

The Tale of No

by Battle of Lissa

Very tiny, precocious, and prone to trouble, No has come to Hogwarts. And Severus and Hermione find life as they've known it thrown out the window. Written as a gift for Ladyinthecloak for the between2snakes LJ community.

One

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Anything you recognize belongs to JKR. I do not profit from writing this story.

Author's Notes: This was written as a gift for [ladyinthecloak](#). I've never written a drabble before or a 'happy' fic. I decided to attempt both in her honor.

-Many, many thanks to my beta, [luvsev](#).

Many had told Hermione this day would come, but she'd staunchly refused to believe them.

She was destined for greater things.

At only eighteen, she had assisted the great Harry Potter in defeating the vilest wizard known to magic folk.

An unorthodox N.E.W.T. examination following a non-existent seventh year had given her the highest marks in five decades.

Now, at twenty-three, Hermione had returned to Hogwarts as the new Transfiguration professor.

She wasn't the least bit enthralled.

And it appeared that the only person who was at the door to greet her wasn't even old enough to attend classes.

"No!" The toddler pulled her chubby thumb out of her mouth only to scream that one word.

As if transported to some alternate reality, Hermione carelessly dropped her bags and scanned the halls.

What in the world was a small child doing at Hogwarts?

"Eh... hello, little one. What's your name?"

"NO!" The bright-eyed child screeched louder.

"Nice to meet you, No. How about telling me your mummy's name?"

The tiny girl opened her mouth and screamed at the top of her lungs.

Hermione didn't have time to so much as flinch before a different sort of sound distracted her.

It was a sound Hermione had thought she'd never hear again.

She hadn't heard it for seven years. Not since she was a student.

Rawhide boots scrapping across the flagstone, powered by long, slim legs. Voluminous robes whipping in determined haste.

It shamed her to admit, even now, it was a sound which instilled fear.

Two pigtails bouncing on her head, the little girl clapped eagerly before raising her hands towards Professor Snape.

The dour man hadn't so much as blinked in response to the child's excitement before gathering her in his arms.

A long glare was Hermione's only welcome.

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"He *found* her?" Hermione gasped.

"Hush! Lower your voice." Minerva sent a quelling glance around the lawn to ensure they were still alone.

"Sorry. Is she Muggle?"

"Her parents were, if that is what you are asking. As for the rest, only time will tell."

The two women strolled on, pretending ease before Hermione asked the expected.

"Did Professor Snape kill..."

"Voldemort was defeated six years ago," Minerva interrupted monotonously.

But as Order members, both women were aware that the death of Voldemort had not destroyed the Death Eater faction. It had merely gone underground, along with an invaluable spy.

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Scrubbing at her blackboard, Hermione had no indication she wasn't alone.

She nearly screeched at the unexpected whack behind the knee, more surprised at the blow than the minimal pain.

A burst of gleeful laughter sang behind her.

The child had struck her with a Potions stirring rod.

"That wasn't very nice, No," Hermione said softly, plucking the rod out of the toddler's tiny fist.

"Not nice!" the child agreed with a grin.

Hermione couldn't help smiling before picking her up.

"I cannot fathom why the man allows you to roam about. Let's return you to the dungeons, shall we?"

The door to Professor Snape's private rooms stood out in the dank corridor, seeing as it had been left wide open.

The child kicked her legs about once they'd entered into the Professor's private living space, insisting to be let down.

"No, no, sweetie. We need to find..."

"Pretty dress!" the child squealed towards the doorway.

Face an unnatural shade of red, Professor Snape stormed into the room. Some unspoken anxiety seemed to clear once he'd identified the child in Hermione's arms.

Finally managing to free herself from the Transfiguration professor's hold, the toddler flung herself around one of Snape's legs.

"Pretty dress!" the little girl sang again once Professor Snape had placed his hand upon the crown of her head.

"I trust you can find the door."

If the child wasn't in the room, Hermione would've cursed him for his rudeness. It appeared some people never change.

The young woman planted her feet and crossed her arms. "*You're welcome.*"

"Funny. I do not recall ever saying thank you."

"Exactly."

Hermione couldn't maintain her ire.

Singing unintelligibly, the child had completely wrapped herself in Snape's long cloak, dancing about.

Watching Snape struggle to maintain his balance, Hermione burst out laughing.

"I believe you have been dismissed, Miss Granger!"

"Now I understand why she calls you that." Hermione sputtered through giggles.

"I said LEAVE!"

"NOT NICE!" Her chubby finger pointing up at the tall man, the little girl frowned in response to his bellowing.

Professor Snape pinched the bridge between his brow and groaned.

"Why do you allow her to roam as she pleases? It's dangerous."

"I am fully aware of the danger, and I do not allow her to roam about. DOBBY!"

The intimidated house-elf appeared in the room with a loud crack.

Releasing her black dress, the child squealed excitedly.

"*Explain.*"

"Dobby is sorry, sir."

"You cannot have a house-elf baby-sit, Professor!" Hermione was appalled.

"Seeing as your continued presence is most unwelcome, I believe you should assume your opinions are unwanted as well. And I'll have you know that this is a common practice among purebloods."

"I'm certain you also know purebloods tend to have spoiled, willful children."

Snape snorted.

"Dobby," Hermione asked knowingly, "how do you attempt to keep her in these rooms?"

"I asks her to 'please stay,' Harry Potter's friend."

"You *ask* her?"

Hermione ignored the man's snarl.

"Of course Dobby *asks* her! He's a *house-elf*."

"And what does she do when you ask her to stay put?"

"NO!" the little girl answered gleefully. Clapping her hands, she jumped up and down, then kissed Dobby on the cheek.

"My... you are quite in a predicament, aren't you, Professor? I believe I'll leave *now*."

Face in the palm in his hand, Snape completely ignored the woman as he fought to steady his breathing.

"You're the epitome of trouble, aren't you?"

Hermione slightly paused before closing the door behind her. The words may have been that of a reprimand, but she'd never heard Snape address anyone so quietly.

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At breakfast the next morning, Hermione was quick to address Professor Snape before he made an effort to shut her out.

Classes were to begin soon, and he still had quite a predicament on his hands.

Grinning calculatingly, Hermione lowered herself into a vacated seat beside the silent man... even though many others were clearly available.

A single eyebrow, raised in skepticism, was the only greeting he'd given her.

"I'm curious, Professor..."

He groaned. Long and deep.

"Is she to remain with you for the remainder of the school year?"

Snape stiffened defensively. "She is to remain with me. Period."

Hermione read into his statement, just as he'd intended her to.

"I must admit... it will be wonderful to have such young blood in the castle. I'm sure Minerva mentioned my... ah... reluctance to teach this year..."

"I fail to see how such information would concern me."

"...but I'm certainly up for the challenge." Hermione reveled at the knowledge that she now sat beside this man as an equal.

In her over-excited rambles, Hermione noticed that Snape had grown more... uncomfortable. During a long, uneasy silence Hermione had finally realized that her body had slightly edged closer to his.

"Where is she?" Hermione demanded suddenly.

"I chained her foot to my writing desk."

"WHAT?"

Professor Snape threw his fork upon his plate. "*Honestly*, Miss Granger!"

A high-pitched giggle erupted from under the table.

Bending down, Hermione lifted the table-cloth with a sharp snap.

"Boo!" the toddler shrieked.

"Good morning, No!"

The little girl eagerly climbed into her lap.

"*Do not* call her that. She barely understands the meaning of that word as it is."

Hermione snorted. "Then what is her name?"

Snape hesitated before answering, "Eileen."

"Ah." In other words, this child was named the day he... found... her.

Hermione scooted her chair closer to the Head table, enabling Eileen to reach the food on her plate.

Severus mutely glared at the two of them while Hermione allowed the child to stuff her chubby fists into her mouth.

"She's too young to use a fork, Professor."

"How would you know? You didn't even bother to place one in her hand. Besides, she's of the proper age to begin learning."

"You know her age, then?"

"I'm assuming it's anywhere between twenty and thirty months of age."

Hermione nodded in agreement.

"You won't be using Dobby's services anymore, I take it?"

Severus didn't answer. His entire body stilled in response to Hermione's pert observation. Even the food in his mouth was forgotten mid-chew.

Hermione dared to laugh, which Eileen copied happily, sputtering egg onto the table.

Wiping the child's mouth, Hermione said, "What is to be done with you now, No?"

"I said not to call her that!"

"Shall we leave you in the teacher's lounge?" Hermione continued, ignoring the dour man at her side.

"NO!"

"How about the dungeons?"

"NO!" Eileen clutched at Hermione, no longer finding this game very fun.

"She will be watched by Professor Vector."

"NO!"

"WHAT?"

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Before Professor Snape had recovered Eileen from Hermione's arms and left the Great Hall, she had refused to admit to her old professor that she was a bit... offended... by his selection of guardianship.

For many reasons, Hermione had assumed he'd ask *her* to baby-sit Eileen.

After all, she was a new teacher, therefore her work-load was fairly light. And Hermione knew for a fact that she had free periods whenever he was scheduled to lecture.

But Vector?

The woman was known to have the patience of a caged Hippogriff.

Hermione started, slamming her lesson-planning book at that last thought.

Arrogant, stubborn wizard, Hermione thought to herself, running at full speed through the corridors.

At breakfast, the man had mentioned leaving for the day to replenish his potions ingredients. That can only mean Eileen had been with the beastly woman for hours.

She heard the child's gasping cries long before she had reached Vector's classroom.

Not a single word was said.

Vector's face was flushed with frustration.

Eileen flung herself from her cower beneath a desk, running into Hermione's outstretched arms.

Sending one disgusted glare at her former professor, Hermione exited the classroom, kicking the door closed with her heel.

Later that evening, Hermione anticipated the firm, impatient knock upon her door.

Crossing her living space, she yanked it open and expected the worse.

Her expectations were unfounded.

Severus Snape stood silently in the doorway. He looked past Hermione, identified Eileen sleeping on the sofa and nodded once as if satisfied.

"I...thank... you," he said uncomfortably.

Hermione lowered her defensive hand from her hip. "You're not...?"

"Upset? No. Vector told me what happened. It wasn't very difficult to read the truth between her words. Considering everything... I am...aware...you wouldn't have taken her without reason."

Hermione smiled and invited him inside.

Hermione lifted a tea-cup to her lips, hiding the smile that had been growing for the last half-hour.

Sitting beside the sleeping toddler, the older man seemed completely unaware that the hand he'd placed upon the crown of the child's head now toyed with her hair.

"I'd offer to keep her for the night, but I know you'll say 'no.'" Hermione smiled as she spoke. "Besides, it might scare her to wake up in such unfamiliar surroundings."

Severus didn't agree or disagree, but continued with his unblinking stare into the fire.

"What is she to call you?"

"I've no idea."

Hermione allowed silence to pass before asking, "You're in over your head, aren't you?"

"Yes," he answered without shame. "And it scares me. But the alternatives frighten me more."

"Orphanage?" Hermione ventured.

"Out of the question."

"Extended family?"

"Ghastly creatures unfit to manage the children they already have...what exactly is so amusing about this, Miss Granger?"

"As I said this morning... the idea of having young blood in the castle is wonderful."

Severus grunted in agreement.

Clearing his throat meaningfully, Severus warily glanced at the woman from the corner of his eye before asking, "Are you free tomorrow, around one?"

To her dismay, Hermione flushed from head to toe. "Excuse me?"

"I will be indisposed and need..."

"Oh! Of course I'll watch her. Do you mind if I take her for a walk round the castle grounds?"

Professor Snape glanced down at the little girl, brows furrowed in thought. "I suppose I don't..."

"Excellent."

"Nowhere near the lake."

"All... right."

"Or the beasts in or around Hagrid's hut."

"If you insist..."

"And absolutely nowhere near the Forbidden Forest."

"Honestly! I'm not a bloody idiot!"

"Language, Miss Granger," he sneered, lip curling.

"And I am *not* your student, either."

Frowning once more, Severus turned his face away from her hot-tempered gaze only to reply, "Indeed."

Hermione believed that he was somehow disturbed by her words.

"I think we should take our leave."

"I did not intend to make you feel unwelcome. You don't have to..."

"I am not *fleeing* from your ire, Miss Granger. But it is getting very late."

Now it was Hermione's turn to frown.

Snape chuckled sarcastically. "Don't look as if you want us to stay."

Hermione didn't respond right away, reddening once again.

Severus cleared his throat and forced himself to sound impersonal. "Good evening."

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Severus Snape had a problem.

He couldn't identify exactly what that problem was, but he knew exactly when it had begun.

Eileen had started to demand to see Hermione on the days the Transfiguration professor was not scheduled to watch her.

"Her-my-my!" she'd command.

"Not today."

"No! Her-my-my!"

"You will play with her tomorrow, Eileen."

"HER-MY-MY!"

Severus groaned, lowering his quill in anticipation for the climax of the tantrum.

One long, high-pitched scream.

He then quickly gathered the toddler in his arms and fled to Hermione's rooms.

Increasing his unexplainable discomfort, the woman had been very eager to take her.

"The child is determined to drive me insane."

Hermione grinned knowingly. When it came to Eileen, Severus Snape was a horrid liar. "You're spoiling her."

"I am merely giving my inner-ear some needed rest."

"It pleases you to please her," Hermione accused.

Severus dramatically rolled his eyes. "Return her when you've had your fill."

"No wait!" Hermione snatched his robes by the elbow.

Severus froze, his back facing her.

Quickly removing her hand, Hermione continued. "You don't have to leave... I think she'd enjoy...*I'd enjoy...*"

Stunned, he whirled around only to be pulled inside by tiny persistent hands.

Hermione leaned against the closed door and smiled indulgently.

Professor Snape attempting to relax in her rooms seemed like the epitome of a fish out of water.

Picking up a parchment splattered with paint and glitter, Severus casually commented, "I take it this is how the two of you spend your time."

"One of the ways, yes. She enjoys how the colors mix. And how do you play..."

Severus cut her off with one long, emotionless glare before pointing at the child's presence behind him. Once again, Eileen was singing gibberish, wrapped in the man's robes.

"Ah."

Not laughing was impossible.

"Your turn," Eileen insisted, pounding the palm of her hand against a book on the end-table.

Severus raised an eyebrow in response.

"Story time!" Eileen clarified, slamming her fist harder.

Sitting down and placing the book on his lap, Severus started once he'd identified what it was. "This is not suitable material for a toddler!"

"Well, she likes it."

"Knowing you, she must have no other choice than to like it. I doubt you've attempted to read anything else!"

Eileen touched two fingers to her nose before sighing dramatically. "Her-my-my... your turn." Curled next to Snape, Eileen patted the cushion.

Severus handed her the book. "Hogwarts, A History," he snorted, shaking his head.

One chubby finger pressed against her mouth, Eileen shushed him soundly.

Hermione read with energy, beginning with the toddler's favorite stories about the schools founders. Eileen gleefully interrupted Hermione, pointing and identifying the wizards and witches in the photos, then instructed her to continue by chants of, "Your turn!"

Snape had remained a silent observer in all this... initially.

Growing comfortable, he extended his arm across the back of the couch, congratulating Eileen's accurate identifications.

Before either of them realized it, his fingers toyed with curly hair.

Author's Notes: This was written for the *between2snakes* LJ community in appreciation for all the hard work **ladyinthecloak** has done in the fandom. I also send my gratitude to **luvsev** for the beta and to **southern witch** for inviting me to participate and her gentle advice.

-Many other awesome gifts for ladyinthecloak can be found here: <http://community.livejournal.com/between2snakes/>