

Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire

by notsosaintly

Good Holiday Season Advice: If you own chestnuts, stay far, far away from the fire.

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Chapter 1 of 1

Good Holiday Season Advice: If you own chestnuts, stay far, far away from the fire.

It had to happen: a bit of sauciness from notsosaintly for the Christmas season. Written as a challenge to myself, purely off the first line of *The Christmas Song* (see notes at end of story). Someone had mentioned roasting and grinding coffee beans a couple weeks ago, and I naturally inferred the same meaning to roasting chestnuts. It's the way my mind works. Double meanings everywhere. Be thankful you don't hang around me. I expect it gets a little tedious.

Disclaimer: JKR created Severus Snape (and the lot). Unfortunately, she didn't see the true potential of the character. He defected from her world one day and showed up on my doorstep to apply for the position of NSS's Muse. As far as I know, he's never looked back. He works for free, just as I do.

"Severus, I want to go home for Christmas this year," Hermione said, sipping a little mulled wine after a rather large dinner of pot roast and stewed vegetables. A dinner she had not made, for Severus was acting cook for the entire fortnight their house-elf was on holiday. *As if house-elves need holidays*, he thought. *Only in this house.*

"You *are* home," he replied, not able to keep the tinge of annoyance from colouring his words.

Her eyes snapped across the room to where he was doing the washing-up after dinner, and her voice dropped half an octave. A warning if there ever was one. "You know what I mean."

"I do not," he said stubbornly, feeling reckless, still scrubbing away...without magic...at the burnt-on gravy at the bottom of the dish. He felt like he was serving one of his infamous detentions, except in his own bloody kitchen. It did nothing for his mood. "I refuse to see the appeal of slushing through piles of half-melted soot-stained snow, putting up with dreary, overcast days, numb toes, warming charms that won't stick..."

"And I agree," she interrupted. "But that's not the point, and you know it. My parents have asked us to come, as they have every year since we left, and I think it's about time we visit. It's been *seven years*, Severus."

"It's not like the Ministry has made it any easier for me to return, or have you forgot?" he said and rinsed the dish while carefully inspecting the flecked porcelain for any remaining bits of food, hoping to wash the entire conversation down the drain with the wash water.

"I have two words for you." She paused, and he looked at her out of the corner of his eye, knowing he was not going to like what was coming.

"Polyjuice Potion."

Suddenly, the dish didn't seem clean enough.

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Severus grumbled over the steaming cauldron and stirred vigorously; the perspiration forming on his brow a product of standing over the hot brew or of the lather he'd got himself into, he knew not which.

"Bloody stupid London in bloody winter. If I wanted to see a bloody flake of snow, I'd open the bloody deep freeze. Could be spending bloody Christmas on the bloody beach instead of bloody London..."

"I can hear you, you know," Hermione interrupted from the doorway. "All the way in the bedroom."

"Good, and I don't care," he said, stirring harder now that his verbal tirade had been thwarted. "There was nothing in the terms of the bet that said I had *tôke* it. I could be spending Christmas here, where it's sunny and warm..."

"Too warm."

"...and work on my Potions dissertation..."

"Which you finished last week."

"Stop interrupting me. I'm just saying there are more pleasant places to be than in the middle of bloody London in the middle of bloody winter!" he shouted.

For a moment, the tension hung thickly in the air, portending doom. Severus had even stopped stirring. The potion was a cock-up anyway. He didn't know why he had even bothered....

"Is the Polyjuice Potion ready?" she asked, any expectation of a major blow-up on her part fizzling anticlimactically. *Why shout when it is so much more satisfying to twist the knife in a little bit more?* he asked himself wryly.

His hand reached under the table and found the phial without hesitation. Severus glared and all but slammed it down on the table in front of him.

"Good," she replied lightheartedly as though oblivious to his irritation. "We're leaving in an hour."

She tossed a huge grin over her shoulder along with a saucy wink and a few lengthy curls before closing the door against a renewed onslaught of disparaging comments about London in the winter.

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"You couldn't pick anyone else?" Severus complained as he looked in the mirror.

"Remus was convenient. Besides, I just wouldn't feel comfortable Side-Along Apparating with a stranger, even if I knew it was really you," Hermione answered with her back turned, tossing a few more essentials into her overnight bag.

Severus stepped up behind her and pulled her against his shorter, slightly bulkier and, from what it felt like, girthier-where-it-counted body. "Oh, and you feel comfortable with Remus' arms wrapped around you?" he whispered into her ear, enjoying how well his *girth* fit perfectly between her arse cheeks at this height.

"Mmmm... Severus, the bet..."

"Bugger the bet. You had a bet with *Severus*, not *Remus*," he replied and pulled her hair back to kiss her neck in that spot, right behind her ear, the one she loved so dearly to be kissed. Perhaps he could get in one last shag before they left. Hermione never liked to 'do it' unless they were home *and* alone.

"I...oh!" she exclaimed as a pair of his fingers pressed firmly into her tightly jeaned crotch and his hardness pressed against her backside. Her breathing was becoming laboured. The promise of a reprieve from this silly little bet was almost a sure thing....

"Severus, we...we can't," she panted, still wanting to argue her case. It lacked confidence, he decided, and there was no way he was going to stop now. A week and a half of celibacy was enough to make any man slightly deranged.

"I see nothing hindering us but these jeans," he replied as attempts to slip a hand between fabric and skin failed. Her jeans fit very well, something he normally liked...but right now it was preventing him from reaching his goal.

"The bet," she managed to say. "You still ... owe me ... four days."

"I'm sorry. *Who* owes you four days?" he growled into her ear as he shifted her jeans lower, little by little. She was going to give in if it killed him.

"You, Severus. You must ... stop." The difficulty she was having saying those words made him smile.

"Sounds like something you'd need to discuss with Severus, my dear," he quipped, trying to sound more Remus-like.

The waistband of her jeans now rested below her hairline, and he was able to slip a finger in far enough to press tight little circles over that little bundle of nerves, feeling it grow firmer under his practiced touch. He almost had her. Just a little more persuading ... She had to see the logic behind it. Holding her breath and gasping, her legs both squeezed his hand and strained against the hip-hugging jeans in an alternating rhythm.

Perhaps a little more convincing would be in order if he wanted to *get all* the way in her pants. He nipped and sucked at her neck, kissed along her jaw, traced her ear with his tongue, and murmured in the lowest, sexiest voice he could muster under the circumstances, "It wouldn't be breaking the terms of the bet if it were *Remus* making love to you."

Suddenly, she squealed and his finger was sliding with much more ease over her throbbing flesh. All he could do was growl with the knowledge he had lost the battle in more ways than one, and he held her tightly to him as his hips spasmed against her backside. Damned werewolf had no stamina whatsoever. He should have figured as much. His forehead rested a moment on her shoulder while he caught his breath, and then his head shot up when he realised she had come at the mention of Remus making love to her.

She was putting herself back together and saying, "Thank you, that was nice," and "We better get going; you only have forty-five minutes," before he could say anything, however.

Wordlessly, he took out his wand and cleaned himself up...at least he could use magic for personal hygiene. Damn the bet, and damn her, and damn London, and damn it

all if his wife got turned on by the thought of shagging a *bloody* werewolf!

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"Hermione!" Jean Granger greeted her daughter warmly, pulling her into a tight embrace on the front doorstep. "And Sev...who are you? Where's Severus?"

"This *is* Severus, Mum. Let us in. If I knew it was going to be snowing like this, I would have brought my other cloak." Hermione pushed her way inside while Severus inched past his mother-in-law, who was still eyeing him suspiciously and half-blocking the doorway.

"I'm serious, Mum, it's him. The potion will wear off in, oh, about thirty minutes, give or take," Hermione reassured her mother. "Where's Dad?"

Jean Granger shut the front door and watched her son-in-law use his wand to dry the hems of his trousers. "He's in the study ... Why don't you..."

"Why don't I join him? Let you two ladies catch up," Severus replied, not entirely sure he wanted to be left alone with his mother-in-law.

"Good idea!" Hermione readily agreed. "Here, take these with you. It's right at the end of that hallway ... Oh, and he won't know you're..."

"Yes, yes, I know. I'll take care of it," he replied, gratefully taking the whisky bottle and the two glasses she had shoved into his hands and nodding Hermione toward what he believed to be the kitchen, happy when her mother followed.

He poured the whisky on the way, ready to offer a peace offering for absconding with the man's daughter seven years earlier ... and then he realised the man was a Muggle and couldn't hex him anyway. Feeling slightly less nervous, he nodded when he entered the room and handed a glass of whisky to his father-in-law. Frank Granger's eyebrows twitched in mild surprise.

"I assume you're Severus," he said, "though you don't look anything like I remember. I am pretty sure you were taller, had darker hair, were quite a bit slimmer..."

"Yes, well, give it about twenty-five minutes and you won't be disappointed," Severus replied and sat down heavily in the chair next to Frank where the man was watching a television programme.

"Ah," Frank said as though everything had been cleared up. "One of those 'wizard' things. I understand. Hermione did say something about how your Ministry hasn't cleared you entirely yet. Pretty rotten from what I understand. In my opinion, they should have pinned a bloody medal on your chest and given you due credit. Damned ungrateful bastards."

"Quite." Severus looked at his father-in-law with some interest. "I had no idea you understood so much about the wizarding world."

"I know a fair bit more than I let on. Jean gets skittish around magic. She doesn't like things she can't understand; never did get used to the idea that magic actually exists," Frank admitted, setting his drink down on the table beside him. "I made it a point to read up on everything I could when Hermione first received her Hogwarts letter. With Voldemort and the war, I thought she had enough on her plate without thinking we were worrying about her, so I never let on how much I knew."

Severus nodded. "So you're the reason for Hermione's love of books. That's one mystery solved then."

"*That* she got from me. Everything else came from her mother: her hair, her build, her fiery, take-no-shite personality, her uncanny ability to get anything she wants..."

"Hermione in a nutshell," Severus snorted into his whisky.

"To put it mildly, these women are of the same mind. You just have to accept them as they are ... It'll go much easier in the long run." Frank smirked and raised his glass.

"Cheers," Severus replied and took a long draught.

Frank picked up the bottle and waited patiently for him to finish. "So what'd you do to warrant a trip to Merry Old London in the middle of winter?"

It was a little uncanny being around someone who seemed to understand his relationship with Hermione. "Lost a bet," Severus answered and took another long swallow.

"Yup, yup, suspected as much." Frank sipped his whisky. "If I know my daughter, the trip to London wasn't the only price you paid. Aside from your ... unusual appearance, I'm talking about."

"I am chef and maid for two weeks, no magic allowed. Our house-elf apparently was in need of a holiday," Severus grumbled.

"Sounds like my Hermione. I'm kind of surprised she didn't add 'no shagging' to the list," Frank said.

Severus choked on his whisky and coughed out, "Said something about how I needed to learn to appreciate her more...."

"Oh, ho ho ho!" Frank exclaimed, laughing. "So she did, did she? That's her mother's daughter for you."

Severus had to chuckle at that, in between residual bouts of coughing. He decided that being around someone who understood what he had to deal with every day was actually ... nice. Maybe London in the winter wouldn't be so bad after all...

The two men were still laughing when the door to the study opened and the two women poked their heads in.

"What are you two laughing at?" Jean asked with a smile. "Never mind. I'm glad you're having a good time. Come. We girls need help building a fire ... We're planning on roasting some chestnuts."

Severus took one look at Frank and then out the window where the snow was falling at a fairly steady rate with no sign of stopping. Both men put down their whisky glasses and stood up simultaneously.

"Actually, Jean, Severus and I were just going out to shovel the pavement. It's coming down pretty heavily, and we thought we'd better get a head start."

Hermione and Jean paused, staring disbelievingly at their men for half a moment. Finally, Hermione shrugged and said, "Suit yourself," and the two women walked away to tend to the fire themselves.

Severus and Frank looked at each other and exchanged looks of relief as they drained their glasses.

"Come on, I've got warmer clothes in the front closet. You'll be needing them. If we're lucky, we'll be out there a long time," Frank said.

"I'll cast the warming charms," Severus added as he grabbed the whisky bottle and glasses and followed his father-in-law down the hallway.

The Polyjuice Potion wore off as strains of *The Christmas Song* reached the men's ears. They couldn't get outside fast enough.

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Chestnuts roasting on an open fire

Jack Frost nipping at your nose

Yuletide carols being sung by the fire

And folks dressed up like Eskimos.

Excerpt from *The Christmas Song*, written by Mel Tormé and Bob Wells in 1944. It's a favorite of the Granger women, who only know the first four lines really well and resort to humming the rest ... As Jean taught her daughter, the first line is really the most important one anyway.

Ho, ho, ho.