

Strange Taste

by wingless

A fluffy, silly tale about a culinary delight which Hermione tries to share with three adult males one late evening at Grimmauld Place.

Chapter One

Chapter 1 of 1

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This is just a fluffy, silly tale that wanted to be written after I consumed too many sweets one evening. I'm ever so glad my beta, moonrevel, never says no to anything I send her for a thorough grammar and spelling check.

The sitting room of Grimmauld Place was empty except for Hermione, Remus, Dumbledore and Snape. It was already past midnight, and the other residents had gone to bed.

Remus didn't care when she went to bed; she was after all of age, and he was not her father.

Dumbledore had politely asked whether or not she should be in bed by now. His grandfatherly tone made Remus smirk, and even Severus' lips twitched as he hid behind his book.

As predicted, Hermione looked at the old wizard with a less than amused face; her eyebrow rose mockingly, and Dumbledore was intelligent to realize his folly, but it was too late to back-pedal.

"Do I look particularly tired... sir?" she asked, adding the title deliberately late.

"Of course not, my dear. I just thought that you would want to follow your compatriots when they retired, erm, three hours ago."

He smiled benignly, but Hermione only narrowed her eyes at him. "Harry, Ron and Ginny are still underage and have no choice but to obey mother hen Molly," she said sarcastically but not meanly.

"Staying up late is not new to me, as you can attest to from my excessive studying hours I used to keep at Hogwarts," she added and heard a snort from Snape's direction.

Her attention directed itself to the man whose black hair was the only thing peeking from behind the small book he held.

Dumbledore was rather grateful for the distraction and took the chance to hide behind his own tome.

"Forgot your reading glasses, Professor, or else why is your nose touching the pages?" she asked the Potions master sweetly and had to stifle a laugh when his face rose just enough to reveal two beady eyes and a challengingly raised eyebrow.

Sweet!

He ignored her question. "Fancy yourself special for staying up with the grown ups, Miss Granger?" he asked instead.

Hermione snorted loudly. "Oh yes, joining the club of insomniacs is my biggest achievement yet," she said, amusement evident in her voice. "Wait till I tell Mummy and Daddy," she squealed and bounced in her seat for good measure.

Remus chuckled quietly, and Dumbledore had to cough to cover up his chortling.

Severus himself couldn't summon up any vitriol, and his eyes crinkled in amusement, visible only to Hermione, who sat closest to him.

Remus chimed in. "And you can tell them all about your new friend: Sevel-Puss," he mimed in a childish voice.

Severus' eyes darkened, never having liked to be the butt of Gryffindor jokes, especially not when they were coming from a Marauder. Even in his thoughts he sneered at the name the wizards had given their group of bullies and cowards.

Hermione noticed the anger in his eyes, and she presumed the rest of his still hidden face would look equally forbidding.

She didn't chime in with the laughter coming from Remus and the Headmaster. "Ah, yes, and I can introduce you as my pet warthog," she said to the sandy-haired wizard who quelled his laughter in the face of her ire.

"I was only joking," Remus told Hermione, and then repeated the words to the surly man behind the book, but he received no answer from either of them.

Then he frowned. "I do not look like a warthog," he complained, and Severus' malicious smirk was back.

Hermione noticed and sent a warm little smile in his direction.

He looked back at her thoughtfully.

She returned her attention to her book, absently stuffing sweets in her mouth. All three men watched her yap quietly after every bite she took.

"What in the blazes are you eating?" Snape finally asked what everyone was thinking.

She looked up, startled. "Cherry and Chilli Gummy Sweets," she explained, not understanding his need to know. He wasn't usually interested in anything she did.

"You're yapping like a pug in the throws of an orga... asthma attack," he informed her dryly, pretending not to have almost uttered the word orgasm in front of his ex-student.

She grinned sheepishly, pretending to overhear the sexual reference that had him blushing a little. "Sorry," she said and proceeded to offer the sweets to the other men.

Remus demurred, but Albus was quick to try the new sweet. He was already affected by the chilli when she turned the bag to Snape.

"Are you sure they are fit for human consumption?" he drawled.

Hermione only rolled her eyes and thrust the bag under his formidable nose.

After a moment's hesitation, he took one of the gummy things that even optically resembled both a cherry and a chilly.

She watched him chew, and he stared back at her with a frown, not quite liking her scrutiny.

The cherry flavour came first, and he quite liked it; then after a few chews the chilli flavour made its presence known, and he had to breathe through his mouth to relieve the hot feeling in his mouth.

"Merlin's balls," he wheezed a little after he managed to swallow the thing. His eyes stung a little and surely looked watery, but he'd be damned before he'd wipe his eyes in front of the chit.

"What? You don't like them?" she asked incredulously, looking between him and the Headmaster.

Even the old wizard shook his head with a faint smile. "I do believe I prefer 'sweet' sweets," he said and cleared his throat, still suffering from the chilli.

"They are an abomination," Severus added, still breathing through his mouth. He saw Hermione's disappointment and almost laughed as she petulantly put another of those hot things into her mouth.

"Men! No bloody taste," she mumbled and went back to her book, the others soon following her example.

Silence reigned once more, and even Hermione's odd yapping had ceased. She always got used to the flavour after a while.

After another thirty minutes, Dumbledore finally retreated and Floo'd back to Hogwarts. Remus followed soon after, walking up the stairs to his room.

Once they were alone, Severus grabbed Hermione's bag of sweets, smirking at her surprised expression.

"You said you didn't like them!" she accused.

"I merely said they are an abomination, not that I didn't like them," he clarified in a superior tone and munched on another chilli-cherry.

The effect was instant, and his eyes watered a little as he fought for even breaths. "I'd rather not be witnessed eating those by the other two," he mumbled and surreptitiously wiped his eyes.

Hermione didn't like that he felt the need to hide such simple reactions as watering eyes and a little yapping. On the other hand, he didn't seem to mind doing it in front of her and it pleased her.

With a smile, she yanked the bag out of his hands.

"Mine!" she declared staunchly but patted the seat next to her on the couch. "We can share them," she said graciously and was pleased when he joined her after a moment.

"You get used to the hot flavour after a while, and there will be no eye or mouth watering," she promised, and soon they were reading comfortably next to each other, their hands reaching into the sweets bag continuously.

The bag was empty before they knew it. Severus examined the bag with a hawkish eye after his hand failed to find another sweet. He harrumphed, and Hermione found him endearing once more.

"I can get more," she promised and yawned.

Severus checked the time: two in the morning already. He felt tiredness starting to make him sluggish, but he would not leave the house before she was tucked up in her

bed or at least on the way to her room.

Childish? Perhaps. A questions of male superiority? Definitely!

"Now you've proven to be just as good as the grown ups, you can traipse to your room and tell your stuffed animal collection adorning your bed about your success."

Hermione chuckled at his dry tone.

"You're just jealous of my collection. Don't worry, you can always borrow Mr. Nibbles, the squirrel," she said, patting his arm consolingly.

"Insolent chit," he said with a put-upon sigh, and she leaned against his shoulder, still chuckling.

She closed her eyes, suddenly feeling very tired, and Severus didn't dare move. Only when her body positively slumped against him and her breath had taken on the calmness of sleep did he allow himself to relax.

He leaned backwards against the couch, her body following his every movement. He got as comfortable as possible and closed his eyes. Just a little rest, he thought, and leaned his head atop hers; her bushy hair was making a surprisingly good pillow.

He knew he would be up at five in the morning, his inner clock an advantage for once. He would be up well before anyone else in the house, enough time to flee this situation. His last conscious thought was: 'Don't drool in her hair!' before succumbing to the inevitable sleep.

The empty sweet bag rustled occasionally when their bodies moved unconsciously during the night.

When Severus woke, it was indeed five o'clock, he realised with relief. The only thing he hadn't anticipated was that he had not been the first to wake, for he was alone.

He was stretched out on the sofa with a pillow under his head and a blanket covering his body. He made to get up when his hand encountered something squishy. With a perplexed frown, he lifted the blanket to look at the strange object and felt his lips quirk when he found a full bag of chilli-cherry sweets with a tiny note attached to it.

"Same time, same venue, same haute-cuisine?"

With a chuckle, a surprisingly good mood and a bag of abominable sweets he left Grimmauld Place, looking forward to the evening.