

Appreciating Tchaikovsky

by karelia

Hermione shuddered as her eyes fell on the centre of the courtroom. Mr Malfoy was tightly chained to a chair and had obvious trouble breathing. Mrs Malfoy was seated in a chair beside him, although her chains were looser.

Appreciating Tchaikovsky

Chapter 1 of 1

Hermione shuddered as her eyes fell on the centre of the courtroom. Mr Malfoy was tightly chained to a chair and had obvious trouble breathing. Mrs Malfoy was seated in a chair beside him, although her chains were looser.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Pity, that.

"Hold on, Harry." Hermione tugged at his sleeve. "I... I'm sorry. The memories of this place..." She let out a shuddering breath.

"Yeah." Harry stopped and patted her arm in a calming gesture. "I know what you mean."

Hermione swallowed hard and took a deep breath. "Okay. I'm ready. I hope this won't take long."

The two friends continued on to Courtroom 10, coming to a halt in front of the closed door.

Harry leant his ear against the door. "Damn, should have thought to bring Extendable Ears," he muttered.

"Potter," said a silky voice from behind.

Harry's and Hermione's heads flew around. "Professor Snape!" Neither had heard him approach.

"Surely, you're not here in defence of the Malfoys?" he asked, his voice incredulous, his look calculating. "It is somewhat late if you wish to make accusations."

"Of course defence," Harry said.

"The Malfoys suffered enough in the last months of the war, don't you think?" Hermione added.

The door opened, and an old wizard beckoned the three inside before Professor Snape had a chance to reply.

Hermione shuddered as her eyes fell on the centre of the courtroom. Mr Malfoy was tightly chained to a chair and had obvious trouble breathing. Mrs Malfoy was seated in a chair beside him, although her chains were looser. Both had clearly seen better days. *Can Azkaban not even provide hair brushes?* Hermione thought, irked by the Ministry's ignorance of basic needs and sorry for the loss of perfection that had once epitomised the Malfoy family.

As soon as the judge announced the defence witnesses, inviting Professor Snape to step forward, the dark man stood tall and drawled, "I suggest you loosen Mr Malfoy's chains if you do not wish to be held responsible for his premature demise."

The judge stared, then shook his head. Finally, he grinned sheepishly and motioned for the Auror behind the couple to loosen Malfoy's chains.

Hermione watched and listened intently as Snape was questioned by the judge and furnished his answers. Truthfully, she realized, from what she knew.

Harry went next, and he answered all questions to the best of his knowledge. When the door opened half-way through his questioning, revealing Kingsley Shacklebolt, Harry let out a relieved sigh.

The Minister interrupted to greet the wizarding world's saviour. "All right, Harry?"

When Harry answered in the affirmative, Kingsley turned to the young witch beside him. "Thank you for your willingness to testify, Hermione. I appreciate it."

"Hello, Kingsley. I'd like to think that now is a good time to start aiming for *ajust* world, don't you? And on that note, I'm not sure why Mrs Malfoy is still in chains. There have been no definite charges besides conspiring with her husband, and both Professor Snape and Harry have already testified; yet she's still being treated like a criminal."

Harry cast a glance of admiration at his friend.

Kingsley frowned momentarily. "Let me check with the judge."

Mrs Malfoy's chains disappeared, and the hearing continued.

"Were you tortured and held against your will inside Malfoy Manor, Miss Granger?" the judge asked.

"I was," Hermione said, nodding. "But it was the Snatchers who took me there and Bellatrix Lestrange who tortured me. Neither Mr nor Mrs Malfoy had anything to do with that as far as I know. In fact, the few times I saw either of them, they looked like they were there entirely against their will. In their own home, I might add. Like Harry, I firmly believe that they only stayed with Voldemort because they had no choice. What parent would willingly sacrifice their child? Certainly not them. Their actions at the end of the war clearly showed that."

She only just caught Snape's glance. His impression was inscrutable. Guilt threatened to overwhelm her once again as she thought how they'd left him for dead in the Shrieking Shack. Weeks later they had learned that he had survived courtesy of the Malfoys. How the couple had managed, she had no idea. She remembered all three of them sitting huddled together in the Great Hall for hours after Voldemort had finally fallen and had wondered more than once how they'd succeeded in saving Professor Snape's life.

Finally, the judge was ready to pronounce the Malfoys' fate.

Only a handful of people applauded as the Malfoys were granted their freedom and Mr Malfoy's chains disappeared.

Hermione watched Professor Snape help the blond wizard out of the chair, leading him towards the back door. Narcissa whispered into her husband's ear, then stood unaided. She'd either been better treated or had a stronger constitution, Hermione thought and was surprised when the blonde walked towards her and Harry.

"Mr Potter, Miss Granger. I know simple words of thanks are insufficient in the extreme, but it is all I have for now. Thank you." She nodded slightly and, without waiting for a reply, turned to follow her husband and Professor Snape through the door.

Narcissa silently observed her sister's behaviour, inwardly cringing. In post-war wizarding Britain, it was all well and good that pureblood families were once again cosy...no matter their association with Muggle-borns...but Andromeda's mannerisms bordered on the ridiculous, and her inevitable emergence every single time Severus was visiting was downright eerie.

A grandmother behaving like a teenager, Narcissa thought, irritated at her older sister and embarrassed on Severus's behalf, although he appeared to take the witch's advances in a stride. He obviously had enough now, however, as he stood up abruptly and faced Lucius and Narcissa. "Sorry. I must take my leave. There are potions that need tending to." He touched his neck in a meaningful gesture.

Narcissa stood up and accompanied him to the door. "I'm so sorry, Severus. I'll make sure she won't turn up next time you visit." A thought suddenly struck her, and she smirked. "Alternatively, I could invite Miss Granger; I owe her my freedom after all and have been thinking of inviting her. Her presence is sure to take the edge off Andromeda's advances."

Her smirk widened into a grin when he glared at her. "Yes, Narcissa, just what I need: a former student to flirt with instead of a middle-aged, frustrated witch."

"She likes Tchaikovsky, I heard," Narcissa said conversationally as she opened the door for him. Her long-ingrained observational skills did not miss the minute hitch in his breath. "You do need a partner, Severus. A worthy partner." Her words had been uttered softly, ensuring he couldn't hear, as she closed the door and returned to the drawing room where, thankfully, Andromeda was preparing to leave.

"Sister, dearest, I agree you need a man, but Severus isn't the one, trust me." Narcissa smiled thinly, and Andromeda frowned.

"I know that, Cissy!" she exclaimed. "But I need some practice in dealing with men. It's been so long." Her sigh was heavy.

"Good. As long as we're clear on that." Narcissa embraced her and planted an obligatory kiss on her cheek before nearly slamming the door. *Bella would have Crucioed you*, she thought with a hint of nostalgia.

"No, Lucius," Narcissa hissed, and her husband abandoned his attempt to open the window and call out to his friend; instead, he turned to face her, frowning. She didn't normally call him by his name.

"What are you up to, Cissy?" he enquired.

"Nothing much," she said evasively. When his frown deepened, she sighed inwardly. "Trust me?"

"Always." He nodded in confirmation. "But I'm curious."

"Let's say," she started while gazing out through the window into the grounds' rose garden, "that I'm facilitating love."

"Facilitating love, eh?" He looked amused, but then sneered as his eyes followed hers. "Between Severus and a Mudblood?"

"Yes, my love. Andromeda isn't suitable for him, and said Mudblood saved our arses, remember? I don't exactly recall any of our esteemed pureblood friends at the trial, do you?" Narcissa raised her eyebrow at her husband. Occasionally, he was... somewhat slow on the uptake. Not that it stopped her from loving him fiercely...now as much as she had the day she'd said yes.

"True, true. But what do you know about their shared interests? Do they even have any?"

Ah, he was finally gathering his brain cells and put them in working order, Narcissa thought with relief. The recent past had taken a toll, and there had been times she'd nearly lost hope. Things suddenly looked promising, and she replied with gusto, "Tchaikovsky, for a start. I shall wave my wand in a moment to offer them the 1812

Overture, and I fully expect them to kiss before it ends. They do share many other interests; I've been watching them. Neither has stopped talking except to listen to the other, and they've been standing in the same spot for the past hour and a half." She smiled at her husband. "They've probably smelled up the entire contingent of our roses by now. I shan't be surprised if the roses have no scent left after tonight."

He peered over her shoulder. "I see."

"Do you? Let's find out." Narcissa cast a spell, and suddenly, the manor and grounds were filled with the doleful beginning of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture.

She smiled at her husband when he conjured a table and chairs right inside the rose garden and then instructed the house-elf to provide food. "Can't have romance without a picnic, now, can we..."

They watched together as Severus led the young witch to the table and pulled out a chair for her.

"See? He does like her," Narcissa said, her voice filled with smug satisfaction.

"Yes, I can see that, love. But the 1812 is nearly over, and they..." He fell silent when his friend bent down to ruffle the young witch's hair and then kissed her forehead.

"It's a start, wouldn't you say?" Narcissa asked almost gleefully.

"Indeed, wife. And if you aren't too hungry, I'd like to listen to the 1812 in the privacy of our bedroom."

She managed to hide the wide grin that threatened. It had been a month since they'd been out of the hell hole that was Azkaban, and he'd been melancholy for the most part of it. If all it took to get him back into bed was scheming some love story, she'd cope. Happily so. If Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture was involved, all the better. "Love, I thought you'd never ask."

He stretched out his hand, and she took it gracefully, Severus and the Granger girl and the roses with their likely lack of scent entirely forgotten.

Prompt from Kyria: The trial of Lucius Malfoy/ Courtroom 10/ who speaks up for him?

Prompt from Debjunk: 1812 Overture (in case you'd like to hear the version I wrote this to, it's here: Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzMGzBKRttU>, Part 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkS9THHjp38>), a picnic, and a rose

A/N: According to MS Word, this tale, including disclaimer and prompt information, is 1812 words long.

Grateful thanks to grangerous for the fast beta and SouthernWitch69 for a final read-through.