

Adoption

by skybyrd

A 7x100 answer to the challenge "Adopt-A-Wizard" at grangersnape100 on LJ. AU after HBP

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Chapter 1 of 1

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"Severus Snape to Hermione Granger," the ministry official announced coolly.

Hermione strode up to the dais to receive her paperwork.

"Miss Granger, under the new Adopt-A-Wizard program, you have the responsibility of Severus Snape for a year and a day following his release from Azkaban. It is your choice as to the return of his wand. However, you are responsible for any spells cast from that wand. You are obligated to feed, house, and cloth Mr. Snape. You must help him re-integrate into Wizarding society. Do you understand and accept this responsibility?" He gave her a disdainful look.

"I understand."

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Five long years he had spent in Azkaban. Five years of reliving his crimes everyday. Five years of never seeing the sun, or anyone other than the guards. Five years of relying on others for the most basic of human needs. And it seemed that rather than being free, he was entering his sixth year of captivity. This time with just one jailer.

He allowed himself to be shown into a small cottage. Hermione nibbled on her bottom lip as she anxiously asked, "Do you like it?"

He glared at her. "It's my new prison, Miss Granger, does it matter?"

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She gave him his wand immediately. She showed her trust in him by setting up a basement apartment with its own entrance, kitchen facilities, and potions laboratory. She arranged accounts for him with all the major apothecaries, in her name of course, but he could order what he needed.

She left him alone for the most part. However, he had been alone for 5 years and 3 months. He was tired of his own company. He knew she returned from her employment in the Department of Mysteries around 5 p.m. every day.

At 5:30 that evening, he ascended out of his apartment.

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"Relax, Severus," Hermione admonished. "Its just dinner!"

He shook his head in disbelief. "Dinner with the Golden Trio, how relaxing!" he mocked.

"It's been six months. It's time to rejoin the world, Severus, you know that." She placed her hand on his arm, trying to comfort him. Neither expected the jolt of awareness that passed through them. Their eyes met, something sparked between them that caused both of them to turn away.

All through dinner, they spoke formally and politely to each other, each trying to understand what happened earlier. Luckily, neither Harry nor Ron noticed anything different between them.

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Hermione leaned into Severus, willing time to stop, to extend this moment forever.

Unfortunately, before long the song ended.

She raised her head to thank Severus for the dance, surprised when she saw his head descend, then felt his lips on hers. The kiss was short but meaningful. It was done in public, a declaration of their relationship.

These last three months they had become closer, intimate in spirit, but not in body. At least not fully, and not yet. Not until a year and a day had passed since his release. A condition which Hermione had agreed to immediately.

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They entered the Ministry of Magic together. Severus and Hermione made their way to the Adoption office to officially end his Adoption. It took but a moment to dissolve all the spells and wards surrounding the Adoption. He was free, he could go anywhere, do anything he wanted. He looked at Hermione, and decided.

As soon as they left the Adoption office, Severus stopped and pulled his Hermione into his arms. "There's something else I'd like us to do while we are here," he whispered softly into her ear.

Hermione leaned back to look up at him curiously.

"Marry me?"

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Her hair was gray, his was still black. It wasn't fair. But then again he never was, Hermione thought with a smile. They still lived in her cottage, which was now bursting on their 100th wedding anniversary.

Children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren filled the house to spill over into the yard. She'd never expected a large family, but that was what they had gotten. She felt a hand on her back and turned her head to kiss the cheek of the love of her life.

Severus smiled down at his wife of 100 years, and blessed the gods for bringing them together.