

The Best Laid Plans

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Snape's plan is cunning and subtle; Hermione's is daring and bold. Who will prevail?
SS/HG one-shot.

One

Chapter 1 of 1

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Many thanks to Karelia for impeccable beta skills and amazing support.

Standard disclaimer: Any characters and places you recognise aren't mine, and I make no money doing this. Obviously.

The best laid plans of Mice and Men,

Often go awry

...*"To a Mouse"*, by Robert Burns (English translation)

He couldn't explain why the sight of her upset bothered him. It had never done so before. If anything, he had often found the sour mood of the Charms professor to be quite satisfying, as he had invariably...and quite intentionally...caused it. He considered it his duty to rattle the perfectly ordered world of Hermione Granger. Having been left for dead by the blundering trio nearly a decade prior had earned him the right. He was entitled to whatever whims brought him joy, and her torment brought him so much more than joy. Perhaps that was what had irritated him today. He was almost certain her current temper had nothing whatsoever to do with his actions. Which meant someone had encroached upon his territory, and that could not be allowed. She was his alone to torture.

Not that he'd ever bothered to stake his claim in any manner that would have been noticed by others. Men like Severus Snape didn't concern themselves with such trifles. He'd been quite content to observe her since her return to Hogwarts a year ago, to watch her squirm each time she felt his eyes upon her. He never missed an opportunity to bait her, and she rarely missed a chance to respond to his challenges with an acerbic retort. She had proved herself a worthy opponent, and he believed she derived as much thrill as he from their frequent matches. And if their battles of will had begun to take on a more ... intimate ... tone lately, so much the better. It was all part of His Plan. Each step had been painstakingly crafted, each variable carefully considered. Once finalised, it couldn't fail to yield his desired result: the brightest witch of his acquaintance, in his bed.

His Plan, despite its brilliance, had obviously been threatened by person or persons unknown. He had observed Hermione from the moment she'd entered the deserted library. His senses had come alive long before she crossed into view, as they always did. His awareness of her on this heretofore-unknown level had been one of the many reasons for the formulation of His Plan. She had stormed into the room, her black robes billowing magnificently with barely suppressed rage, and it had occurred to him a few modifications to His Plan might be in order. She didn't appear to fully appreciate the subtle nuances of His Plan, and in the meantime, someone had elicited her ire in a way that should have been reserved for him. And that simply would not be permitted. But, oh, she was an amazing sight to behold when she was angry. Her brown eyes flashed with a fire so hot it leapt across the room and heated his blood. Perhaps he had tortured himself long enough. Perhaps the time had come to move towards the next stage of His Plan. He snapped his book shut and stalked across the library.

Hermione Granger was having a bad day. No, make that a bad year. Nothing had gone according to plan since her return to Hogwarts. She'd envisioned a quiet future, full of mind-enriching triumphs and treasured moments of solitude. Instead, she'd been given a rowdy bunch of miscreants, a pack of brats unabashedly spoilt by parents still giddy from having survived the rise and fall of Voldemort. Outside of her disappointing lessons, whatever peace she had hoped for had been constantly interrupted by Severus Snape...the bane of her existence as a child...who had, for whatever reason, elected himself Official Nuisance to Hermione Granger.

It was bad enough that he had startled the life out of her when she'd first returned by looking as if a day hadn't passed since she'd last seen him. She wasn't sure if Nagini's bite had somehow preserved his appearance, or if the talented Potions master had simply invented a draught to resist the effects of aging. Either way, she wasn't vain enough to inquire about his methods. Yet. He would likely just taunt her about it, his most favoured activity of late. Of course, that would give her an opportunity to engage his wits, which was always a stimulating proposition. Being challenged by Snape, and learning that she could hold her own in such challenges, was the only thing about the past year that had given her any satisfaction. But it had to stop.

She pulled books from a shelf marked 'Enchantments and Bewitchings' and tossed them onto a table, knowing full well she wouldn't read them. She had to stop obsessing over Snape. She had allowed her fantasies to grow far too bold, and it simply had to cease before it was too late. Perhaps it was already too late. Her afternoon in Hogsmeade had been a complete disaster, thanks to Snape. When she had received the owl from Viktor Krum suggesting they meet, she had been delighted. Although they had remained steadfast quill-pals, she hadn't seen him in years, and she had been eager to reminisce.

Viktor had been solicitous and kind, and after they'd chatted about the past and other inconsequential nonsense, he had confessed he'd thought of her often and still desired her. And then he had kissed her. Her shock had passed quickly enough...Viktor had never been one for subtlety...and she had kissed him back, waiting for a spark of desire that never came. What had appeared in its stead had been far more shocking than Viktor's kiss. Far more unwelcome, too.

She stabbed her elbow onto the table and plopped her chin into her hand. Why couldn't she have harboured romantic feelings for Viktor? What was wrong with her? He was gorgeous ... he was famous ... and he claimed to fancy her, even after all these years. So why had she pictured charcoal eyes the minute Viktor's lips had touched hers? Surely she could stop thinking about Snape long enough to enjoy being snogged by the most famous Quidditch player in the world. What she needed was a plan. Something brilliant to either force Snape from her mind once and for all, or drive him completely mad with...

"Good evening, Professor," purred his familiar voice, close enough to her ear that his breath stirred her hair.

She squeaked like a house-elf and then cleared her throat. "Good evening." She straightened her robes while he eased himself into the chair beside her.

"You seem upset," he said, his tone far too civil to be trusted. "Is there anything I can do to help?"

What new game was this? He seemed sincere, but it had to be a trap. If only she'd had more time to formulate a plan, this would have been an ideal opportunity to set it into motion. Perhaps she could improvise ...

"I *am* rather upset, Professor Snape," she explained with mock hesitation, "but I'd hate to impose upon you."

"Not at all," he said. "It is distressing to see you so perturbed."

"Is it really?" she asked. "I always thought you rather enjoyed seeing me vexed."

One side of his mouth lifted. "I'll admit I have enjoyed *causing* your vexation in the past." He leant closer and lowered his voice. "There are a great many ways I would like to see you, but upset by someone other than me is not one of them."

She held her breath. In what other ways could he possibly want to see her? So many of these innuendos had slipped into their conversations lately, and she wasn't sure if she was imagining the underlying suggestion or if it truly existed. She supposed his statement could be completely innocuous...maybe he simply wanted to see her happy. Or see her make tea. Or ... better still ... perhaps he wanted to see her happy and making tea, stark naked, after he had just ravaged her body and...

She blinked. Her Plan ... Her Plan ... where the hell was Her Plan when she needed it?

"Tell me, Professor," he prompted, "what...or who...has upset you today?"

"Well ..." She shifted sideways and draped her arm over the back of her chair. Damn, but it was difficult to concentrate this close to him. He smelled like herbs and fire, and she decided she'd never be able to banish him from her thoughts until she'd buried her nose into his chest and felt his arms around her.

"I met Viktor Krum in Hogsmeade today," she began without preamble. "Do you remember Viktor?"

"Of course," he replied. Had his eyes narrowed at the mention of the name?

"Right. Well, Viktor ... he ..." She paused when his jaw tightened and asked, "Are you certain you want to hear this? I hate to bother you with my personal problems."

"No."

She couldn't tell whether he had dismissed her request to continue or her claim of being a pest. But as he didn't seem in any hurry to leave, she shrugged and continued.

"If you're certain. You see ... the thing is ... Viktor kissed me."

"And that upset you?" He seemed to jump on the possibility.

"Oh no, not at all," she said. "Viktor's quite skilled."

She hadn't imagined it...he definitely looked angry. Even his nostrils flared, as if breathing had become a chore. And was it any wonder when he pushed his lips together so severely? How he managed to flatten them into such a thin line was beyond her. They were so full the rest of the time ... so perfectly formed and beautifully shaped and ...

She shook her head. "It wasn't Viktor's kiss that upset me," she said. "Rather, it was my reaction to his kiss that ruined my mood."

"How so?" he asked at length.

She shifted her body towards his and frowned. "I felt nothing," she whispered. Perhaps she was imagining things again, but it seemed as if his lean frame relaxed at her words.

"I see," he whispered in return.

He leaned closer. Anyone observing them would have believed them unlikely conspirators, sharing immensely secretive information. Mere inches separated their faces. She studied the delicate lines at the corners of his eyes, the imperfect symmetry of his long nose where it had obviously been broken, perhaps more than once. But it was his eyes that captivated her, pulling her nearer like the moon commanding the tides.

"I never knew that was possible," she said. "Did you?"

"Naturally."

"Is there something wrong with me?" she asked.

"No," he replied, almost too quickly. "Why would you think that?"

"Conventional wisdom says I should certainly feel something ...*anything* ... when a man like Viktor kisses me."

"Conventional wisdom is overrated." He arched one eyebrow and dipped his face closer, ever so closer to hers. "Krum may be a perfect physical specimen, but he's hardly your equal."

She suppressed her smile. He had delivered the exact opening she had hoped for. Abandoning subtlety, she angled her face closer to his. A mere sneeze would bring their lips together now.

"And when I find my equal, do you suppose *his* kisses will excite me?" She held her breath and waited, her heart pounding like a moth beating itself against a lantern.

"We had best find out," he said at last.

She closed her eyes when his lips touched hers, softly, caressingly, like the finest silk gliding across her mouth. His touch was gentle, almost surprisingly so. She parted her lips, anxious to taste more of him. His tongue touched hers, and she shuddered. So much rested on this first truly intimate exchange, this symbolic exploration, a piece of his body inside hers. And where she had waited for a spark when Viktor had kissed her, an inferno blazed to life deep within her, so scorching it was a wonder the entire castle hadn't ignited.

Long fingers slid around her neck. They wound through the hair at the base of her skull and tightened, urging her closer. He deepened the kiss slowly, now that he held her mouth captive. His tongue teased and claimed, promised and delivered. She moaned against his lips, enjoying each moment of his delicate torture but craving more. Desire twisted inside her, an impossible knot that tumbled and churned and cried to be untied. His tongue stroked hers, back and forth, forever teasing. She captured it at last and sucked on it as if she were dying of thirst and it contained the last drop of water known to man. He groaned, a sharp, fierce noise that startled her enough to release his mouth and draw herself back. When her eyes could focus, she stared at him in silence, waiting for the moment to grow awkward. But it never did. There was no embarrassment, no hesitation...just a seemingly mutual appreciation for what they had just shared. And for Hermione, an overwhelming need for much, much more.

"I definitely felt that," she said.

"I would have recommended a Healer if you hadn't."

Her smile bloomed slowly. Who could have known her lousy day would take such a delicious turn? Perhaps some things were better left unplanned.

Severus thought now might be a good time to outline the finer points of His Plan. The evening had veered so far from the course of his well-structured scheme he could scarcely believe the entire endeavour hadn't ended in misery. He didn't dare tempt Fate by straying too far.

"So what happens next?" she asked.

"I'm glad you asked," he replied. "I happen to have a plan."

"I'm glad to hear it." There was something cheeky about her smile. "Does your plan involve a trip to your quarters and shagging each other senseless?"

To his credit, he allowed only a few seconds to pass before replying, "It does now."

He led her from the library and congratulated himself for being so flexible. Her Plan had definite merit.

A/N: I was completely stuck writing my Exchange fic, and I thought perhaps I could drabble my way out of it. This was the result. Still stuck, but at least I wasted a few hours pretending to be productive!