

Beyond Blue

by Hanagasume

A marriage law has been passed by the new Minister for Magic... Hermione and Snape aren't impressed, but they have to follow the law, right?

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 11

A marriage law has been passed by the new Minister for Magic... Hermione and Snape aren't impressed, but they have to follow the law, right?

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Chapter 1 - The Marriage Law

Two people at the staff table at Hogwarts waited in anticipation for the mail that fine Saturday morning. The sky outside was the brightest blue, and the clouds were visible in the enchanted ceiling. It was beautiful. The reason for the waiting and anxiety could easily be explained in by the previous Saturday's copy of the *Daily Prophet*, where the Ministry's new Marriage Law was introduced by the newly instated Minister for Magic, Albus Dumbledore.

After the fall of Voldemort, the old wizard had finally decided to accept the position being offered to him and decided to "encourage" the repopulation of the Wizarding world. There had been many casualties in the final war, and now, every eligible witch or wizard between the ages 19 and 80 were required to be married and bear at least one child within the first five years of that marriage.

Ironically enough, magical beings that had fertility problems were exempt from this rule. Hermione had not been impressed when she found out about it and had immediately gone to see the Minister to "discuss" the matter, which was a polite way of saying "complain and talk his ear off for over an hour." At the young age of twenty-five, Hermione still had no wishes to be saddled with a husband in a marriage that would no doubt make her very unhappy.

Her studies at Hogwarts had been put on hold until after the war, and by the time she had graduated from there, she had nearly turned twenty. She had spent three years at the Denver Academy studying Arithmancy, Transfiguration, and Potions, and had been teaching Arithmancy and half of the Potions classes for almost two years and did not want to throw away all of the effort she had put in to build a career, just to get knocked-up and end up with a child.

Little did she know, but just along the table, someone else was struggling with this marriage concept also. It was odd that she didn't realize this, as he taught the other half of the Potions classes, as well as Defense Against the Dark Arts, which meant she had to work closer with him than most of her other colleagues. As she settled in her chair and sighed, the owl-post swooped into the Great Hall, and one barn owl dropped a letter right in front of Hermione. It was finally there! She had been ready to get the marriage business over and done with, have the kid, and then move on with the life she had planned out for herself.

So after she had been "convinced" by Albus, which was a round-about way of saying that she simply agreed to get out of having to listen to the old man drone on for the day, she had taken to initiative to send in an owl to one of the most prestigious wizard match-making companies in the world to find a husband that would be a reasonable partner and one that she wouldn't tire of. Ripping open the seal, Hermione opened it and read through it quickly.

Dear Miss Granger,

Hermione inwardly cringed at the use of her last name in such a formal fashion. She had really gotten over the whole thing after her ten years of magical instruction during which she was called 'Miss Granger.'

We are happy to inform you that there have been several matches to your preferences in a partner, three of whom have an extremely high percentage rating. Your choices are as follows: 99% with a waiting period of two weeks, 86% with a waiting period of one month, and finally, 79% with a waiting period of one week. Please make your selection and attach ten Galleons to your reply if you wish for the company to arrange a meeting date. If you do not wish to continue with this, ignore the above message.

Yours Sincerely,

Janet Figg

Madam Mim's Matchmaking Services

"Matchmaking Experts"

Hermione folded the parchment up and left the table, rushing straight past the rest of the staff towards her chambers so that she could pen a quick response. Severus Snape only barely noticed as she got up and rushed past, not really caring though. He was too busy reading through the letter he had received that morning from the Madam Mim's Matchmaking Services. He had been anticipating the news all morning, and now that it was finally in his hands, he felt his gut twist in illness. He wasn't ready to get married, and he doubted that he ever would be.

It was all Dumbledore's fault that he was in this pickle. He was already teaching two subjects, was the Deputy Headmaster alongside Minerva, who had replaced the doddering old geezer, and was still the same man he had been all those years before, despite that fact that he no longer had to play spy. He didn't want children, he didn't deserve a wife, and he most certainly had no idea if he even had a heart.

'What's that you have there, Severus?' asked Minerva nosily from next to him.

Severus folded it back up carefully. 'That is really none of your business, Minerva. Now if I may be excused, I have some matters of great importance to attend to,' he said defensively.

He left the staff table without any further ado and strode in the general direction of the dungeons, seething. Minerva was exempt from the law because her body was in an unsuitable condition to give birth to a child. He couldn't get out of it because he was as fertile as they came.

Groaning as he threw his office door open, Severus decided it had to be done. Sooner was better than later, he supposed. He unfolded the letter and looked over the middle paragraph once more.

We are happy to inform you that there have been several matches to your preferences in a partner, three of whom have an extremely high percentage rating. Your choices are as follows: 99% with a waiting period of two weeks, 83% with a waiting period of two months, and finally, 75% with a waiting period of two weeks. Please make your selection and attach ten Galleons to your reply if you wish for the company to arrange a meeting date. If you do not wish to continue with this, ignore the above message.

Severus read the first option again and again. 99% was a very high number, and it was very rare for someone to get such a high percentage in the company results. Seizing the opportunity to at least marry someone he was compatible with, he quickly wrote a response in his neat, spidery scrawl and attached the right amount of gold to it. He at least wanted to meet the woman if he was to marry her.

Without giving it a second thought, he whistled for his owl and sent the mail off with it before venturing to his classroom to collect the class worksheets and his small, rectangular glasses. He had discussed and arranged to meet with Professor Granger that morning to organize the class plans with her.

He left his dungeons and went straight to her office, wanting get it finished so that he could return to his chambers and investigate whether or not his letter of confirmation had been replied to yet. He knocked on the door and heard a soft 'enter' before he allowed himself in and dropped into the seat behind her desk, just as she launched her owl off her arm out the window.

'Good morning, Professor Snape,' she said with a smile.

'Indeed,' he replied in a bored tone. 'There are only two more weeks until the school years draws to a close,' he noted.

Hermione nodded and smiled. 'Are the O.W.L's and N.E.W.T's beginning on Monday, or did I misread the calendar?' she asked, attempting to engage him in casual conversation. She always found it hard to do with him.

'You read correctly,' he offered dryly, handing a copy of both exams to her. 'I have written the senior exams, and I assume you have written the junior exams for me?'

'Of course,' she replied a little tersely. He didn't have to be so cold. 'But I suppose that comes as somewhat of a surprise to you,' she snapped coolly.

'Very well,' he said quietly.

He stood from the chair and accepted the exam drafts she had written for him dismissively and went to the door of the room. 'Thank you for your time, Professor Granger,' he said as he left.

Hermione sighed and relaxed in her seat just as the owl returned to her with the date and time for a meeting with her "match." She cracked open the seal and read the contents, smiling at the location. This company ran a very smooth, subtle organization. Gretna Green was famous for its convenience and no-waiting-time weddings.

'It looks like they think I'd marry him straight away if they had the location and setting.'

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 11

A marriage law has been passed by the new Minister for Magic... Hermione and Snape aren't impressed, but they have to follow the law, right?

Chapter 2 – A Familiar Face

Although known above most things for practicality and sharp wit, the entire situation Hermione found herself in did not feel practical in the least. To her, having children was not practical, and she just wasn't ready for them – ever. She had never been good with relationships of any sort, and she wasn't about to gain a lifetime's experience of it out of the air.

She had received a reply from the coupling service that had informed her, in a round-about way, she would be getting one date with her match, in which they were given time to organize their wedding plans. She had, at first, been absolutely opposed this idea, but after rationalizing it in her head, she realized that there really was no way out of the ordeal and that the poor man would soon be her husband.

Hermione had decided to wait until the school term finished before she got married and was glad that her partner only became available on the same day as she. The marriage would have to occur somewhere in two weeks.

Oddly enough, Hermione had been as nervous as a cat all morning as she waited in anticipation for her "date." Decidedly, she glanced up at her clock and determined that she should go and get ready for her meeting.

What she had no idea of was that down five floors, within the depths of Hogwarts, Severus Snape was facing a similar problem. He looked over his appearance in the mirror and grimaced. He was pale, hook-nosed, and much the same as he had ever been. His only redeeming feature remained, as always, his athletic and toned body, and although he was no body builder, his sinewy muscle left him lithe and thin enough to be the spy he had once been.

It was with pride that he could admit that he did not have the same flab or excess fat or skin that most men his age were starting to get.

Sighing, he pulled on a black Muggle cashmere sweater over his crisp white shirt. After examining his stiff appearance in the mirror, he decided to undo the top buttons of the shirt to seem less frosty. Pushing the sleeves to his elbows, he spied the Dark Mark and winced before pulling on polished black shoes. He left the castle through the Dungeon tunnels shortly afterwards.

Before Apparating over the confines of the forest, he glanced at the location on the letter and remembered it, trying to think of an alley that may have been nearby that he could go to. Shaking his head, he folded the parchment and stuffed it into his pocket before leaving with a resounding pop, just as someone not even two hundred meters away did the exact same thing.

The next thing he knew, he was sprawled on the ground in a very ungraceful way with his limbs tangled with another person's. Apparently, they had the misfortune of leaving at the same time and arriving at their location simultaneously. Taking a deep breath, Severus moved to untangle himself from the other victim, who was decidedly much smaller than he was.

When he looked up, he almost gasped when a disheveled-looking Hermione Granger gazed back at him with a surprised look.

'Professor Snape?' she asked numbly in her confusion.

Severus felt that he could not answer her immediately, as he had become very distracted by the vision facing him. Hermione Granger was wearing a simple, blue summer dress with thin straps on her shoulders, fitting quite nicely on her slim body. The skirt of it was bunched up around mid-thigh, and an attractive blush stole across her nose and cheeks.

'My apologies, Miss – I mean Professor Granger,' he said as he lifted himself off the ground and extended a hand to her.

Although it was out of character for him, he felt as though helping her off the ground was the least he could do for practically Apparating on top of her. She accepted the hand, and he hoisted her from the dirt with ease. She had gotten a lot thinner over the years and felt as though she weighed barely a thing, even though she was tall for a woman.

'Thank you,' she murmured as she brushed the dust off herself and brushed a curl that had escaped the confines of her braided hair.

Severus concluded that she actually looked quite fetching in the dress and seemed to have ample cleavage, although not huge, but enough to make the dress look nice on her nonetheless. He nodded, and they both started in the same direction. Perhaps it was just a coincidence?

'Pardon me for asking, but you aren't going to that café on the corner, are you?' she asked, pointing in the direction of where they were both apparently headed.

'I am,' he said simply.

'Oh.'

'Would it be rude of me to inquire as to what business you have in that café?' he asked curiously. Hermione noticed that even though they had been colleagues for two years, he still treated her with the same formality that he had while she was his student.

'I'm supposed to be meeting someone – well, I don't actually know who they are yet,' she answered as he held the door open for her.

Severus blanched when she said this. It couldn't possibly be her that he was meeting, could it? She walked in ahead of him, but he pulled her aside before she could walk away and pulled out his letter. Unfolding it, he held it out to her. She took it and opened her mouth to ask what, but stopped short and gasped.

'Ah, so you recognize this?' he asked in a silky voice.

She nodded and pulled a similar piece of parchment out of a hidden dress pocket and unfolded it, holding it beside his. They were the exact same letter, save for the names they were addressed to.

'Apparently I am your match, Miss Granger,' he said, carefully extracting his own letter from her hands. She had turned almost as pale as the sheet of parchment she held.

'Merlin,' she breathed.

'Indeed,' he replied.

Hermione folded away her own letter and pocketed it before swallowing the lump in her throat and looking up at Snape to see that he was almost as troubled as she. Well, it could have been worse. Summoning what Gryffindor courage that had not yet fled her, she pressed on.

'Shall we find seats?'

They went and were seated, Severus directly opposite Hermione, and had ordered a strong coffee each before either of them found the courage to say something. The situation was entirely too awkward.

'Miss Granger – I don't know what to say. I–' he began in his own embarrassingly blustering way.

She held up a hand to spare both of them from his stammering. 'It's Hermione, Severus,' she said. 'I'm about to marry you, so it seems silly to go around calling you 'sir'

and 'Professor,' and the same goes for you calling me 'Miss Granger,'" she added.

'You still wish to marry?' he asked, utterly bewildered. 'Me?'

'Whether or not I wish to marry is immaterial. I have to, and you are my so-called match. Seeing as we are already betrothed, I intend to go through with it. I do not back out of promises I make,' she answered practically.

Snape stood pensively for a moment before speaking. 'So, where do you wish to marry?'

'I was hoping you had an idea, perhaps something private? I can already see Harry and Ron's shocked faces,' she said dramatically, covering her own.

'Here then, on the Green,' Snape offered simply. 'It is easy, accessible, and we will not need witnesses.'

'Would you mind terribly if we didn't get married until after the school year is over?' she inquired carefully.

'Not at all.'

Hermione looked up and smiled slightly for the first time that meeting. 'Thank you, that sounds reasonable,' she replied, standing from her seat. 'I suppose we should leave then.'

He nodded, and they paid for the coffee before Apparating back to Hogwarts. He walked her to her door and left in directly afterwards, leaving Hermione to contemplate her position alone.

Perhaps it would not be so bad after all.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 of 11

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Chapter 3 - Making Preparations

The colors were amazing to say the very least, but nothing stood out more than the rich, navy blue. It wasn't a conventionally bright or outstanding color, but it was truly perfect. Hermione decided that she would have to look reasonable at the very least for her wedding. She had chosen a simple, cream-colored suit jacket and skirt, and of course, the flowing, navy blue silk blouse.

She had found some elegant three-inch black heels a few days earlier in Muggle London, along with the rest of her outfit. She lifted herself out of bed and pulled her nightshirt off before dressing in her now-customary black trousers and white shirtsleeves that she tucked neatly into the pants and then pulled on a teaching robe.

She was going to have to speak to Snape that day at the very least. She was engaged to him after all, and she wanted to at least appear to be civil to him. They had barely spoken since that morning in the coffee shop.

Decidedly, she walked to the Great Hall and sat down next to Snape for breakfast.

'Good morning!' she announced cheerfully.

'Hermione,' he acknowledged with a nod before taking a swallow of his tea. 'Are you well this dreary morning?'

Hermione quelled her immediate impulse to laugh at him for the "dreary" comment. Musing, she thought for the second time since finding out he was her betrothed, that it might not be so bad to marry him. Though personally, she would miss her freedom.

Then again, even when she married him, she would not be allowing him any of the liberties that normal husbands had with their wives. She would not allow him to boss her around for starters, and he would not dictate what she did with her life. The only liberty he did have was to father their child.

'I am well, thank you, Severus,' she replied as she spooned some sugar into her tea.

She glanced at his *Daily Prophet* and was slightly surprised when he nudged it towards her more so that they could look at it together as they drank their tea in silence. They read amiably together for ten minutes, perusing the contents of the Wizarding worlds' gossip column.

'Albus has made a new law,' she commented as she read page six.

'Yes, and no doubt it is another one of his ghastly plans to repopulate the Wizarding world in an entirely unnecessary fashion. Or perhaps it is another one of his useless, crackpot inventions to create a peaceful and harmonious community and all of those other bloody pleasant things,' he drawled. 'It's all Thestral crap as far as I am concerned.'

Hermione smiled at his cynicism. 'Well, it does involve the marriage law...' she teased.

'What? Has he finally decided to abolish it?' he asked hopefully as he turned his head to pay attention to the article. Hermione almost lost it and laughed at him. He finished it off and sighed deeply. 'Ah, Miss Granger, it seems that we will be stuck together forever now. Albus has just declared that all marriages remain irrevocable.'

Hermione frowned in annoyance. 'No divorce? Albus has gone too far this time,' she said, fuming quietly.

Severus nodded and her frown only deepened. 'I must be a glutton for punishment, joined to you for the remainder of my being,' he teased.

Hermione swatted him on the arm and scowled. 'Be careful what you say, Severus. I am a banshee now, but I could easily be worse,' she warned.

'My apologies,' he said sarcastically.

She pinned him with an icy look, but spun around to look at Minerva as the older witch cleared her throat to get their attention. Having finally got it, she scowled at them both reproachfully.

'Please don't tell me that you two are squabbling again,' she asked with a sigh.

They both looked at her with a grin and said, 'No!'

'Are you absolutely positive about that? There seems to be an awful lot of tension between you two lately. I had thought that you'd resolved your differences,' she persisted despite their twin objections. 'There are only three days left of term after all, and there is no need for trouble.'

'Minerva, I can assure you that there are no problems between Hermione and myself,' Snape snapped irritably.

Hermione's elbow made firm contact with his ribs, causing him to wince and grunt in annoyance, shooting a glare at her. 'Severus, don't be rude,' she chastened. 'Perhaps we should tell her though.'

'Alright, have it your way, woman,' he said coolly, rubbing his side.

Minerva watched this oddly domestic display of taunting with surprise and confusion combined. They grudgingly came to an agreement, and Severus apparently had to deliver whatever it was they had to say.

'Perhaps it was a terrible oversight to not have informed you earlier – which I assure you, is no fault of mine –' he snarked, looking pointedly at Hermione, who just poked her tongue out at him immaturely. '– Hermione and I are engaged to be married this Saturday in Gretna Green.'

Minerva's eyes lit up brilliantly at this. 'Oh! How wonderful,' she exclaimed. 'Albus and I always wondered when you'd find each other.'

Both Hermione and Severus snorted at this hasty assumption.

'I am not sure what you mean by "find each other," Minerva, but no such thing occurred to us,' Snape commented. 'That is, unless you consider accidentally Apparating on top of your Ministry-approved "match" when you had no idea who they were, finding them.'

'Or being forced to marry and reproduce,' Hermione added. 'Find each other, indeed.'

'But if you don't have feelings for one another, then why are you marrying?' she asked in her confusion.

'It is all very simple, Minerva,' Hermione said as she stood from her chair. 'This is purely a marriage of convenience.'

And with that, she swept out of the hall, taking her chilling air with her and leaving Minerva gaping at her. Unknowingly though, she had also left a wounded Snape alone at the table. Hermione may not have had any feelings resting on the line and, initially, neither had Snape. But he had gradually begun to feel something that he knew was a lot more intimate than only friendship.

Minerva, by chance, had snapped out of her daze just soon enough to see the slightest trace of hurt in Snape's eyes. It had been from Hermione's stone cold words. But the icy mask replaced it in an instant, and Minerva felt sympathy for him. Putting a hand on his arm, she sighed.

'You do have feelings for her, don't you, Severus?' she asked gently.

He frowned as her looked at her, but when he saw the care and concern in her expression, he dropped the scowl. 'Perhaps my feelings have become a little more complicated than I would like, of late,' he replied guardedly.

'Do you love her?' she pressed.

'Not yet,' he said simply. 'But it wouldn't be hard.'

With that, he got up from the table and gazed gratefully at McGonagall. 'Thank you for your concern, Minerva. But I believe it is sorely misplaced.'

'Oh, nonsense, Severus,' she chastised. 'Just take care of yourself. She will, in due time, realize that this match was not just coincidence.'

Snape nodded and left the Great Hall in a sweep of his robes. He needed to find something that would make him forget for the day. Upon reaching his chambers, he went to the decanter of brandy by the fire and poured one. His blasted firewhisky was nowhere to be found.

He looked in the mirror and winced at his reflection. He didn't have anything that a young witch could want. He wasn't young or attractive or whole. Hell – he didn't even have a nice personality. His inner voice was attempting to reassure him that he wasn't all displeasing.

But he just wasn't listening that day...

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 of 11

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Everything was so green and alive and blooming. This, however, was all in contrast to the lack of bloom and life in Hermione and Severus' relationship. It was dormant, like a sleeping dragon or a latent volcano. Gretna Green in the Scottish Highlands was about as green as the color and name suggested.

Severus stood by the anvil, in the centre of a rock formation, the wind whipping his long jacket and hair about wildly as he waited. Recently, things had been happening so fast, he could hardly tell when one started and the other ended. Yet the day he had been secretly anticipating was not promising to pass by quickly.

He had chosen to wear black. It was simple, easy, and it didn't require him to have to go through the ordeal of shopping for something different.

But when Minerva had seen what he was wearing that morning before he left, she immediately demanded that he do something with the color. When he had objected, she had transfigured it to a dark forest-green shirt herself. He allowed it, which was how he ended up in Gretna Green wearing a green shirt that was tucked neatly into a pair of new black trousers and a knee-length black jacket.

Actually, considering all, it was a slight improvement and didn't make his skin seem so stark and pale. Glancing at his watch, and then at the wizard that would be binding them, he felt his anxiety build.

'Don' worry, me lad. The lass will be coming,' the older man said through his thick Scottish accent. 'She'll be —'

Just as he was about to finish, he smiled and instead pointed over Severus' shoulder somewhere. He whipped around making his jacket snap in the wind and almost gasped aloud at the sight presented to him.

Hermione was walking towards them, already clad in her cream-colored suit, navy blouse and elegant heels. Severus had a bit of trouble breathing because of the way she looked. She was an angel, albeit a fallen one, stealing his breath away like that.

She had her hair pinned loosely at the back, mostly to keep it out of the way, but somehow it looked better that way with the suit. She had a natural flush to her cheeks, and Merlin, she was beautiful to him.

'Sorry I'm late,' she said out of breath, as she had obviously rushed to make up for lost time.

That was not entirely true though, Hermione thought as she stared at her betrothed. When Severus had first whipped around and looked at her with those inscrutable eyes, she had begun to feel a little short of breath. He looked quite dashing in green, not that it was the first time she had thought him dashing, but of course she would never admit to thinking it more than once. She noticed that he had gone to some effort, no matter how little or large, to look more than presentable for their binding.

'Come,' he said smoothly in a deep baritone, extending a hand to her.

Hermione shivered a little at the sound of his voice, but contained her excitement at being so close to him and tried to smother the feelings she had in her stomach. Letting him take her hand, he led her to the anvil and their binder.

'Ready?' asked the older wizard.

They both nodded hesitantly, and the old man thought momentarily that a better and more perfect couple couldn't have been found. Although almost stark opposites, they complemented each other perfectly; her with her light, and him with his dark.

'Kneel before and repeat what I say if that is what you so intend,' he commanded, and they obeyed readily.

'We give ourselves freely to be married on this day with the ancients as our witnesses,' he said.

'We give ourselves freely to be married on this day with the ancients as our witnesses,' Hermione and Severus repeated in unison.

'Please face each other and join hands, and to each of my questions answer "I do so wish" or "I do" if that is what you intend,' he began. 'Now, do you both intend to care for each other in happiness and struggle, to be faithful always, and trust each other mind, body and soul?'

'I will,' they said together.

'Is it your wish to remain joined for the rest of your lives, living in peace and war, hardship and credit, for each other and yourselves?'

There was the briefest of pauses where they threw each other fleeting glances before announcing 'I do so wish' at the same time.

'And finally, do you promise to love each other, mind, body and soul, for the rest of your lives, with all of your heart?' he asked.

Severus looked into Hermione's eyes for the longest of times, pouring what he hoped was a little of his affection for her into it, trying to reassure her or console her reasoning. He gave her hand a gentle squeeze and whispered to her. 'You don't have to promise that one, Hermione,' he said softly.

She bestowed a radiant smile on him for that and squeezed his hand back softly. 'I will,' she declared just loud enough for the binding wizard to hear.

'I will also,' Snape said immediately afterwards.

'Excellent!' he exclaimed. 'It gives me great pleasure to now pronounce you Husband and Wife. You may kiss your bride, Professor Snape,' he added with a cheery and expectant smile.

Severus looked down at the woman who was now his wife. 'We don't have to —' he began stammering.

Hermione's only response was to still his lips with a gentle finger before standing up slightly on her toes and brushing her lips across his briefly. Snape felt his heart skip and warmth spread through his entire body, starting with his chest and going outwards. He was already warm as it was.

She pulled away after a few tentative moments and smiled, releasing his hands. 'Shall we go?' he offered quietly.

'Yes, I have some things I need to organize,' she replied, taking that arm that he offered to her.

He Apparated them in tandem from the small town nearby, and they soon found themselves in front of the Hogwarts gate. 'What have you got planned for this evening?' he asked as they walked.

'I have to reorganize my files,' she replied.

'Oh,' Snape said blandly, feeling totally disheartened. He knew that he shouldn't have expected anything from her, but he felt that it was only right to keep an open afternoon. He trudged on beside her silently for the remainder of their trip to the castle, and when they had entered the oak front doors, he left her in the middle on the hall without any further ado. He wasn't sure if he could handle another emotional blow that afternoon.

He dropped into the chair in his office and sighed, closing his eyes and pinching the bridge of his nose. How could such a perfect morning turn into such a disastrous afternoon? Hermione had been beautiful. The binding had been exhilarating.

And her lips had been so soft and warm beneath his. But then they had returned to Hogwarts, and everything had become the same as ever. She went back to being Hermione Granger despite the fact that her surname was Snape, and he went back to being the grumpy old bat of the dungeons.

There was a knock at that door.

He stood and answered it, shocked to see his young wife staring up at him. 'Hermione?' he asked in his confusion, using the door to keep himself steady.

'Do you regret marrying me?' she asked guardedly.

'No,' he answered immediately. 'But I can see that you regret our bonding,' he added, looking down at her with fierce, yet hurt, eyes.

'No, I don't really. Severus, I know what you must think, but I –' she began fruitlessly. 'I just –'

He held up a hand to silence her, hiding behind the security that his mask of coldness gave him, glaring down his nose at her. 'Don't lie to me, Hermione, just don't. I know that you don't love me, but I care, Hermione. I care!' he said coldly, closing the door in her face.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 of 11

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Chapter 5 - Resolutions & Conflicts

The flutter of wings and the scraping of claws against wood were the only sounds that signaled the arrival of the morning post. Severus took the *Daily Prophet* along with his other mail from the owl and slid a Knut into the pouch attached to its foot. He tossed aside the mail and opened the newspaper straight away, spreading out the front page. He ignored the moving photograph on the front that was displaying the win of the British Quidditch team against the Bulgarians.

After reading through the entirely uninteresting article that went with it, he continued through the paper, reading all of the usually unread stories. He even gave a moment to read the recent weddings column, recognizing at least half of the names and sighing when he remembered the day his own name had appeared next to Hermione's in the paper the morning after their binding.

Of course, that had been just over two weeks earlier, and that had been the last time he had seen anything to do with Hermione. She had been consciously avoiding him, as he had been her since that afternoon when he had closed the door in her face, but the one thing he did do was keep the clipping of their wedding announcement, as it was the only thing he had.

Tossing aside the paper then, he returned to eating his breakfast, getting ready for a long day of restocking the potions for the hospital wing, as was his obligation. He pushed the plate of eggs aside and, instead, attacked the plate of fruit at the table, eating the lot of it before flicking his wand to clean up after himself. He just didn't feel like cleaning everything by hand that morning.

'Poinsettia,' he said clearly, and a portrait of an elderly man jumped aside for him and allowed him entrance to his Potions workroom through the secret passage there.

With a flick of his wrist, he had three cauldrons lined up with a flame going beneath each and the ingredients floating out of his private stores to the bench before him. He hadn't had the time to do anything like this for weeks, which was another reason why he was so wound-up. Making potions always had relaxed him.

He began chopping his ingredients methodically and meticulously, deftly charming them wandlessly to float into the assigned cauldron and having the stirrers mixing the ingredients well. Sighing, he checked on each of them, smiling when each of the potions turned the correct color, and then he lowered the heat.

Letting the potions simmer, he sat down and allowed himself the leisure of perusing his latest Potions magazines and the *Ars Alchemica* for some interesting stories and clips, as well as a list of the latest and cheapest ingredients on the market. It was doing things like this and discussing things like these that he was most interested in doing with Hermione because he knew that she loved those things also. And that was the thing he was being denied in her unwillingness to attempt, at the very least, a friendship. Pushing aside all thoughts of his wife, he re-concentrated on the task at hand and turned the heat off the first two potions, leaving the other to simmer for another five minutes as method dictated.

He decanted the other potions into vials and placed them in the First Aid box before banishing the mess to the sink and returning to the final Blood-Replenishing Potion, turning the heat off that also and depositing equal amounts into the vials he had set out, adding them to the box once a stopper had been put into each. Then he called an elf to take it to the Hospital wing.

He cleaned up the workroom and left it in pristine order, deciding that it was about time to read his mail, now that he had managed to put it off for long enough. Sighing in resignation, he picked up the first letter, caught sight of what lay directly beneath it and mentally cursed. It was a letter... addressed to Hermione.

Hermione Snape, he read, one of his long fingers tracing over the letters. It actually looked right on the page. He picked it up with trembling fingers and examined the Ministry seal on the back and the annoyingly loopy writing of one of the annoying Ministry fumbler.

'Damn!' he muttered.

He was going to have to take it to her. Make no mistake - Severus liked the sight of his wife immensely, but she had hurt him, upset him, and above all, she had already communicated her unhappiness with their binding. Shaking his head, he decided that it was about time to pay her a visit, and just seeing her beautiful face once would be enough for him.

He walked up the stairs and finally along the corridor that Hermione's chambers were in, and when he reached the door to her office, he was surprised to hear an awful lot of shouting coming from within. The door was cracked open a little, and he could see that she was definitely one of the raised voices in there, and by the sound of it, the other was a male voice that was annoyingly familiar.

He stood there and decided to listen for a moment before he interrupted their interesting conversation. After all, it was bad manners to interrupt people while they were talking.

'- and don't you dare use Ron as an excuse, because he came and saw me last week and said that he was fine with it!' she shouted angrily.

'Hermione, you're being selfish. You knew that I would be mad, yet you still went and married that overgrown bat! Why, I didn't even find out until a week after it happened, and only because Ginny saw fit to let me know when I returned from my business trip in Spain!' the male voice roared.

'You were in Spain, you still get the *Daily Prophet* there, so don't use that as an excuse, Harry Potter!' she retorted hotly, feeling the tears stinging her eyes.

Snape felt a sudden realization jolt through his body when he heard the mention of Harry's name. It was Potter, and they were arguing about him. He paused for a moment, when he was about to throw the door wide and storm in to hex the boy senseless, but Hermione spoke again.

'Harry,' Hermione said in a quivering, yet reasoning voice. 'I chose to marry him. I was not forced, and I really do like him, a lot more than I thought. I hurt him two weeks ago, so very badly, and I have never regretted anything more in my life. I know you're angry, but as one of my best friends, I am asking you to be understanding.'

'Hermione, I cannot understand. He was a Death Eater! You know it, and I know it, and I will never accept him,' Harry said in a deathly low voice before it rose towards the end. 'I cannot be your friend as long as he is a part of your life. It was bad enough that you even work with him here!' he added angrily.

When Snape heard those words and the sob that escaped Hermione's throat that accompanied his hateful words, he snapped. He burst into the room forcefully with the door crashing against the wall behind it with a splintering thud, and in a flash, he had Harry up against the wall with his wand at his throat and a steady arm pinning his shoulder still.

'Give me one reason why I should not hex you seven ways to Sunday right now, Potter,' he snarled.

Hermione stood, thunderstruck in the middle of the room, eyes wide and bottom lip quivering. HE was there, in her office. It was likely that he had heard every terrible comment that Harry had said about him, and now he had Harry pinned against the wall. She shook her head and opened her mouth to speak when she heard the words of venom seep out of Snape's mouth threateningly.

'Severus?' she asked weakly, dazed and confused beyond thought.

He looked over his shoulder at her and saw her tearstained face, trembling bottom lip, and look of pure shock. His features softened, and he shoved Harry back against the wall and turned his back on him, walking straight towards his upset and confused wife. 'Hermione,' he whispered tenderly. 'Are you alright?'

She tried to nod, but failed and simply collapsed into his arms as he held them out to catch her. 'I'm so sorry,' she sobbed as he held her, and the cry that she had needed for weeks finally spilled forth from her stinging eyes.

Severus stroked her hair and muttered quick, soothing words before he looked back at Harry Potter crumpled against the wall. 'Get out of here, Potter, and don't assume you're welcome here until you come to your senses and apologize for what you have done to my wife!' he barked angrily.

Harry gave him a hateful look and pushed off the wall, storming through the open door and slamming it closed behind him. Severus turned back to look down at the crying witch in his arms and felt his temper calm and heart swell with something he didn't recognize. 'Hermione, sweet, beautiful, Hermione,' he whispered against her hair as he hugged her. 'I forgive you, but can you ever forgive me?'

She nodded against his chest and looked up at his with glistening eyes. 'Of course I can,' she replied softly before she leaned forwards and claimed the kiss that they had surpassed their wedding day.

When Severus felt her soft lips against his, he could feel the promise that the kiss held and poured his own promises back when it deepened... They were going to start again.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 of 11

A marriage law has been passed by the new Minister for Magic... Hermione and Snape aren't impressed, but they have to follow the law, right?

Disclaimer: Not mine. No money.

Chapter 6 - Meet the Parents

As a gentle breeze swept over the Hogwarts grounds, carrying the warm summer air around with it, the occupants of the castle remained within the confines of the cooler stone. Hermione clambered out of the high four-poster bed with bleary eyes and the desperate need to relieve her bladder. She sprinted to the bathroom and did just that before turning on the tap and splashing her face with cool water. When she returned from the bathroom, she found her husband sitting up on his side of the bed, running a hand through his hair.

'Morning, Severus,' she said brightly.

He turned around and smirked at her, standing and taking a moment to get his bearings before walking over to her and wrapping his arms around her. 'Good morning, my wife. How are you this day?' he asked caringly.

'Much better than last night, thank you,' she replied, trying not to remember her quarrel with Harry. After Harry had left, Snape Flooed them to his chambers and let her cry out before curling up in bed together and falling into fitful sleep.

'Wonderful,' he murmured, kissing her cheek gently.

Hermione smiled and blushed a little, hugging him just a little tighter. 'Is there something that you needed to do today?' she asked, looking up at his face for an answer.

'Nothing that can't be put off for a bit if you want to do something,' he answered simply, gently caressing her brown curls.

'I think we should go and see my parents. I mean, we've been married over two weeks, and my parents don't even know that I got married,' she said softly, working her

way out of his embrace. 'I think they'll like you.'

'Somehow, I find that hard to believe,' he replied with a smirk.

Hermione smiled and walked towards the fireplace, grabbing a pinch of Floo powder and tossing it into the flames that she ignited. 'Please say you'll think about it,' she pleaded.

'No need, Hermione. I will come with you,' he said flatly. 'When do you want to leave?'

'Maybe in an hour, so by the time we leave, it will be around ten o'clock. Not too early,' she responded. 'Thank you again, Severus.'

He nodded slightly, and she disappeared into the green flames, leaving him alone in his dungeon chambers to contemplate how he assumed her parents would react when they discovered that she had been so foolish as to marry him. But he knew, after the previous night, that his Hermione would stand up for him, despite how right her parents would be when they said he was a foul, lecherous old man that was preying on their young daughter. He imagined that they would have something to say about him being her former professor and most likely insinuate that he had been leaching onto her even while she had been a student.

Now that he knew would have been entirely false. He admitted that he hadn't even considered her as a prospective wife or partner and had not been remotely interested in a relationship with her before the day they had met in the café. Admittedly though, he had seen her mature and had become physically attracted to her, as she had become quite the startling beauty on her return.

He shook his head and went straight to the bathroom, turning on the taps of the bath and filling the tub with hot water right before sinking into it and hissing as his growing arousal made contact. The warmth did nothing to resolve the matter at hand, and his thoughts constantly strayed to his beautiful wife, sprawled atop his bed all wanton, like a goddess, thighs spread wide, waiting and pleading for him to sink within her tight flesh...

Groaning, he finally gave in and allowed himself to relieve the pressure building up within, soon finding his release. He bathed rather quickly after that and was dried and dressed in a flowing green silk shirt tucked neatly into his black trousers. Hermione was back in his room as he rolled the sleeves of the shirt to his elbows, and she smiled when she saw the familiar shirt.

Strolling over to him, she reached her hands up to undo another button at the top of the shirt, revealing a slight "v" of his chest with a light dusting of black hairs peaking out. 'You look nice in this shirt,' she commented offhandedly as she wound her arms around his neck in a hug.

He wrapped his arms around her and brought her tight against his body with graceful ease before leaning down to capture her lips in a searing kiss. 'You always look wonderful to me, Hermione,' he replied, eyeing her lovely, thin-strapped yellow floral summer dress.

She blushed all the way to her chest and kissed him lightly on the lips before pulling away. 'All right, we'd better get a move on then,' she suggested, taking his hand in hers tentatively and tugging him in the direction of the fireplace.

'Are we going to Floo there?'

She nodded. 'Yes, I have the only connection to their house from my chambers. I owed them earlier to let them know that I was coming by Floo,' she answered brightly.

'Did you tell them the nature of the visit?' he enquired curiously.

'I didn't quite get that far in the letter, but I told them that I had something extremely important to tell them about,' she said sheepishly, wondering if he would be offended by her slight discomfort.

He simply tipped her chin up to look him in the eyes and kissed her on the lips lightly. 'I don't mind, love,' he said softly.

'I know.'

They Flooed to her chambers together, and she waved her wand and made a small incantation to allow them passage through this network before tossing in Floo powder and stepping in and through to an immaculate drawing room and parlor. The room was empty, and Hermione stepped out first, dusting of the little bit of soot that had managed to swirl and land on the skirt of the dress.

Severus came out after her and dusted himself off also before resting his hands on her shoulders as she looked around. When she felt the hand, she reached one of her own up and touched his, sending sparks between them both. 'Let's go find my parents,' she said resolutely, taking his hand firmly and leading him through the door.

'Mum! Dad! I'm here!' she called out.

Hermione heard footsteps from upstairs and heard the muttered curse before a shorter, older woman, and a tall, graying man came into sight and immediately rushed down the staircase to greet her. She let go of Snape's hand as she returned the hug her mother gave her and then the one that her father insisted upon.

'Hermione, oh darling, it's wonderful to see you!' her mother, Georgiana, exclaimed cheerfully, hugging her daughter once more.

'Yes, muffin, it's good to see you home,' Joseph Granger added, patting his daughters' shoulder.

'Muffin?' Snape mouthed to Hermione in question, amusement creeping across his features. She gave him a "Don't you dare" glare and released her mother in favor of returning to his side.

'Mum, Dad, I know this is going to seem all rather sudden to you, but I would like you to meet my husband, Severus Snape,' she introduced bravely, seeing the shock clearly written on her parents' faces.

Georgiana was the first to recover. 'Well, where are my manners? I am Georgiana Granger, Hermione's mother,' she said politely with a smile, walking over to the man and holding out her hand to him, which he accepted warmly with a smile. 'I am glad to meet you, Severus.'

'I am delighted to finally meet you also, Mrs. Granger,' Severus replied formally.

'Oh, please, call us Georgiana and Joseph,' the older woman insisted, nudging her stunned husband forward to greet their new son-in-law.

'Yes, nice to meet you, Severus,' Joseph said, shaking his hand firmly.

'A pleasure, Joseph.'

Hermione beamed at him and her parents, an immense sense of relief and joy flooding her. Severus sighed inwardly as he released her father's hand and saw the smile of acceptance on both of their faces. This was not the reception that he had expected, but he allowed himself to feel relieved that this had been the case as opposed to the other option. He smiled at his wife and took her hand, giving it a gentle squeeze.

'Let's go have tea,' Georgiana announced, and they all followed into the kitchen: two of them infinitely relieved and the other two glad that their daughter had finally met a man that obviously loved her so much.

Severus found, during their time with the Grangers, that he liked this family very much and loved his wife even further...

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 of 11

A marriage law has been passed by the new Minister for Magic... Hermione and Snape aren't impressed, but they have to follow the law, right?

Disclaimer: Not mine. No money.

Chapter 7 - Begetting an Heir

Summer was at its peak, and the sun shone brightly over the Hogwarts grounds, sending crystal reflections of light over the lake. Meanwhile, Hermione was in her chambers with a bag on her bed and her cupboards open all over the room. The day before, Severus had announced that they should go on holiday, and she had agreed happily. And so they had made plans to go to Milan, Italy for a couple of days before heading to Katerini on the coast of Greece for a week.

She had been delighted when she had discovered that he actually had a house there that overlooked the port and oceanfront. And to make the whole thing even more appealing, he had made reservations for them in a lovely hotel while in Milan, where they would be able to leave to briefly view both Muggle and Wizarding Italian culture. She had already packed the clothes she would be taking and only had to collect a few of her books for their longer stay in Greece.

She heard a knock on her bedroom door and turned to see her husband standing in the doorway with a small smile curving his lips. She went to him then, as she had become quite used to doing, and wrapped her arms around him, she kissed him tenderly. 'Hello, Severus. Are you ready?' she asked.

'Yes, are you?' he replied, releasing her from his hold.

She waved her wand and summoned her books to her and levitated them into the suitcase, closing the top before turning back to him. 'I am now,' she answered, shrinking the bag and depositing it into the pocket of her jeans like it was no more than a slip of paper.

'Do you want to leave then?' he asked with a smile, holding a hand out to her.

'I think that'll do,' she said, taking his hand and allowing him to lead them out of her rooms hand-in-hand. They walked down to the Entrance Hall and were quite surprised to find Minerva and Filius Flitwick standing by the Oak front doors, both dressed in comfortable summer clothes. A sight Hermione was not sure she wanted imprinted into her memory.

'Minerva, Filius, what are you doing here?' Hermione asked, taking her hand from Severus'.

'We are traveling to France with the rest of the staff for a couple of weeks, and by the looks of it, you two are off on holiday also,' Minerva commented.

Severus, who had remained quiet thus far, and was probably quite a surprising sight to his colleagues in simple black trousers and a partially unbuttoned white shirt tucked neatly into them with the sleeves rolled to his elbows, spoke up. 'We are going to Milan, and then OUR house in Katerini for a while,' he responded smoothly.

'Pardon, Severus, but did you just say OUR?' Filius squeaked, eyeing the two of them curiously.

'Why, yes, I did,' he answered, taking Hermione swiftly by the hand and whisking them out of the Great Hall.

He left behind an extremely stunned Flitwick and a chuckling Minerva. Hermione smiled at him as they walked along, holding his hand tightly and wondering why she had ever had objections to marrying this wonderful, wonderful man. And although they slept in the same bed most nights, they still had one last task to undertake until they would officially come together as husband and wife. That thought made her shiver with desire, but she had to contain herself until they were alone that night.

Once at the Apparation point, Severus wrapped his arms around her waist and smiled, but his eyes were asking her if she trusted him. Hermione could only nod and smile as she closed her eyes and pillowed her cheek in the juncture of his shoulder and neck. They Disapparated away, and when Hermione opened her eyes, they were standing in the middle of a dark, seemingly unused, cobbled alleyway.

Just beyond it, the light of the morning sun could be seen peeking through the not-yet-crowded streets. 'Severus, this place is entirely too amazing,' Hermione said, awed at the picture presented to her.

'I thought we could consider this as our belated honeymoon of sorts. What do you think?' he commented, slightly anxious to hear her answer.

'I think you are the most wonderful husband a girl could ask for,' she said, wrapping her arms around his neck and kissing him hard on the mouth. When she pulled back, a lazy smile stole across his features, and he released his hold on her, gesturing for her to lead the way out. 'This is truly a dream come true. Who would have thought that the snarky Potions professor could be so romantic?'

'No-one would believe you, my dear,' he said with a chuckle as he followed her into the rays of that glorious sunlight.

'True that,' she teased, taking him by the hand once more.

Snape led the rest of the way to the hotel, and once they arrived, Hermione saw just how much of an expense Severus would go to just for her when they viewed their room. It was huge, with a sitting room, bedroom with all the furnishings and a king-size four-poster bed, and the deluxe bathroom. He had really not spared any expenditure in this area.

Come to think of it, Hermione had never believed he even cared too much about money at all and seemed to always provide more than well for them both. Somehow she felt guilty letting him buy her everything she ever dreamed of, but then again, he had never complained of being short of funds, so she let him indulge.

'This I don't believe I have ever been in more beautiful a room in my entire life,' she said softly, looking up at him adoringly.

'It's all for you,' he replied, cupping her cheek in his hand and leaning his forehead against hers.

She smiled and felt the tears brimming in her eyes, one breaking free and sliding down her cheek only to drip onto one of Severus' hands. He leaned in and kissed her tears away before capturing her lips in a gentle kiss, letting her deepen it at her own leisure, lest he scare her off by taking it too far. She gently sucked on his bottom lip,

tentatively begging for entrance with the insistent prodding of the tip of her tongue. Allowing her this liberty, he snapped and hungrily devoured her mouth, probing it and tasting her sweet, innocent lips.

When he broke away, they were flushed and panting, desperate for breath after the most intense kiss they had ever shared. Once she had caught her breath, Hermione gave him no more time to think before her lips met his again. This time, their hands wandered paths over their clothed bodies, mapping and memorizing, and Hermione only pulled away for a second.

'Severus, I want to continue this, but I need to know...' she said breathlessly.

'What is it you want to know, dearest heart?' he asked softly, stroking up and down her back gently and tracing small circles. 'Ask me anything.'

She worried her bottom lip for a second in decision before she took the plunge and took a deep breath to deliver the question. 'Do you love me?'

He smiled at that. A month ago, he would have had to think on that while he contemplated trying to figure out a way just to talk to Hermione. But right then and there, he knew only one thing. He loved her, more than he could have ever thought possible.

'Yes, Hermione, my lovely, wonderful wife. I love more than you will ever be able to comprehend,' he said silkily, and leaning to whisper, he added, 'And you comprehend quite a lot, I might add.'

She giggled at his humor and kissed him soundly on the lips. 'I do love you, Severus,' she said to him with adoration shining in her eyes. 'I don't believe I could have ever thought otherwise.'

He smiled at that and scooped her off her feet and into his arms, carrying her towards the bedroom. 'Well now, don't you think it's about time we think about completing the final clause in our marriage contract?' he asked.

'And what might that be, love?' Hermione asked with an impish grin.

'The reproductive act of course,' he said plainly, smiling at her with smug triumph. 'And I do believe we are just the perfect two for such a thing.'

'I couldn't agree more, love,' she murmured as he deposited her on the bed.

It was a good two hours before Hermione and Severus were finally exhausted by their activities and were slumped over each other beneath the silk sheets of the large hotel bed. Hermione's arm was draped across his naked chest, and one of her legs was thrown over him in the same fashion, and he had his arms wrapped around her possessively. A contented smile played over his lips as they slumbered, witch and wizard, feeling better than they ever had before.

'I love you, Severus,' she mumbled almost incoherently.

'And I you, my dearest heart, and I you...' he said as they joined each other in restful and dreamless sleep.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 of 11

A marriage law has been passed by the new Minister for Magic... Hermione and Snape aren't impressed, but they have to follow the law, right?

Disclaimer: Not mine. No money.

Chapter 8 - Katerini

It was always loveliest to sit on a beach in the summer and do absolutely nothing other than relax, eat, and swim, not to mention various other more pleasurable activities. Hermione lounged on a beach towel in the sun, sipping her sparkling soda and admiring the scenery that the ocean provided. Italy had been amazing, but it was nothing compared to the simplicity and beauty of the small port and beach city.

When they had first arrived, Hermione had been in awe, and before she had got a good chance to see the place better, she had dragged her husband off to their bedroom for a little while to express to him just how much she appreciated this before they explored the small city hand-in-hand.

She was brought back from her musings, however, when a cold something came to rest on her flat stomach. She looked down and saw Severus there, his hair pushed back, completely drenched and soaking through her t-shirt. 'Well, hello there,' she said with a small smile. 'You're wet.'

'That is generally the idea when you swim, my dear,' he replied, smirking and getting up before enveloping her in his arms and making her shirt thoroughly dampened.

'Arrgh! You're getting me wet!' she squealed as he attacked and pinned her beneath him on the sand.

He smiled just before he leaned down and captured her lips in a searing kiss, sucking on her bottom lip, coaxing her to open her mouth to him. She did so willingly, and they snogged for a while until the need for breath became pretty much paramount. He held himself above her with his strong arms, face flushed with arousal, which sent a jolt of warmth to her center.

'Let's go for a swim, love,' he suggested, getting up off her and holding out a hand when he was standing.

She took his hand and he hoisted her up quite easily, closing his arms around her the moment she was steady. 'All right, but next time just ask instead of drenching my shirt,' she said huffily. 'What am I going to wear back?'

'We can Apparate back, witch; you know that,' he answered her, tugging her shirt off and removing her shorts.

He allowed himself to admire just how beautiful she looked with her curls spilling down her back and clad in only her swimsuit. It presented quite an appealing picture, and all he wanted to do was rip those swimming bottoms off and thrust in. He picked her up and carried her, squealing and squirming, into the water with him. He dropped her into the water and was faced with a sopping and scowling young wife.

'You'll pay for that one, Severus Snape!' she said with an impish grin before she threw her arms around him unexpectedly and pulled him under the water with her.

When they came back out, Severus caught her around the waist and pulled her close, forcing her to wrap her arms and her legs around him for support. She smiled and kissed him gently, tasting the salt of the water on his lips and the sweet zest of lemon on his tongue. He growled low and kissed her back with just as much passion, cradling the back of her head with one hand, as the other sought to remove the barrier of their swimming suits.

She shifted her hips up just a little to help him with the removal of her bottoms, and they joined together with a hiss and toppled over the edge together not long after, growling just softly enough not to be heard when they found release. When they had replaced their clothes once more, he carried her to the shore, and they collapsed together on the sand, with her underneath and him holding himself just above her with his strong arms so he didn't crush her.

'I like this,' she said with an exhaled sigh, wrapping arms around his neck and smiling up at him.

'What do you mean?' he asked, returning the smile.

'Us, here in paradise alone,' she replied. 'I've gotten to know you better, and we've been wonderful together.'

'If I didn't know any better, I would say that you were admitting to having feelings for me, wife,' he retorted cheekily, earning himself a playful slap on the chest, and he rolled off her and beside her, bringing his arms around to embrace her instead. 'I have treasured being alone with you, love.'

She laughed softly and reached a hand out to tuck a stray lock of dampened hair behind his ear. 'I love you, Severus,' she whispered, stroking along the bridge of his aristocratic nose, not at all too large or hooked in her opinion.

'And I love you, dearest,' he responded smoothly.

'We should head back to the villa. It's getting dark, and I still have to get something ready for dinner,' she prompted, hoping that his stomach was giving him the heads-up for a meal.

'I'll agree to that on two conditions,' he bargained.

'What?'

'We shower and get cleaned up first, and then you let me help you prepare our meal,' he replied, sitting up and pulling her up with him. 'That way we can truly have done everything together.'

'Did anyone ever tell you that you were a closet romantic?' she dared to ask with an adoring smile.

'My dear,' he began, standing and helping her up also, 'no one would ever believe such a tale. Not even from the lips of Hermione Snape.'

She smiled at his use of that surname with her given name. She liked the way it sounded. It made her feel accepted and loved by him, and she hugged him immediately. 'I wouldn't dream of even attempting to ruin your reputation, Professor.'

He summoned their belongings to him, and they headed back along the beach to their house bare-footed and hand-in-hand. Eventually, they made it through the shower, after washing away the salt and scrubbing the sand from their hair, scalps and fingernails. Hermione laughed when she realized how much trouble her husband went to with his nails, making sure they were always clean and meticulous so that there was nothing there to corrupt his Potions.

'You're smiling at me funny,' he commented as he looked up to find her sitting on the bathroom bench in her bathrobe, watching him intently.

'You are fascinating to watch,' she replied simply, slipping from her perch, taking one of his hands in hers, and kissing his palm lightly before scampering out. 'I'm going to get a head-start on cooking.'

'Alright,' he answered as he watched her leave through the reflection in the mirror.

Hermione went to the spacious kitchen, pulled out a tray, and summoned the ingredients from the fridge. She was cooking Mediterranean chicken that night and had marinated her chicken with the required herbs that morning before her sleepy professor had woken. She heard him enter the kitchen and step up behind her, looping his arms around her, taking the knife in his hand, and beginning to slice gracefully, with her trapped between him and the bench.

'You're going to make this very difficult for me, aren't you?' she asked as she ducked under his arm and went to the other side of the bench to begin chopping the cauliflower and broccoli.

'Not even the slightest bit,' he replied with a satisfied smirk.

'Hmmm... well, you can just find a comfortable spot on the couch tonight, don't you think?' she teased, making him raise an amused eyebrow.

'If you even try...' he said in a warning tone.

'Don't worry about that, my love. You'll not spend a night on the couch while I'm in the bedroom,' she reassured.

'I should not,' he responded carelessly. 'You know we have to get back soon, don't you?'

She nodded, a tad disappointed, as she had enjoyed the holiday away from Hogwarts immensely. 'I know, and it will be sad to leave, but we can just come back here next summer, can't we?' she suggested thoughtfully.

'Of course we can, love,' he replied as they continued to work together, in perfect harmony.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 of 11

A marriage law has been passed by the new Minister for Magic... Hermione and Snape aren't impressed, but they have to follow the law, right?

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Chapter 9 - Red-Faced Apologies

As usual, the day began with the sun filtering into the bedroom and stirring the grumbling occupants, who had been engaged in more ardent activities the night before as opposed to sleeping, hence the grumbling. With a stretch, a yawn, and a rub of her eyes, Hermione welcomed the day, squinting, and also very tempted to pull the covers over her head and just give up on trying moving out of bed, but decided against it, seeing as she and Severus were leaving Katerini that morning.

She sat up and twisted the top half of her body around, and out of the corner of her eye, she caught sight of her husband, propped up on one elbow, gazing at her with hungry eyes. She smiled and turned around properly so that she could dip a little to meet his lips with a good morning kiss. He responded by grabbing hold of her and pulling her back down and against him, crushing her bare breasts to his firm chest as one hand fisted in her curls and the other pressed against her lower back.

He pulled away after rendering her breathless and smirked at her passion-smudged eyes. 'Good morning, my love,' he murmured provocatively.

'Good morning, indeed,' Hermione replied breathlessly, running her hand up his chest and hooking her arms around his shoulders.

'We have to leave today, my dear,' he said reluctantly. 'The honeymoon is over.'

'It doesn't have to be,' she said with a pout.

Severus chuckled and kissed her pouting lip, rolling them so she was beneath him, pressed deliciously against him while his erection nestled between her thighs at her hot core. 'Then what do you suggest, Hermione? What shall we do instead of leave?' he asked in a damn sexy voice.

'Fuck me. Go on, do it,' she dared him as she panted for breath, arching herself up to try and get him inside of her.

He did as he was asked, glad to find her ready and waiting for him without having to indulge in foreplay so early in the morning, driving into her as if this brought the very essence of life itself. She quivered around him, arching and meeting him thrust for thrust, kissing his neck, chest, and shoulders before finally meeting his lips in a scorching kiss that muffled their cries as they toppled over the edge together.

Panting, flushed, and spent for the time being, Snape rolled off Hermione so that he didn't squash her and pulled her to rest on top of him instead, encircling her with his arms. She sighed contentedly. She loved him like this, his passions and emotions free for her to see, baring his heart and soul to her. They were so open and so goddamn good together it was hard to imagine.

'God, I love you...' she managed in between panting breaths.

'I know you do,' he replied arrogantly, earning him a thump on the chest, to which he responded, 'Yes, yes, I love you too.'

'That's better,' she mumbled before lifting herself off him and slipping out of bed. She then fastened the tie at the front of her silk bathrobe. 'Now, how about breakfast before we pack to leave?'

'You want my help?' he offered, rolling onto his back and stretching invitingly.

Hermione walked around to his side of the bed and leaned down, kissing his chest and letting her hand travel down to his semi-erect manhood, teasing him, making him arch for more before she withdrew quickly and skipped out of his reach and across to the door.

'Tease,' he muttered.

'You know it,' she replied saucily, slipping out of the room to the sound of her husband chuckling softly.

She went to the kitchen and summoned a bowl and all of the ingredients for pancakes and began to make the batter, adding forest fruits that she had efficiently chopped with the practiced skill of a potions master. She flicked her wand, then the stove turned on, a pan came out of the cupboard, and she poured some of the mixture into it. After about fifteen minutes, she finished and put the pancakes, a jug of juice, and a pot of coffee onto the table.

'Severus, get out of bed,' she called out.

Hearing Severus groan, she sighed, smiling and shaking her head before she relented and went to the bedroom, leaning in the doorway. 'Come on, sleepy. We need to eat breakfast and pack to leave,' she urged.

He rolled over and looked at her through his roguishly long black hair. 'Come back to bed, love,' he murmured. 'Forget breakfast; let me eat you.'

Hermione laughed and walked into the room, sitting on the bed next to him, but making no move to get back in. 'You, my love, are insatiable,' she said with a saucy grin, brushing her thumb over his bottom lip.

He took her thumb into his mouth and sucked on it gently, grazing it with his teeth and watching as her eyes dilated a little. 'You have no idea,' he mumbled, reaching for the front fastening of her robe while she was distracted.

And then she pulled away quickly and went to the doorway, tugging her robe back into place to cover the revealed creamy, pert breast. 'Breakfast,' she said before leaving.

Severus groaned and got out of bed, grabbing his own black silk bathrobe and pulling it on, fastening it shut and running a hand through his hair to get rid of the most obvious snarls. When he was satisfied that it would do until he took a shower later, he went to the kitchen and sat down across from Hermione, reaching for the *Daily Prophet* just as his food began to appear on his plate. He looked up and found that Hermione was eating with one hand and reading a book while using her wand in the other to levitate the food onto his plate without even so much as looking up to see if her aim was correct. Needless to say, she was spot on.

'Show off,' he muttered.

'No, I would need to use wandless magic to earn that title, Severus,' she said, putting an emphasis on his name.

He chuckled, and they ate and read in complete silence until they finished their breakfast and Hermione levitated their dishes to the sink, flicking her wand at the sponge and soap to wash for her. Severus smiled at his talented little witch and scooped her up into his arms, carrying her into the bathroom with him.

'Severus, I have to pack,' she argued.

He muttered a charm under his breath and waved his hand at their room, using magic to pack for them while he decided that they would shower together. 'There, my love. It will all be packed and ready for us when we have showered,' he said, leaning in and capturing her lips in a kiss before she could reply.

They showered together, washing each other's hair and body, making sure to pay special attention to their most sensitive parts before clambering out, drying, and fetching their clothes. Hermione dressed in a pale yellow summer dress that fell to her knees while Severus simply dressed in his usual black trousers and a white linen shirt, tucked in neatly, with the top few buttons undone and the long sleeves rolled to his elbows.

Hermione wrapped her arms around his neck and was about to kiss him when there was a pounding on the front door. Severus simply dipped Hermione over his arm, kissed her neck, and swirled her out of his arms as if they had been in a dance. 'Go get the door, wife,' he said, giving her a proprietary pat on the bum to get her going. She poked her tongue out at him as she left and opened the door immediately when she got there, startled at who she saw there.

'Harry, what are you how did you find us?' Hermione stammered before realizing, straightening out, and schooling her face to indifference.

'I spoke to Minerva. She said you'd be here. I came to apologize to you and Sn-Severus,' he said, looking down at the ground sheepishly. 'He was right. I was being unfair. You're allowed to marry and love anyone you please.'

'What's going on here, love?' Severus asked, coming up to stand behind Hermione, putting a possessive arm around her waist and then he saw Harry. 'What are you doing here, Potter?' he demanded.

'I came to say that I was sorry to you and Hermione,' he answered immediately. 'You were right. I was a terrible friend, and I hope you can both find it in you to forgive me.'

Hermione turned to look up at Severus, who met her question with a nod, and he held out a hand to Harry, to both of their surprise. 'I will forgive you, Potter, under the condition that you will never hurt Hermione again,' he said gruffly, shaking the bewildered boy's hand.

'I suppose I could forgive you then too, Harry,' Hermione said before grinning and throwing her arms around Harry for a hug.

'Thank you.'

Snape cleared his throat. 'I hate to interrupt your sentimental reunion, but we are leaving now,' he said, holding up their bags and indicating that they move out of the doorway and into the Grecian sunlight. 'We will contact you some other time, Mr. Potter. My wife and I have business to attend to back at Hogwarts.'

Hermione caught the glimmer of mischief in his eyes, nodding in agreement. 'I'll owl you, Harry,' she said before they Disapparated out of sight.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 of 11

A marriage law has been passed by the new Minister for Magic... Hermione and Snape aren't impressed, but they have to follow the law, right?

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Chapter 10 - Holiday's End

With only one week left until the end of the holiday, the Hogwarts castle had been re-inhabited by all of the staff again in preparation for the new school year. The classes had to be planned and the plans submitted to Severus for approval, and the supplies had to be replenished, as well as the potions in the Hospital Wing re-stocked, which Hermione generously helped Severus with, although they didn't actually get much done at times.

As they had neglected to do before their honeymoon and holiday away, both Hermione and Severus decided that it would be prudent for them to share rooms, seeing as they were married. And Hermione didn't particularly like the idea of being separated from the man she had grown to love. To be honest, he was never going to let her keep her old chambers, apart from her office, even if she had begged. He wanted her by his side for as long as she was happy to stay with him.

Hermione had planned to go to Diagon Alley to purchase some books that she'd had the owner of Flourish and Blotts keep aside for her, as well as a new pair of teaching and dress robes, and, finally, some new quills that she had never been able to get in Hogsmeade. She was just about to leave the dungeons when Severus entered their chambers, and she remembered that she hadn't told him that she was going. With a squeak, she found herself wrapped in his arms.

'Are you going somewhere?' he asked, kissing her neck and eyeing the outdoor jacket she wore when she went out.

'Hmmm, yes. I'm sorry, but I forgot to tell you,' she answered. 'I've got to get things in Diagon Alley, and I figured you'd be busy, so I was going to go and be back by dinner so I didn't interrupt you.'

'By all means, I just finished with the subject plans and have a few things to pick up from the Apothecary there,' he said softly.

'Oh, so you're coming with me?'

'If you're not averse to the prospect, I wouldn't mind joining you,' he said with a small smile, releasing her from his embrace.

She grinned and summoned his outdoor jacket from the coat cupboard and handed it to him with a sweet smile and a kiss on his lips. 'Alright, let's go. I have to get new robes, and that might take a while,' she said, tugging on his hand for them to leave. 'We can stop by Fortescue's later for ice cream if we have time.'

'Fine,' he said, removing his teaching robes and pulling on the smart, long black jacket and letting her lead him out of the Dungeons.

They went to the Apparation point together, and he pulled her close to his side, wrapping his arms around her and smiling before Disapparating them both. They reappeared in Diagon Alley and released each other, lingering momentarily before they parted ways, agreeing to meet at Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlor when they had finished with their shopping.

Hermione went straight to Madam Malkin's, had the witch take her measurements, and then chose the design for both sets of robes before leaving to collect her book orders and quills. Half an hour later, she returned to the shop to find that the robes had been completed and she only had to quickly try them on. The teaching robes were perfect, and the dress robes only had to be adjusted in the waist because her waist was relatively small.

'Just put them on my tab, please, Helia,' Hermione said politely to the shop owner.

'Not a problem, Madam Snape,' the woman replied with a sly smirk.

Hermione smiled back and left the store with all of her purchased items in hand, making her way towards Fortescue's to meet with Severus. When she was still fifty meters off, she could see him sitting there already with a coffee before him and her favorite ice cream opposite him. She really did love that man.

'I took the liberty of ordering for you,' he said casually as she seated herself across from him.

'Thank you, it's my favorite,' she replied with a grin.

'I know,' he said with a smirk as she dipped her spoon into the delicious-looking cookie-dough ice cream before her and seductively drawing it into her mouth.

'Want to try some?' she offered, holding a spoonful towards him.

'I'm not really in the mood for ice cream,' he said in tones that suggested much and made Hermione shiver in anticipation. 'So, hurry up and eat so that we can get out of here.'

'Impatient, are we?' she asked, slowly and deliberately sucking the ice cream from the spoon. 'I can get this to go if you're in that much of a hurry, my dear Professor.'

'I suggest you do,' he said, impatiently tapping his foot as she stood and walked into the shop, only to emerge ten minutes later with a tub of ice cream and a small, smug smile playing about her lips.

'Ready to go, oh Potions master mine?' she asked.

He stood up and collected all of their bags, and walked quickly with her back to the Apparation point, and when there, was in a hurry to get them back to Hogsmeade and even closer to the castle, where he could show her just how impatient he was. By the time they reached the dungeons, the throbbing of his loins was almost unbearable, and he practically threw their purchases onto a chair and dragged her into their bedroom. Hermione loved it when he got like that, rough and possessive, yet still showing her that he needed her.

'Undress now,' he commanded as he too began to practically tear off his clothes.

Hermione smirked and did as she was told, but obviously not fast enough because he was on her, kissing her hard and pressing his tongue past her ready lips as he tore at her clothes. Once they were both fully unclothed, Severus teased her to the point where their need to be joined was mutual and thrust into her warmth, pounding into her hard and fast.

'Gods... Sev... er ...us I'm close,' she panted in between thrusts.

'Me too, love,' he replied in kind as his balls tightened.

When her walls clenched around him and she shouted his name, he lost it and released his seed deep within her in several spurts and then collapsed onto the bed beside her. He immediately wrapped her in his embrace and pulled her tight so that he spooned her with one of his arms under his head and the hand of the other resting against her flat stomach.

'I love you,' he murmured softly into her ear as she dozed lightly.

'Mmmhmm... love you too,' she mumbled, drawing a soft chuckle from her husband, who merely snuggled closer before falling asleep with her.

Two hours later, however, Hermione woke, feeling suddenly ill, and ran straight to the bathroom where she promptly vomited the contents of her stomach into the toilet. She retched up everything and spat it all out before the wave of nausea passed and she stood on trembling legs to reach the basin. She turned the faucet and washed her face with cold water, looking at herself in the mirror.

She looked a sight with her hair mussed from sleeping and the activity that had immediately preceded that. With a sigh, she left the bathroom and returned to the bedroom to find Severus sitting up and looking worried.

'Are you alright, love?' he asked as she sat back down on the bed next to him and slid between the sheets.

'I just felt sick, suddenly,' she replied. 'I've been having waves of nausea all week now, but that was the first time I've actually vomited.'

Severus' eyebrow rose at that, and he reached over to his discarded trousers and pulled the wand from the pocket. 'Will you let me check, just in case it is serious?' he asked quietly.

Hermione simply nodded and lay back to let him get it over and done with so that they could get back to sleep. Tomorrow would be a big day after all. He murmured a spell and let the wand travel over her head and downwards, ensuring that all was the way it should be, until he reached her abdomen. The tip of the wand was glowing blue, and he was positive of what it meant.

'Hermione, my love, you're pregnant,' he exclaimed with wide eyes.

'What?' she exclaimed, sitting up.

'You are carrying our child within you and have been experiencing what is called morning sickness,' he answered, a smile forming on his face. 'You're going to be a mother. I'm going to be a father.'

Hermione let it sink in for a moment and then felt a smile spread across her features. 'You're really happy about this, aren't you?'

Severus kissed her so lovingly then that she found herself near breathless. 'I love you, Hermione Jane Snape,' Severus said with a tender look before they became wrapped up in each other once more.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 of 11

A marriage law has been passed by the new Minister for Magic... Hermione and Snape aren't impressed, but they have to follow the law, right?

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Chapter 11 Smile at the Sky

There was a loud, annoying knocking on the door of the classroom just after lunch, and as Severus Snape surveyed his classroom, the person knocking burst through. He saw that it was one of the first-year Slytherin girls, and she looked a little worried or distraught. She ran straight to the front of the classroom and stood by his desk, panting and trying to regain her breath.

'Professor Snape you're n-needed in the infirmary!' she exclaimed, short of breath.

'What?' he demanded loudly as he stood from his desk, sweeping around it and following the girl out the room. 'Read page 350 to 400!' he shouted to his class as he left. 'Is she is it Professor Granger-Snape?'

'Yes, sir,' the girl piped.

'Very well, get back to class,' he said, walking as briskly as he could in the direction of the Hospital Wing, leaving the frightened girl behind.

He had known that it was going to be time soon, but he had no idea it would have to be this day of all days in the year. There was only one month left of the school year, and Hermione had been replaced temporarily for the last few weeks by a Professor Jutland because of her state of weakness from the pregnancy. She had unfortunately become ill, as her body was rather smaller than most women who decided to have children.

He burst through the doors to the wing and went straight to the private operation room where Hermione had been for the last week. He arrived just in time to hear the cries of a child reach his ears. He walked around the privacy curtain to see a pale, sweaty Hermione smiling at him and cradling a child in her arms.

'Love come and meet your baby girl,' she said weakly, breathing a little irregularly, but still smiling.

Severus immediately went to his wife's side and looked down at the most beautiful thing he had ever seen in the person of their baby girl. She was lovely, with his dark, straight hair, and Hermione's adorable nose luckily. 'She's beautiful,' he said, stroking her soft cheek adoringly. 'Just like her mother.'

Hermione beamed at that and leaned in closer when Severus wrapped a possessive arm around her and continued to stroke their child's hair. 'Severus, what are we going to name her?' she asked.

'Felicity,' he said simply.

'That's a beautiful name,' she said. 'I like it Felicity Anne perhaps?'

'That sounds acceptable,' he murmured, dropping a kiss to the crown of her head and kissing downwards from there, stopping briefly at her lips before kissing her deeply with an intensity she would never get tired of.

An hour later, the three found themselves surrounded by a sea of people that were all there to see the baby and congratulate them. Classes had finished for the day only ten minutes before, and then the noises had become louder as both students and professors alike had flocked to view the new Snape.

'Your baby is beautiful, Severus,' Minerva said over the noise of all the cooing and awing at little Felicity. 'What have you decided to name her?'

'Felicity Anne Snape,' he replied simply, trying to ignore the fact that there were students annoying them. After all, Hermione was beginning to get exhausted by the look of things, and she needed some peace to sleep after the hard labor. 'Excuse me, Minerva, but could I trouble you to get rid of this lot? Hermione is tired, and this isn't making it any easier for her.'

'Of course,' she said with a smile. She was so proud of Severus and how far he had come as a husband and how wonderful a father he would be. 'Alright, everyone, the Professors Snape would like some privacy, so head back to your common rooms to get ready for dinner!'

Once everyone had cleared out, Hermione beckoned Minerva over and passed her the baby so that she could hold her for a while. 'Careful to support her neck,' she said, and the older woman nodded. McGonagall sat in a chair just past the privacy curtain, cooing to the child, leaving Hermione and Severus alone for the first time that day. She looked up at her husband adoringly and leaned in to place a gentle kiss on his cheek as he stroked her still slightly damp hair and smiled.

'She is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen, Severus,' she said softly as her eyes began to drift shut.

'Yes, my love, and she is our beautiful little one,' he replied, dropping the most tender of kisses to the crown of her head and hugging her close against his body.

Hermione sighed happily and closed her eyes, allowing herself to feel some peace and restfulness for the first time that day. With Severus behind her breathing softly and cuddling her close, and the knowledge that her beautiful little girl was just on the other side of the curtain with the Headmistress, she drifted to sleep, listening to the sound of gurgling and breathing.

*

The skies were the brightest of blue, and there were very few clouds. With the sun almost at its peak and the dew still lightly covering the grass and trees, a tall dark-haired man exited an ancient castle holding the hand of a shorter, curly haired beauty, who was carrying a baby. This was perfection to him. For years, Severus had yearned to know what happiness and contentment were. And finally, after twenty long years of waiting, he had found his joy in the most unlikely of places.

He had found it with his wife and only love, Hermione and in their beautiful daughter, Felicity. Silently, he led them out of the castle and towards the lake where they put out a blanket and sat in the morning sun, simply enjoying the fresh air and each other's company.

For Hermione, it seemed surreal that she would find this situation perfect or at least in her former opinion of marriage and children. But she had changed. It had taken a long time, but she loved Severus with all of her heart now, and she loved the child that they had made together. Sitting out in the sun by a lake with her daughter and beloved husband was one of her favorite things to do lately.

Felicity was only 10 months old, but the little girl had already developed some of the more noticeable of her parents' characteristics. She was a lovely girl that smiled and was already starting to talk a little just small things like "mama" and "dada." Severus had never imagined that he would ever be "dada" to anyone, but he loved hearing it more than he thought he would. Hermione thought he was a wonderful father. He read to Felicity and played an active and involved role as a parent in other words, he became everything his father had not been when he was a child.

Harry visited her again, and the problems there had been all but forgotten. Hermione knew that he was just looking out for her, but within a few months, Harry and Severus were on civil terms and held short conversations from time to time. Harry had not been made Felicity's godfather, however. They had mutually decided that Minerva would be her godmother while Remus Lupin, being the only one Severus considered a trustworthy male friend, was chosen as godfather.

In all of the events of the past year, Hermione had found that the Ministry was not so wrong to enforce this marriage. She loved her husband and her daughter, and she had never been so content in all of her life.

'Severus?' she asked softly as her back rested against his chest with her wedged firmly between his legs.

'Yes, my love?' he replied, stroking her hair absently.

'Will it always be like this? I mean, will we always be this happy?' she said as if she were asking herself this.

He stared out at the water on the lake with the sun glistening on it and the reflections of everything spread across it wildly. Would they always be this happy? He certainly wished they would, but he knew it was unrealistic to think that they wouldn't have any problems. It was a part of life to experience hardship. A good example was the first month or so of their marriage. That had been a disaster.

But it never hurt to hope for good in the future.

He looked down at his wife, who had turned in his full-body embrace to look up at his face, and smiled at her. Leaning forwards, he kissed her lightly on the nose before lifting Felicity up with one arm and cradling her to his chest while holding Hermione firmly to him with his other arm.

'I would like to tell you that it will always be like this, Hermione. But I can't lie to you. I can only hope and pray that we will always be happy together,' he said softly, kissing her cheek and then her lips tenderly.

'Okay,' she said, snuggling against him and hugging around her daughter with an arm also. 'I love you both, so much.'

'I love you, Hermione,' he said quietly, looking out at the lake once more with a sigh.

Maybe it was time to go back to Katerini for a while.

End.