

Xenial, After a Fashion

by dracontia

He isn't used to having welcome houseguests. But he's adapting. Episode 7 of The AI & Scorp Show.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: They aren't my characters, but that doesn't stop them from coming over to play in my brain...with family in tow.

Notes:

Xenial: Of or concerning hospitality towards strangers (from Greek Xenos, 'stranger').

This is the seventh episode in the AI & Scorp show; not only does it contain spoilers for episodes 1-6, but it will make very little sense unless you've read the previous six already!

"Pay attention, Hugo. The Shrieking Shack's this way."

Shrieking Shack, my arse. Snape's Halfway House for Wayward Hogwarts Students is more like it.

Snape closed his book in exasperation and resigned himself to taking it up again once they were gone. Just because they belatedly had the courtesy repay him for misappropriating his personal space did not mean that they should expect him to put on a show. He floated over to the window and pulled back in surprise at the sight of the two usual suspects towing a red-headed boy along with them. Snape could discern nothing of the third fellow aside from his gangly height and lurid hair color. His nose was firmly stuck in a book as if it was charmed there.

What the... Who is that?

"Uh-huh. I have one eye on the path."

"Look, if I don't get to walk and read, you don't either," Scorpius complained.

Albus steered the boy out of the way of another obstacle with a strategic bump of his shoulder. "We're almost there, cousin. I'm not guiding you up the steps."

Hugo sighed and gave way to necessity, marking his page with a spell.

There's something dreadfully familiar about that one.

Have I sunk to the depth where I'm actually contemplating playing 'guess the Weasley paternity?'

"Honestly, you two behave as if you've never been taught how to take care of books." Hugo fretted and fussed with the makeshift shelves until they were clean, straight, and their contents were completely organized by subject and alphabetized by author.

"We'll be your references if Madam Harkness decides to retire from the library," Scorpius said, looking on in amusement.

"He wouldn't need references, Scorp. I'm sure that the Headmistress would love to find a librarian who was a little farther away from joining Madam Pince in the great beyond," Albus said. He was already hard at work transfiguring the remaining empty wall into a blackboard.

Snape watched the proceedings with grudging approval, even as he felt an odd pang at learning indirectly of Madam Pince's demise.

Hmm. He must belong to that middle Weasley. Percy? I suppose I can imagine him spawning a Ravenclaw.

Yes, Severus. That was the sound of your afterlife hitting rock bottom.

Soon they were settled in quietly with their studies. Hugo ensconced himself on the couch with his Transfiguration text, Scorpius labored over a Charms text with an expression Snape recognized all too well as 'What the fuck is it that I'm not getting about this?' and Albus set about making some sort of chart on the blackboard, apparently from memory.

Of course, with Scorpius in the room, silence was doomed to an extremely limited shelf life.

"Dunno why..."

"Scorp, lose the 'dunno' or your dad's going to pitch a wobbly."

"I DON'T KNOW," Scorpius began again, glaring at Al, "why you didn't get along with us sooner, Hugo..."

"...Since we three are obviously the supreme geeks of Hogwarts?" Al supplied helpfully.

"You will now belt it," Scorpius said imperiously.

"You will presently spend the summer cleaning up peacock shit because you've cheesed off your dad again by talking like us lot. Fair warning," Albus said.

"Good God, you two sound like my parents. 'Ronald! Not in front of the children!' 'Bloody hell, Hermione, they've heard worse at school,'" Hugo mimicked.

Miss Granger married the youngest one, and this happened?

...

Twenty points from Gryffindor for collectively failing at naming your offspring.

"You sure you're not gay, cousin? You two make a great old married couple," Hugo continued, sounding perfectly earnest.

Albus chuckled and continued to flip through one edition of his precious collection of Potions journals, in search of the article pertinent to his project. Scorpius was the one who favored Hugo with a nasty scowl...an expression utterly wasted on the other boy, who was paying court to his Transfiguration text and oblivious to the rest of the world.

"You're changing the subject, Hugo."

"Well, you two seemed to create your own world around you from the moment you met up first year. Not to mention that I didn't think you would appreciate my dad making the odd rude gesture from his Chocolate Frog Card."

"No bringing up dads and Chocolate Frog Cards," Al said, suddenly sounding a bit grumpy.

"I thought it was kind of *funny* when our dads' cards tried to hex each other that one time," Scorpius said with a chuckle.

Hugo peeked over the edge of the book and decided that the level of pink in Al's ears dictated an intentional change of subject. "I thought we were just here to study. After all, we didn't bring Lily and Rose, so Scorpius has no one to talk boys with..."

"Hey!"

Hugo held up his book to deflect the parchment wad Scorpius flung at him and kept talking. "...and Al's such a bloody work-a-holic, he might as well transfer to Ravenclaw. And become a monk."

Al flung an enthusiastic obscene gesture over his shoulder and continued to refine his chart of Potions catalysts on their makeshift chalkboard. "It wouldn't do any good to bring the girls. They're the only two females in the castle who **wouldn't** discuss James."

"James?" Hugo spluttered.

"I don't know why it's so funny," Scorpius muttered. His blush had an annoyed tinge to it.

"Because, Scorpius, if James was any straighter, he'd need a spell to tie his trainers."

Hugo laughed so hard that he actually had to stop reading.

"I might have other interests," he said defensively.

"Really?" Al asked. "You mean, other crushes?"

"I don't need to know this," Hugo said, a little anxiously.

Seconded, Mr. Weasley.

"No one in Slytherin, I'd have caught you eyeing them up," Al said speculatively.

"Oh, Merlin, here we go," Hugo moaned. "Sherlock Potter on the case again."

Scorpius scowled. If they didn't know better, it could have been directed at his reading material.

"Silence? It must be someone important," Al said, actually turning away from the chalkboard. "A professor?"

"Well, that certainly narrows it down," Hugo said, despite himself. "Since Scorpius has working eyes, Slughorn is out."

"And since you're related, albeit somewhat distantly, to Professor Devereaux..."

Scorpius hid behind his book. The heat from his blush practically left a shimmer above the cover.

Hugo interrupted, "Oh, bloody hell...You're crushing on Professor Longbottom!"

Merlin's hairy arse, Mr. Malfoy!

It was all Snape could do to keep from saying it aloud.

"Let's see... straight? Check. Married? Check. Professor and far too professional and honorable to have anything to do with a student, even if the first two conditions didn't apply? Double check." Albus sighed, not unsympathetically, and returned to his blackboard. "Admit it, Scorp. He appears to meet all of your usual requirements. What do you think, Hugo?"

Hugo never looked up from his book. "I think Scorp seriously needs to get a crush on someone who'll return it," Hugo said dryly.

Snape almost forgot to remain invisible as he caught Scorpius casting a fleeting, longing glance at Albus. "If only it was that easy," he whispered.

Hugo caught the whisper, and actually put his book down...though not in time to see the glance. "Have you told...you know...anyone else yet? I mean, if some other blokes knew... That is, I'm pretty sure there are other guys at school..." He trailed off awkwardly, his helpful intentions showing through the embarrassed blush on his face.

"Outside of this room, only Lily knows. You know I can't be out. My Father..." Scorpius quickly buried his nose in his book and mumbled something like, "Thanks anyway."

"Hugo Weasley, matchmaker to...anyone. You're definitely not in Ravenclaw from lack of courage, cousin," Al said in an effort to break the sudden somber mood. He did a fair job of keeping his voice light, even though it did come out a bit uneven.

Used to picking up Al's cues, Scorpius jumped on the segue to a different subject. "Why aren't you in Gryffindor? I'll grant you, you make a convincing Ravenclaw...but you've got several centuries of family history, including all but one cousin, arguing against it. It's not as if you have to park your brain at the door to the Gryffindor common room."

It just helps.

"It just helps," Al said in tandem, albeit in a barely audible murmur.

Hugo rolled his eyes and shook his head at Al. Scorpius laughed hysterically.

Snape was hard pressed not to join in.

"If you want the simple answer...too much drama." He shot a sly grin around the cover of his book. "The same reason I'm not interested in Slytherin."

"Hey!" Scorpius' protest was somewhat undermined by the fact that he was still laughing.

Snape snorted.

Spare me the wit that accompanies red hair and freckles.

Al snorted as well... but not so loudly that he didn't notice the ghost having the same reaction. The shrewd look that flickered through his green eyes, the visible expression of a mental box being checked off, was gone before anyone could observe it.

"Quidditch is an acceptable subject? How about those Cannons, then?" Scorpius didn't bother to hide his mischievous glee.

"Hey!" Hugo shot back.

Albus, with the accuracy of a veteran Chaser, turned abruptly and pelted both of them with pieces of chalk. "Belt it so I can bloody well finish this list already!"

Scorpius and Hugo, no mean Chasers themselves, flung them right back.

Throughout the resulting spirited exchange of improvised missiles, Snape lounged in the air above the table, studying Al's forgotten Potions journals with interest. He tried to be bothered by the raucous laughter and flying writing utensils.

Rather to his annoyance, he found himself possessed of a curiously pleasant feeling of nostalgia instead.

Don't mind me, gentlemen...and I use the term loosely. I just live here. In a manner of speaking.

Oh, and you'd bloody well better pick up all that chalk before you leave.

Much to his surprise, they did.

FIN

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to beta read this, SeverusLovesUs!