

Unlikely Connections

by LadyTuesday

The strongest connections in life are the ones that seem the most unlikely. After enduring a brutal violation at the hands of a friend and an intimate link with a man she never expected, Hermione Granger was never more sure of anything than that.

The Overture

Chapter 1 of 3

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DISCLAIMER: Anything that you recognize is not mine. Don't sue. I'm broke and don't have anything you want.

*** Warning ... this story (when it is finished) will any/all contain the following age-appropriate topics:

1. Nonconsensual sex/rape,
2. Consensual sex between individuals of very different ages,
3. Graphic descriptions of sexual intercourse and related sexual acts,
4. Graphic descriptions of masturbation,
5. Violence/brutality/cruelty,
6. Occasional harsh/cursing language,
7. General teenage angst,
8. Hormones, hormones and more hormones.

If any of the above topics disturb you in any way, please refrain from reading this story. These plots elements are potentially offensive. You have been warned.

Author notes: This is LadyTuesday from sycophanthex and adultfiction.net. Just recently became aware of this lovely archive and decided to put my stories up here too. I just want you all to know, FYI, the significance of the chapter titles. I am a devoted Hermione/Snape shipper and have noticed that most of the portrayals of a relationship between these two is one huge, sordid dance. So, being the comedienne that I am, I made the chapter titles regarding dancing. Doesn't really affect the storyline, just reflects it.

Thanks and enjoy ~~ Lady Tuesday

Chapter One - The Overture

He covered the distance between them in barely three strides, measured and sleek, with precision that could only be accomplished through complete bodily control or impatience. Or both.

He dodged the tables full of bubbling cauldrons without so much as a break in his stride, his eyes never leaving her face, which was currently sculpted into a pouting scowl. He leaned down so that his face was barely a foot from hers; she could feel his breath hot on her nose and cheek as he spoke, his voice smooth and cold, like a thin layer of silk covering steel. "Tell me, Miss Granger, why it is that for seven years you have conveniently ignored the fact that I am Potions master and professor of this class, and not you?"

As he leaned forward even further, closing the distance between them to a scant few inches, she realized why he did not have to demand authority in his classes: the sheer strength and total assurance in his voice struck awe and fear into his students immediately. And that didn't even take into account his physical presence.

He was an imposing figure, standing at least four inches above six feet with wide, sharply angled shoulders, unrelieved by the severe black of the frock coat and robes that bragged of a myriad buttons down the front. The relentless and brutal lines of his clothing reinforced his physical appearance of some kind of scowling god figure, ready to throw out punishments at the slightest provocation.

However, after a year and a half of quiet, background work for the Order of the Phoenix, Hermione had seen the Snape that was not merely a bundle of resentment and disapproval. She had seen a bitter and unforgiving man who took his anger out on any warm body within his vicinity. After two years of working alongside one of her teachers, she saw him as a real person, outside of his classes. And for the first time in her academic career, Hermione Granger stared back at one of her teachers and was not impressed.

"Perhaps," she responded icily, returning his glare step-for-step, "it's because you insist on letting your juvenile temper terrify your students. I, on the other hand, notice why people struggle in your class. Someone has to instruct them."

The class around the fuming professor and insolent student had fallen completely silent. The normal chatter of sideline conversations and clangor of classroom activity had halted and waited, with an audible intake of breath, for the response to this heretofore unheard of phenomenon. Hermione Granger had insulted a teacher.

Without even so much as a twitch in his face to belie the anger that bubbled up in him as a result of her petty and impudent verbal slap, he spoke. "Fifty points from Gryffindor . . . for your impertinence . . . and five days worth of detention. To finally teach you your place." He turned and strode back to the desk at the front of the room, robes billowing ominously behind him. He spent the rest of the class correcting papers with an anxious, nearly gleeful smile on his face and never raised his eyes to his students.

She, however, spent the rest of the time fuming. She continued with the process of making the Calming Potion, being inattentive to say the least. Despite the fact that she was butchering her class grade for the day, she never took her eyes off of his face, arrogant smile and all. If her eyes could have burned holes in his skin, his body would have been riddled with pock marks.

At the end of the class, much to the dismay of Harry and Ron (who had been poised for a thoroughly enjoyable explosion on Hermione's part), she walked easily to Snape's desk and placed her flagon of the translucent teal potion in front of him, resisting the urge to give him his satisfaction and toss it in his face as she so desired to do.

It might benefit him with the results she thought angrily as she gathered her things and stormed out of the dungeon.

It was the chance he'd been longing for over the past seven years. His first and, undoubtedly, his only chance to show Hermione Granger that she was not the only clever student in Hogwarts and that she must learn when to hold her tongue. Severus's ego fairly salivated with anticipation of thrashing her ridiculously high self-confidence. Hermione Granger, resident know-it-all, would finally be taken down a peg or two.

He scribbled a note on some unused parchment near his desk and fairly bounded to the Owlery to send an owl to Granger. He would not give her the satisfaction of delivering himself or by messenger. She was to know who was in charge here.

There was a great tapping at the common room window as Hermione sat in one of the squashy old arm chairs near the fireplace of the Gryffindor common room. She preferred to spend her evenings here, out from the silence of her single room, reserved for the Head Girl. The bustle of the common room was friendly and familiar.

She sat rereading *Hogwarts, A History*, still trying to work off the frustration of today's Potions class. She looked up and saw a great tawny owl rapping its beak madly on the window, begging to be let in from the torrential downpour now lashing the leaded glass windows of Gryffindor tower.

Hermione rose to let in the poor creature, which shook its feathers indignantly, obviously annoyed at being sent out in this weather, and then thrust out its leg. She noticed a small note attached, which she removed and read, scowling at the dark, slashing script contained therein.

Miss Granger, in view of your inexcusably rude exit from my class, I was not able to arrange the terms of your detention. You will report to my private office directly following afternoon classes this Friday and will remain until I have been satisfied as to the results.

Professor S. Snape

She crumpled the note angrily and threw herself back into her chair.

"What's the matter, M'inee?"

She turned quickly and noticed a pair of bright eyes shining from the chair opposite her at the fire place. She hadn't even noticed that Harry had entered the room. "Snape," she grumbled angrily. "He's giving me detention on a Friday afternoon! He wouldn't tell me what I would be doing or when I'd be done, and he got a god-damned bird from the Owlery just to tell me. Arrogant bastard."

Harry chuckled gently at her outburst. "Well, hon, can't say I'm surprised." He chuckled again at her outraged face and then continued, "The great-and-goodie-goodie-know-it-all Hermione Granger finally gives him an opportunity to do something other than give her full marks, and you think he's going to waste it? You've got to be barmy." Harry smiled gently as her face softened.

"I suppose your right," she said and then chuckled. She began to raise her book again.

"However," he continued, noticing her change in spirits, "I don't envy you that detention. I wouldn't be surprised if he kept you there until next term."

Hermione laughed softly in response, dropping the book and brushing away the stray water droplets the owl had left on her school jumper. Her robes were draped over the back of the chair she had been sitting in, and she kicked her shoes underneath the same. She then strode over to the couch where Harry had relocated himself. She lay down next to him ungracefully and allowed her head to drop with a soft thunk onto his lap. Harry's face reddened at her current position, but she charged on, unaware of his blush.

"He just makes me so ... ARGH ... FURIOUS!" she roared, causing some shaky looking first-years in the far corner to jump at the noise.

He stared down into her face, flushed with anger, and mustered up a sober expression. "I could always throw a hex at him during next Potions lesson for you?"

The rain was still pummeling Hogwarts as Hermione strode purposefully into the Potions classroom on Friday afternoon. The ill weather did nothing to improve the chill in the air as she moved through the corridors near the dungeons. She had no doubt that the looming feeling of dread beginning to sink into her good mood was a confirmation of Harry's notion that Snape would keep her until doomsday if he could. The man was absolutely insufferable, and she wasn't sorry in the slightest that after seven years she had finally gotten up the gumption to tell him off, the great evil git.

A thousand rather ill-conceived insults clouded her mind as her scowl deepened, creating ugly lines across her forehead and mouth as she realized that Snape was not there. She had certainly taken her time from the Herbology greenhouses, stopping into Gryffindor Tower to change into some more comfortable Muggle clothing (it being technically the weekend already), then at the girls' toilet to wash her face and hands, compose her hair, and slick on a little extra lip gloss. She then stormed at herself for giving a damn what she looked like when she was only going to see Snape.

It has been nearly 20 minutes since classes ended she growled to herself. *There is really no excuse for his abysmal tardiness* She was nearly ready to leave him a scathing note saying that when he deigned to return he could summon her from the Head Girl's room when she suddenly remembered what his note had said.

"Blast," she whispered, realizing with horror the error that befallen her. She rummaged around in her bag for the note he had sent last night and read hurriedly.

"Blast!" she shouted loudly as she stuffed the note back into her bag.

He had told her to meet him in his private office, not the one attached to the classroom. She had been so angry with him for assigning her detention on a Friday that she had not read the note properly.

She started off from the Potions classroom at a galloping run, whizzing through the three corridors and up the two large flights of stairs between the dungeons and Snape's private office. She failed to dodge nearly a dozen Hufflepuff first years who insisted on detaining her to ask if she had really told off Snape or whether it was just a rumor.

After trying to break away at least twice without success, she snapped, "Ten points from Hufflepuff ... for ... making the Head Girl late for detention," and scurried away.

She arrived at Snape's office, panting with the sudden exertion and clutching at a stitch in her side. She quickly snatched at her clothing, trying to rearrange it, and composed a contrite apology, which hung on her lips as she poised her hand to knock.

"You're late," groused a stern voice behind her. "Decidedly so."

The Dance Begins

Chapter 2 of 3

"Miss Granger," Snape growled, not raising his eyes from the unlucky parchment he was marking with a large red 30%, "I did not assign this detention merely for you to take a constitutional around my office, wasting my time and trespassing on my goodwill." Snorting at the mention of 'good will,' she mumbled, "Yes, sir," and dropped her potions kit on the floor beside the couch, now ready to begin her tasks.

Author notes: In this chapter of the story, I have taken several liberties with things not specifically discussed in canon. First of all, I have taken some liberties with Snape: He doesn't live/have his private office in the dungeons, and I have added some personal details (that you'll have to read to find out). I have been trying to be as in-character as possible, but for the purpose of the story, I have decided to put through my own interpretations of him. Hope you like.

Chapter Two - The Dance Begins ...

Hermione wheeled around so quickly she could have gotten a crick in her neck. He was standing no more than a foot behind her, his hand extending under her arm to grasp the doorknob. He towered over her slight frame, no doubt to achieve the effect of staring down his disproportionately large nose at her.

"I'm sorry, Professor, I--" she began, still huffing and puffing.

"Miss Granger, I have tolerated your rudeness, your presumption and now your tardiness. I will certainly not tolerate any lame excuses of how some feverish snogging with Potter in a darkened hallway has caused you to be late. Get in."

"I take it back," she mumbled. "I'm not sorry."

"That will do," he growled. A satisfied smile plastered itself across his thin and sallow face. He watched her jump slightly, as she had clearly not considered herself loud enough to be heard.

The door clicked unpromisingly behind her, causing her to jump yet again. She had no desire to be behind a closed door with Snape when he was in such a smug mood. Even less did she care to be in a closed room with a self-satisfied Snape who had yet to dole out punishment.

As if reading her thoughts, he strolled casually around the dimly lit office, obviously fishing for a suitable occupation for her. "You will begin," he started, smoothly, "by re-alphabetizing my collection of Potion recipe books, refilling every container in my private store cabinet, and chronologically filing my crates of backdated student work."

The driving rain made a suitable background cadence to his sinister sneer and self-congratulatory tone of voice. She removed a sweater she had thrown over her shoulders in anticipation of the draft of the dungeons and draped it over the end of the couch, ready to grudgingly get to work, when he slyly continued. "You will then grade the essays of all the first years, read the next chapter in *1000 Magical Herbs and Fungi* and comprise a class study list for the N.E.W.T. reviews."

Her shoulders sagged at the sheer amount of work she had just been given. A glance at her watch told her that she would be there until, at the very earliest, dinner, and perhaps at least two hours after she returned from eating. And that was if she worked speedily.

Snape glanced once more around the office, searching, Hermione imagined, for any other inane tasks that he had been putting off for just such an occasion. Apparently finding nothing, he crossed the room in silence and seated himself behind his desk; pulling out a pair of thin, silver-framed reading glasses, he set himself to the task of

reading what she recognized as her N.E.W.T level Potions class's latest essay assignment on the Polyjuice Potion.

Hermione took this momentary reprieve from his hawk-like stare to gaze around the room. Contrary to what she had pictured for Snape, the office was not swathed in the silver and green colors that she would have expected for a Head of Slytherin House who was so obviously and ruthlessly patriotic (and biased). Instead, it was decorated with an intricate set of black tapestries, a heavy, deeply carved mahogany desk in an alcove in front of the window, smooth cherry bookshelves lining nearly the entire room, and a matching leather couch and chair that looked so plush it would more than likely swallow someone of her stature. The couch and chair stood in front of a roaring fire, which, in strict contrast to the drafty dungeons with their high-ceilings, cast a warming glow in the room.

Ironically, the only items that told of his house status were a small inkwell on his desk, around which was curled a glittering silver serpent, and a tarnished silver and green prefect badge, laid on his desk just behind a pyramid plaque that said, *Professor Severus R. Snape, Potions Master*.

Allowing her gaze to wander, she glanced around the walls; much to her surprise, in between the tapestries were some very striking oil paintings. He must have developed a fondness for the particular person's work, as they were obviously all done by the same artist. The paintings all had a similar sort of color scheme: deep blues, unrelieved blacks and moody grays, not breaking the inherent brooding mystery that surrounded Snape, the man and his office.

Her face softened in ill-concealed interest as she dropped her school bag on the couch next to her sweater and allowed her fingers to wander against the spines of the books on the nearest shelf to her left. His tastes in books were certainly eclectic. He had an expected, rather expansive collection of potion books; but the set of shelves immediately behind his desk was stuffed with books of varying sizes, shapes and topics. Crammed into the clutter of books, a clutter that Hermione found very friendly and familiar, were collections of English classic literature, a medical dictionary (Muggle of course), and even a book of plays. At this last she sniggered audibly, picturing in her head Snape reading dramatically from Oscar Wilde or Noel Coward.

"Miss Granger," Snape growled, not raising his eyes from the unlucky parchment he was marking with a large red 30%, "I did not assign this detention merely for you to take a constitutional around my office, wasting my time and trespassing on my goodwill."

Snorting at the mention of 'good will,' she mumbled "Yes, sir," and dropped her potions kit on the floor beside the couch, now ready to begin her tasks.

She started with what she mentally referred to as "desk work": correcting the first years' exams and reading and compiling a study list. Following this, after a curt, ten-word conversation with Snape as to the location of certain items, she refilled his private store cabinet. This last duty was decidedly more difficult than she anticipated, as his store cupboard was directly behind his desk, and, as he made no move to leave his desk to allow her room, she had to squeeze herself into an area between his chair and the cupboard that she was sure would have made even someone the size of Dobby claustrophobic.

When she had finally shut the doors to his private store, she was dully aware of her stomach grumbling. She checked her watch and debated whether she should inform Snape that she had only a half hour left or she would miss dinner completely. As she stood contemplating her dilemma, he rose from his desk, pushing his chair into her stomach as he stepped away. Dropping his glasses into his top drawer, he picked up his wand, twirled it gently, causing a plate of ham and chicken sandwiches, a pitcher of pumpkin juice, a flagon of dark wine and two goblets to appear on his desk.

"You must be hungry," he stated unceremoniously. "Eat."

Hermione surmised that he must have thought he was being quite noble and considered picking up her belongings and stalking out. However, just as she had made to do so, her stomach grumbled loudly. Snape smirked at her as she set her bag back down and settled tentatively into the chair in front of his desk. She picked up a sandwich, not at all keen at the idea of sharing a meal with Snape, but he simply poured himself a goblet of wine and moved to sit in front of the fireplace.

She couldn't really decide whether she was relieved that she wasn't expected to make conversation or affronted that he had rebuffed her so thoroughly and efficiently. With a firm resolve to regain her position as Hermione Granger, Teacher's Pet, she picked up her plate of sandwiches and goblet of pumpkin juice, and moved to the couch opposite his silent reverie in his arm chair. He acknowledged her presence only by the barest of glances and a thinly raised eyebrow. She watched mutely as he raised a hand slowly to push away an ebony strand of hair from his eyes, never pulling his distant stare away from the fire.

She cleared her throat uncomfortably, wondering if he would endeavor to grant her some company. Deciding that he would not, she ventured a conversation. "The paintings you have hanging are stunning."

He gave her a spare nod, not lifting his glance.

"The artist is quite talented."

Another nod.

"Do you know who painted them?"

At this, he inclined his head towards her, his face covered with an unreadable expression. "Yes, I know who painted them."

"They're all landscapes ... Is it a Muggle artist, or a wizard?"

He looked as though he were trying to repress a snarl. "I painted them."

Hermione sat in shock, suddenly compelled to engage in a rapt examination of the hem of her T-shirt. Though she would be the first to admit that professors must have other pursuits, other hobbies than those relating to his or her particular subject, she would never have guessed that Snape of all people could be so ... creative. The paintings were, after all, quite stunning, even though distinctly like Snape himself: dark, ominous and enigmatic.

"When do you have time to ...?" Her voice died away as his face seemed to become stonier, more stoic. She guessed that this was not a subject he cared to discuss, especially not with a student so well-placed to embarrass him and undermine his intimidating reputation.

As she turned her head away, she noticed a portrait on his desk that she had not seen before, as Snape's arm had then blocked it from her view. Seated in the portrait was a thin woman with a sallow complexion, pointed nose and long, shining raven hair that flowed over her shoulders. Had her face been marked with a smile, Hermione may have even gone so far as to think her beautiful, but as her face remained ever-wary, she could only see fit to mentally describe her as "watchful." There was a certain arrogance and nobility of station in the way she held herself, making her an arresting presence, and causing anyone who glanced at her to wonder at her mystery. Her portrait was moving, but only the slight shift in her eyes, the occasional glance over her shoulder would belie that it was a wizarding painting.

"Who is the lady?" she asked, dropping her shirt and motioning to the portrait.

He grumbled, a guttural growl low in his throat, and snapped, "Miss Granger, had I known that I would be subject to a personal assault by these ridiculous questions, I would have released you to the Great Hall for dinner. For once, girl, learn your place, still your tongue, and desist in this inquisitory onslaught."

She couldn't help but let a hurt squeak escape her throat. She had merely been trying to be pleasant. For some reason she found herself fighting back tears. She rose from the chair and returned to the desk where she ate in silence, the black-haired woman watching her silently.

"Her name was Solange; she died in France fourteen years ago." After a deafening silence where Hermione didn't dare breathe, he added, "She was my mother."

Hoping that this brittle conversation indicated a thaw in his taciturn exterior, she continued. "When did you paint this?"

There was a long pause before he answered her. "Yesterday."

Knowing that this signaled the end of any pleasantries (if one could call their discourse "pleasant"), Hermione set down her food and rose to begin re-alphabetizing his potion books. The books came down with relative ease, though she had to stand on the lowest shelf in order to reach those at the top. For long past an hour she worked, completely unaware that he was moving about the room, the silence complete with the exception of the rhythmic drumming of the rain on his windows. Without thought of his current employment within the chamber, she continued reorganizing the books, cross-legged on the floor, before preparing to place them back on the shelves. When she was finally ready to reshelv the books, she came across the rather large problem that without the weight of the volumes on the bottom row the lowest shelf would not hold her weight in order to allow her to put the books back at the top.

She strained upwards, the large volumes crushing down on her hands as she fought to place them on the top level. Gauging that the shelf was several feet out of her reach, she realized the fight was fruitless, but she pressed on despite this.

After ten minutes of struggle and stunted jumping, she had only managed to reshelv one book. Hermione was tottering precariously on one foot, holding a several-inches-thick volume of *Most Potente Potions*, when she lost her balance and began to topple over. Flailing her free arm, she struggled to remain upright, when suddenly a long arm grasped her upheld wrist, guiding it towards the shelf.

She fell backwards against his chest as he reshelved the book, instinctively wrapping his free arm smoothly around her left arm and ribcage to keep her upright and off the floor.

As she righted herself completely, she tugged down her shirt, which had ridden up under his arm, and turned to face him. Hermione marveled at the fact that she had not heard him move over to her, despite the rustling his billowing robes must have caused. Given the fact that he had not moved away, when she turned to face him Hermione was eye-level with the broad expanse of shoulder that she had not realized he possessed in such abundance. After all, this was the closest she had ever been to him.

He must have been watching me, she thought blushing as she slowly turned her attention up to his face, looming nearly a foot over hers. His expression was, once again, dark and unreadable.

In the wee hours of the night that would come later she would berate herself as to what had possessed her to do what she was about to do. But whatever the reason, Hermione Granger laced her arms around Severus Snape's neck and stood on her toes to place her lips gently against his.

She closed her eyes for a few seconds, losing herself in the exciting mystery of the forbidden moment, but when she opened them she was shocked at what she saw. Snape had not physically responded to her actions in the slightest; instead he was watching her face with a cold, calculating glare. She could see in his eyes that he was waiting to see her motives. He expected this to be a hook she was baiting, monitoring his reaction. He thought she was up to something. Hermione was shaken to the core, and heartily ashamed of herself.

She broke away from him quickly, flushing to the roots of her hair, her hand flying instinctively to her lips. What had she just done?

"Miss Granger, you are dismissed for the evening. Leave now," Snape spoke without moving an inch. She certainly didn't need to be told twice. In a rush of flying brown curls, she fled the room, red-faced. When she had gone, he remained staring at the door for quite some time.

The Partners Square Off

Chapter 3 of 3

She clawed at her hair with both hands, hoping the tug on her scalp would clear her head. What in the world would possess her to kiss anyone, let alone SNAPE? She racked her brain, but could find no clear explanation, aside from the idea that she had been struck by an absolutely unforgivable fit of momentary stupidity.

A/N: A few things: First of all, much to my stupidity and personal chagrin, I forgot to mention in my first set of author's notes that this happens IN THE SEVENTH YEAR. I hinted at it a bit, but have gotten the suspicion that some people may not have picked up on it. The fact that it does not take place in the current time of canon may account for some of the character differences.

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### Chapter Three - The Partners Square Off

He paced his bed chamber, furious that he could not sleep as a result of the evening's events. A glance at the mantle clock told him that it was nearly four in the morning and that breakfast was a scant few hours away.

He had spent a good portion of the night making swift, impotent strides around his office, then his bedchamber, and then his office and his bed chamber via the small entranceway that connected the two. His temper had ranged from anger, to frustration, to furious puzzlement, and back to anger as he marched throughout his chambers, surprised that he hadn't worn patterns in the thick carpet.

*What impertinence!* his mind screamed. *How dare she! The presumptuous little twit!*

*Leave it to a Gryffindor*, he mused, settling fitfully in a straight-backed, leather chair next to his wardrobe. *Leave it to a Gryffindor to be so ridiculously uncontrolled and bow to some silly whim of romantic fancy.*

At this, he rose from the chair and scoffed aloud. Romance! Not even he would connect himself with anything mildly romantic, and yet this simpering little know-it-all found it within her rights to smother him when he had been so foolish as to keep her from falling on her stupid behind. He should have just let her break her bony little bottom.

The nerve of her, thinking she could just plaster herself against him and be so damned ... hormonal! *Who does she think I am, some 17-year-old? Some sex-driven, slobbering boy, itching for a wild grope? Who does she think I am, Harry bloody Potter?*

*Just what was she playing at?* he wondered. *What could possibly be gained from kissing me?*

Much to his vexation, she warranted nothing but full marks on her homework, her potions were superb, her classroom demeanor, while not unassailable for his wicked tongue, was usually polite and gratingly respectful. What could she possibly have wanted to kiss him for? What good would it do her?

Unable to support the idea that even she didn't know the answer to that question, he threw his black brocaded dressing gown over top of his black satin pajama bottoms

and strode purposefully from the room. Perhaps the crisp air of the Astronomy Tower would clear his head of the frustrated anger.

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She clawed at her hair with both hands, hoping the tug on her scalp would clear her head. What in the world would possess her to kiss anyone, let alone SNAPE? She racked her brain, but could find no clear explanation, aside from the idea that she had been struck by an absolutely unforgivable fit of momentary stupidity.

She was not under the delusion that he would let this pass unnoticed. He was not the sort of person that would, in the idea of preserving both of their dignities, quietly punish her for her inappropriate behavior and then pretend that it had never happened. Oh, no, not Snape. He would most likely relive it in excruciating detail, moment by moment, in front of her entire Potions class, possibly even the entirety of Slytherin House. He would make her out to be simperingly in love with him, stripping her of every ounce of her self-respect in slow, agonizing stints. And house points to boot if she got angry and retaliated. From every possible angle, she could not have been in a worse pickle with Snape.

She hugged her arms around her knees, bracing herself against the chilly night wind. She often came out here to sit on the battlements outside the Astronomy Tower at night when she needed to think. The stone was cool against her back, the wind brisk against her face, and the view from the top gable incomparable. She always came here and sat just to the left of the outside of the window that stood in the middle of the staircase to the tower. She looked out over the lake and sighed. She was in for a doozy.

Her mind raced as she watched the trees of the Forbidden Forest wave gently in the breeze. *Why?* she asked herself incessantly. It wasn't as if Snape were charming. Or even approachable. Hell, he was like a huge, looming bat that swooped around the school, reveling in humiliation and anger. He was disdainful, rude, and completely unbearable. She hadn't even kissed a boy of her own age -- someone she fancied -- and yet she had kissed a completely horrid man old enough to be her father.

The worst thought, in her opinion, was that he had merely glared at her. He had stood there and regarded her as if she were a prehistoric bug on a slide, whose behavior needed to be reasoned out. *The man must have ice in his veins,* she growled inwardly. *I mean, all right, we hate each other. And sure, I was only there because I had detention. But for God's sake, I'm an 18-year-old girl, and I may not be gorgeous, but I'm certainly not repulsive, and I was kissing him! He could have at least kissed back. What kind of man would just stand there when a girl was kissing him? Old git. Probably the only kissing he's had in a while.*

At this, she shook her head, as if to rid it of that thought. Horrified at herself for pondering Snape's kissing habits (or lack thereof), she resigned herself to the fact that the view and cool air simply would not solve her problems tonight. She swung her body, clad only in a short, white cotton nightgown and her knickers beneath it, back through the window and started down the tower steps.

She hadn't bothered to wear a dressing gown or borrow Harry's invisibility cloak. As Head Girl, she was allowed to roam the halls whenever she pleased, as long as she didn't cause any trouble or disturb Peeves. In fact, in these dangerous times, both McGonagall and Dumbledore actually encouraged her to patrol the halls at night if she was restless. During these nightly sojourns, she had never encountered anyone, not even Mrs. Norris, so she didn't bother to attire herself in anything substantial. On a whim, she decided to take the long way back to Gryffindor Tower. *The very long way,* she chided herself as she went three floors down and out of her way so that she could walk by Snape's office.

She walked easily down the halls, in no great rush to get to bed despite the fact that it was just after four a.m. As she neared the hallway where she had been only hours ago, she slowed her pace, softened her steps. She crept, soundlessly, up to the door of Snape's private office. She held her breath and pressed her ear against his door. She was actually surprised that she didn't hear any noise. After the way he had treated her, she expected him to be in a towering temper, pacing his office like the great bat-like, vampire thing that he was.

With a smirk at her vicious thoughts, she turned back towards Gryffindor Tower and started the walk back towards bed, not troubling herself to be quiet. She had not even gained two steps from the office when she plowed headlong into something somewhat soft and found herself on her backside on the floor. Clutching her nightgown over her more private parts, she found herself staring up into Snape's face, which was looming several feet over her head.

He had been so surprised at her presence outside his office that he hadn't bothered to clutch his dressing gown around him, which was now hanging open. Her jaw hung open a few inches, her mind barely processing the sight of Snape in satin pajama pants and bare-chested beneath his dressing gown. She scrambled to her feet and moved around him, clutching her nightgown even closer to her body.

He sneered at her for a moment, knowing she had no idea that by seizing her gown in that manner, she was actually revealing more of her underlying figure rather than less. They both stared at the other for another second or two, Hermione with widened eyes, and then strode away without a backward glance, as if they had never seen one another.

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She had successfully managed to avoid Snape for the remainder of the weekend. In fact, she had managed to avoid everyone for the rest of the weekend. The only person who actually saw her face in those two days was Harry, who had timidly appeared at her door on Saturday afternoon, holding a tray of sandwiches, soup and tea. "To combat the cold rain," he had said with a grin.

She had noted (gratefully) that there was only enough food on the tray for one person. He had not expected to be invited in.

After a few shy knocks, he had stood in her doorway, blushing slightly at her attire and backlit by the crackling fire from the common room, and mumbled that he had noticed that she had missed breakfast. And lunch.

If Harry was curious as to her sudden disappearance, none of it showed in his voice as he handed over the tray. "I thought you could use something to break your studying," he said, grinning once again. She hadn't invited him in, as she wanted desperately to be left alone with her thoughts.

"Studying?" she questioned vaguely.

"Yeah, everyone basically figured if you weren't out here stopping Ron and I from charging into trouble of some kind that you must be studying. I admit, I thought that October was a bit early to start studying for N.E.W.T.s but ..."

He trailed off with a knowing glance as he saw understanding beginning to dawn on her face. Harry could tell something was wrong and was handing her a reason not to come out of her room for the rest of the weekend.

*Tricky, Potter,* she thought, *very tricky. Well done.* She had smiled weakly, gesturing to a stack of her normal bedtime reading, saying, "Well, you know me ... study, study, study ..."

He could tell her heart wasn't in it, but he had merely nodded and said, "That's our Gryffindor girl." He then leaned over the tray, close to her ear, and whispered, "Tell me about it when you're ready."

She smiled genuinely this time and nodded as she shut the door behind her. *He really is very thoughtful,* she admitted to herself as she set the tray of lunch down on her desk. Slightly hungry though she was, she didn't eat. She hadn't slept either. When she had arrived back in her room at nearly four thirty that morning, she had sat down on her bed and run over the events of the day in her head.

Not coming up with any great resolution, she had spent all day lying on her large four-poster bed, toying with the midnight blue satin coverlet, not bothering to change out of the thin nightgown she had been wearing when she bumped into Snape. Just what had she thought she was doing?

She had berated herself with the question all day ... alternating between periods of anger at herself, anger at him for his lackluster reaction, and utter disappointed disgust at the whole situation. And she still had four days worth of detention with him! Thank God she had the entire weekend to steel up her composure before that happened.

She flopped down onto her bed, furious at herself, and stared at the ceiling. She ran her hands absently across the lace neckline of the gown as she considered the absurdity of the situation. Hermione Granger was not prone to these moments of losing one's head. Hermione Granger was solid, quick-thinking and clever. Hermione Granger, the real Hermione Granger, was not this silly person who ran around kissing horrid teachers simply because she couldn't think of anything better to do. Hermione Granger ..... had finally passed out into exhausted sleep.

Her mind, however, was racing into fitful dreams.

*She stood in the midst of an office, lit only by the flickering of the roaring fire. She was dressed in a long black gown that scooped low in between her breasts in the front. Raising a delicate hand behind her, she could feel that the back of the dress dipped all the way to her waist. Her riot of honey-colored curls was swept away from her neck, save a few that had escaped along her temples. Long, heavy drops of diamonds swung gently at her ears. A quick glance in the mirror across the office from her showed that she looked absolutely stunning.*

*But where was he?*

*She could feel his presence in the room, even if she couldn't see him. Allowing her gaze to wander, she heard a soft rustle of material. He had emerged from a door that she guessed led from his bedchambers. He was swathed in black twill pants hanging low on his hips, buckled with a thin silver belt of Celtic knots just tight enough to keep the garment from falling to the floor. His prominent hip bones and lean, lightly defined stomach were visible. He was shirtless, showing light whirls of raven hair dotting his lower stomach, thickening into a deep thatch just above his waistband. He was carrying a brocaded dressing gown carelessly over his left arm. His long ebony hair was pulled low and away from his face with a thin silver ribbon. A double hoop glinted from his left ear, reflecting the fire in wavering strips of light.*

*Her heart pounded mercilessly in her chest as he tossed the dressing gown aside and crossed the room in measured, unhurried steps. He drew so near that she could feel his breath on her face as she stood beneath his towering height. A slender, almost elegant hand rose to her throat and ran gently along her body, tracing the wide scoop of the gown. When his finger skimmed the creamy skin of the top of her breast, she took in breath audibly, gasping at the feeling of his skin on hers. His deep black eyes caught the cinnamon brown of hers.*

*A wicked grin smoothed itself confidently over his face just before he grasped her arms and pulled her to him roughly. His mouth demanded hers, tongue plunging into her mouth, tasting, exploring. She surrendered to the excitement coursing through her veins as he kissed her, his hands roaming across her body.*

*With a steadiness that was absolutely brutal considering the power with which he kissed her, he pushed the dress from her shoulders. The fabric flowed down to pool on the floor. He bent his head to her exposed breasts. As his mouth covered her chest in hot, agonizingly patient strokes, she fisted her hands into his hair, leaned back her head and whispered his name.*

*"Severus . . ." It escaped her in between gasping breaths.*

She had spoken the name aloud in her sleep, and it was that exhalation that woke her. She sat up, startled to find her heartbeat leaping and her body gleaming with a fine layer of sweat. Furious at her elevated bodily state at a simple dream, she threw her dressing gown across her body and stormed towards the prefect bathroom. She needed a good, long cold shower.