

# Punctuation Will Be Punished

by *sweetflag*

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This is in response to a challenge set by sunny33 (many thanks for this!).

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Chapter 1 of 1

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The moan slipped out and seemed to echo tauntingly around the small room. Her ears strained for a returning sound; nothing came to shatter the absolute and comforting silence. The others hadn't heard; they were safe. The hand that she had felt obliged to clamp down over her mouth was removed and left to tremble against her cheek.

*Gods!* thought Severus with a sympathetic spasm in his guts. She looked beautiful like that: eyes half-closed; hair ruffled and wound about his fingers; her lips quivering and swollen. The sight of her was intoxicating.

"I'm sorry."

Severus blinked and frowned. It was so hard to think when she was cleaving to him as though she needed him to keep her grounded and whole. The way that her erratic breath brushed over his face and how his lips tingled as though hers were still crushed beneath his did nothing to help him concentrate.

"What for?" He hadn't intended for his voice to sound so gruff and demanding. Her wounded expression suggested that she had accepted his lust-roughened voice and alarmed concern as a sign of annoyance. How could she even think that he could be unhappy with anything about her after all that they'd shared? But he could not deny that he may have strengthened her doubts with his own failings and insecurities. Never had he said that he cared for her.

The image of her face all flushed and hungry as she tore at his robes came to mind; he had been equally selfish. The blouse she wore would be beyond repair. The torn fabric revealed the upper edge of her brassiere and the soft curves of her breasts: an enthralling vision to drive him to dementia. The pulse in her throat stole his attention as she turned her head away and rested her temple against the door. The evidence of her passion and the exposed pale skin were enough to make him wish that he was twenty years younger. But he wasn't. It'd be all that he could do to drag her to the bed and make her struggle to stifle her moans and screams. How he wished that he could lift her up to pin her against the door! Damn getting old! And damn battle-wounds.

"I know that you said we need to be discreet when we're at Headquarters... But I just can't!" she said in a breathless whimper. "It's so... *intense* being here and having to be so quiet. It's too much."

*Yes!* His heart leapt while he considered the reasoning behind her sudden distress. The thought that he could tease Hermione Granger to the point where her brain collapsed and all her Gryffindor honour evaporated was better than any lip service from the Order. It was quite possibly the most erotic thought to loom large in his limited imaginings and experience.

Some semblance of mental clarity descended to smother his licentious ponderings. She was right about being at Headquarters making things more intense...maybe that was why she had a tendency to be more prickly and he more... wicked? He did find the surreptitious teasing of her an ideal game: the subtle touch as he walked past; the suggestive comment during meetings; the hand touching her thigh under the table. No wonder she was always so tense and delightfully needy.

The increased pressure appealed to both of them in subtle ways. She liked the feelings of constraint and inherent naughtiness combined with the fear of being caught; he enjoyed watching her struggle and falling apart under him. It was that knife-edge dance of what they needed versus what they dared to get away with. And he loved to test her just as much as she loved to be tested.

How ironic that the place that would tear them to pieces had bound them together so neatly. His quaking shudders as he stifled his laughter made her glance up at him sharply.

"You find it funny that I almost ruined what we have?" Her cheeks had flushed for quite another reason when she turned to stare at him. Those stunning eyes of hers narrowed. "They will never understand us; we would have to end this."

It was an effort to stop his dark humour and smugness dictating his response; he knew that she would respond badly if he should continue to seemingly disparage her upset over her inability to keep quiet. But the thought that he could drive her to such a place where her mind crumbled was just so deeply gratifying. The fact that she had also admitted it was just the cherry on the top!

"No. I do not find the thought of 'us' being discovered as something humorous."

"I'm the source of your humour?" Crossing her arms petulantly across her chest had his eyes darting from her face to that delicious-looking crevice between her breasts. Severus swallowed and groaned softly.

"Not at all." He was so glad that she had surrendered first in admitting the intensity of their relationship; he would have broken and confessed all at that point. "I just found your confession to be quite... flattering." He smirked and bowed politely. "Perhaps you could return the favour tomorrow evening?" he asked as innocently as he could. Common sense and a will to live encouraged him to slide his hands around her waist; his chest trapped her folded arms across her midriff. Hermione could be... *feisty* when riled. Had he earlier stomped on the idea that he was no longer thirty? Certain parts of him felt positively reborn.

The kiss reddened lips dropped open. "You... You..." she stammered as her fury warmed up. "You're saying that I don't.... that you aren't..." Her words dried up; something had made itself known. "You liar!" she murmured while squirming against him.

Severus groaned and quickly pushed his thigh between hers before she had the idea to escape. He knew that she could give as good as she got; she would leave him to suffer this as a punishment for his earlier humour at her expense.

"I resent that accusation." He showed his intense disapproval by nipping on her earlobe and smirked when she moaned. Severus had been an attentive explorer of Hermione Granger. He knew all her places of interest. He was also a proficient exploiter of insider knowledge. "What shall I demand in reparation?" he asked silkily. Her eyes darkened and fluttered closed at his words. The legs around his thigh relaxed in way of a hint of what he could claim. He grinned like a wolf and leant down so that he could continue to whisper in her ear. "You will not make another sound. Do you hear me? Failure will lead to... consequences." He bit down sharply on her neck to clarify his intentions.

It was new ground... Or the distant shore that he was sure they'd been heading towards. They complemented each other's most secret and compelling needs. He needed to have what she needed to relinquish. It was new and dangerous; it was exciting and alluring...it was what they had sought in each other from the start. But he had to be sure that what they had discussed in passing was what she wanted.

"Do you understand?" His voice was surprisingly tender as it conveyed the requirement for her approval.

Her brow was furrowed in thought when he moved to look her in her face. It was possible that she would refuse. It was possible that he had misjudged how to please her. His mouth went dry as his stomach dropped. Had he tried to initiate something that she would find repellent? Had he instilled a worrying thought in her head? He knew her. She would analyse and extrapolate. Would his deepest desires and proclivities do what the Order would do if their affair was discovered? Would this tear them apart? He couldn't bear the thought! But he had to be sure; he had been compelled to ask.

Her tentative smile and nod were like the first raindrops after a drought!

"I understand."

He slaked his thirst.

The trail of bites from ear to shoulder seemed to make her want to leap out of her skin. Severus revelled in the challenge as he used every trick and scrap of knowledge to push his luscious lover to her limits. The sight of her biting down on her lip and the sound of her strangled cries were enough to make him wish that he could have her here at Headquarters whenever he wished. One particular keen caused his knees to buckle and his breath to stutter.

It was torture! It was delightful!

He doubted that he'd ever tell her that he had found a way to bypass the impediment to casting magic within Headquarters. He smiled as he licked the edge of her earlobe and caught her choking sob. Yes! It was decided. He would *never* tell her that he always cast a powerful Silencing Charm around her room.