

In Gratitude

by dracontia

Lily Potter is a thoughtful young lady. If Albus Severus and Scorpius spend enough time with her, some of it may rub off on them. Sixth installment in the AI & Scorp show.

AI & Scorp Show, Episode 6

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Not my characters, but they seem to hang out at my place an awful lot without paying rent.

NOTE: This is number 6 in the continuing series begun with 'Do Not Enter.' Read the sequence leading up to this installment or nuances of the incident will not come across!

"And you're certain this is what he wants, AI?"

Albus sighed. "For the millionth time, Lils, he's always reading over our shoulders when we study there. If you want to do something nice for the Ghost, this is probably your best bet."

Lily continued her fretting unabated. "Scorpius, be careful!"

"I **am** being careful. It's bloody difficult with half a library strapped to my back!" He staggered under the load. Some of it wasn't for dramatic effect.

"Quit your whinging. I've got the other half," AI grumbled.

Here we go again. Apparently, not even death is sufficient to escape the antics of yet another Golden Trio of Hogwarts. What on earth are they doing this time?

He floated outside with mild trepidation to investigate.

"There are charms to make that easier, you know," Lily reminded them...a bit belatedly.

AI grinned. "Last time Scorpius tried to cast..."

"Shut up."

"Wingard..."

"SHUT UP!" Scorpius' cheeks pinked up alarmingly. Al refused to take the hint, possibly from spending entirely too much time with Scorpius.

"I ended up on..."

Two full book bags dropped to the weedy earth of the yard with almost simultaneous crashes. Al took off at a brisk sprint, laughing wildly, with Scorp in hot pursuit.

"Stop! Stop, this instant! Pick up those books, or you'll be sorry!" Lily shouted... unintentionally mimicking her mother's ability to berate others across wide parcels of real estate...as she took off after them.

Lily's threats had no impact whatsoever on the two boys, who were now chasing each other around the Shack. Scorpius was yelling at the top of his lungs; Albus was trying to find enough breath to run, laugh, and finish his inane anecdote all at the same time.

"The common room ceiling for half an hour!" Al finished just as he was tackled to the ground.

Remarkable. They've obviously developed a mental De-aging Potion.

Snape looked on in approval as Lily aimed her wand and unleashed a hosepipe-worthy drenching on the struggling boys.

Nice technique, Miss Potter.

Scorpius shrieked so piercingly that the remaining glass in the Shack's windowpanes shattered. Severus noted fondly yet another area in which the boy resembled his father.

"Merlin's Balls! Was that really necessary, Lils?" Al shook his head, dog-like, splattering water over a wide area. Scorpius, who had just applied a Drying Charm to fairly good effect, squawked in protest.

"I'm not letting you two get started! Honestly, you're fifteen. Can't you focus long enough to finish one simple task?" She stood with her hand on her hips, glaring. Snape found the posture oddly familiar.

Out of the mouths of babes and young ladies unfamiliar with the proclivities of fifteen-year-old boys.

"It's a brilliant idea, Lily. But why couldn't we just bring them a few at a time?" Scorpius groaned, pulling the strap of the straining book bag over his shoulder.

"That would spoil the grand Gryffindor gesture," Albus said with exaggerated solemnity.

Snape hid his snort of laughter amidst the sounds of the boys chuckling and Lily smacking each of them in turn on the back of the head.

"In! Books on the table!" she ordered.

Snape hovered nearby as the three carefully unloaded the bags, stacking an array of older books on the table.

At some point, I shall require an explanation of exactly what you three are on about.

Albus glanced around the room and nudged Lily. "He's here, and I think he's a bit impatient. Better do it now."

Impatient? I've been putting up with you lot barging in here with your infinite variety of patent absurdity for three years. I've the patience of a bloody saint.

Now, get to the damned books.

"Mr. Ghost," Lily announced, "we were hoping that we could do something for you." She stood up straight and tall but somewhat spoiled the effect by chewing her lip almost ragged from nervousness. She looked for all the world like a small child who had been enlisted to present a bundle of flowers or some such to a visiting dignitary.

A very tall visiting dignitary.

Albus stepped in to rescue her from her uncharacteristic attack of nerves. "You've helped us so often, so we wanted to help if we could. That is, we don't know how you occupy yourself, but we thought...if you have the time...that you might like something to read."

"We asked at the castle, and the ghosts said that they can open books and turn pages," Scorpius added.

"And we'll put new ones out every time we come to visit since some of the ghosts said that it's harder to lift a book than it is to open it." Lily regained her stride somewhat and resumed her prepared speech.

"Not that we told them why we were asking, sir," Scorpius hastened to assert. He remembered that Albus had been particularly insistent that the ghost was jealous of his privacy.

"There's a variety, so we hope that you'll find something that you quite like. So... they're all yours," Lily finished, smiling shyly.

They held their breath collectively for what seemed like minutes, awaiting some sort of response.

These... You... They're for... me?

Scorpius and Lily jumped, for once feeling the mood in the room change as easily as Albus did. Before they had time to ask him for clarification, one of the books on the table flew open and the pages began turning.

Lily clasped her hands together with a happy little gasp, Scorpius smiled uncertainly, and Albus frowned thoughtfully at the flipping pages.

It took Snape quite some time to identify his overwhelming emotion. It was forgivable considering how seldom he had reason to feel this particular one. The intense sincerity of the feeling spurred him to action.

They all watched in fascination as the ghost turned pages at varying speeds, sometimes skimming quickly, sometimes slowing to a near stop. Eventually, the pages ceased to move altogether. Al took Lily's hand and then Scorp's, silently alerting them that something was about to happen.

"Look," Scorp'us whispered, pointing to one of the dirty windowpanes.

Lily's breath caught as she recognized the fine, spiky script etching the words shakily into the layer of dust on the glass.

Thank you.

"You're welcome," she whispered, bouncing on her heels in excitement.

Albus bit his lip, regarding the window and the books on the table in turn. A shrewd expression flickered across his face, but his voice was gentle as he squeezed Lily's shoulder. "Come on, Lils. Let's leave him to enjoy them."

Scorp'us took Lily's arm as was his polite habit and led her out the door. "I hope you like them, sir," he called hesitantly over his shoulder. "Coming, Al?"

"Just getting the bags," he answered, waving them ahead. He dusted off the somewhat abused book bags and shrunk them down to fit into his pocket. Glancing out the door to make certain Scorp'us and Lily weren't looking back, he took a moment to carefully rearrange the books one more time.

"Goodbye, sir." He closed the door softly behind them.

Snape glanced up at the click of the latch.

What? Oh, I suppose it's for the best that they get on with their day. It appears to be one of their better ones. They may yet accomplish something useful.

On the way back to town, Al asked Lily, "Did you see anything of the ghost? Either this time or any others?"

"Just a flicker of light, really. Nothing else," Lily answered, still smiling happily at the success of her plan.

"Did you see something, then?" Scorp'us asked sharply. Al's casual tone nudged his mental alarms, if only because he sounded so convincing.

"Just a flicker. I rather wish we knew a bit more about him." He cast one more curious look back at the Shrieking Shack before linking arms with Lily and Scorp'us again.

"I think you mentioned before that if he wanted us to know who he is, he would tell us," Lily said. "I'm just glad that he's happier now."

"I hope so, after all he's done for us." Scorp'us looked to Al as the expert on all things related to their anonymous benefactor. "Is he?"

Al smiled slowly. "Yeah," he said, drawing out the single word as if he was turning the answer over in his mind with great care. "I'm pretty sure that he is."

Severus floated above his presents, hungrily skimming each book; he wondered which to read first and if his ghostly senses would allow him to continue reading after dark.

Dear Lily. Such a very thoughtful child. What a pity she doesn't have more influence over those two barbarians.

Although...

No. It must be pure coincidence...or perhaps proof of his apparent modicum of sense...that the Potter boy put all of the Potions texts on top.

FIN

Thank you, dear SeverusLovesUs, for beta reading this. :)