Hooting

by Pearle

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SS/HG, One-shot; DH compliant - but definitely EWE.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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- *whooo whooo:* **TheKnowItAll**- *@snape- 5 min 'til class starts. TTYL!*

The screen flashed, the echo of a metallic owl sound fading as the hoot directed at him registered on Squawk. Severus snorted; it was ironic that his previous putdown of the witch had now become a term of endearment between the two of them. If Hermione found the name amusing, that was fine with him. He balked when she'd tried to register the user name 'HBP' for him. That chapter of his life was long over; he needn't be reminded of it every time she sent him a hoot or when he sent a screech. Jokingly, she'd even suggested 'SlytherinSexGod.' His glare, unsurprisingly, had no effect on her. She had finally acquiesced when he'd said he'd use 'Snape' as his user name or not use the system at all. Fortunately, the-know-it-all knew when to stop.

Severus shook his head, a sharp pain starting behind his right eye, the feel of a headache coming on. Minerva's insistence that Hogwarts setup its own computerized system after the Ministry of Magic had successfully installed one was beyond lunacy. No need to Floo anyone anymore. Now you could sit at your desk or in the comfort of your home and send them a screech, or for a fast fix, you could hoot your mates.

He firmly believed no one needed to know what anyone was doing every minute of every day. If only he could convince Hermione of this fact instead of having her hooting him her every move, her every thought, untold times a day. For Merlin's sake, they'd just finished eating lunch not ten minutes ago. Of course class was starting in five minutes; he'd heard the bell; hadn't they walked out of the Great Hall together? Didn't they just separate not five minutes ago?

- *whooo:* **Catnip**- *#staff reminder: class logs due on fri. no exceptions.*

- **WandofFire**- *@snapsnap- library after dinner. need to work on trans essay.*

- **GoldenSnitch**- *1st #qudditch game of the season this sat. #slytherin vs #gryffindor. come out and support your team.*

- **DuelingMasters**- *#dueling club today at 3 in RofR*

- **FlowerPetals**- *@teacup-meet me at dinner. u know where. he finally asked me!*

- *whooo whooo:* **TheKnowItAll**- *@snape-3 feathers up, 21 to go *shakes head* firsties..lol... B4N*

- **ChessKing**- *@TheKnowItAll- see you sat. for the game. meeting h & g at hogwarts. lunch at 3 broomsticks after?*

Severus clicked off of Squawk. He'd go blurry eyed if he tried to read all the hoots, not that he cared what was said anyway. It had been pure genius of Hermione to come up with auditory alerts keyed to certain hash tags and users so he wouldn't miss important memos or messages. Of course, it was no surprise since she was the one who had perfected the charm groups that allowed computers to work in the magical world in the first place. After ten years with the Ministry, setting up first, government facilities and then introducing the idea to the wizarding world at large, she had decided she'd had enough of politics.

As per usual, Hogwarts was now home to another restless soul as Hermione joined the staff as the new Charms mistress the previous year after Filius had decided to retire. He couldn't say he'd been thrilled when one third of the Golden Trio had returned to Hogwarts to teach, but he'd found the witch to be an acceptable conversationalist when she'd occupied the seat next to him at the High Table or if they had happened to sit next to each other at the weekly staff meetings. They'd even spent a few amicable weekends talking about the integration of charms and potions over a butterbeer or two when they'd both been assigned to chaperon the first Hogsmeade weekend in October and again when he'd joined the staff at their regular twice monthly Friday night gatherings at the Three Broomsticks in mid-November. It was not unusual for one to seek out the other when in possession of an interesting article or new book. Their friendship might have continued on in said fashion if Hermione hadn't taken it upon herself to move things along on New Year's Eve.

Despite the obvious, he was the 'greasy git,' the 'bat of the dungeons,' an ex-Death Eater and spy, and nineteen years older than Hermione with a personality that could only be categorized as anything but pleasant, she'd smiled shyly before squaring her shoulders and raising up on tiptoe, and ... kissed him. Right there in the staff room, at the stroke of midnight, she kissed him. He'd been too shocked to respond at first, long ago resigned to a solitary life to ever imagine a witch of her caliber, or any witch for that matter, having any type of romantic interest in him. But she had kissed him, willingly. Ignoring her mumbled apology at her 'brash Gryfindorness' (a characteristic he hadn't let her forget since), he pulled her to him and kissed her soundly. It had taken a moment for Hermione to process this new development before she'd wrapped her arms around him and melted into the searing kiss. The silence had been overwhelming, as one by one those present in the staff room had stopped to stare in awe at the odd couple. The sudden quiet had finally penetrated the haze Severus was in as he and Hermione had parted to draw a much-needed breath.

He'd colored at the thought of what his colleague's reactions might be, but the smile on Hermione's face, as well as the welcoming warmth of her eyes, had eased his mind. "Would you care to join me... elsewhere for a drink?" he'd asked silkily.

"Yes, I'd like that very much." Much to the surprise of those present, the pair had left the staff room and weren't seen again until lunch the next day.

Minerva had denied it when questioned, but Severus thought he'd heard her murmur, "Well, it's about time," when they'd left the night before. At times she'd proved to be just as much of a meddling old fool as Albus had been, just without the twinkle. He'd truly been surprised to find that Minerva actually approved of their relationship when he'd spoken to her the following day.

It seemed the castle approved of his interest in Hermione as well. He'd always known the castle was a sentient being, but he suspected it was now imbued with the spirit of Albus Dumbledore as well. It seemed to be the only explanation for the changes to his quarters. Not long after he and Hermione had 'officially' become a couple, he'd noticed a change in his fireplace. It had grown wider and taller than it had been before. It was now large enough for a person to step through it. Looking through the flames, he'd found he could see into Hermione's sitting room. It seemed the castle had connected their quarters, making it easier, and less obvious if the two spent the night together, a change that pleased him even if he hadn't been the one to request it. If Minerva knew of this change, she never commented on it to either party, but every so often, he would catch her watching him and wonder just how much influence she had on the old structure. The sound of the door opening quickly brought him out of his revere.

The door creaked noisily on its hinges as Hermione strode into the lab. "Did you notice how quiet it is? I can't believe Parliament is down again."

He *had* noticed the quiet; in fact he'd reveled in it. But the look in Hermione's eyes indicated that her statement meant something, something he probably should know if he'd been listening to her the last time she'd explained the system to him, but for the life of him, he didn't know what it was. "Parliament what's the Muggle government got to do with it?"

"Not the Muggle government; Parliament is our server for the Strix Network here at Hogwarts." Again, her expression was challenging, indicating this information most likely had some other meaning.

Except this time he understood the reference. While not fully raised in the wizarding world, Severus was long familiar with the owls that delivered mail, having witnessed his mother receiving odd bits of correspondence from her family and friends throughout his childhood. "Indeed, you've chosen to name the collective network here after a group of owls?"

Hermione smiled. "Very good, not many people get the reference. But Parliament is not the network, but the power source and router for the network. It also connects us to the magical net. Care to take a shot at Strix?"

What to answer? Strix was both Lain **and** Greek for owl, but knowing Hermione's penchant for root words... "Of course," he answered with great disdain. "It's Latin for owl."

"And you totally ignored the Greek reference." Hermione laughed as she rose up on her tiptoes; she planted a quick kiss on his cheek before spinning round and heading back out the door. "I need to tweak the charm groups on the power grids to handle the overflow of energy surges during peak hooting periods. It can't keep going down every time there's a flurry of hoots. Right now, no one can hoot until I reinforce the charms and get Parliament back up and running again."

Absently, Severus nodded. "God forbid the students do something other than hooting," he mumbled. Tweak, squawk, screams, hoots, hisses, screeches, when had the English language disappeared? He mourned the death of upper case letters, capital letters all but extinct in the service of hoots. Too much time would be taken up holding down the shift key he assumed. Oddly enough, Squawk user names had more than their share of capital letters. And the names the students and staff had chosen; some went beyond moronic he thought.

- *whooo:* **TheKnowItAll**- *@snape- all systems go. din in your qrts or gh?*

Severus rolled his eyes. She would just keep hooting him if he didn't answer, but how many times had he told her not to discuss their private affairs on a public system.

- **Snape**- *@TheKnowItAllAs I have previously stated, I will not discuss personal matters on a public forum. If you wish an answer regarding this matt...*

Damn, not enough space. Maybe he should stick to sending screeches; they didn't limit the amount of characters a sender could use. It wasn't enough that the 'hoots' and 'screeches' used abbreviated language or that 'hoots' were limited to 140 characters per hoot (a limit that meant his comments were normally cut off in mid sentence since he routinely ignored said abbreviations), but now that the entire school was hooked into the network, he found the abbreviations creeping into the essays the students were turning in as well. It was a well-known fact that you were guaranteed a zero, as well as a loss of ten house points, if you turned in any work to the dour Potions master that contained any form of the abbreviations he detested so much. Still, Hermione had given him a list of common networking abbreviations that were supposed to make his hooting go faster. He supposed it might help if he used a few of them, even if he were contributing to the untimely death of the English language.

As usual, his failure to send a proper hoot resulted in Hermione showing up in his office. Sometimes she thought he did it on purpose as a way of calling her to him. "You didn't answer me."

"I tried. I know hooting is the modern way to communicate, but I end up with only half a thought before I run out of space. I can't help it; I'm just not attuned to all this new technology. I still prefer the old fashioned way of communication," he said with an elegant shrug.

"The old fashioned way, quill, ink, parchment, and real owls?"

"Not quite. Something more personal than that." A wordless spell and warding of his lab door gave the couple privacy from intruders and stray students. Wrapping one long arm around the witch, Severus pulled her to him before capturing her lips in a gentle kiss; it only took a moment for him to deepen the kiss as Hermione enthusiastically joined in. She had to agree, as much as she liked technology, there was something to be said for old-fashioned communication.

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Pearle

Chicago 2010

A/N: Trying to get myself back into a better frame of mind. Thank you to all who responded with your prayers and thoughts on my live journal and through emails at Potter Place. I still need to answer all the comments, but I want you to know how much they mean to me and how much they really have helped me. And the good news is my hubby received a great report from his cardiologist today (just continue on with the new meds and return in one month, but his heart is doing really well).

While I haven't felt like doing much of anything (see aforementioned journal entry if you're wondering why), this little plot bunny bit me after I'd read a market survey about Twitter. He absolutely refused to let go until I placated him. The Twitter server is call 'Starling,' and of course posting on Twitter is called a tweet. The words hoot, hooting, and squawk immediately jumped to mind, and this little bunny sunk his teeth in and refused to let go.

As always, my undying thanks to the wonderful Southern_Witch_69 for betaing this for me and for her unending supply of commas and well wishes. Thank you, Sun, you are a sweetheart!

For those of us who are Internet and Twitter impaired, here is a translation of the above abbreviations:

- B4N Bye For Now
- TTYL- Talk To You Later
- Twitter is a free social networking and microblogging service that enables its users to send and read messages known as *tweets.*
- Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters.
- The symbol or hash mark " # " is commonly used on Twitter to identify subjects for data gathering and tweet searches or for sorting the subjects of your tweets.
- The symbol or hash mark " @ " is commonly used on Twitter to identify a private or direct message to a particular person even though it is visible by anyone on the network.

And incase you were wondering, I imagined a screech to be the same as an email, a scream would be a virtual Howler, and a hiss would be spam of a sort.