

Phoenix Feathers

by magalena

Severus is in need of a rare potions ingredient, and Hermione knows where to get it. Written originally at hpcon_envy for a challenge by Bambu345, the prompts were: dusk and phoenix feathers.

Phoenix Feathers at dusk

Chapter 1 of 1

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Severus perused the list of ingredients he needed for the potion for a special burn paste strong enough to heal scars from dragon's fire. He'd had a special request from Charlie Weasley, who was now in charge of the dragon preserve in Romania; one of his workers had gotten badly burned in a freak accident and now was quite badly scarred. Severus knew he needed something much stronger than a regular burn paste. He'd found the potion in an obscure book that he'd picked up in a little, out-of-the-way book store in Edinburgh.

The problem was one of the key ingredients was the tail feather of a phoenix. Since Dumbledore's death, however, Fawkes had disappeared from Hogwarts, and Severus was not aware of any other readily available source for phoenix feathers. He'd just discovered a new business venture that claimed to be able to locate the rarest of ingredients in the Wizarding world. He wasn't sure if he could trust their sources, but at this point he had little choice. He sent an owl off to Logralo's Ingredient Shop; their motto was "We specialize in rare and unusual ingredients. If we can't find it, nobody can." He hoped they were as good as they claimed. He'd checked with all his usual suppliers and hadn't had any luck so far; he might as well give this place a try.

He received a reply promptly the next morning, stating that while they did not have the phoenix feathers in stock, they had no doubt they could locate them for him. The note also stated that while they normally charged quite a hefty finder's fee for such an extremely difficult to locate item, they would be willing to waive said fee under certain circumstances. Would he be willing to meet with their representative the next day at dusk at the Leaky Cauldron, to negotiate the terms? Terms? What could he have that they could possibly want, he wondered, but he agreed to the meeting anyway.

He couldn't have been more surprised to walk into the Leaky Cauldron's private meeting room to find Hermione Granger waiting for him than if it had been Voldemort himself sitting there.

"Miss Granger, what a surprise. You are not at all who I expected."

"So sorry to disappoint you, Professor. Or do you prefer Headmaster?" she replied.

"I didn't say I was disappointed, Miss Granger, merely surprised. And as you are no longer my student and it appears that we may be doing business together, perhaps you could find it possible to call me Severus?"

"Of course," she acquiesced. "If you would consent to calling me Hermione."

"Very well, Hermione. What exactly is this meeting about, then? What is it we are supposed to be negotiating?"

"As I'm sure you are aware, Logralo's is a new business, and we would like to establish ourselves in the Wizarding world as a reputable supplier of ingredients of all sorts. What better way to do that than to secure a contract with the best known Potions Master in all of Britain?"

"Surely, you flatter me."

"Flattery? I think not, Severus, merely the unvarnished truth. A contract to supply ingredients for your personal brewing needs, as well as to supply Hogwarts, would guarantee us a certain credibility in our area of expertise: rare and unusual ingredients."

"And how am I to know that your firm is, in fact, reputable?" he asked.

She looked briefly as though his comment had hurt her feelings, but realizing he had a point, he really knew nothing of their business, she answered honestly. "You give us a chance, Severus. That's all you have to do, give us a chance. If we don't perform to your satisfaction, you can fire us. It's that simple."

He eyed her speculatively for a moment before replying, "You feel you can get me the phoenix feathers? I need them in a timely manner. I can't be waiting for weeks."

"Without a doubt," she replied earnestly.

"Very well, Hermione. Here is what I will offer: you get me the feathers, and I will sign a one year contract with your company."

"A three year contract," she argued.

"Two years with an option to renew," he countered. "And I want it in writing that if your firm does not live up to our agreement, the contract will be terminated."

"It's a deal," she cried. Reaching under the table, she pulled out her briefcase and produced a sheaf of papers.

"What is this?" he asked, clearly puzzled.

"Our contract."

"Oh, no, Hermione. I said I would sign this after you get me the phoenix feathers."

Reaching back into her bag, without a word she handed him a long narrow box. Opening it carefully, he found not one, but two perfect, golden phoenix tail feathers. "How did you find these so quickly? I just owled your shop yesterday and was told they were not in stock."

"Yesterday they weren't, but now, they are. We aim to please, Severus," she replied with a smile. "Would you be willing to sign my contract now?"

His fingers tapped idly on the table. He was wondering if he'd been duped. Still, she had supplied the feathers, although he now knew that she'd had them in her possession all along. "I don't suppose you would tell me where you procured these from?"

With a sly smirk she teased, "Well, it's confidential. I can't reveal my sources. I suppose I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you."

Shaking his head, he commanded with a chuckle, "Give me the damn contract. I'll sign it." Signing it with a flourish, he demanded, "Don't make me regret this, Hermione."

"I hope you'll never regret our association, Severus," she said, tapping the papers with her wand to make duplicates and causing the original to vanish, automatically on file at the Ministry. "I'm sure you'll be seeing a lot of me from now on."

They drank a toast to their new alliance. Gathering her things to leave, she asked him, "It's nearly dark, would you walk me back to the shop? You could renew your acquaintance with my partners."

"Partners? Who are your partners?" he asked, curious.

"Oh, you know them quite well, Severus. They're former students as well. I thought you might have figured it out. I am the gra in Logralo. I thought you might have already guessed who the other two are, but apparently not."

He thought for a moment before the reality of it dawned on him. "Oh no, tell me it's not..."

"Lo-Gra-Lo, Lovegood-Granger-Longbottom, Logralo's," she replied with a huge grin on her face. "Luna is well versed in strange and unusual creatures. She can get us all sorts of things from Unicorn blood or hair to Acromantula silk to an eyelash from a Crumple-Horned Snorkack. And Neville, of course, is the resident expert on anything herbological. If it grows, he's our man to find it."

For a moment she thought he was going to be angry. He seemed to be contemplating the whole concept, but he finally accepted it. Holding tightly to her arm, he demanded, "I will honor our contract and accept your partners, but on one condition, Hermione."

"And what condition is that, Severus?"

"All my dealings must be with you. I don't want to put up with Longbottom's or Lovegood's antics. I'm sure they're both quite brilliant in their own way, but I don't want to deal with them." He pulled her close to him with his final demand, "I am, however, more than willing to deal closely with you."

Looking up into his face with a knowing smile, she linked her arm with his and replied as she led him off toward Logralo's, "And I'll be quite happy to deal very closely with you, Severus. Very closely, indeed."

~fin~