

The Lesson At Hand

by *dracontia*

Albus Severus Potter wonders why the sleeves on Daddy's robes are so long.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Neither generation is mine, and they profit me not except in their potential to provoke thought.

When Albus Severus Potter was three and a half years old, he started to notice that Daddy wore his sleeves very long. They covered his hands the way his hair covered his forehead.

Being three, Albus did not think about this for long periods of time. And if he thought to ask Daddy why he wore long-sleeved things, Daddy said, "It's a bit chilly, don't you think?" Or something of that sort. Which didn't make much sense to Al because Daddy usually seemed very warm.

Daddy was warm when Al crawled into his lap in the evening. Albus knew that Daddy wouldn't mind being interrupted because Daddy was doing paperwork. And Daddy **hated** paperwork.

Sure enough, he put down his quill and let Albus bounce his little Snitch ball with the buzzing wings on the desk, and they took turns grabbing it. It always made Al laugh to see the little golden ball disappear completely in Daddy's hand, which was so much bigger than his own. They kept at it until Al bounced the ball into the inkpot. But Daddy didn't get mad. He just pulled out his wand and put the mess to rights and made the Snitch ball all shiny again. Albus was so busy watching the magic that he almost missed Daddy's sleeve sliding up. But Al's eyes were quick, and so were his tiny hands. He grabbed Daddy's wand hand and pointed before it could hide in the sleeve again.

"What are those words, Daddy?"

Al felt Daddy grow very still. It made Albus worried because sometimes things—like lamps—broke when Daddy went still like that. Sometimes Daddy yelled, though almost never at Albus or James or The Baby.

"What words?"

"On your hand. What do they say?" Al stared at the back of Daddy's hand as if the meaning would somehow float into the air like a charmed advert. But all he saw were ink stains, the whiteness of Daddy's knuckles as he gripped his wand, all the little lines stretched and flattened out so that words that looked like Daddy's 'scribble writing' stood out dark pink. Al only knew printing, or else he could tell what all the letters were, they were so clear.

Daddy was quiet for so long that Albus didn't think he would answer. "They say, 'I must not tell lies.'"

His voice was soft, but Al still felt as if Daddy was very unhappy about something. His breathing was wrong, and his hand didn't feel as warm as Al thought it should. "Why, Daddy?"

"It's a reminder."

"What's a reminder?" Al looked up. Sometimes Albus thought that he could see things in Daddy's eyes since they were so much like his own.

"Something to keep me from forgetting." Daddy smiled then, so Al felt better. Whatever was making Daddy scrape thumbnail against fingernails, scratching them ragged, was not Al's fault. He snuggled against Daddy's robes and knew that everything would be fine when Daddy put away his wand and returned the hug.

"What's it you're not s'posed to forget, Daddy?"

For a moment, Daddy hugged a little too hard. Then it turned back into a normal sort of hug again and Daddy's hand with the words was on Albus' back, feeling as warm as it should. "Stand up for the truth. Even if it hurts."

FIN

Thank you, SeverusLovesUs, for the punctuation lesson. I promise, some of it will stick... one day.

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