

Mirrors

by shefa

A constrained writing set for JunoMagic written for HPcon_envy. Taking home an abandoned kitten found in an alleyway changes Severus in ways he doesn't expect.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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He strides by it the first time, casting a cursory glance over the tangle of fur whose shining eyes pierce the gloom. It's the eyes that snare him, he thinks. No matter he's long past hoping they could be windows—or mirrors—to any sort of soul.

But *these* eyes hold him fast, determined to discover his heart's desire. They pull him from his well-worn route into the alley where abandoned animals and little boys roam when mothers, too soon, loose their hold.

He hates how the shadows fall here; it's no place for children, especially not those who purr.

~**~

Hermione takes in the ratty kitten the way she welcomes all orphaned creatures—as if she's been waiting for the opportunity all her life. She gathers the ball of sharp angles and fur into her arms with all the efficiency of a mediwitch, tending to him with gentle hands and crooning voice.

Severus schools his expression into the remote one that serves him well with that other cat, the orange one whose own gaze would pierce him if he yielded.

"It's only until we find him a home," he says and she nods absently. "It's bad enough I put up with that bag of orange cat hair and attitude," he mutters just as Crookshanks saunters over, leaping to the arm of Severus's chair to supervise.

When the kitten is finally fed, marginally cleaner, and tucked into a nest of soft cloth near the hearth to sleep, the cat looks at Severus, who fancies he sees reproach in those yellow eyes.

"I've got your number, mongrel," he hisses.

But there's no rebuke greeting him there, only soft orange fur that clings to everything and a head butt from Crookshanks that says more clearly than words, "Mongrel, I've got your number, too."

~**~

When he curls his body around hers on their bed, bodies flushed from lovemaking, he thinks he might have enjoyed being a cat.

She draws a lazy finger along a collarbone that doesn't jut out anymore as it had in lonelier times, trailing after it with her tongue. "Salty," she murmurs into his skin. "Sweet." He would purr if he were a cat, he thinks, but he is a wizard and so makes do with a voice rough with pleasure and his own dexterous hands.

Later, sated again, the impatient meow from outside their bedroom door finds them, and he can't help it. He smirks. A bit.

They've come to a *détente*, he and the half-kneazle. They understand one another now—two half bloods, unwanted for too long to drop their guards easily, no matter the warmth of the welcome. As the one who appeared much later in Hermione's life, Severus still revels in the knowledge that when the bedroom door closes, *he* is on the inside.

Chosen.

Being chosen by Hermione (and choosing her, he hastens to remind himself) is undoubtedly the height of transcendence. She chose him despite un-gorgeous features (though thankfully not squashed) and surly disposition. It's *him* she wants.

He flicks his wand and the door creaks open. He's surprised that it's the kitten gliding into the room. *Meow!* and the silvery-white creature fairly flies from chair to side-table to bed, coming to rest on Severus's chest as if it were his personal throne. The kitten's pelt is silky; its fine baby strands weave between the knots Hermione hasn't yet untangled.

"He prefers you, Severus," Hermione murmurs, half asleep.

He just scowls.

But his hands are gentle, cupping the kitten's fragile body as he gently works out the knots that harsh elements left in his fur.