

Slytherin Persuasion

by karelia

Severus convinces Lucius to try Indian food.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Not mine.

"Leave it to me, Narcissa," said Hermione, touching the older witch's arm in a gesture of comfort. "We've got Severus on our side; I'm sure it won't take a lot to convince Lucius." She cast an encouraging grin at her friend, glad her own husband wasn't as stubborn as the Malfoy patriarch.

Narcissa nodded, a tentative smile gracing her lips. "Let's hope so. As long as he isn't aware that someone manipulates him... I'd love to go..." She embraced Hermione before Disapparating.

Hermione grinned to herself as she walked through the grounds of Hogwarts, a plan slowly taking shape.

Lucius wrinkled his nose as he followed Severus through the door. "Severus, please! How long have you known me? And you think this...*establishment* would appeal to me?" The cul-de-sac Severus had Apparated them to had caused Lucius reason to doubt his friend's sanity. They'd landed next to an overflowing rubbish container, and Lucius had to hurry away to avoid stepping on any rats skittering across the ground. The short walk across the road had convinced him they'd ended up in the world's worst slum. "You sure this is London?"

Severus stopped and rolled his eyes. "Thirty long years, Lucius. And have I ever given you reason not to trust me? It's London, yes. Near Aldgate and Whitechapel to be precise." His eyes gazed around the barely lit room until he spotted an unoccupied table in a corner near the back.

A waiter rushed past them carrying a tray of steaming food. Lucius breathed in deeply; the scent was most enticing. *Hm. Perhaps I should give this a chance...*

They'd barely sat down when another waiter appeared, threw a couple of menus on the table, dumped a jug of water and two glasses in front of them, and disappeared.

Lucius glared at his friend, who seemed unperturbed. "Don't mind the staff. One does not come here for the service or the ambience." Then he turned his attention to the menu. "Oh, yes. She said their *karahi gosht* is the best," he murmured.

"What?" Lucius was at a loss what Severus was talking about and had given up rather quickly on the menu. It might as well have been written in Hindi...he'd have understood no less. "I suppose I'll have to rely on you to order something I like." It was hard to suppress the sneer. Being clueless was not usually a Malfoy trait.

But as he breathed, the scent of the food served all around him crept up his nose, stroked his skin, and he found it wasn't exactly dangerous to rely on Severus where the choice of food was concerned. And besides, he was getting hungry now. Very hungry. He was grateful for the soothing music playing in the background. Bizarre music on outlandish instruments and odd voices singing in a strange language, but he found it soothing.

Severus ordered...Lucius followed his speech avidly, pretending to understand every word...as soon as the waiter appeared again, this time with a plate of some crispy rounds, some scattered with black dots, others plain, and a small tray with what looked like ketchup, piccalilli, and something green Lucius couldn't identify.

Lucius followed Severus's motions of breaking a piece off the plain round, stopping momentarily to decide which sauce to try first. The mango one, not quite as yellow as piccalilli at closer inspection, looked most appealing. He chewed the piece of plain popadum lathered with the chutney...and found himself in heaven. "Oh..." The crunchy texture of the popadum provided the ideal contrast to the sauce, its soft lentil taste an alluring balance to the spicy sweetness.

Severus smirked as he dipped a piece into the mint chutney. "Yes. I know exactly what you mean. By the way, try the one with black pepper; it's spicier."

Lucius followed his friend's advice and ventured to try the popadum scattered with black dots. It was, indeed, spicier. And better, he found. Especially with the red sauce that wasn't ketchup at all. He tasted tomato, something mildly minty, perhaps onion, and then there was a decidedly sour hint, though it wasn't the harshly tart lemony acidity. He nodded appreciatively. "Nice."

The music changed. Slightly louder now, it also seemed more Western. More appealing, though Lucius couldn't quite place the appeal.

"Ah," Severus said, "they're welcoming us whites by playing fusion. Personally, I've become rather fond of the genuine stuff, but Hermione assured me that the fusion music is of superior quality as well. Of course, she's always been fond of Menuhin."

Lucius recognised the name as well as the unmistakable sound of the violin that had started to play along with the decidedly foreign instruments. Even the drums sounded different, and the violin was comfortingly familiar. He looked around now and couldn't help notice that he and Severus were the only white people.

Severus smirked. "If you want to explore a new ethnic cuisine, go to the place that's frequented by those who are familiar with it."

The food arrived, three different dishes, accompanied by rice and flat bread and a small plate with onions, tomato and cucumber surrounded by wedges of lime. One dish was undoubtedly meat in some sauce, another could pass for chicken in tomato sauce, though the chicken pieces looked somewhat... weird, and the final one looked... disgusting in colour.

"Try the meat first." Severus pointed at the meat with sauce. "It's the mildest dish."

There was no need to question Severus's knowledge by now. Lucius scooped a spoon of meat on his plate and added some rice. Then he copied Severus and broke off a piece of bread as well.

The meat melted on his tongue; the richness of the sauce took his breath away. There were spices he no doubt had never heard of, spices that tasted like a revelation of possibilities, promises of wonder, a paradise where Narcissa awaited, keen and ready for him. The heat of one spice suddenly jerked him back to reality. It exhilarated him enough to ignore the burning sensation.

"Dhal. Lentils, but nothing like the ones Europeans cook. Add lime juice; it'll bring out the flavour." Severus pointed to the least appealing dish, though at least the chopped green coriander looked inviting.

The taste could not have been a starker contrast to its appearance. Succulent flavours of spices combined with onion and garlic and ginger forced the taste of the lentils into the background, and coriander and lime tickled his taste buds enticingly. Now he was able to enjoy the rice properly as well; the karahi gosht was better eaten without any accompaniment except a little bread for the sauce.

Lucius finally made his way to the strange-looking chicken. "Is it chicken? I cannot tell, and nothing so far smells particularly meaty; it's all a symphony of spicy scents permeating the air."

Severus smirked. "Try it." He helped himself to a generous portion, squeezed some lime over it, and broke off another piece of bread.

Right. Bread then. Not rice. His mouth formed into an o as his taste buds analysed the dish. "It's cheese!"

"Indeed," Severus said, inclining his head. "Chili paneer."

It was by far the spiciest bite he'd ever tasted, but the combination of the different shades of spiciness, the variety of flavours...at once contrasting and balancing...and the enthralling texture of the cheese as well as the very finely grated ginger also made it one of the best.

When at last the plates were cleared, Severus asked, "So, what did you think of Indian food?"

Lucius leaned back in his chair. "I must admit, it was one of the best culinary experiences to date. Certainly something I wish to taste more often, find more dishes, explore this cuisine."

Severus smirked slightly. "Hermione and I are planning to go to India over Yule. Perhaps you and Cissy would like to join us?"

"Yes! That's one of the best ideas you've had, my friend!"

Severus didn't bother to hide the smug expression when he steered his wife towards the bedroom. "The Malfoys will be joining us for our holiday, my love. You are aware you owe me, are you not?" He motioned for her to move closer to the bed. "Your choice of restaurant worked out most excellently. I can just imagine him sending house-elves to culinary schools in India."

"Wonderful! I'm sure the house-elves' speech would improve greatly if they adopted an Indian accent." Then she grinned inwardly. "What do you have in mind, husband, for me to return the favour?" A shudder of delightful anticipation ran down her spine when he conjured silk scarves and cast a spell that tied her hands neatly to the bed posts. *Two birds with one stone... I'm sure I can become a Slytherin yet.*

A/N: Lyn_F's prompt: Describe Lucius's first encounter with spicy food. The hotter, the better.

Thanks to blue_paris for the beta.