream, you called me Hermione.'

He looked away from her, letting his gaze follow the green-skinned witch as she circled over-head.

'I don't understand why I keep dreaming of you.'

'Or why I keep dreaming of you... it's getting confusing. I am not sure what to think anymore.'

'Perhaps that is because this is my dream, Hermione.' His voice was pitched low as he pronounced her name, making it sound like a caress.

She stepped closer to him, tilting her head back to look into his eyes.

'If this is your dream, Severus, why does it contain images from my imagination? Do you believe that you just dreamed these characters up? Did your subconscious assign these characters to me?'

He kept his eyes on hers, noticing that she had small golden flecks in her eyes and that her lashes looked a little too long. An effect of his dream, perhaps?

'Maybe I should just get rid of the dreamcatcher.'

For one second, he saw her eyes widen in surprise, but as she opened her mouth to say something, she popped away.

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*A/N: Please review! I had a lot of fun writing this chapter and I hope you enjoyed reading it.*

*Thanks to my lovely beta, Septentrion. She's the best!*

## Book Stores and Divination

Chapter 4 of 9

Hermione consults an expert to find out why she keeps dreaming of Severus.

Hermione's eyes snapped open. She was lying flat on her back in bed, looking up towards the canopied top which was lightened by the rays of the sun coming in through her window. That dream had felt... He had said something about the dreamcatcher. She sat up in bed, running a hand down her face. Why was she dreaming of her Potions professor? For two nights in a row now she had dreamt of him, and both dreams had been so strange.

There were elements that were very dreamlike; obviously the images of witches and wizards from Muggle movies were part of her imagination and dreams. She wasn't experiencing nightmares anymore, but she was very confused at this new element. Why had her subconscious placed Severus Snape among those images? She wondered if there was someone she could talk to who would know about dreams. What did it mean that she had all of a sudden started having strange dreams about one person? The dreamcatcher obviously had something to do with it, just like dream Snape had said. Why would the dreamcatcher cause her to dream about Snape? *Just how much power over her dreams did this object have?*

She remembered Harry and Ron had to study their own dreams for Divination one year. She scowled. There was no way she was approaching Trelawney for help with her dreams. No doubt the Divination professor would say she was headed for imminent doom. She chewed on her lower lip as she considered her options.

Lavender! Lavender and Parvati had always been really into Divination. She could see if Lavender had some books on dreams or dream interpretation. Lavender and Hermione had struck a rather tentative friendship in the past few months. Neither girl was interested in Ron anymore, and it seemed as if everyone who had taken part in the final battle shared a certain bond. She could ask Lavender today at breakfast, she thought as she got out of bed to prepare for the day.

'Hi, Lavender,' Hermione said as she slid onto the bench next to the other witch.

'Hi.'

'Listen, I have a favor to ask. Can I borrow some of your Divination books?'

Lavender's eyebrows rose.

'You want to borrow some of my Divination textbooks? Everyone knows how much you hate Divination, Hermione. I was there when you threw the crystal ball, remember?'

'I know, I know, it's just... I need to read about dream interpretation. You have books about that, right?'

Lavender's eyes clouded over. 'Is this about... Well, are you still having nightmares about the final battle?' she asked, lowering her voice.

'No, it's not like that. I've just had a few really... Unique dreams, and I want to know if they mean anything.'

Lavender narrowed her eyes as she regarded the other girl.

'Unique how?'

'I'd rather not say. They are personal.'

Lavender smirked and Hermione realized what the other girl was thinking.

'Not like that! Just not something I want to go into, okay?'

'Whatever you say, Hermione,' she teased, still smirking.

'It's just... Have you ever learned anything about sharing your dreams with someone else?'

'Dreamsharing? Sure, we talked about it my fifth year, but I don't have any books about it'

'Is it possible?'

'Well, in theory it is, although there haven't been many cases of it, and it's almost impossible to prove.'

'How would you go about it? Is there a spell or a potion?'

'No, it's not like that. It's more to do with a connection. See, dreamsharing only ever happened between two people who shared a deep and intimate connection.'

What kind of connection?'

'Well, a husband and wife, or siblings. It's common among twins. Parvati said that she and Padma used to do it when they were really young. If one was having a nightmare, the other could sense it and go into her dream and help her feel better.'

'So she could enter her dreams, like with Legilimency?'

'No, they would both have to be asleep for it to work.'

'But they would have to share a connection. It wouldn't happen at random.'

'No, I don't think so. Dreamsharing is really rare; you just don't share your dreams with anyone.'

'Could someone use Legilimency to enter someone else's dream?'

'No. People have tried but most of the time, you need to maintain eye contact to achieve Legilimency. Even if you can achieve legilimency without eye contact, when someone isn't awake, their thoughts are scattered. There would be nothing for the Legilimens to link onto.'

Hermione nodded. That made sense.

'Okay, I get what you are saying. It's probably just a weird coincidence.'

'Did you think you were sharing your dreams with someone?' Lavender inquired.

'I dreamt of the same person two nights in a row, and the dreams felt real. I just thought I would check.'

Lavender shrugged.

'Sometimes dreams do feel real. It's probably nothing.'

~~~~~SSHG~~~~~SSHG~~~~~

Severus dropped his chin down and looked up through the curtains of his lank hair. He frequently used this method to watch the student tables without being noticed. He was watching the Gryffindor table when Miss Granger sat down next to her friends and started chatting. It was impossible, from this far away, to see if she really had those unusual eyes and long eyelashes he had noticed in his dream. He felt like he needed some confirmation that this really was just something that came from his imagination.

Those little details about her eyes and appearance were no doubt added by his own imagination. Probably in a bid to make the girl more interesting, not that he had spent any time in the past thinking of her eyes. Nor of any other details of her appearance, for that matter.

She was talking animatedly with Lavender Brown, both girl's heads bent low as they conversed. He hadn't known that those two were friends. Perhaps, deprived of the other two-thirds of the annoying trio, she had been forced to make new friends.

He allowed himself a small smirk as he thought back to the beginning of the year when both Potter and Weasley turned down the invitation to return to Hogwarts. Both boys had been given special acceptance into the Auror Training Academy, due to their work during the final battle, but most of Severus' colleagues had hoped that they would have taken the option to attend school and sit their NEWTs, regardless of the ministry's special treatment.

Miss Granger stood from the bench and left her table. Severus didn't know what classes she had this day; he didn't have seventh year Potions so would have to wait until tomorrow to see if her eyes matched the ones in his dream.

~~~~~SSHGSSHGSSHG~~~~~

*Hermione was in a book store. Not one of the usual stores she frequented in Diagon Alley, Hogsmeade, or even Muggle London. This one was entirely new to her and in her opinion entirely perfect. Judging by the quality of the books and the layer of dust over everything, it was obviously a used bookstore. There was no sense of organization whatsoever. Books filled rows and rows of bookshelves and spilled out onto any other available surface. There were books piled haphazardly on tables, chairs and even on the floor. Old leather bound volumes with faded titles or newer looking paper-backs.*

*Hermione sniffed, inhaling the smell of dust and old parchment that she loved so much. She smiled as she made her way to the far right corner of the room. She would start there and systematically move through the entire shop. She didn't want to miss looking at every single book, even if it took her days. She rounded the corner and walked right into something hard, black and made of cloth. Strong arms came to rest on hers, steadying her as she looked up.*

*"You again!" Severus Snape scowled down at her.*

*Another dream then, 'Hello, Severus.'*

*'I had thought I had finished with these dreams; I've had the last fifteen minutes peacefully to myself.'*

*"You're insisting again that this is your dream?"*

*'I know it is.' He dropped his hands from her arms and took a step back from her.*

*'Come on, this is so obviously my dream, and a good one for that matter.'*

*He raised his eyebrows. 'What makes you so sure about that?'*

*'A bookstore? Everyone knows that my idea of perfection is a bookstore quite like this one. Of course it's something I dreamed up.'*

*'I had no idea you had claimed the monopoly of being a bibliophile, Miss Granger.'*

*'You know you want to call me Hermione. You always do by the end of my dream.'*

*'Fine. Hermione, you are not the only book lover in Scotland. I happen to enjoy books just as much as you do.'*

*She nodded. 'I guess that makes sense. I can see you as a book lover. Maybe we have more in common than I thought.'*

*'I hardly think that a love of books constitutes more in common,' he said with a grimace.*

*'You know, I talked to someone about these last few dreams that I've had.'*

*'Indeed?'*

*'Yes, to Lavender Brown actually. She's been taking Divination every year, and I remembered that they had spent a term journaling and interpreting their dreams.'*

*'Ah, yes, the exact science of Divination,' he said sarcastically.*

*She smiled at that. 'Normally I would agree with you but I decided it wouldn't hurt to ask. You see, these dreams feel very real to me, and I thought for a moment that maybe we were dream-sharing and that this is really you, rather than just a Snape that I drew out of my own imagination.'*

*'So you thought that rather than this just being my dream, in which for some reason my subconscious has placed you, that we are both experiencing these dreams at the same time?'*

*'Exactly, but we aren't.'*

*'Ah, so Miss Brown told you we weren't dream-sharing?'*

*'Well, she said that for two people to dream-share, they have to have an extremely strong connection or bond. Like family members or something. She said it is most common amongst twins.'*

*'So, since we do not share any bond...'*

*'It would be impossible for us to be dream-sharing.'*

*'And Miss Brown has studied dream-sharing extensively so you can trust that she is right?'*

*'Well, er... She hasn't studied it extensively because there isn't much documented out there to study. It's not considered solid academic ground and it's mostly just theories.'*

*'So, she could very well be wrong.'*

*'Wait, are you saying you think we are dream-sharing?' She took a step closer to him, looking into his eyes as if searching for the truth.*

*His eyes gleamed as he smirked down at her.*

*'I never said such a thing.'*



*'But, you just said that Lavender could be wrong.'*

*'I was merely trying to get you to look at things from a different perspective. As it is, I don't believe we are dream-sharing. I have heard the theories about it, and your friend is right in this case. We share no bond, and therefore it would be impossible.'*

*She blushed as she realized he had set a trap for her to fall into.*

*'You were playing devil's advocate.'*

*He shrugged.*

*She dropped her eyes from his, glancing around the book shop.*

*'I really like this place. I wish it really existed.'*

*'It does.'*

*'Oh?'*

*'As I said before, this is my dream, Hermione. This is my favorite bookstore. It's located right near the corner of Diagon Alley and Knockturn Alley. School children rarely venture that far.'*

*'Well, I have been over that way and I never noticed a bookstore.'*

*'It isn't marked by any signs. You either know of it or you don't.'*

*'When I first noticed my surroundings, I planned on going through each and every book in this shop.'*

*Severus shrugged. 'I'll join you.'*

Severus woke slowly, blinking a few times as he stretched in bed. He would never admit it out loud but he had very much enjoyed his dream last night. The Hermione Granger of his dreams was likely much different than the know-it-all of his classroom. He had dreamt that he had gone through countless books with her, discussing every subject they came across.

When he was younger and had thought he might one day marry and lead a normal life, he had imagined spending time with a woman in that way, leisurely looking through the selection in the bookstore and talking comfortably with someone whom he could share his opinions and thoughts with. The dreamcatcher had finally given him a genuinely enjoyable dream, even if it had come in the unexpected form of Hermione Granger.

He blinked again, looking around his bedroom. Something was wrong.

He realized what felt different to him. It was too bright in here. He grabbed for the pocket watch he kept on his nightstand. He was late!

He had overslept. He would have to hurry if he was to make it to class on time. As it was, he would be skipping breakfast this morning. He hurriedly got out of bed and headed towards his bathroom.

He would need to wash the dream out of his head before he was faced with the real Miss Granger in class today.

~~~~~SSHGSSHG~~~~~SSHG~~~~~

Hermione smiled to herself as she watched Professor Snape finish his lecture on healing pastes. She had such a wonderful dream last night, and she felt fresh and well-rested. Dream Severus, which was how she thought of him in her head, was so different from the Professor Snape from class. In her dream, he had talked to her like an equal. They had gone through a number of books, and he had patiently explained some of his theories and ideas about each different subject they had discussed.

Hermione hadn't wanted to wake from it. She automatically stood as the rest of the class did to go gather the needed supplies for today's potion. She had already done the reading and knew that it was a fairly easy potion to create.

Snape tended to leave the 'return' students alone for the most part. They all sat together near the back of the class and did their work quietly. So Hermione was surprised when he swung by her work table and peered into her cauldron. She had been grinding up a small cutting of saffron to make a powder when he stalked up to her.

'Miss Granger, be sure you do not grind that up too finely. Saffron is an expensive ingredient and cannot be wasted.'

'Yes, sir.' She wanted to yell at him. She knew what she was doing, and her saffron was turning out to be the perfect grade needed for the paste.

He looked up from her cauldron and stared into her eyes for a minute before scowling at her and walking away. *What did I do to make him scowl like that?* He kept to the front of the classroom and terrorized the seventh years for the rest of the time, only glancing over to scowl at her once more before class came to an end.

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A/N: Please Review.

## A Kiss and Beyond

*Chapter 5 of 9*

Hermione and Severus continue to dream.

*Everything was white. There was no floor, no walls, no furniture, nothing to indicate where he was. It was just white. He stomped his foot; there was no sound. He was*

*standing on something solid, but he couldn't see anything. He reached his hands out and walked around for a little, but he never encountered anything solid. He sat, his legs crossed like a child on the ground trying to figure out what to do next. It seemed as if he was just to remain in the white for a while.*

*He didn't even blink when she popped into view. He had only been here for a few minutes before she appeared.*

*'Hello Severus.' She too didn't sound at all surprised to see him there.*

*He inclined his head towards her. 'Hermione.'*

*'Where are we tonight, then?'*

*He gestured around him and shrugged.*

*She looked around at the white before going through the same investigations he had just completed. She stomped her feet, jumped, and then walked around with her arms outstretched in front of her.*

*She finally came to sit in front of him, mimicking his cross- legged position.*

*'It's all white.'*

*'I can see that, Hermione.'*

*'Maybe this is your dream.'*

*'Why would I dream about white?'*

*'Well, I certainly wouldn't dream about just white. I have more interesting things going on in my head.'*

*He snorted.*

*'Next time, concentrate on something nicer when you dream. This white area is boring.'*

*'For the last time, Hermione, this is not my dream. It must be yours.'*

*She sighed, holding up her hands.*

*'I don't want to have the same argument with you, even if it is reversed.'*

*He scowled and crossed his arms.*

*'The dream you looks exactly like the real you,' he mumbled.*

*'Pardon?'*

*'I said, the dream version of you looks exactly like the real you. I checked today in class.'*

*'You checked? What do you mean? Why would I look different?'*

*'Details, Miss Granger. I'm talking about the little details that I never noticed before.'*

*'Like what?'*

*He grimaced for a minute before answering.*

*'A dream or two ago, I noticed that your eyes have gold flecks in them and that your lashes are quite long. Today in class I took a minute to look at your eyes, and they match the dream you's eyes perfectly.'*

*She smiled. 'I'm flattered that you noticed my eyes, Severus. This also proves to me that you are indeed just a dream version of the real you.'*

*He raised his eyebrows.*

*'The real Severus Snape would never be this nice to me. He hates me.'*

*'Why do you think he hates you?'*

*'Well, I'm Harry's best friend and I annoy him in class. Besides, he's a git.'*

*He shot her an affronted look.*

*'Despite what you might assume, Hermione, he-I don't hate you just because you are friends with Mr. Potter.'*

*'Well, the real you certainly acts like it.'*

*'No, the real me used to act like it. When I had to. Remember, I was a spy and couldn't have the Slytherins running home telling their parents that I was cozying up to a Muggle-born. Can you honestly say that I have treated you any differently than the other students this year?'*

*'No, I guess not.' She said after thinking about it for a minute. It was true. Snape was still the strictest teacher, but he was far more neutral this year than what she had seen in the past.*

*'You don't even favor the Slytherins anymore, do you?'*

*He shrugged. 'There's no need, anymore.'*

*'Okay, you're right. The real Snape has changed a lot this year. I still maintain that he would not treat me the way you are right now.'*

*'And, you are far different from the Miss Granger who attends my Potions class.'*

'What? No, I'm not.'

*'The Miss Granger of my potions class is an annoying little know-it-all who is constantly waving her hand in the air. What's more, she would never spend time with me because she is too busy fawning over Potter and Weasley.'*

*'That's not at all fair! You accuse me of using the past to make my judgments about the real you. I admit that the hand-waving may have been annoying my first few years, but I really toned it down in the last few. Besides, I don't fawn over Harry and Ron. I hardly ever see them anymore, what with their being in Auror Academy this year.'*

'Ah yes, the future Aurors. Tell me, how are you getting along with your boyfriend so far away and busy?'

'My boyfriend?' she shrugged. 'Oh, Ron. Actually we broke up before I started school.'

'Indeed, and everyone says you are the perfect couple.' His voice was mocking.

'We are too much like brother and sister. It just didn't work when we tried to shift into a more romantic relationship.'

'I'm glad to hear you say it, but I doubt the real Hermione Granger feels the same way.'

She rolled her eyes.

'I am the real Hermione Granger and you'll only know if you ask me. In real life, not in dreams.'

He chuckled. 'This does have the tendency to get a bit confusing.'

She smiled in response. 'Yes, it does. It's just that I've already begun to separate you from the Snape who teaches Potions. You're the dream Snape.'

'I doubt I'm anyone's "dream" anything, Hermione.'

'Well, I've resigned to myself to the fact that I will continue to dream of you for a while now, and I think I will just let myself enjoy the dreams.'

He nodded. 'They are more pleasant than the ones I was having.'

'You were having nightmares?'

He hesitated, looking away into the white.

'Come on, Severus, this is just a dream. It's not like you're admitting anything to me for real.'

He tilted his head to the side, considering this.

'True. Yes, I was having nightmares. I have been, in fact, since I was released from St. Mungo's.'

She nodded. 'Me too. Every night I would wake up in a cold sweat, dreaming about different aspects of the final battle. Different people who died: Moody, Fred, Remus and Tonks.'

'I would see you walking.'

She nodded. 'I walked until I was so tired it would ensure that I got at least a few hours of dreamless sleep.'

He nodded in understanding.

They both fell into silence, but it wasn't uncomfortable.

'Severus?'

'Yes?'

'I like talking to you.'

'I admit that I enjoy speaking with you as well.'

'I really had fun at the bookstore. I think that was my favorite dream.'

He smirked, turning up one corner of his mouth.

~~~~~SSHG~~~~~SSHG~~~~~

'Starbucks, this time! This one is definitely mine.'

'At least it's not another one of your white dreams.'

'The white was yours, Severus.'

She smiled at the now familiar argument. She had been meeting him in her dreams for a few weeks now, and that argument had become a joke between them.

'Come on, I'll buy you a coffee.' He said with a smirk.

They walked to the counter where two coffees popped into existence. There was nobody working there. As always in their recent dreams, they were the only two people there.

They sat in two squishy armchairs in a corner.

'So what should we talk about tonight?' Hermione asked.

They had experienced a number of dreams and had talked extensively over a number of subjects. Both avid readers, they had read a lot of the same books, both Muggle and magical. Hermione had been pleased to find that they had quite a lot in common.

Severus took a sip of his coffee and raised his eyebrows at her.

'Well,' she shrugged, 'how about we talk about the latest issue of Potions Quarterly?'

'You read Potions quarterly?'

She nodded. 'I have a subscription to that and Transfigurations Today.'

'I don't know why that surprised me. Of course you do.'

Her smile still in place, she sent him a coquettish wink.

He smiled at her audacity.

'You're quite handsome when you smile.'

His smile immediately down-turned into a frown.

'Oh, stop! Remember, this is a dream, it's not real. Just accept my compliment. You are a handsome man and it's more apparent when you let yourself smile like that.'

'Fine. I ... thank you for the compliment,' he said stiffly.

'You know,' she reached over and touched the roots of his hair, 'you really are a good looking man. All you need is a better shampoo and maybe some time at the dentist.'

'Hermione, what are you...'

'Shhh. I'm just touching your hair.'

'It's hardly appropriate.'

'Dream, remember? I'm pretty sure this is my dream, so I get to do what I want. I want to touch your hair.'

He was quiet as she threaded her fingers through his hair.

'I used to have a crush on you.'

He snorted.

'No, really I did. Back in fifth year after I had learned you were a spy. It just seemed so incredibly brave, like James Bond or something.'

'James who?'

'James Bond is a character from a Muggle movie. He was a spy who worked for the British government.' She had leaned forward to get a better grasp of his hair, and he could feel her breath on his face.

'Do you always compare the people in your life to characters in movies?'

'I suppose I do.' She kept one hand anchored in his hair, while the other one started to trace the features of his face.

'You have beautiful eyes.' She said in a low voice as she traced her fingertip over first one and then the other eyebrow.

'Beautiful eyes, a deep sexy voice...'

'Hermione...' His voice sounded apprehensive.

'Severus, I want to kiss you now.'

'No you ca '

She cut him off by leaning forward and covering his mouth with hers. His lips were closed for a moment, keeping the kiss chaste. She ran her tongue over his bottom lip and his lips parted, gaining her tongue entrance into his mouth.

They both stood from their chairs to get closer to each other. She whimpered softly when his arms came around her. His tongue tangled with hers, following it back into her mouth.

Hermione's eyes opened slowly in the morning light, and she groaned, pulling her pillow over her eyes.

Damn, I'm awake. That was turning out to be a very good dream!

~~~~~SSHG~~~~~SSHG~~~~~

Severus, rolled over in bed as he awoke, groaning in frustration. He knew the dreams weren't real, he knew that for some reason, his subconscious had chosen Miss Granger to represent a 'dream' girl of sorts. It wasn't real, but it had felt so good. It had apparently been far too long if one kiss with the dream version of a student was enough to get him so turned on. He glanced down the length of his body, seeing the obvious signs of his own arousal. He had Potions with the seventh years again today and he would need to get himself under control before class.

For the most part, Severus could keep the dream Hermione and the real student Hermione separate in his head, but he didn't want to take any chances. After the passionate kiss he had just dreamed of, her appearance might be enough.

Snape slammed open the doors and stalked into the classroom.

'Today will be a practical class and we will be brewing the protection potion. Instructions are on the board.'

He went straight to his desk as the students scrambled to gather the necessary ingredients for the potion.

He glanced surreptitiously at Miss Granger as she queued up for the puffer pod leaves which were not provided in the standard student Potions kit. She stood behind Neville, her nose in her textbook as she waited. She had caught her lower-lip between her teeth, something both she and the dream version of herself did quite frequently.

It was enough to draw his eyes to the plumped lower lip and make him remember the kiss from his dreams. It had felt so real! He could still remember the way she had felt pressed flush against his chest. He could still feel the curve of her lower back where he had placed one of his hands. He lowered his eyes, pinching the bridge of his nose. *I need to stop thinking of that.*

When he looked back up, his eyes collided with the brown and gold eyes of his most recent dreams. She was staring straight at him. He froze, unable to drag his eyes away from hers. Slowly her eyes moved down just a fraction, focusing on his lips, and he unconsciously licked them in reaction. Her eyes skidded back up to his for one more second before she was jostled by another student. She had reached the front of the line. Severus looked down at the papers on his desk, determined to ignore her for the rest of the class period.

-----SSHG -----SSHG

*Hermione felt a small bubble of panic in her chest. She was in the white space again, but she was all alone. She had been here for ten minutes already and she was starting to worry. What if her dreams with Severus had ended? She killed some time pacing around in small circles, lifting her head every few minutes to see if he had popped up.*

*It had been twenty minutes and still no sign of him.*

*With a sob, she sat abruptly on the ground, bowing her head and covering her eyes as the tears started to fall. She hadn't realized what he had come to mean to her in the past few weeks. The dreams with him were pleasant and enjoyable. Perhaps she had taken it too much for granted. She just expected him to be there when she closed her eyes now. She frowned a little as her tears subsided. Was it healthy to be this dependent on a dream? It would eventually have to end, wouldn't it? Or would she be dreaming of her Potions professor for the rest of her life?*

*'What's wrong?'*

*Severus' deep voice interrupted her thoughts, and she cried out, startled by the sound.*

*'Severus!' She scrambled to her feet. 'I thought you weren't coming. You weren't here and it's been almost half an hour.'*

*She ran to him and threw her arms around him in relief. He stiffened at first before relaxing and returning her embrace.*

*She held him tightly for a minute before pulling back and looking up into his eyes.*

*'I can't understand why you "arrive" at a different time from me. If I am dreaming you, shouldn't you always be here at the same time?'*

*He kept his arms loosely around her waist and shrugged.*

*'I'm not sure of anything when it comes to these dreams.'*

*'Sometimes I wish we had more control over them.'*

*'What would you change if you did have control?'*

*'Well, I would choose when we wake up for one thing, and I certainly would choose to never return to this white space! Why did you dream of it again?'*

*He chuckled at her reference to the 'whose dream is it' argument.*

*'You weren't satisfied with when we woke up last time?'*

*She smiled shyly at him.*

*'No, I really wasn't.'*

*'Perhaps we could begin where we left off last night then?'*

*Her response was to tilt her head back as his lips descended on hers. One of her hands drifted up to thread through his hair at the nape of his neck. His arms tightened around her and pulled her completely against him, her hipbones connecting with his upper thighs.*

*It felt like an eternity before they both parted, breathing hard.*

*'Gods, Severus, you are an amazing kisser.'*

*He smirked at her.*

*'Seriously. If that is how the Potions professor kisses, I want to wake up and go find him.'*

*He growled low in his throat. 'Don't you dare! I'm not finished with you yet.'*

*She giggled up at him before running her hands slowly up his chest.*

*'I've wanted to kiss you all day long. I was so disappointed when I woke up this morning, just as things were getting interesting.'*

*'I know how you feel. I had seventh-year Potions today, and I couldn't keep my eyes off of Miss Granger's lips.'*

*She smiled, looking up at him through her eyelashes. 'I kept looking at Professor Snape's lips. I think I made him a little nervous, always staring at him.'*

*He felt a flash of confusion as he always did when she referenced something that had happened to him earlier in the day. In his dreams she seemed like such a separate entity that he sometimes forgot that she was just a figment of his imagination and that his head could make her say or know anything that he wanted (or needed).*

*She giggled again, interrupting his thoughts. He raised one eyebrow in inquiry.*

*'It's just, this should feel really strange. I mean, I've just spent the last five minutes snogging my Potions professor. Professor Snape, of all people.'*

*'I don't snog, Hermione,' he said, his abhorrence for her choice of words very clear.*

*'Oh, yes, you do, and you're quite good at it.' She shot him an impish smile. 'I'm just saying that this shouldn't feel so good or so natural.'*

*He looked thoughtful as he responded.*

*'I suppose that even the conversations we have had are out of the ordinary for you and me. The only reason that all of this feels right is that it's only a dream. We are not really kissing. In real life, we have no relationship to speak of.'*

*'Severus?'*

*'Hmm?' He had leaned down and started nuzzling the juncture of her neck and shoulder.*

*'How long do you think these dreams will last?'*

*'I don't know.' He pulled away a little to look her in the eye.*

*'All joking aside, Hermione, intellectually I know that any dreams I experience are of my own making. So theoretically, the fact that you are appearing in my dreams means that something in me needs you as a dream figure right now. I suppose they will end when whatever it is I need is finally fulfilled.'*

*She nodded. 'The same would go for me if these were really my dreams, using you as a figure I need.'*

*He leaned forward until his forehead touched hers, still meeting her eyes with his.*

*'So, what do you propose we do at this juncture?'*

*'Well, even if none of this is real, it feels real. It feels great. So, I guess we make the most of our time together.'*

*His answering chuckle was low and dark. 'I agree.' And he took her lips in his once again.*

~~~~~SSHG~~~~~SSHG~~~~~

Hermione gave a frustrated groan as a pounding sound woke up her suddenly. For the last five days her dreams had become more and more erotic as her and dream Severus' relationship advanced. Dream Severus hadn't been satisfied with just kissing for long, and he had slowly coaxed her to become less inhibited with each dream. He had been removing her shirt when the pounding had awoken her.

She sat up in bed and blinked, still a little dazed from sleep, as she tried to locate the source of the sound. She had already tried hitting the button on her alarm clock to no avail. She looked at the clock; it was three a.m.

'Bloody Hell!' she muttered in a voice still husky from sleep.

The pounding was coming from her door, and she stumbled out of bed towards it.

'What is the problem?' she said as she swung the door open.

'Hermione?'

'Lavender? What are you... it's three in the morning.'

'I know, I'm sorry. Were you sleeping?'

Hermione rolled her eyes, not bothering to answer that one.

'Come in. What happened? Are you okay?'

'No, I had another nightmare!' Lavender practically wailed.

'Oh, okay. Come sit down.'

At the beginning of the year, Hermione and Lavender had confessed to each other that they 'occasionally' had nightmares. Hermione had chosen to deal with it on her own, while Lavender sought the company of others when she was particularly disturbed.

Hermione conjured a cup of hot chocolate and placed it in Lavender's hands, making sure the girl had a good grip before letting go.

'Do you want to tell me about it?'

'No, I just... I just need a minute to calm down. I thought the nightmares were over. It's been almost two months since I've had one.'

'I think, Lavender, that even if you have stopped having them for the most part, all of us will always have them occasionally.'

Lavender sat quietly for a few minutes, taking small sips of her hot chocolate. When she did speak, she had calmed down and her voice was steady.

'Hermione, what do you do when you have a nightmare?'

'Well, I used to take walks. I feel like I've walked every inch of Hogwarts during the nighttime. I usually would walk until I was so tired that I would sleep too deeply to dream or have nightmares.'

'Do you still have them?'

'I haven't had one for over a month now.'

Lavender took one more sip of her hot chocolate before setting the cup on Hermione's desk. 'Thanks, Hermione. Sometimes it helps just knowing there is someone I can turn to.'

'I understand. Anytime you need me, just come to my door.'

The other girl still looked reluctant to leave.

'Lavender, do you want to spend the night in my room tonight? We could transfigure a cot for you to sleep on.'

Lavender gave her a sheepish smile. 'Yeah, that would be good, thanks. I usually don't have two in one night, but I can still remember the one I had... It was about seeing Voldemort, when he was in the Great Hall.'

Hermione nodded in understanding. That had truly been a horrible sight for most of the students.

A few minutes later, both girls were settled on their respective beds.

Hermione had pulled her wand out, about to turn the candles down when Lavender noticed it.

'What's that, Hermione?'

Her voice was weary when she answered. Was Lavender ever going to let her get back to sleep?

'What's what?'

'That thing hanging on your ceiling.' Lavender pointed to a spot directly above Hermione's head where her dream catcher hung.

'Oh, it's just decoration. It's a child's toy from the Indians of America.

For some reason, Hermione was reluctant to go into too much detail.

'It's called a dream catcher. I read about them in this one book I found in the library called '

'Oh that's nice. I think I feel ready to sleep now.'

Hermione smirked as she waved her wand to turn the candles down. It still worked; as soon as she adopted her lecture voice and talked about books, she could count on most of her peers to tone her out.

SSHG-----SSHG

'Where the hell did you go?' Dream Severus asked, his voice sounding sexy even if his tone was petulant.

'Sorry, I was awoken very suddenly by someone knocking at my door.'

'Is it morning?'

'No. One of my friends had a nightmare. In fact, she is staying in my room for the rest of the night so I want to keep any... sounds I might make in my sleep to a minimum.'

He ran his fingers through his hair, regarding her with a grim smile. 'Very well. Come.' he held out his hand to her. He led her to sit next to him on a small loveseat. They were in a dingy living room, two walls covered from ceiling to floor with old books. He had told her it was his house, inherited from his parents.

He settled her next to him, his arm around her shoulders before calling;'Accio novel'. During their dreams together, she had found that Severus Snape had a penchant for Muggle mystery novels. He had called an American political thriller to him and began reading to her, his voice deep and soothing. She sighed and snuggled in closer to him. Sometimes this kind of dream was as pleasant as the more... physical ones they had been experiencing lately.

AN: For some reason some of this chapter was lost when I first loaded, I have now edited the chapter and added the missing peices. My story makes much more sense now!

AN: I just want to thank my wonderful beta Septentrion who is absolutely the best!

Almost Halloween

Chapter 6 of 9

Hermione worries when she realizes Halloween is almost here.

Almost Halloween

See previous chapters for disclaimer

A/N: I want to thank Septentrion for being the best beta a girl could have. I will miss you, but I wish you so much luck and happiness with your baby!

~~~~~sshg~~~~~

*Hermione's hands were driving him crazy... She moved her hands lightly up his arms and shoulders, then down his chest before coming to rest at his waist. She looked into his eyes then, smirking slowly as she started to unbutton his shirt. After each button she would slip a hand inside the shirt to rub across his chest, occasionally flicking one of his nipples. She pushed the shirt down his arms before leaning up on her toes to fasten her mouth over one nipple and then the other. As her lips touched him he sucked in a breath. Her mouth felt so amazing, soft velvet lips, moving over his naked skin.*

*Severus couldn't stand passively for long. Threading his fingers through her bushy curls, his mouth slanted over hers. He traced her bottom lip with his tongue before thrusting it inside her mouth to war with hers. She whimpered softly in response as her hand continued to wander along his chest and torso.*

*With a groan he pulled away and looked down into her eyes.*

*'Hermione, stop for a minute.'*

*'No, don't stop.'*

*'Hermione. If we don't stop now, I will not want to stop at all.'*

*She took a few deep breaths, trying to gain a little control.*

*'Severus, I don't want to stop either.'*

*'But - '*

*'No buts.' She put her hand up to his lips. 'This is a dream and I want you. We've got over a week's worth of foreplay under our belts. Make love to me.'*

*Severus' face was blank as she pulled her hand away from his lips and looked up at him. She smiled sweetly as his eyes searched hers.*

*'Are you sure that you want me?'*

*'I'm sure. I'm tired of waiting.'*

*He traced a finger down the side of her face. 'I wish you were real.'*

*He leaned down slowly before taking her lips once again in his own. His mouth still on hers, he leaned down and lifted her into his arms. They were in her room at Hogwarts tonight. They had already spent one of their dreams together in her room, and he had already looked over all her books, knick knacks and pictures. This time, he didn't look around but went straight to her bed and lowered her down on top of the coverlet. He managed to continue kissing her as he started to unbutton her shirt.*

~~~~~888888888888~~~~~

Severus woke up slowly, stretching before sitting up in his bed. *That had, without a doubt, been one of my most enjoyable dreams.* In the privacy of his own rooms, he allowed himself a wide, satisfied smile. The smile immediately turned to a grimace as he felt the sticky evidence of how much he had really enjoyed his dreams. He grabbed his wand from the nightstand and cast a quick *Scourgify*. What was happening to him? His dream Hermione was making him have wet dreams now. Something that hadn't happened in years.

Two hours later, Snape's mind was still on his recent dreams as his seventh-year class quietly entered the room. He watched as Hermione Granger scurried in and found her seat in the back of the room. She looked exactly the same in his dreams, same curly hair, same big brown eyes. He let his hair fall forward, watching her as he barked out instructions. She looked just like his dream woman, but the last time he had looked at his Hermione's eyes, they had been glazed with passion. This Hermione was the same know-it-all bookworm who had first entered his classroom seven years ago. She stood with the rest of the class to gather ingredients from the cupboard. *Was she the same?* The war had changed everyone, but how close was the real Hermione Granger to the one whom had literally become the 'woman of his dreams?'

Snape sat behind his desk with some first-year essays. The seventh-year class was coming to an end, and his students were decanting their potions samples and leaving them on his desk. He had spent the majority of the double potions class watching Hermione Granger as she competently brewed the complex healing draught he had assigned. One of the last students to approach his desk with her potion, her eyes met his as she set it on the desk. Holding the look for a long moment, she stood with her hand still on the potion vial. Her lips were parted, and she looked so alluring, standing before him. He expelled a slow breath and she blinked, breaking their shared look. Her lips quirked up in a shaky smile before she turned on her heel and hurried from the classroom.

Severus waved his wand, closing the door behind her before letting out a low groan. He was becoming obsessed with the girl, all because of the increasingly erotic dreams he was experiencing. Dreams that for some unknown reason featured the know-it-all sidekick of Harry *bloody* Potter. Was it possible to fall in love with a dream?

~~~~~SSHG~~~~~

Hermione stopped just outside of the potions classroom and held a hand to her heart, breathing heavily. She needed to remember to keep her Potions Professor and her dream Severus separate. For a moment there, when their eyes had met in the classroom, she had wanted... something.

She couldn't get last night's dream out of her head. It had been the most erotic experience of her life, and she had only dreamt it. She wanted to truly experience that pleasure. If this kept going, she was worried that a dream wouldn't be enough. As it was, she felt as if she was living for her dreams. As if the things that happened to her during the day didn't matter anymore. All that mattered was when she went to sleep and could be with him again.

Hermione glanced back at the now closed door of her potions classroom and sighed before walking away. One thing she knew, things couldn't continue to go on like this. She had been experiencing these dreams for almost two months now, she realized, remembering that Neville had talked about the Halloween Feast taking place tomorrow. She had been so caught up in her 'dream' life, she had forgotten about Halloween. This was not a good sign, she decided. Something had to happen. She couldn't continue to live for her dreams and let life pass her by.

~~~~~7777777777~~~~~

Hermione smiled as she slowly walked through the stacks in the Hogwarts Library. She always felt the same thrill when she entered the Restricted Section. She was allowed to use it whenever she wanted to now, but it still felt like a special privilege to her. She was just selecting a book about charms called 'Not so charming Charms of the Twentieth Century' when she felt Severus's hands on her shoulders.

'What are you reading?'

'Hi, Severus.' She turned in his arms and looked up at him, her book clutched to her chest.

'I just selected this book about dark charms.' She held up the book so he could read the title.

He smiled. 'Ah, yes, I've read that one. It's one of Filius' favorites.'

'Really? Is it informative?'

He shrugged. 'It is probably informative for someone who wasn't in the Dark Lord's employ for a number of years.'

He leaned down to place a series of nibbling kisses along her neck. She sighed in pleasure at the feelings he evoked.

'Perhaps I will have to check this book out tomorrow, when I'm awake. That is, if it really exists. I could have dreamed up this book,' she said as she let the book drop to the floor before winding her arms around his neck.

'Let's not worry about that now. Come to the library tomorrow and look for it.'

She pulled away suddenly when she heard the word tomorrow. She remembered her thoughts from earlier today; tomorrow was Halloween.

'Tomorrow is Halloween.'

'Yes, I know,' he said before placing another kiss on her neck.

She pulled back slightly. 'Severus, tomorrow is Halloween, and I didn't even realize that until today.'

He sighed and dropped his hands from her shoulders.

'Hermione, what's wrong? I know tomorrow is Halloween. There will be a feast and a Hogsmead day, same as last year. Why are we going over the calendar?'

She ran a frustrated hand through her hair.

'Severus, I have been so caught up with this... dream world of ours that I didn't even notice that it has been going on for almost two months. I haven't really been paying attention to matters of the real world. Every day, I just go through the motions, waiting until it's time to go to bed again.'

'Yes, I know what you mean. I enjoy these dreams very much.'

'But, I don't think it's healthy, Severus. I mean, shouldn't real life be more important than my dream life? Shouldn't I be concentrating more on my classes and my friends rather than on my dreams with you?'

'Does your time with me feel wrong?' He was scowling at her and his voice was curt.

'No, it's just during the day. When I see you in class or during meals... I just can't stop thinking of you.'

'Hermione, if this was really you and not a dream, do you know what I would say to you? Your grades haven't changed. You're still the top of your classes, as always. You keep assuring me that this is really you. Well, then if it is, then you are fine. This isn't affecting you in any noticeable way. At least, there is no noticeable change in the real Hermione Granger's grades or class time behavior.'

'Maybe not in any noticeable way, but I am just more disconnected than I should be.'

'Well, that's your problem, isn't it?'

She gasped at the bitter tone in his voice.

'Severus, don't be like that.'

'Hermione, you just told me it's un-healthy to be so focused on me. How am I supposed to be?'

'I was asking for your opinion, Severus. If this was happening to you and you were becoming disconnected from real life because of your dreams, what would you think? Do you think this is healthy for me?'

Unconsciously mimicking her gesture, he ran his hand through his hair. 'Okay. Yes, I am feeling a bit distracted by this. Regardless of whether or not these are your dreams or mine, I do understand what you are saying. But, Hermione, we agreed that this was something that one of us needed. That the appearance of the other person was because we needed something from that dream figure, remember? We also said that once that need was fulfilled, the dreams would probably end.'

I know these are my dreams, Hermione.' He framed her face with his hands, looking down at her tenderly. 'I know that for some reason, I need you in my dreams right now, and I admit that I am enjoying these dreams very much. I can't control what my own brain is doing, what my own mind is creating when I dream. So, I've decided to enjoy it for as long as it lasts.'

She smiled up at him. 'I guess you're right. I might as well just enjoy this while it lasts. I do love being with you.'

He leaned down to claim a tender kiss from her lips.

'Come on,' he said as he picked up the book from the floor.

'Since we are in the castle for this particular dream, I should be able to take you down to my quarters. My sitting room is much more comfortable than the library, and I have the newest issue of Ars Alchemica. There is a fascinating article about using charms to enhance potions. I'm sure you will find it interesting.'

~~~~~OOOooo~~~~~

A/N: Reviews are precious to me! Once again, another shout out to Septentrion, the one who makes this story legible.

## A Dreamless Sleep

Chapter 7 of 9

Hermione gets her mail and takes a potion.

### Chapter 7: A Dreamless Sleep

Hermione smiled and nodded as Neville outlined his ideas for an advanced Herbology project. She was determined to focus on her friends and what was going on in the real world and therefore had asked Neville about what he was working on. Last night she had been sorely tempted to leave the Halloween Feast early and to go to bed, but she made herself remain. Her dream Severus had convinced her that it was okay to enjoy their dreams, but she decided it wouldn't hurt if she tried to give her awake self a little more attention.

Hermione concentrated on what Neville was telling her; he seemed to be winding down a bit and would expect her to contribute to the conversation. Before she could speak, they were interrupted by the arrival of the post. She and Neville both looked up as the owls flew around the Great Hall, dropping letters, newspapers and the occasional package.

Hermione received both her newspaper and the latest issue of *Ars Alchemica*. She bit her lip as she realized she had yet to read last month's issue. It was just another part of her life she had let slip in the last few months. She usually read each issue from cover to cover within a day of receiving it. She decided she would read at least one article tonight before going to bed. It would be good to start exercising a little control over her life.

She idly flipped through the journal as she finished her pumpkin juice, deciding to finish her breakfast and head towards her first class. Then she noticed a familiar article on the use of charms in potions. She gasped, putting her glass back on the table with a quiet thud.

'Are you okay, Hermione?' Neville asked, looking at her with concern.

'Er... Yes, Neville, I'm fine; this is just very interesting,' she said, gesturing to the glossy booklet in her hand, noticing the cover had the same familiar layout and picture.

'I have to go; I'll see you later,' she added as she gathered her book bag and left the table, still clutching *Ars Alchemica* tightly in her hands.

Snape had shown her that article two days ago in her dreams. There was no way for her subconscious to know what would be in this month's issue two days ahead of time. Everything else she had dreamed of could have been from her own brain, but this article was real. What did that mean about her dreams from the last two months?

~~~~~

Hermione was grateful she didn't have potions class today. All day she kept thinking of the latest issue of *Ars Alchemica*. She knew that certain members of the academic community received early issues of various trade journals, so it was likely that Snape was one of them. But she had gotten to look at that early issue. It was exactly the same as the one she had received in the mail today. At least a portion of their dreams had to be based in reality. Snape had to have really been there for that last dream at the very least.

She didn't think it was only for that dream though. She thought over her dreams of the past two months. It had started with the dreamcatcher she had found...

Hermione thought back to the night she had found her dreamcatcher. There had been two of them. She had only been able to pick up one of them. Perhaps Snape had picked up the other. Could the dreamcatchers be enough of a connection to cause them to share their dreams? It went against what Lavender had told her about dreamsharing, but perhaps the magic of the dreamcatchers could make this happen. If this was possible, then she had been sharing her dreams with the real Professor Severus Snape *for two months now*. She had conversed with him candidly, she had let her guard down around him and most importantly she had *slept* with him. She felt panic well up within her. She had slept with him! The thought kept repeating itself in her head constantly. She wanted to leave Hogwarts and hide. Her happiness with her new dreams all seemed to be dissolving right in front of her face.

~~~~~

By the time classes were done for the day and the Great Hall had filled with students for dinner, Hermione's mind was still racing with the implications of her discovery. Regardless of what Lavender had told her, she was sharing dreams with Snape; there was no other explanation for her discoveries. *So what do I do now?*

Snape of her dreams would never believe her; they had spent countless dreams arguing over who was really dreaming. He would think she was just bringing up the same subject again. She tried to imagine going to Snape while awake and telling him in person, but she immediately disregarded that idea. As sure as she was that they were really sharing their dreams, she just didn't have the nerves to approach him in person.

Hermione couldn't recall ever having a full and open conversation with Professor Snape outside of her dreams. It would be entirely too difficult to discuss their dream relationship face to face, but she couldn't think of what to say in their dreams. He would be expecting to see her tonight and he would most likely realize something was wrong if she acted at all differently around him.

Hermione stood from the table and hurried out of the Great Hall. She had hardly been able to eat a bite of dinner, and she didn't want to be around people right now. She couldn't concentrate on conversations with her classmates when her mind was so occupied.

The infirmary happened to be on Hermione's route from the Great Hall to her room. As she passed it, her mind worried with the upcoming night's dreams, she came to a decision. Just for tonight, she promised herself as she entered the infirmary.

A short while later, after a quick conversation with Madame Pomfrey, Hermione left the infirmary clutching a small vial that contained a dose of dreamless sleep potion. She couldn't take the potion two nights in a row, it was dangerous and highly addictive, but for one night, she would avoid the inevitable and take a break from her dreams. Snape would be angry at her for not showing up tonight, but she just wasn't ready, she needed more time to plan what she was going to say.

Back in her room she forced herself to spend a few hours on homework before changing into her nightgown and drinking the potion. She knew she was putting off the inevitable, but she decided that she would worry about Snape tomorrow.

After drinking the potion, she laid back in bed, waiting for it to take effect. It would only be about ten minutes at the most. She looked up at her dreamcatcher and thought about Snape. She was fairly certain that the dreamcatchers had caused them to share their dreams. It was the only thing that made sense; Snape must have picked up the other one. Perhaps he had hung his up above his head just as she had done. Something about the dreamcatcher's magic was connecting the two people who had possession of the matching pair.

What was he doing right now? Was he already asleep waiting for his dream Hermione to show up? Her last thought before the potion took hold of her was that she would miss Severus tonight.

~~~~~

Severus had lost count of the times he had paced the floor. He was in the used bookstore from Knockturn alley, but the books held no interest for him. It felt like he had been here for an eternity already, but so far his dreams had not produced his Hermione. Why not? What had changed?

He felt bereft. When he had gone to sleep this night, he had felt a tug of anticipation. Lately this had been a familiar feeling when going to sleep. He knew that sleep meant seeing Hermione and loving Hermione.

During one of their dreams, she had disappeared for a short while. The story that his mind had conjured up was that she had said she had been awoken by a friend. Was this the case now? Was he somehow imagining that she was just awake and not yet asleep? He would keep waiting to see if she would show up. It had never taken this long before, though. There was something perverse about the fact that even his dreams seemed to be restrictive. As if he wouldn't let himself have complete unadulterated happiness. Even his dream woman left him sometimes or appeared in his dreams late.

He thought back to a recent dream of his that had taken place at Hogwarts, in the library. Dream Hermione and the real Hermione Granger both shared a passion for the Library and books. Something he shared as well. His dream Hermione had been worried about the amount of time they spent together and he had told her that for the time being, he needed her in his dreams. The next morning he had been rather amazed at the level of complexity that his dreams had reached, but now he wondered. Could that be it? Had he finally reached a point where he didn't need her in his dreams? So, now she was gone?

He didn't want to accept that. For a short time he had been happy. Dreams or not, it had been so freeing to spend that time with someone like her. Someone who was his equal and who understood him. He closed his eyes and concentrated on Hermione. Maybe he could will her into his dream. They were his dreams; couldn't he have some sort of control over them?

He tried to imagine her appearing right there in the bookstore, but it was no use. When he opened his eyes again, nothing had changed. He felt a bubble of frustration welling up inside of him. He wanted to see her.

~~~~~

Hermione woke up feeling groggy and disoriented. It was a common symptom of sleeping under the influence of dreamless sleep potion, she had read. The potion, being true to its title, had given her a full dreamless night of sleep, but she didn't feel refreshed or rested. She felt a sense of loss, having not seen Severus last night. She could only imagine how he had felt when she had not shown up.

She sighed as she slowly swung her legs out of bed. She had potions class today and would have to see him. She would have to act as if nothing had changed, he still didn't know they were sharing dreams. She had until tonight to decide what to do. She couldn't take a potion tonight; she would have to face him in her dreams again. Should she tell him?

She made her way into her bathroom and turned the shower on cold. She would need something bracing to clear the cobwebs out of her head. She had a feeling today would be a long day.

~~~~~

Severus stayed seated behind his desk as his seventh-year Potions class filed in. Hermione Granger was one of the first to enter. She didn't look up at him; she just kept her head down and hurried to her desk. Severus ducked his head and peered at her through his hair. He just wanted to look at her for the next hour. He felt like a starving man who has just seen food. He desperately needed to see her after such a disappointing night. Even if she wasn't the same person as whom he had dreamed up, for now it was enough that she was physically identical.

Not feeling up to lecturing today, he assigned a potion that was most likely too easy for the seventh-year level Potions class. He didn't care; he was too busy trying to slog through his own emotions. He felt despair at the thought that his dreams with Hermione could be over. He knew it was illogical, but he also felt a certain amount of anger. He wanted to walk up to Miss Granger and shake her until she told him why she wasn't in his dream last night. He was heading straight for bedlam. The Miss Granger of his potions class would have no idea what he was speaking of if he mentioned his dreams. Intellectually, he knew this, but emotionally...She looked so much like his own Hermione.

Hermione felt the Potions professor's eyes on her for the duration of the class. He was making her feel clumsy, as she fumbled with her ingredients, too nervous to focus on the rather easy practical lesson of the day. The class was way past the time when they should be working on variations of the common Pepper-up Potion.

She knew why he was watching her. They had often talked about seeing each other in class. They had even made references to the class hours before they were together in their dreams. She had thought it was all in her head, that her brain was just pulling from her memories, embellishing them and adding them to her dreams. She knew better now.

Hermione realized that she knew Snape quite well. Both of them had let their guard down, thinking that their dreams were a personal thing. Not imagining that the person they encountered was really who they appeared to be. Before their relationship had turned physical, they had spent countless hours talking about everything. The conversations, at times, had become quite personal.

He knew her just as well. Perhaps better than Harry and Ron could claim at this time. They knew Hermione as their best friend during their developmental years, but they didn't know the Hermione of today. She was an adult who had just seen a war. She had experienced torture first hand and had her share of nightmares to prove it. It was true she had lived those experiences with Harry and Ron, and therefore all three of them had a bond that would not be broken. But, she had lived through the aftermath all on her own. Snape was the only person who knew that side of her. The only person she had talked about her nightmares and fears with.

Hermione put her head down, letting her hair fall and cover her face as she felt her eyes grow wet. She didn't want to let him go. Neither from her dreams, nor from her life.

Trying to look on the bright side of things, she decided that she should be happy about this. This wonderful person, whom she had dreamed about and fallen in love with, was part of her waking life. Yes, love, she decided. She had fallen in love with her Potions professor. They had fallen in love through their dreams, but now she could have him for more than just her dreams. That is, if he accepted her.

Could she convince him to accept her in life as well as sleep? He could be so stubborn sometimes. Right now he was probably feeling both despair and anger and a large amount of insecurity. He would have assumed that he would never dream of her again, since she wasn't in his dreams last night. Could she find a way to tell him that wouldn't make him shut down on her?

Perhaps she should start by finding a way to prove to him that they were sharing. She would let herself dream tonight and try to convince him that this was different.

Even if it didn't work, she wanted one more night with him.

~~~~~

*A/N: Thanks to new mommy beta Septentrion who makes each chapter comprehensible. Nothing I write would be possible without her.*

*Also, please go back and re-read chapter 4 as I added quite a bit that was left out when i initially posted.*

## Hermione has a Plan

*Chapter 8 of 9*

Hermione comes up with a plan of action.

*Severus was surprised to find himself in the Hogwarts library. The last he could remember, he had been sitting in front of his fire, sipping a glass of Firewhisky. He had been determined to stay awake as late as possible. He would no longer look forward to sleep if his dreams were sans Hermione. He sighed as he realized he most likely fell asleep while sitting in his chair. He would no doubt feel it in his joints the next morning.*

*'Severus!'*

He turned to see Hermione smiling up at him.

'I thought you might not be coming tonight. I've been in this library for hours now, hoping to see you.'

He scowled down at her, even as he felt a wave of joy rush through him. She was back in his dreams.

'Yes, well, at least I have shown up. Hermione, you weren't in my dream last night.'

Her eyes darted away from his and she shot him a sheepish grin.

'I know you were mad, and I'm sorry Severus. I... took some dreamless sleep potion last night.'

'Why would you do that? Thank the gods you had the sense not to do it again this night. That potion is highly addictive, Hermione. You must be careful.' He wondered if he had imbibed too much Firewhisky. It wasn't as if she were a real person. He needn't worry about her taking too much potion; she was imaginary.

She nodded. 'I know, I know. Severus, I will explain everything very soon but for now, please believe me. I needed one night away from you, just to think some things over.'

She held up a hand to stop him when he opened his mouth to question her further.

'No, Severus, that's all I can say right now. Please trust me. I... just want to be with you right now. Do you think we could go down to your quarters?'

Severus continued to scowl down at her. Why should he cater to whatever she wanted? She was the one who had taken a potion to avoid him. Then he realized how ridiculous he was being. For some reason, his mind didn't dream her up last night. The fact that the dream Hermione had used a potion was proof enough for him that it was all in his mind. Of course my mind would go straight to potions for an excuse.

He held out his hand and led her down towards his quarters. Dream or not, he wouldn't waste it being angry at a figment of his own imagination. She had said she wanted to be with him tonight, and he was more than willing to comply.

~~~~~ OOOOOO ~~~~~

Hermione was lying nestled in Severus' arms, feeling both tired and energized. Her back was to his front, but she felt him place a kiss lightly on top of her head as he held her. She sighed; the night and their dreams would be ending soon.

'I wish this were real, Severus.'

'As do I.'

She turned to look at him, placing one of her hands on the side of his face. 'Really?'

'You know I do, Hermione. I would be honored if someone like you chose to spend her time with me during our waking hours.'

'What if I said that I thought that this is real?' she asked cautiously.

Severus smirked and rolled his eyes at what he perceived was an old argument.

'Let's not start this again.'

Hermione sat up in bed in an effort to appear more serious, despite her nudity.

'Just listen, Severus. What if we are dreamsharing? Nobody really knows everything there is to know about it. Maybe we found some sort of... magical exception to the rules. Maybe we do share our dreams, even if we didn't have that close connection when we started.'

Following Hermione's lead, Severus sat up in bed and leaned his back against the headboard.

'Hermione, it's just not possible. Why would I, completely out of the blue, start sharing dreams with one of my students? No, not just one of my students, but Potter's best friend?. That doesn't make any sense.'

Hermione chewed on her bottom lip. How could she prove this to him?

'I still think we should be sure, Severus. There must be a way we could determine whether or not this is real. Would you please just humor me?'

He raised one of his eyebrows and looked at her imperiously for a moment before shrugging.

'Fine, I will humor you, a figment of my own imagination. What did you have in mind?'

She beamed at him before wrapping her arms around him and kissing him soundly on the mouth. He countered by grabbing one of her hips and pulling her to lay down on top of him, his lips beginning his own assault on hers. She pulled away before the kiss could get too deep.

'No, I want to talk about my plan.'

Severus growled and moved to grab her again, causing her to giggle.

'Severus! Stop, I want to talk to you.'

He crossed his arms and rolled his eyes as he leaned back against the headboard, causing Hermione to giggle once more. It was slightly unnerving to see him act like Harry or Ron.

'Well, madam, proceed.'

She re-adjusted her position by sitting between his legs and leaning back against his chest before she started talking. He wrapped his arms around her and rested his chin atop her head.

'I was thinking that we could make up some sort of code.'

He sighed, 'Code? Hermione, is this really necessary?'

'Yes. Now, stop interrupting me.'

'As I was saying, we could maybe plan on you saying something in class. Something that is reasonable, so if we aren't sharing dreams, then it won't matter. But if we are sharing dreams, then each of us will know instantly when you say it.'

'When I say... what, exactly?'

'Well... I don't know... Let me think...' He leaned in and kissed the side of her neck. She absently made a 'shooing' motion with her hands, too intent on her thoughts to take too much notice of him.

'I've got it!' she said excitedly, making him jerk back in surprise.

'Severus, what were you planning on teaching in potions tomorrow?'

'First, I was going to demonstrate the proper method for skinning a two-headed snake. For the second hour I was planning on assigning a potion using that skin. Most likely a metal-animate potion.'

She wrinkled her nose for a moment, thinking about skinning a snake. The beginning metal-animate potions were easy enough. They were used on common household items constructed of metal to give them specific magical properties. She remembered checking out a few books in her first year about that after she has seen a coffeepot fill itself with water and coffee grinds.

'Okay. Well, now I know, so if you do teach about that, I will know we are really dream sharing... Oh. That won't help you at all, will it?'

He raised his eyebrow at her and smirked. 'No, it won't. Besides, Hermione, I always follow the order in the text book. It would be easy enough for you to figure out what I am teaching next lesson.'

'Well, can't you change it?'

'What? No, I have always followed this curriculum for seventh-year potions. My lessons build on each other, and the class is about to start learning more of the advanced animating potions.'

She let out a frustrated breath. He could be so difficult sometimes. 'Well, how about if you ask a specific question that nobody in class could answer? You can tell me the answer right now, so if I get it right, you will know that we are dream sharing!'

'I don't think I would completely trust that one,' he said, absently rubbing her arms. 'The real Miss Granger reads so much, there would always be a chance that she did know the correct answer to any question I ask her.'

'I am the real Miss Granger!' she said, getting frustrated. Who knew it would be this hard to prove it to him?

'All right. How about if I do something wrong in class?'

'What do you mean?'

'Well, maybe something that would earn me detention. I am normally well behaved in class, so if I mis-behaved by doing something you and I agree on ahead of time, you would have to believe that we are sharing our dreams.' She turned her head to smile at him triumphantly.

'All right, my love, I'll agree to that. What will you do?'

Momentarily side-tracked by his endearment, she smiled softly before trying to decide what she could do. This would be the hard part. Her own nature rebelled against planning to get in trouble.

'I don't know. Do you have any ideas?'

He raised an eyebrow. 'You are asking me to give you an idea that would get you into detention? I refuse to give you a means in which to disrupt class.'

She sighed. 'I don't know what to do. This is Harry and Ron's department, not mine.'

'Ah yes, your two compatriots, who if I am not mistaken, were the culprits behind the firework in Goyle's cauldron while you were just a second year?'

'You knew that was us?'

'Ah, well, not until I had to brew a number of potions to reverse the mis-use of Polyjuice on a certain Griffyndor know-it-all.'

She smiled at his affectionate tone of voice. 'That gives me an idea...'

'No, Hermione, don't even think of it.'

'Wait, you don't know what I was going to say.'

'Yes, I do. No throwing fireworks in anyone's cauldron. That was an extremely dangerous prank to play. A number of people could have been hurt.'

She grimaced for a minute as she thought about that. He was right though, it could have hurt a number of her classmates.

'Okay, you're right. I won't throw a firework. But, I could still melt my cauldron.' She smiled as she thought of that. The idea had merit.

'Yes, I'll melt my cauldron. I've always wanted to do that! If Neville can do it, then so can I.'

'Foolish girl.'

'No, it's going to work, Severus. If Hermione Granger melts her cauldron in class tomorrow, you will know that we have been dream sharing!'

He smirked. 'Fine then. Now that I have agreed, are you done wasting our time with this useless conversation?' He leaned down and started kissing her neck again.

She smiled and wiggled a little before reaching behind and running her hands through his hair. There were still a few hours left in this night, and she knew just how to use them.

-----OOOOOO-----

AN: I can't stress this enough; please re-read chapter 5 (A Kiss and Beyond) as I have added a great deal to it. In fact, I'm not sure how anyone understood this story with so much missing before!

AN: Thanks to my beta, without whom i would have made some major canon mistakes, like mixing up what happened in first year vs. second year!

Snake Skin

Chapter 9 of 9

Hermione melts her cauldron.

AN: see disclaimer in earlier chapter

As always I want to send three cheers to my beta Septentrion who does a wonderful job at keeping this story coherent!

OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

Hermione couldn't remember the last time she had felt this nervous before a potions class. She took a deep breath before pushing the door open and making her way to her customary seat near the back. Severus hadn't gotten there yet and students were still filing in. She sat down and concentrated on looking as normal as possible.

She wasn't nervous about the class, even if the prospect of skinning a two-headed snake was a bit nerve racking. No, it was the actual potion-making that was making her nervous. She had already decided on what ingredient she could slip in to cause a minor explosion followed by the melting of her cauldron. She was vain enough to hate the idea of ruining her perfect potions record, but one time wouldn't hurt her grade.

But she didn't know how Severus would react. Last night, he hadn't believed that anything would really happen in class today. What would he do when her cauldron melted? When faced with the truth of their dream sharing, how would he react towards her? She knew him well, but she couldn't predict something of this magnitude. What would he say to her? Would he acknowledge her or would he ignore her? He had shown an emotional and vulnerable side of himself to her in their dreams. She knew he wouldn't like the idea that one of his students had managed to get so close to him.

Hermione sat through the first hour of potions, even managing to cleanly skin her two-headed snake. The task ended up being a lot less daunting than she had originally thought. She had imagined a large snake roughly the size of Nagini, but in reality the two-headed snake was no larger than a common garden snake. It was quite easy to make a few incisions and peel the skin back.

Her heart started to beat quickly and she felt beads of sweat pop up on her forehead when Severus pointed his wand at the chalkboard. Potions instructions and ingredients appeared, detailing the creation of a basic animate potion. It was just as he said it would be last night.

Hermione added the two-headed snake skin to her potion and watched the brew turn mustard yellow as she stirred. She had made the potion perfectly, now she just had to mess it up. She tried to ignore the tremors in her hand when she picked up her jar of dried puffpod worms; she had predicted that the leathery skin of the worms would react badly to the dandelion milk in the potion.

She dropped three puffpod worms into the brew and took one step back as her potions started to make a soft gurgling sound. Severus' head snapped up at the no-doubt familiar sound of a badly made potion. He had been across the room, berating a Hufflepuff student about their potion when he heard the sound. His eyes met hers as the resulting explosion occurred. She caught his look of stunned realization just as something slimy landed in her hair and steam started to hiss up from the melting cauldron.

OOOOooooOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

Severus Snape could recite this lecture in his sleep. It was one he did every year for his seventh year class and had not deviated from it yet. Skinning a two-headed snake actually sounded a lot more interesting than it ended up being in reality. He quickly demonstrated the technique and ordered the class to do just as he did. After that it was a simple matter of putting directions on the board and letting the class begin their potions. He anticipated no real problems. The basic animate potion was a rather easy but necessary part of the curriculum.

He caught sight of the real Hermione Granger as he walked around the classroom. She was diligently peeling back the skin from her snake. He had to stifle a smile as he thought of the dream he had experienced the night before. It was amazing what a man's imagination could conjure up, he thought as he watched her. No doubt the student would be horrified if she knew he was imagining what she looked like after a particularly satisfying bout of lovemaking.

He felt a slight pang of sadness as he thought over his latest dream. It had felt so real, and he wondered, not for the first time, if he should stop himself from having them. Not only had his dream Hermione mentioned taking dreamless sleep potion; he was beginning to wish for more than just the dream. Perhaps his head was telling him that he should take dreamless sleep potion himself.

He had laughed and loved and enjoyed a certain amount of intimacy with his dream Hermione. He wanted that all the time, not just in his dreams.

Severus let his scowl show as he strode back to the front of the classroom and tried to get his mind back on task. He needed to keep himself focused and not let his night life distract him during the day. He whipped his wand out and pointed it to the chalkboard where the potions instructions appeared.

'You should all be finished skinning your snakes by now. Let's see if you have done everything correctly. You will be using your snake skin in this potion. I will know if you improperly skinned the snake.'

He stifled the urge to smile as the students wordlessly pulled out their potions kits and began to prepare their ingredients. He enjoyed seventh-year Potions class because, after several years in his class, the students knew to obey him without complaint. He moved to his desk and sat down; he could wait 15 minutes before he began moving around the classroom to personally check on their potions attempts.

Thirteen minutes later he sighed and looked up from the Potions journal he had been reading. It was time to intervene. Particularly with a certain Hufflepuff who was headed towards disaster: there were pieces of snake skin all over his work table. No doubt his potion would be an abysmal failure. Severus strode towards said student and started in on improperly skinned snakes.

Just as he was warming to the subject, he was interrupted by a familiar gurgling sound. Apparently this potion, easy as it should have been, was too much for at least one

