



PEARL BUTTON

Summary:

Hermione's genuine smile of delight had surprised Severus. She was happy to see him... Hmm... How very odd and disconcerting. Highly disconcerting indeed. Severus Snape, Hermione Granger, and one naughty, naughty pearl button.

Chapter 1

Author's Notes:

I do not own Harry Potter or any of its characters; J. K. Rowling does. In addition, I do not make any profit from this fanfiction. Huge thank you to my beta AmyLouise for editing.

The Bolazams Apothecary was an old and well-respected company. Five decades ago, when they opened their first potions laboratory, a strong team of potion makers made the company a success. They were the key that had earned and secured the company the highest rating on the potions market for the past thirty years. Unfortunately, over the last few years The Bolazams Apothecary had lost too many of their precious members—some due to age, some due to war and illnesses. In other words, the company was rapidly slipping into nothingness and was hence

in great need of, desperate even, for fresh, young and brilliant minds. Thus, Bolazams Apothecary found and hired the legendary Severus Snape as an independent adviser. He had all the skills they needed—he was a brilliant potions maker, a well-known, respected wizard, and he had acquired a unique store of knowledge about all the noteworthy Potions masters and their apprentices around the world.

His objective was straightforward—to choose and create a new team. He needed to find a group of enthusiastic young people, highly competent in Potions, and make a team out of them. Before long, there were hundreds of curriculum vitae to rake through. It was nothing for Severus Snape; as a former professor, he was used to piles of paper. Soon, twenty-five of the best candidates were chosen—five of them would be hired, and one out of those five would be named team leader. Severus and Severus alone would make this decision, as per the conditions of his contract. Severus had made it crystal clear that he would not tolerate any form of intervention or pressure from the company’s management. From their side, the board of directors insisted on being present during the interviews and vowed, in return, not to interfere with the process. Agreement was reached, and the interviewing of the candidates began.

It was December 15, the fifth day of the interviews. By now, Severus had a fair idea of who he would recommend be hired. He had all four candidates ready. The only position left was the team leader. Sure enough, the professor had a plan—Hermione Granger. She was his secret trump card. Severus purposefully left her till last in the array of candidates.

And here she was—standing at the threshold with a brilliant smile on her lovely (*where did this nonsense come from?*) face.

“Good afternoon, Miss Granger,” uttered Severus in his customary snarky manner, looking down his nose at the young witch.

“Good afternoon, Professor. What a delightful surprise!” exclaimed Hermione brightly before turning to the members of the management. “Good afternoon, gentlemen.”

With that, she gracefully walked to the desk, her hips swaying slightly in a very feminine way, the rapid tapping of her heels resounding throughout the room. Her luscious, hot cocoa coloured curls fell softly onto her shoulders. Her amber eyes were focused on her former professor. She had clearly not expected to see him here; however, her genuine smile of

delight directed towards him had surprised Severus. She was happy to see him ... How very odd. The soft light in her eyes and bright smile on her face were unexpected, extremely peculiar and highly disconcerting. Yes, highly disconcerting indeed.

His own reaction to the sight of her was even more disturbing. Of course, he had known he would see her today; it was not a surprise for him. He had chosen her himself from the long list of the young Potions masters. However, the moment she appeared at the entrance in her simple, white button-down shirt tucked into a black pencil skirt, Severus’ mouth had gone dry.

Suddenly and inexplicably, all his nerve endings became acutely aware of just how tight Hermione’s black skirt was and how utterly delectably it fitted on her curvy hips. How positively edible her fetching, shapely legs, round knees and delicate ankles looked.

When Hermione came close, sitting right in front of him, he noticed that her modest (at least, that was Severus’ first impression) button-down shirt was rather tight and well fitted as well. Severus could clearly see a few opened buttons on the top and then—there was the first fastened pearl button. The material of the shirt was stretched and strained under the pressure of Hermione’s breasts beneath, causing the buttonhole to open just a little too wide. This little pearl button was obviously in trouble. Hermione drew a breath and the fastened pearl button plunged into the hole even more, threatening to fly open at any second and make Hermione’s enticing cleavage available for viewing in the process.

The consideration of this possibility alone caused poor Severus to go rigid, and to his horror, it happened simultaneously with more than one part of his body. Suffice it to say that the sudden stiffness in his neck and jaws was the least of his problems.

Oh, bugger. What is this shit? Thought Severus. He had not reacted to a woman in this manner for quite some time. *Hell with that!*—he *never* reacted to women in this quite desperate, manner.

He knew it! All this Christmas shit was getting to him—these carol singers and bells everywhere, these smiling nitwits (also known as children) with all these stupid lollipops and toys, their daft parents with their idiotic urge to kiss each other in public. They were the problem; of that Severus was certain. All of them, with their sick tendencies to parade their happiness, made him long and yearn for something soft, comforting,

or maybe for somebody—somebody curvy, feminine and preferably with peach-hued skin. For Hermione Granger obligingly supplied his absurdly oversexed brain.

Agh! Bollocks! Severus soundlessly growled in his mind. With strenuous effort, fighting against his traitorous body and even, to some degree, his mind, Severus Snape forced himself to focus on the young witch's curriculum vitae, even though he knew it almost by heart already.

Hermione Granger—strange! He had expected her to be a Weasley by now. Severus discreetly glanced at Hermione's fingers—no, there was no evidence of engagement rings of any kind there. A relieved sigh escaped from his mouth. Hmm, interesting. Thoughts were swirling in the professor's mind.

He had not seen her for eight years. So, she is what—twenty-six now? He knew that she had returned to Hogwarts after the war and attained her N.E.W.T.s. with the highest scores possible, of course.

Severus still remembered how perplexed he had been by the girl's peculiar decision to pursue a career in potion making. However, the moment he found out that she had accepted the apprenticeship in France, he had become completely pissed off. The fact irritated the hell out of him.

Why on earth did she choose France and that old prick Bierdue?

The insolent girl hadn't even come to him, didn't even ask about an apprenticeship! And don't you dare think that Severus was jealous... because he wasn't, not at all. He didn't feel even a sliver of envy for that bloody idiot Bierdue. No! It was just completely, utterly illogical to go to France when he, her own professor, was right here in England. Besides, Severus just knew that he could have given her so much more, so much more... knowledge. Yes, knowledge. Definitely, he would have given her more knowledge.

Of course, he had been intrigued when he saw her curriculum vitae in the pile among the others. He was not only curious but also somewhat edgy in anticipation of their meeting.

An impatient cough from one of the directors brought Severus back to reality. Everyone in the room was waiting for him to start the interview. Hermione fidgeted nervously in her chair; evidently, Severus' long silence had startled her. He smirked and locked his inquiring gaze on her.

It was a pleasure to see that he wasn't the only one who felt uncomfortable. To the professor's relief the wave of stiffness had subsided as well.

“Very well, Ms. Granger, tell me about your apprenticeship.” Severus proceeded with the typical interview procedure. He asked questions; Hermione answered them. Everything was going normally. Well, almost normally.

The abnormal thing was that Hermione Granger was quite passionate about Potions. Her eyes were alight. As the interview continued, she gradually became more and more excited about the subject. Her breathing mirrored her emotional state, and therefore, the little pearl button on Hermione's shirt was under rather intense stress. Apparently, so was Severus.

Each laboured breath drawn by the young witch, each visible movement of her chest caused that damn pearl button almost to unfasten. Almost, but not quite. This repetitive action had done unbelievable things to Severus or, to be precise, to his body. He was hot and cold at the same time, stiff and rigid in all possible and impossible places. In other words, the Professor was slowly simmering in the cauldron of undiluted hell.

By the middle of the interview, Severus was aflame. His eyes were smouldering and shifted continuously between the pearl button and the almost visible contours of Hermione's breasts that the freaking button didn't allow him to see.

Moreover, if all this humiliation weren't enough, Hermione Granger, ever so astute, had noticed her former Professor's predicament. The young witch's pupils widened, her breathing became more feverish (how's it even bloody possible!). Unconsciously, she wet her lips with the tip of her pink tongue (Severus almost died at the sight of this) and locked her amber eyes, now lit with a different fire, on his black ones.

Their conversation metamorphosed into an explicit sexual overture. Severus' questions were asked in a low, velvety murmur, and Hermione's answers sounded more like purrs. The content of the questions and answers had ceased to mean anything at this point. Undeniably and hopelessly, they were both drowning in each other's fiery gaze, not caring much about the world around them.

The confused directors of the company, however, cared quite a lot. Not only could they not hear them clearly anymore but also, with every passing minute, they felt themselves entirely out of place in the same

room with these two lovebirds, like a third wheel.

So, once again—this time, however, a rather irritated fake cough sounded in the room. It tore Severus from Hermione’s eyes, shirt, buttons and dreams about her cleavage. He turned to look at the board members (who were still coughing their guts out) and met their wary eyes.

“Yes, right. Umm, well, Miss Granger. I am sure we have heard enough. We will reach our decision in a couple of days and will inform you accordingly. Thank you for your time; it was nice to see you again.”

Severus rounded up the interview rather hastily, and Hermione, still slightly dazed after their intense conversation, stood up, said her goodbyes and left.

“Well, what do you think, Severus?” asked the executive director of the company. The director’s wary gaze slowly returned to his more usual one of respect.

Severus stood up and began his summation, his thoughts not quite in order yet.

“Gentlemen, I have known Hermione Granger for many years, starting from Hogwarts. She is an excellent scholar. Miss Granger was always a top button...” The bewildered expression on the faces of the directors told Severus that something was terribly wrong. Nervously, he ran his hand through his hair and, cursing and swearing in his mind, continued in a strained voice, “a top student, to be precise. I think that you should hire Miss Granger as leader of your potions makers team. She will become a pearl...” *Oh, shit, shit and triple shit*, thought Severus to himself and then daringly breathed out.

“Yes, Miss Granger most definitely will become the crown pearl of your potion-makers’ collection, gentlemen.”

“All right, Severus,” said the executive director, giving him a peculiar glance, “it is decided then.”

It took only three days of slightly lengthier showers before and after bed, minor redness on his right palm (but nothing too terrible) and virtually unnoticeable strain of his wrist muscles before Severus was back to his usual self. He didn’t even remember the shade of that silly pearl button or the colour of Hermione’s lips. Not to mention that he had entirely forgotten how deliciously full her breasts, hidden by the shirt and guarded

by the button, promised to be...

Alas, fate was never kind to Severus. Never. And this time was not an exception.

Exactly on the fourth evening, when Severus came out after a long, recreational shower and relaxed in his armchair with a nice glass of Firewhisky in his left hand (his right needed its rest), an unknown owl delivered the letter. The professor, with a sour and apprehensive feeling that all his hard work of forgetting Hermione was about to be thrown into pits, opened it and read:

Dear Professor Snape,

Today I’ve received the contract from The Bolazams Apothecary with a letter in which they stated that they are happy to offer me the position of leading Potions mistress in their company. They also wrote that they believe that I will become the crown pearl in their collection of potions makers (rather odd wording, don’t you think?).

Anyway, Professor, I know it was you who recommended me, and I am quite determined to make it up to you.

How about lunch? Please let me know where and when.

Sincerely yours,

Hermione Granger.

Severus hummed in amusement—crown pearl! His accidental pun had gone down into history.

Chapter 2

Pearls

Fluffy, delicate, intricately ornamented snowflakes circled in the air, as if decidedly aiming at Severus Snape's prominent nose. Some of them were landing right on target. Some missed, landing instead on his eyelashes, brows and cheeks. All of them, however, regardless of where they landed, shared the same unfortunate fate. Once landed they melted, leaving small wet patches on his skin.

Severus huffed and wiped his face – the weather was positively and utterly miserab... (*aaagh, wrong word*) perfect. Severus Snape was walking briskly down festively decorated Diagon Alley. The street was packed with busy, cheerful wizards, witches and children. Carol singers sang their hymns standing right in front of Gringotts. The shops sparkled and shimmered with Christmas lights and decorations, and peals of little bells reverberated along the street continuously, mingling with the happy laughter and chatter in the air.

Oh, how he loathed these festivities and Christmas spirit. For almost his entire life, he had hated this time of the year with every fibre of his being. Luckily, this was no longer the case. For decades, misery had been his typical companion during Christmas and had remained so until the previous December, when one rather brilliant witch had walked into Severus' life. Unexpectedly and irrevocably, she had changed everything in it, even his perception of Christmas. This wicked witch had managed to turn his loneliness and misery into rubbish and throw it away, filling the void left behind with her rapid heel tapping, her vibrant laughter, tantalizing scents and buttons, lots and lots of pearl buttons.

Now, a year later, the Potions master was surprised by how bearable, even tolerable, the joyful atmosphere around him felt. It was December 15, ten days before Christmas. A hardly noticeable but nevertheless soft and, dare I say, happy smile played on Severus' lips. His every step had a distinct spring to it, and his every move was animated by the absolute contentment of a man who has just found the perfect Christmas gift for his precious wife.

With a satisfied grunt, and not quite succeeding in disguising his smile, Severus patted his slightly protruding pocket. The small box lay right there, warming his heart with hot waves of anticipation. Indeed, he had found the best possible Christmas present. He could already almost see

how delectable and irresistible the champagne pearls would look around Hermione's delicate neck, how perfectly they would accentuate her peach-hued skin. Besides, the necklace would be a fitting companion to her engagement ring, which had a champagne pearl set in it, as well.

Severus chuckled softly at himself as his apparent infatuation with pearls was pretty obvious.

An appetizing smell of chocolate and vanilla caught Severus' attention and drew him to the window of the candy shop, at which point the daring idea was born in the Potions master's mind. For a minute, he looked at the bright display in indecision. His hesitation was almost palpable. Then he huffed, jerked his enormous nose up and bravely stepped inside.

The bell on the shop's door announced Severus' entrance, inevitably arousing the attention of inhabitants of the shop. Here he stood – the dark, evil outcast, dressed completely black – in the middle of this absurdly neon paradise filled with sugar, chocolate and confectionaries. For mere seconds, the only thought flashing through the Professor's mind was – run, now!

“Shit,” growled Severus under his breath. However, he wasn't ready to give up just yet. A year spent in the proximity of Gryffindor had rubbed off on him. He straightened his shoulders and courageously walked to the counter, almost scaring the unsuspecting shop assistant to death in the process. Apparently they weren't used to such stormy clouds of black looming over their counters.

“What would you like, sir?” asked the assistant, his voice trembling.

“Some chocolate truffles, perhaps. What would you recommend?” asked Severus in his most civil possible voice. Miraculously, it worked. After this question, the boy at the counter visibly relaxed and obviously got a second wind.

“Ah, sir, we have absolutely the best chocolate truffles in England.” He began to fuss around Severus. “Maybe you will find these two interesting,” said the boy as he excitedly pushed two identical chocolate truffles to Severus. “This one is the darkest chocolate we have, filled with black cherry flavoured chocolate mousse,” he pointed at one of them, “and this one is the same dark chocolate, sir, but with black currant flavoured mousse inside.” The shop assistant continued to chatter, especially emphasizing the words ‘darkest’, ‘dark’ and ‘black’ while describing each truffle.

“You have to try them sir, they are truly exquisite.”

“Thank you, I am sure they are,” muttered Severus. “I shall take a dozen of each.” The whole affair had begun to annoy the hell out of him. Old habits die hard.

Suddenly, someone behind him tugged his robe. He turned around, not finding anyone. However, from somewhere well below the counter, near the ground, he heard a high voice whispering loudly, “Sir, sir.”

Severus looked down and met a pair of bright, blue eyes that were watching him intently.

“You've got to buy a lollipop, sir. They are the best here – take blue, they are bloody fantastic, sir. Or red – they explode right in your mouth, freaking wicked, sir. Honestly,” enthused the young adviser as he batted his eyelashes innocently.

Severus arched his eyebrows sceptically. He surveyed the child's covered with chocolate and various coloured sugar syrup plump cheeks, and said to the shop assistant. “Perhaps one lollipop as well.”

“Splendid, what colour would you like, sir?”

The insistent whisper from under the counter continued, “Blue sir, take blue sir or red, red are wicked sir.”

Severus drew an exhausted breath, thought for another moment and said, “This green would certainly do.”

“Sour apple?” the shop assistant and small lad exclaimed in unison.

A short while later, equipped with two dozen of the darkest, blackest, chocolate truffles and one recklessly green lollipop, Severus continued on his walk. He had only taken a few steps when he heard Hermione's voice calling him.

“Severus, Severus!”

The wizard immediately turned towards his beloved wife's voice, and there she was, practically covered by the variety of brightly coloured bags and boxes she held in her hands. Severus closed the distance between them rapidly. He silently intertwined his fingers with hers, taking the weight of her purchases into his hands and impatiently pressing his lips to her in a desperate, searing kiss, completely forgetting his very

firm former views about kissing and parading affection in public. Well, suffice it to say that the Potions master's views had shifted quite a bit. As a Slytherin, he simply changed them. And, truly, why not parade your happiness when you have it? And why on earth not give in to the urge to kiss the delicious lips when they are right here, waiting to be kissed?

"I missed you, witch," murmured Severus, covering her neck with little kisses and nibbles.

"It's only been two hours, Severus," she smiled at him, "and I missed you too." And Hermione pressed her lips to his again, arching and pressing her soft, curvy body into his with urgency and scattering the boxes and bags to the sides. Severus felt how the now familiar, and this time very welcome, wave of rigidness began to engulf him.

"Are you done with the shopping?" His hoarse whisper betrayed his own urgency.

"Yes, yes," was her breathy reply, and they disappeared into thin air with all their bags, boxes, truffles, pearls and one recklessly green lollipop.

A few seconds later, they landed in their small foyer in a tangled mass of cloaks, robes and Christmas ribbons. At this point, they were already lost in their frenzied arching and pushing into each other. Their hungry mouths sought each other frantically, obviously not getting enough – there were too many barriers between them.

It was apparent that the vertex they so urgently desired required skin on skin contact. So, they really needed to unbag, unbox and ... undress. In other words, they had to redirect their efforts.

Severus' low murmur interrupted the music of their ragged breathing.

"I have a little surprise for you," he said, and with that, untangled one of his hands and extracted from the depths of his robes the boxes with truffles. Then, after a second of hesitation and a nervous sigh, he freed his other hand and took the green lollipop out of his pocket. The pearls would go under the tree, of course.

The squeal of delight took Severus by surprise.

"Severus! You bought me chocolate!" Instantly, he was kissed again – deeply and lingeringly.

"I have a surprise for you too. First, I thought to wait until Christmas. But, now, since you brought me this," Hermione's eyes focused on the flamboyantly bright lollipop and mischievous amber sparkles began to twinkle in them, "I just can't wait that long."

Hermione took one bag from the colourful and motley pile. Then she smiled, and whispered into Severus' ear in a very sultry voice. "Would you and your friend," she traced the rather evident protuberance in his trousers with the tip of her finger, making Severus shudder, "be able to wait a couple of minutes for me? I'll be back in a bit."

Hermione vanished behind the door of their bedroom, and Severus had to wait. He removed his cloak and robes, which left him in his black trousers and white shirt. Next, he removed his cravat and then, moving awkwardly since his trousers still were uncomfortably tight, he walked to the bar and poured himself a few ounces of Firewhisky. All the while he was thinking about what exactly he had unknowingly unleashed on himself when he bought that freaking lollipop. The mischievous fire in his wife's eyes had intrigued and turned him on immensely.

Well, if nothing else, Severus Snape was an extremely patient man. So, he waited. Patiently.

At last, after exactly twenty-three minutes and fifty-seven seconds, Hermione reappeared at the threshold of their bedroom. She was wearing an emerald green silk corset, which was fastened with at least fifty tiny white pearl buttons. From under the corset peeked matching little knickers with frivolous ties on the sides. Hermione's untamed chocolate curls, crimson red heels (ever Gryffindor) and a green lollipop, which she was holding playfully in her dexterous fingers completed the ensemble.

As Severus took in the sight of her, the glass with the Firewhisky slipped from his suddenly trembling fingers. The glass hit the floor theatrically, dramatically filling the air with peals of its last farewell. For a long minute, Severus simply could not breathe. However, when his little, naughty witch leisurely unwrapped the lollipop and then slowly and deliberately moved her pink tongue around its green, glistening, round body, before taking it wholly into her mouth, all the wizard's organs seemed to halt their functions at once. All but one.

Only his friend, as Hermione lovingly called it, was very much alive and ready to act, and Severus gave in. Emitting a low, animalistic growl, he

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launched himself toward Hermione's lips, devouring her sour apple flavoured mouth with vigour. Their bodies readily intertwined again and the lovers disappeared in their bedroom.

Shortly thereafter, Severus' desperate cry, "Bollocks! How many are there?" was heard, along with Hermione's answering laughter.

Then, a second later, Hermione's rapturous moans and Severus' satisfied grunts reverberated throughout the rooms.

"Hey! It's... not... fair," she managed to utter.

"I'll... deal... with... the... buttons... later... "

Those were the last intelligible sounds for a long, long, long while.

Postscript

There were seven different coloured button-down shirts in Hermione's wardrobe, all with identical pearl buttons, of course. Needless to say, our ever-thorough wizard painstakingly charmed each and every one of them. He wanted them to be impossible to unbutton (or to look strained, for that matter) by anyone other than Hermione and himself. It wasn't that he didn't trust Hermione; he did, ultimately and unconditionally. It was these naughty pearl buttons that he did not trust at all.

Besides, one wizard absurdly infatuated with pearls was quite enough for England for the moment, don't you think?

End Notes:

Have I managed to lift that Christmas spirit in you?

If I have, please my darlings – be merry and give me some of it. Review. Thank you.