

Strawberry Tart and Chocolate Hearts

by GinnyW

It's Valentine's Day and needless to say, it's been a long day for two professors at Hogwarts.

Strawberry Tart and Chocolate Hearts

Chapter 1 of 1

It's Valentine's Day and needless to say, it's been a long day for two professors at Hogwarts.

Disclaimer: It all belongs to Rowling.

It had been a harrowing day. Her first-years nearly set fire to her classroom while attempting to cast Bluebell Flames. Then her fifth-years couldn't manage to keep their Colour Changing Spells focussed on the mice; by the time they were done, her walls, desks, and students were all various shades of yellows, blues, and purples...and she had a headache. Hermione exited her multi-coloured classroom. It would keep for another day or two. Blessedly, it was Friday and she had the weekend to worry about cleaning up the mess. If all else failed...she inwardly cringed...there were always house-elves to do the dirty work.

She would never know what it was that had possessed her to choose teaching as her career. At times like these, she certainly didn't feel it was something that she was cut out to do.

Ruddy holidays that disturbed the students' concentration and... she began to think. Though she herself quickly lost her train of thought as the pulsing, stabbing and throbbing pain on the right side of her head made it difficult for her to focus.

Heading straight for the hospital wing, she was unhappy when Madam Pomfrey informed her that she was fresh out of Migraine Minimiser.

Knowing that there was only one other potential source for the only treatment that could help her, Hermione made her way to the dungeons. Along her way, she deducted no less than sixty House points from students who happened to be snogging in every nook and cranny she walked past.

She approached the door to Severus Snape's quarters and knocked, silently praying that he would be there. After several minutes, Hermione was ready to give up. She would have to wait until dinner to see him. Just as she turned to leave, his door opened.

He gave her a confused look before pasting on his usual scowl. "Professor Granger. To what do I owe this ~~pleasure~~?"

"May I come in, please?"

His eyes flicked down both sides of the corridor before he begrudgingly opened the door and allowed her into his rooms.

Hermione crossed the threshold, ignoring his glare until she heard the door close behind her.

"What do you want?" he asked without preamble. "I thought we agreed not to see each other today."

She whipped around to face him, her eyes blazing with anger and frustration. "Considering the greeting I've received thus far, I almost wish that I hadn't even bothered." Hermione raised a hand to begin massaging her right temple. "I have a migraine. Poppy didn't have any vials of the potion that I usually take to relieve the pain," she said with a defeated sigh. She didn't have the energy to argue with the man when the throbbing in her head was clouding all of her thoughts.

Looking down his long nose at her, he sneered. "Wait right here." Then Snape quickly left the room.

If she could have rolled her eyes without pain at his exit, she would have. "Snarly, surly bastard," she muttered under her breath as she continued to massage her temples and tried to relax.

Moments later he returned, looking at her with detachment as he thrust a small vial towards her.

Hermione gratefully took it from him and drained the contents before handing him back the empty vial.

"Thanks."

He said nothing, but ushered her to the door, opening it for her to leave. Quick to anger due to the migraine, Hermione couldn't hold her tongue. She turned back to him, not caring who was within hearing range in the corridor. "Just because you hate this bloody day, doesn't give you any reason to be a surly git simply because I came to ask for a potion."

His scowl deepened, and Hermione could see him struggle to keep his emotions under control. A pair of students passed by and it was their obvious curiosity at their professors, she knew, that kept Snape from saying anything more than that he had no doubt that he would see her at dinner.

He slammed the door behind her as she left.

* * *

An hour later found Severus Snape sitting at the Head Table in the Great Hall. The cherubs that fluttered through the room, dropping chocolate hearts in people's food and drink, were enough to irritate even those who enjoyed Valentine's Day. Thus, it stood to reason that it irritated the likes of Severus Snape ten times more than most.

Worse than the cherubs and the red foil-wrapped hearts, were the lovesick teenagers. Every place he turned, it seemed he came upon a student who decided that the fourteenth of February was the perfect day for a first love, first kiss, first touch, first....

He sorely needed to *Scourgify* his brain.

He completely empathised with Professor Granger and her migraine. Severus looked down the table and watched her. When she'd first arrived in the hall, her face had been pinched and serious; obviously she had still been suffering from her headache. Now, nearly thirty minutes later, he saw that she had relaxed, although she was still not overly happy.

Inwardly cringing, he recalled his earlier treatment of her. Cold, distant, par for the way he treated most members of the staff. But Hermione wasn't just any colleague.

It was his damned pride and the way that he insisted that no one *know* that had caused the problem. When she'd first appeared at his door today, he had thought that the practical, level-headed witch he knew had been caught up in the spirit of Valentine's Day and was about to throw discretion out the window by showering him with love and adoration. To learn that she had simply come to him for a potion....

It was hard to say if he had felt let down or relieved.

Severus was ashamed of how he'd treated her. He knew that he needed to fix things... permanently. With that thought firmly in his mind, he put aside his distaste for the day, rose from the table, and left the hall.

* * *

Hermione slowly made her way back to her rooms. After dinner, she'd spent an hour in her office counselling a distraught sixth-year girl who had caught her beau snogging another girl. In retaliation, the student had thrown a strawberry tart at the kissing couple, inadvertently causing the female victim to break out in a nasty case of hives.

It only reaffirmed Hermione's belief that this bleeding day was the worst of all of them.

At least her migraine was now gone.

She opened the door to her rooms, stepped inside, and smiled when she saw that a fire was already blazing in the grate. In front of her sofa was a low table, which she noticed had two glasses of red wine.

And seated on her sofa was a man dressed all in black.

"Professor Snape," she said coldly, still remembering his treatment of her earlier.

He rose and walked towards her. "Hermione," he said as he touched her cheek and leaned down to kiss her softly.

Despite her intention to treat him the same way he'd treated her, from the moment his lips brushed against hers, she felt her anger melting away.

Severus led her to the couch and seated her next to him. "I'm sorry."

"I know."

He pulled her against him and she curled into his side, leaning her head against his chest.

Hermione sighed heavily, enjoying the comfort of his body and his heady scent. Both granted her the strength to say what needed to be said. "Severus, I'm tired of this. I'm tired of pretending that it's a chore to be cordial with one another. I hate that I come to your rooms for a simple potion and I'm treated as if I were your worst enemy."

Though they had both initially agreed to keep their relationship private, as time wore on, Hermione had discovered how painful it was to pretend to be alone. The secrets, the hiding, it was almost worse than *truly* being alone. Many days she found herself wanting to share her joy with others, but keeping it to herself had begun to cause a terrible ache in her chest and a twinge of loneliness in her soul, that didn't seem to be going away.

He brushed a hand through her hair, and then brought it to her chin, to lift her face.

Hermione sat up more fully and looked him in the eyes.

"I know. I never knew where this," he motioned between them, "was going to go. I've not had many pleasant relationships. I do love you, Hermione, even when I don't seem to show it. We've just been keeping this secret for so long..."

"That it's sometimes hard to remember which role to play. Today, we played that role even in your rooms with no audience," she finished. "But, I love you too, Severus."

He leaned towards her and kissed her again.

She marvelled at how she could almost feel the sincerity of his words pour through his lips and into her very soul.

When he finally pulled back, he leaned his forehead against hers. "No more secrets, Hermione."

She brushed her hand up to touch his cheek.

"No more hiding," he continued. "I love you and I'm not going to go on pretending that I don't."

No more secrets. No more hiding.

She smiled.

Severus once again pulled her close and Hermione rested her head against his heart, feeling closer to this mysterious man than she ever had before. He was no cherub and he'd given her no chocolate hearts, but this moment was sweeter than any strawberry tart.

Author's Notes: Just a fluffy little Valentine's Day story that was originally written for Romancing the Wizard on LiveJournal. As always, thanks go to my lovely beta, JuneW.