See What the Cat Dragged In

by blue artemis

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Crookshanks was on one of his regular rambles. He knew he had it good with his bushy-haired human pet with the sweet voice and soft lap, but he was a tom and, well, liked to stake out his territory.

He was prowling through the bushes at the edge of Hermione's property, hoping to startle a slow moving bird, or better yet, a bevy of quail, when he stumbled upon some very attractive pale string. Crooks pounced on the string happily when all of a sudden he heard a groan. He followed the sound up the string until he came to a face. *Oh, no, Hermione doesn't like it when I pounce people.*

Crooks extended a questioning paw and batted the person lightly on the nose. When nothing occurred except for another pained moan, Crookshanks knew he better get some help.

The large half-kneazle ran for home, hoping that his pet had already arrived. He jumped through the window she left open for him, raced into the living room, climbed onto the dining room table and called for Hermione. "Maiaiiiowowoowowow!"

The caterwaul coming from her dining room startled Hermione into dropping her very expensive shoes and running out to see what was wrong with her familiar.

Crookshanks looked askance at his pet. She had no shirt on, her skirt was undone, her stockings needed shredding and she had no shoes. Not to mention the hair looked like rats were nesting in it. *I really should check on that. I could help her and have a snack at the same time... why is she looking at me like that ait, oh, yes there is that person out on the edge of the property.*

"Miaow! Hrrupst, pssst, Maiaoiw!"

"What the heck are you trying to tell me, Crooks? I don't speak cat!"

Crookshanks got up into Hermione's face, butted her chin with his head then took a swipe at her nose.

"OW! You better have a good reason for that, or I'm going to give you to Snape to use in his potions!"

Crookshanks hissed at the thought of being used in a potion. Then he got back in Hermione's face and stared at her meaningfully.

"Last time you did that, we ended up finding Sirius in trouble... OK, then, let me go change and take me wherever it is you need me to go."

Crookshanks was quite pleased that his pet had caught on so quickly.

Hermione ran to her room, changed into some snug jeans, a boyfriend-style shirt and hiking boots. She ran back out to see where her cat would lead. She quickly came upon the spot where Crookshanks had found what he thought was string and was startled to see it was Lucius Malfoy.

She cast a few diagnostic spells over him and found he had been beaten, then thrown from something so that he landed hard, then had rolled into the bushes that lined the edge of her property. He was dehydrated, needed to be fed and most definitely needed a bath. Being as kind-hearted as everyone touted her to be, Hermione promptly cast a stasis spell on the injured man, levitated him and started back to her cottage.

She drew a bath, vanished his clothing and slowly lowered him into the warm water. She reversed the stasis spell, then began to bathe him, treating the small wounds as she found them under the dirt and grime.

She levitated him out of the bath, dried him off with a quick spell, then laid him on her bed. She covered him with a soft blanket, then prepared some broth and tea.

Lucius struggled back to consciousness, feeling comfortable for the first time since Narcissa had left. It wasn't that he blamed her, he had made their lives hell, but who would have thought she liked red hair that much. Or dragons for that matter. He should have known, considering what she had named their son.

"Where am I?"

"You are at my cottage. If you are asking where that is, all I will say is you are in Scotland. My cottage is protected, and I would like to keep it that way."

Lucius looked at his bushy-haired savior. "Why would you treat me so well? Considering what my family put you through, I wouldn't have been surprised if you had left me wherever it was you found me."

"I could never. Bellatrix maybe, but not you."

Lucius looked closer at Hermione. She looked quite fetching with her hair pulled back and those snug Muggle trousers. The oversized shirt was obviously designed to look like a man's shirt, but a close look showed that the buttons were on the incorrect side for that. He was rather taken aback that he had begun to feel jealous over a possible beau for this witch.

"I appreciate your assistance."

"May I ask what happened to you, Mr. Malfoy?"

"I was out having a drink with Severus, and as I went to Apparate home, I was accosted by some young men who took exception to my being free. They said the only reason I was out was because my wife was the only person in my family with any bollocks. Then the seven of them decided to beat me. They dragged me off to who knows where then dumped me. For Merlin's sake, she isn't even my wife anymore!"

Hermione was slightly amused at the fact that he was more offended by the slurs against his manhood than the fact that he was beaten and dumped out in the middle of nowhere.

"Well, Mr. Malfoy, once you are feeling better, you can Floo home from here."

"You would let me stay to convalesce, Miss Granger?"

"Of course. And call me Hermione. You are in my bed, after all." She propped the tray up over him, handed him a spoon and sashayed out of the room.

Lucius was bemused. "Well, Hermione, you may call me Lucius. Most witches do after they have seen me in my altogether. I just wish I had been awake to enjoy it. Maybe once I am home, I could take you out to dinner to thank you, if you would be amenable."

"You never know Lucius. If you ask, I might just be amenable."

Lucius smiled. He could certainly do worse than the brilliant ex-Gryffindor. He went back to sleep, images of her in his bath at the manor dancing through his head.

In her kitchen, Hermione smiled as well. He was certainly different from what she expected. She thought she might be able to like this Lucius. She would see where this would go.

Many thanks to WriterMerrin for the beta!

Prompt from HermioneDiggory: 3. Crookshanks happens upon a former Slytherin in need and brings his mistress to the rescue. Romance ensues.