

The Science of Dating

by OpalJade

Professor Granger experiences a different kind of dating.

One Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This is my response to the "Age Challenge" on GS100. Massive thanks to Lulabelle72 and Lariope for the beta and encouragement.

"Severus, how would you go about dating a tree in the magical world?"

"Has the situation truly become so desperate, Professor Granger... dating trees?" asked Snape snidely. "Are there no options left for you in the Animal Kingdom?"

"Very funny, Snape," replied Hermione rolling her eyes. "I'm trying to figure out the *age* of a tree without having to cut it down."

"Might I suggest using proper terminology if you wish to avoid mockery? The science of determining the age of a tree, or as you so eloquently put it--*tree dating*, is referred to as..."

"Dendrochronology, I know."

~~~100~~~

Hermione set her quill on her research paper and looked at her colleague with an exasperated expression.

"Can you help me or not?"

"Why do you need the exact age of a tree, Miss Granger?" asked Snape, intrigued despite himself.

Hermione hesitated. If she was to share her idea with Snape, he would surely ridicule her.

"Forget it. Since *I wish to avoid mockery*, I think I'd better ask someone else to help me."

"Suit yourself, Granger. I'm sure the esteemed Professor Longbottom will assist you. But if you change your mind, I will be in the forest at dusk."

~~~100~~~

Hermione followed Snape briskly down the narrow dirt path surrounded by oak trees whose branches were touching overhead, forming a leafy tunnel. The setting sun snuck through the foliage to cast a warm glow on the surrounding ferns. Hermione found herself appreciating the beauty of the wilderness, a task that was much easier to do when not hiding from crazed Dark Wizards.

Snape stopped ahead of her directly in front of a mature, peeling birch tree. Without looking back he said quietly,

"I believe your idea of correlating the age of the wood with the wand user has some merit."

~~~100~~~

Snape concentrated on the lesson at hand and carefully pushed his index finger through the bark. He described what he was doing in a slow, precise voice. "Once you have loosened the magnetic field of the tree, slowly push your finger in until you can find the centre. Slowly, work your way back out, counting the ridges inside with your finger. Do not forget to reset the tree's energy field afterwards, or it will die."

Hermione frowned. "I think I can loosen the magnetic field, but how will I know when I reach the centre or what the ridges feel like?"

~~~100~~~

Snape grabbed her hand and eased it through the birch bark. His hand over hers, he manipulated her index finger over the wood where the smooth circular centre was located.

"Feel the difference in the texture?" he inquired behind her while pressing down on her hand to show the exact position.

The only 'texture' she could feel was the warm pressure of his hand around hers. It was strangely erotic to have her fingers intertwined with her colleague's inside a living tree.

The fact that neither moved for a very long time had nothing to do with the advanced age of the tree.

~~~The End~~~