

Right Beside You

by savine_snape

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Happy Birthday, Severus.

Chapter 1 of 1

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The soft 'pop' of Apparition was lost to the wild wind that swirled the fallen snow. The long red hair of the wizard who had just appeared outside Hogwarts swept and swirled with the snowflakes. Tightening his cloak around him, he battled his way towards the castle.

The snowflakes fell like pirouetting ballerinas towards the ground, the wind swirling them against the window of the headmaster's office.

Severus was ensconced in his favourite battered wing-backed leather chair. Opposite him stood two more identical chairs, both devoid of occupants. Wrapped in a moment of contemplation, he listened to the wind outside and the soft pops and crackles from the small hearth as flames licked and devoured the logs. The subtle light from the fireplace made the amber liquor in his glass shine with an ethereal glow. With a sigh he offered thanks to Merlin that the Christmas festivities were over for another year.

Being married to *The-Brains-Behind-The-Brawn* of the Golden trio had its down side, a situation further complicated by the fact that he was also bound to a member of the Weasley brood.

A feeling of melancholy descended upon him. A new year meant that he would soon be a year older. His fiftieth birthday was rapidly approaching. Merlin's beard, here he was: almost 50 years old, married to a 30 year-old firecracker and 39 year-old curse-breaker.

Severus ignored the sound of the door to his quarters slowly creaking opening. The tall red-haired wizard shed his soaked cloak and smiled as his eyes alighted on the dark-haired wizard installed in his favourite chair. Slowly, he made his way across the room, watching his preoccupied husband with a smirk on his lips.

"Sickle for your thoughts, old man," Bill whispered as he rested a hand on Severus' shoulder.

"You survived then?" Severus asked, turning to face Bill.

"I did, though Merlin knows Victoire tried her damndest to hold on and come through the Floo with me, hence the need to Apparate and the reason why I'm almost soaked through to my skin." Bill smiled at Severus as he rubbed his arms, trying to generate some more warmth.

Severus snorted as he took a sip of the amber liquor.

"Hermione's not back yet, I see." Bill observed.

"No," Severus sighed. "She sent an owl earlier to say that she was taking a detour. She's decided to pay your former Head of House a visit before returning."

Bill squeezed Severus' shoulder.

"You know that we both love you deeply, don't you? It was inevitable that Hermione would wish to visit Minerva at some point before the school term resumes, but that's not what has got you so maudlin though, is it?"

"How was your stay in France?"

"Severus," Bill growled as he knelt before the older man. "Don't try changing the subject. What's causing you to wallow in self-pity?"

"You wouldn't understand," Severus replied.

"Try me. Is it to do with your impending birthday?"

Severus snorted as confirmation.

"You know, for a wizard, 50 really isn't *that* old. It's just like a Muggle turning 25. Anyway, don't Muggles say you're only as old the woman you feel? You're in luck, love, since Hermione is only 30..."

"How was France?"

Bill sighed, looking straight into Severus' dark eyes. "Tiresome. Fleur's new beau spent the whole of yesterday trying to best me with tales of his exploits. Victoire isn't impressed by him." Bill smiled as he rolled his eyes.

"Your daughter has a very discerning mind."

"You're only saying that because she has welcomed you and Hermione into her life with open arms. She missed you both. I think that is why she was unwilling to let me Floo home."

Severus took another sip from his glass.

"We shall see how she reacts to me when she gets to Hogwarts and hears all the stories about the *greasy dungeon bat*."

"I can imagine she will be as defensive about you as Hermione is. Now, what say you to a private celebration of the New Year? I think I can distract you from you maudlin thoughts."

"William..."

"Severus, love, I missed you over the weekend," Bill purred. He trailed his fingers up the inside of Severus' leg before rubbing the heel of his palm up the front of his husband's trousers, feeling the enclosed cock harden.

Severus groaned as Bill's talented fingers made short work of releasing his hardening cock from the confinement of his trousers. Bill stared into Severus' dark, half-lidded eyes and licked his lips before flicking his tongue across the head of his lover's cock.

"Fuck, William," Severus moaned as Bill's tongue swirled around the head of his cock.

In the next moment a loud gasp drowned out the crackling of the fire as Bill wrapped his fingers around Severus' erection and began to move. Teasingly, he made sure his thumb brushed the sensitive underside of the head with each upward stroke. He smirked as Severus moaned and his legs twitched.

Placing his own hand over that of his lover, Severus urged him to move faster as his hips countered the movement of Bill's hand. Bill smirked as he placed his free hand on Severus' hip, gripping tightly to halt his thrusting.

"Please, William..."

Bringing his mouth up to Severus' ear, Bill snarled before sucking gently on his earlobe.

"Patience is a virtue, or so they say. You don't want to be spent so soon, do you?"

Severus bit his lower lip in a fashion not too dissimilar to that of their wife in an attempt to control his growing desire as he slowly removed his hand from Bill's.

"William. Please...I *need*..."

"I know just what you need, Severus," Bill purred.

Leaning forward, he pressed his lips against the head of Severus' erection in a soft kiss. Gently, he started to swirl his tongue over the tip, groaning as he tasted the droplet of pre-come. His eyes shone with desire as he heard Severus growl. He smirked as Severus' fingers twined in his hair.

Bill ran his tongue along the underside of Severus' erection, eliciting another gasp from his lover. Slowly, he swallowed Severus' erection, relaxing his throat so he could take the majority of Severus' cock into his mouth, his hands firmly pinning Severus back against the chair.

Severus tried to buck despite the firm grip upon his hips. Bill groaned and the vibration nearly caused Severus to lose all control. Severus grunted as Bill began to suck him with abandonment.

With the head of his lover's cock barely resting against his lip, Bill swirled his tongue around it once more before plunging his mouth back down. To Severus' relief, Bill began to work his erection in tandem with his fist and lips building the speed. Releasing Severus' hip, Bill brought his hand to the front of his own trousers to palm his own twitching erection.

"So good, William," Severus panted as his eyes closed, fingers gripping the chair arm as he fought to withhold his climax.

Bill continued his manipulation of Severus, increasing the speed as he applied more pressure with his lips. His other hand moved from his cock to cup Severus' balls. Mewling with pleasure, Severus bucked frantically, hoarsely shouting Bill's name as he came undone in Bill's mouth.

Bill's ministrations slowed as he felt the post-orgasm tremors spread through Severus' body. Slowly, he withdrew his mouth, letting Severus' softening cock slip from between his lips. He swallowed the last of Severus' emissions and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand before smiling wickedly.

"Told you I knew how to make you relax," Bill whispered, his eyes alight with desire.

Leaning forward, Severus captured his lover's mouth in a harsh kiss.

Hermione smiled at Minerva as she placed the sheaf of papers on the coffee table.

"So, what do you think?"

"Hermione, whilst your intentions are noble, and I can understand your desire to celebrate this momentous occasion, Severus is a very private man. Think back to your binding ceremony."

"But"

"No buts. Hermione, Severus would not thank you for making him the centre of attention. Look at how he handles being headmaster. He does not thrust himself out there like Albus did; he prefers to allow you to be the face of the teaching staff. I know he still prowls the corridors at night. The welcoming feast does not have a long protracted oration about the school. Severus is always short and to the point."

Hermione took a deep breath; she knew Minerva was right. Their wedding had been a very simple affair, there had indeed been very few people present, just as Severus had requested. Whenever they needed to speak to the press, either she or Bill stepped forward to speak, Severus was happy to stay in the background.

"We want to let him know that he is loved. Despite everything, Harry's defending him to the Wizengamot, you reinstating him as a professor, the love that Bill and I shower him with, he still believes he is not worthy of his second chance," Hermione stated.

"Do not push him too hard, Hermione, or he will simply withdraw further. He did what he did during the war in an attempt to put to rights divulging Sybil's prophecy to Voldemort. He didn't do it for adulation or reward, it was his penance."

Hermione sighed. "As always, Minerva, you are right."

"You and Bill should make him feel special on his birthday, by all means, but don't make a public fuss of him."

"Thank you, Minerva, for listening to me. I think it's time that I returned to my men."

Minerva smiled at Hermione, gently placing her hand on the younger witch's arm. "It is, indeed, my dear. Before you go, how are Rose and Hugo?"

"They are doing well. Ronald has spoilt them rotten, but they are good kids. They have handled our divorce and my marriage to Severus and Bill better than I could have hoped for to begin with."

"You are very fortunate, Hermione, and you would do well to remember that come Severus' birthday."

The pair exchanged fond pecks on the cheek before Hermione activated the Floo and returned to Hogwarts.

Hermione dusted herself down as she stepped through the Floo of the headmaster's quarters. She looked around to see who, if anyone, was about. She smiled when her eyes alighted on the clear blue eyes and vibrant red hair of Bill.

"Where's Severus?" she asked as she walked across the room, standing on tiptoes as she placed a gentle kiss on her husband's lips.

"He's gone to prowl the corridors for miscreants. How did your visit with Minerva go?"

"She looked over the list, pondered it somewhat..."

"And?"

"She agrees with you," Hermione replied in a defeated tone. "She said that Severus wouldn't thank us for making him the centre of attention. She advised that we celebrate privately."

"He was very maudlin when I got back from Paris this evening. This whole birthday thing is troubling him a great deal, more so than I think even he is prepared to admit."

"Then, as Minerva suggested, we should tread very carefully," Hermione whispered as she snuggled against Bill. "How was your trip?"

"Almost akin to torture," Bill sighed. "Fleur's new lover is an idiot. Yesterday, if it weren't for Victoire distracting me, I would have returned home early."

"Oh, my poor William," Hermione purred as she snuggled closer. "I'm sure Severus would have welcomed your early return."

"How are my baby brother and the kids?"

"Ronald is... well, Ronald is Ronald. He's doing well for himself actually. Lavender is planning their wedding with the help, or should that be hindrance, of your mum. Hugo and Rose were lapping up the attention from your mum and dad."

"Do you ever regret that the kids don't live with us?"

Hermione's face turned wistful as she pondered Bill's question.

"I miss them, of course I do, but they are having a great time in America. In another eight years Rose will be starting here and Hugo will follow the next year..."

"Victoire starts here next year," Bill replied quietly as he ruffled Hermione's hair. "Would you ever consider having more children?"

"Why, Bill, are you getting broody?"

"Not really, I was just wondering aloud."

Hermione placed a tender kiss on Bill's lips before twining her fingers in his hair, deepening their kiss.

She broke their kiss as she felt another pair of arms wrap around her waist.

"Welcome home, petal. I trust your trip was more to your liking than William's?" Severus murmured in her ear.

Lifting her head, Hermione smiled at Bill before turning in his arms to face Severus.

"It was bearable. I forgot how overbearing Molly can be. She's commandeered the planning of Ron and Lavender's wedding. I'm so glad you insisted on a small affair, love."

"Yes, well, no offence William, but your mother can be rather demanding."

"None taken, love, though I'm not sure Mum would appreciate your description of her."

"No doubt your mother would derive a temporary displeasure from my description, but she's a forgiving person, eventually," Severus replied, quirking an eyebrow at Bill. "Now, why don't we celebrate your safe return and the New Year properly, little one?" he murmured before he nibbled the outer shell of Hermione's ear.

Hermione smiled at both men and proffered her hands to them before leading them through to their bedroom.

Once the trio were ensconced in their bedroom, Hermione proceeded to strip for her lovers. Slowly, she undid the buttons of her blouse, smiling wickedly at her men. Turning away from them, she lowered it before letting it fall from her fingers. She undid the fastening of her bra, slipping the straps down each arm slowly before turning to face them.

"Like what you see, boys?" she purred.

"Merlin, yes!" Severus growled as he walked across the room to stand behind her. He placed his hands under her breast murmuring his approval as he caressed her nipples.

Hermione groaned as his calloused fingers tweaked her hardening nipples. His lips sought the juncture of neck and shoulder. Hermione began to purr as he alternated nips with soothing licks as he made his way from her shoulder to her earlobe.

Bill watched transfixed as Severus devoured Hermione. He rapidly shed his Weasley jumper before wriggling out of his trousers and boxers. He took no time to cover the space between himself and his lovers. Perching on the edge of the dressing table, he pulled his socks from his feet, never once looking away from Hermione and Severus.

"Merlin, you two are hot!" he groaned as he fisted his hardening cock.

"Brat," Severus growled.

Bill smirked at Severus before standing and joining the pair. He fought with Hermione as they both tried to undo the zip of her jeans. Kneeling, Bill lowered them to her ankles, encouraging her to lift first one foot and then the other. Sitting back on his haunches, he murmured his approval. She looked delicious in her minuscule silver-green satin knickers. Hooking his thumbs in the waist band he lowered the scrap of fabric to her ankles before his fingers began to tease her slick nether lips.

Severus stepped back from Bill and Hermione and watched as Bill continued to tease her. Slowly he shed his clothing not once looking away.

"I think we should take this somewhere more conducive to pleasure," Severus purred as he sat down on their enlarged bed. Hermione smirked at Bill before joining Severus on the edge of the bed.

"Scoot across then, love," she whispered.

Severus obeyed, coming to rest in the centre of the bed. Reaching out, he caught Hermione's wrist and gently pulled her towards him. Hermione raised her eyebrows as she smiled down at her husband. Glancing over her shoulder and winking at Bill, she sat astride Severus, grinding against him, murmuring her approval.

Bill stood transfixed; to him there was no sight more wonderful than that which was playing out before him. He moaned, reaching for the pot of their favourite lubricant. Dipping his fingers, he slicked them before fisting his cock.

"Ready, love?" Severus asked as he moved in time with Hermione.

"Mmm, yes."

Severus whispered an incantation to remove Hermione's knickers before reaching between them and aligned his cock with Hermione's slick entrance. The pair groaned in unison as Hermione slowly impaled herself.

"Merlin, I missed you," she murmured as she began to rock back and forth on his hardness.

Bill matched the pace of his fist with that of Hermione's hips, moaning as desire built within him.

"Is there room for another on that bed?" Bill choked out.

"Always," Hermione replied as she stilled, looking over her shoulder at him.

Bill smiled as he got onto the bed. To him, Hermione looked like a wanton goddess, her mass of unruly curls partially obscuring her desire-filled eyes. As he looked beyond Hermione, his eyes caught the 'come hither' look in his husband's eyes. Taking another generous amount of lube from the pot, Bill slowly prepared Hermione's arse for his cock, patiently encouraging her muscles to relax.

Hermione whimpered as she felt the head of Bill's cock push against her puckered entrance. She trembled a little as he pushed into her slightly. He stilled, giving her a moment to adjust. Hermione keened as she moved back towards Bill, allowing Severus to almost slip completely from her quim as she wound her fists in the loose sheet beneath Severus.

After a few mistimed thrusts, the trio adopted a mutually satisfying rhythm, Severus growling as Hermione and Bill moved against him.

"So close, my loves! Oh, Merlin, yes. Fuck her hard, William."

Grasping her hips, Bill began to thrust into Hermione with increasing fervour, lost to the feel of her body heat surrounding him and the encouraging cries from both Hermione and Severus. He continued to thrust into her as her soft, panting cries surrounded them, growing higher and more breathless as she drew closer to climax. With a few more thrusts, Hermione keened loudly as her body trembled. Severus followed her into bliss as Bill continued to move within her. With a final deep thrust, Bill howled his completion, spilling his seed deep within his wife.

Boneless, Hermione lowered herself against Severus' chest. "Happy New Year, love," she whispered before kissing his chest.

Bill smiled down at Hermione and Severus before slowly withdrawing and snuggling up against Severus' side.

"I hope you now realise, Severus, that age is no barrier when it comes to our love for you. Whether you are 49 or 50, we both love you, without reservation."

Severus snorted before pulling both Bill and Hermione closer.

The next few days slipped passed in a haze of normalcy. Hermione and Bill settled back into teaching Arithmancy and Defence to the returning students who were still soporific following the Yule holiday.

Severus continued to prowl the corridors at night, hunting down miscreants from all four of Hogwarts' houses and deducting points evenly now the war was over, he felt no need to favour Slytherin.

It was whilst Severus was out patrolling that Hermione and Bill planned how to celebrate his approaching birthday. Hermione had taken to heart Minerva's words about making it a celebration for three only.

Bill had spoken with Filius Flitwick, and the older wizard had agreed to take over Severus' duties on his birthday and to keep quiet about the reason for the trio's absence.

Hermione woke early on the morning of Severus' birthday to her wand vibrating gently under her pillow. She carefully extracted herself from the mass of limbs, mindful not to wake either of her lovers, grabbed her robe, and padded softly across their bedroom to the adjoining bathroom. Once she had completed her morning ablutions, Hermione made her way across to the large bay window that dominated their bedroom. She had been mesmerised by it when they had taken up occupancy; it was a stark contrast to their previous vista of the lake from the dungeon.

The grounds were bathed with early morning dew that glistened in the pale sunlight. Mist rolled over the surrounding hillsides as the sky phased through reds, yellows and oranges as the sun rose sleepily.

Turning to face the bed, Hermione smiled as Severus drowsily pulled Bill against him, nuzzling against the younger man's neck. His free hand reached back searching for her. Like a ghost Hermione swept across the room, discarding her robe as she went, before climbing once more between the sheets.

Severus shuddered slightly as he felt her feet against his calves.

"Merlin, woman, why don't you put your slippers on before going to the bathroom," he murmured still half asleep.

"Sorry, love," she whispered in reply before softly kissing the exposed flesh of his shoulder.

Severus turned to face her, pulling her towards him. Nuzzling against her neck, breathing her scent in deeply, he sighed.

"I heard your conversation with William the other night when you thought I was out terrorising first years," he whispered, pulling her tighter against his morning erection.

"Mmm, you did?"

"Indeed. You miss Rose and Hugo. You know, I'm not disinclined to the idea of us having a child together."

"But, I thought you loathed children..."

"I dislike unruly children, who have no idea of how to behave outside the home. I would not be disinclined to having a child with you. I would love to watch your belly grow as our child grew within you, if that is what you desire, petal."

Hermione placed her hand atop Severus'. "What do *you* desire, love?"

"Me? I desire to see you happy, and if that means expanding our family, then I'm in favour of the idea."

Hermione smiled. Tenderly, she kissed his lips, snuggling up against him, wrapping her hands in his hair. Tongue fought tongue for dominance as Severus wound an unruly curl around a finger. Slowly, their hips began to move counter to one another, adding fuel to their desire.

Bill awoke to the sound of his lovers' shallow breaths. Without a word, he extracted himself from the bed. Hermione and Severus were so lost in one another that neither noticed Bill slip away.

"Severus, Oh, Merlin," Hermione panted as he rolled onto his back, pulling her on top of him.

The pair moved counter to one another in the age-old rhythm of lovers, both taking and giving equally until they both keened their completion.

Bill leaned against the door-jamb, smiling, lost in thought. After watching his lovers for a few more moments, he covered the space between the bathroom and the bed and rejoined them.

"Happy Birthday, old man," he whispered into Severus' ear as his arm stretched across him to gently fondle Hermione's exposed arse, "and good morning to you, my little minx."

Hermione murmured her half-hearted objection.

Bill smiled as he heard gentle snores come from both Severus and Hermione. Pulling the quilt over them once more, he quickly followed them into slumber.

The trio slept for another hour. Severus was the first to wake when he heard the clock tower strike the hour.

"Merlin's sodding baggy underpants! Why in Hades did you let us go back to sleep, William?"

"Calm down, Severus," Hermione whispered reassuringly as she ran a hand up and down his arm. "Filius is covering for you; we have plans."

Slowly, Severus settled back against the bed.

"I hate surprises," he growled half-heartedly.

"We know," Bill replied sleepily.

"There's no need to worry, love; we're positive you'll enjoy what we have planned," Hermione soothed. "There's absolutely no need to rush around today; go back to sleep."

Severus growled again; he hated not knowing what they had planned, but he had to admit their bed was enticing, and it was, after all, his birthday. With no further objections Severus pulled Hermione and Bill closer before drifting off to sleep once more.

Hermione awoke and stretched, yawning as she threw her arms outwards. She was surprised to find she was alone in the bed, although the sheets were still warm from the bodies of her lovers. She raised herself slowly against the bank of pillows. A smile played across her lips as her eyes alighted upon Bill and Severus.

Bill had Severus pinned against the wall; both men were naked, their hips moving in time with one another. Hermione couldn't hear the words that Bill was uttering, but from the transported look on Severus' face, they were words of devotion and love.

Hermione watched silently as her men continued to move as one, their breathing becoming irregular as their passion built.

Bill nipped Severus' lip as his right hand slid between their bodies; he muttered a lubrication spell before wrapping his hand around both his and Severus' cocks. His hand moved in time with their hips. It wasn't long before both men were keening their completion.

Hermione sighed with pleasure and love as she watched Bill take care of himself and Severus. She would never tire of watching or participating in their physical demonstration of their love for one another.

Bill took Severus' hand in his own and led him back to their bed where Hermione was once more snuggled beneath the covers. Gently, the two men climbed into the bed and nestled against Hermione before drifting off into a sated slumber.

The trio slept peacefully until the clock struck one, and Severus was the first to stir quickly followed by Hermione and Bill. He had not slept so well in what seemed like years, though in truth it was probably only since the start of the new school year. It was a pleasant luxury not to have to worry about the students or tedious paperwork for one day.

Hermione was the first to break the silence.

"I don't know about you," she whispered as she stretched, "but I could do with a shower. Anyone going to join me?"

"Mmm, give us a minute, love," Bill replied, sleepily. "I just need to wake up a bit more."

Hermione smiled at both Severus and Bill as she slipped from their bed.

"Well, boys, you know where to find me when you're ready."

Severus watched as Hermione padded softly across the room, her hips swaying enticingly.

"Merlin," he sighed. "That witch is going to be the death of me."

"But it'll be one hell of a way to go," Bill replied as he sat up against the plethora of pillows.

"William," Severus whispered, cupping his lover's cheek with one hand. "What exactly, does Hermione have planned for today?"

"As we said earlier, it's nothing for you to fear. We just wanted to spoil you. You have been so wrapped up with the administrative side of the school we thought, that is, Hermione thought you could do with some time when you were the centre of attention."

Hermione peeked her head around the door.

"Are you boys coming, or am I to shower alone?"

Neither man needed any further encouragement as they both leapt from the bed to join their wife.

The remainder of the afternoon slipped by peacefully as Hermione and Bill distracted Severus from thoughts of the school, its students and brewing. Bill challenged him to a game of Wizard's Chess, which Severus eventually won, whilst Hermione treated her husband to a sensual massage. All too soon the evening was upon them.

Severus sat in his favourite chair, a tumbler of amber liquor rested on his thigh. He was so deep in thought that he failed to register when Bill entered the study. Bill cleared his throat as he poured himself a generous measure of liquor.

"Severus, do you need a top up or are you all right?"

"William, sorry I was momentarily distracted." Severus shuffled in the chair, his free hand playing with the collar of his dress shirt. "I have no idea why Hermione thinks it so important that we should be dressed so formally if we are not to leave the castle grounds."

Bill turned to face his husband, a smile lighting his face.

"Nice try, love, but I am as clueless as you when it comes to our dear wife and her plans for this evening," Bill whispered as he placed a reassuring hand on his lover's shoulder. "All I know is that I was asked to ensure that we remained undisturbed for the full day, unless of course the place was falling down around us," Bill teased before he gave Severus a loving kiss on his cheek.

Severus raised a lone eyebrow. Whilst he knew Hermione was meticulous in her preparation, he very much doubted that Bill was completely innocent when it came to the planning of the day's events.

Bill refused to be drawn further on the topic of the evening's plans, and the pair sipped their drinks in companionable silence until Hermione appeared at the doorway.

"Are you boys ready to join me?" Hermione asked.

Severus stared at his wife; she stood before them in a diaphanous gown which left very little to the imagination. He smiled at his wife before turning to Bill.

"Merlin," Severus growled lowly. "I'm an old man and she waltzes around wearing *that*."

"Come on, old man," Bill teased as he headed for the doorway. "Let's go find out what our dear wife has planned for this evening."

Severus followed Bill through from the study to their sitting room. He gasped as he stared at the transformation that Hermione had accomplished. The room was now a mirror image of the small restaurant he had taken her to the night he proposed. To his left stood a small table with three chairs, to his right was a perfect replica of the dance floor where he'd asked for her hand in marriage.

"I'm taking it from your stunned silence and the half-smile on your face that you approve of my foolish wand waving," Hermione teased as she seated herself at the small table.

"I do," Severus replied.

Hermione tapped the seat beside her, indicating that he should sit between his lovers. He didn't hesitate to join them, first placing a kiss on Hermione's lips before turning to do the same with Bill.

"Thank you, both of you," he whispered.

It wasn't long before Winky appeared with three laden plates of food. Not only had Hermione recreated the room where he had proposed but she had also, recreated the menu. Winky placed the plates on the table, bowed and disappeared. Severus was the first to remove a morsel, and turning to face Hermione, he smiled, encouraging her to eat the canapé from his fingers.

With a wicked twinkle in her eyes, Hermione leaned forward and nibbled the canapé before taking the remainder in to her mouth. Severus growled as her tongue licked around his fingers. Calming his breathing, Severus turned and offered Bill a morsel; he, too, took time to tease Severus once he had eaten the proffered canapé.

Once the trio had cleared both plates, Winky reappeared with their main course.

"Mmm, you have surpassed yourself, petal. The sea bass looks lovely," Severus murmured, squeezing his wife's thigh as he added salad and grilled vegetables to his plate.

"I've been thinking," Severus said as he raised his glass of wine to his lips. "I think the time is right for us to try and expand our family. After all, that was the whole point of your father's mad law, wasn't it, William?"

"I guess, with the dwindling marriage rates and the fall of magical births, Father thought the trio marriage would improve prospects. I can't say I approve of the way he went about implementing the law, but I have to say, it has been very beneficial, I believe, for all of us."

"Indeed, I have never felt so much love. Be it the love I feel for you two, or the love you both bestow upon me, unconditionally. That is why, petal, I think that the time is right to swell the Granger-Snape-Weasley ranks."

Hermione smiled at Severus and Bill.

"As I said the other evening, I do miss Rose and Hugo. I can't deny it... I am... This is such a shift. Are you sure it's not just a reaction to you turning 50? After all, when we discussed future plans before our binding, you were certain that you only wanted to be a step-father."

"I've been mulling the idea over for some time now. I admit that overhearing you two talking about your children made me wonder if I was somehow missing out on something, if you were making a huge sacrifice to be with me. We have achieved so much, and I think I'm ready to face the challenge of becoming a parent. With you both by my side, I feel sure I will not repeat the horror of my own childhood," Severus stated.

Before the discussion could progress further, Winky appeared to clear the table before reappearing with their dessert. Severus snorted as he noted the deviation from the meal they had shared four years before.

Hermione grinned as she dipped her finger into the chocolate mousse and offered it to Severus. With a smirk he took it into his mouth and slowly swirled his tongue, removing every trace of chocolate.

"Merlin, love," Hermione moaned as she shifted on her chair.

Bill wrapped his arms around Severus, resting his chin on the older man's shoulder.

"You really are a tease sometimes, love," Bill whispered in Severus' ear. "You know, Vicki doesn't think of you as her step-dad, love, to her you are her father. She is looking forward to starting school next year so that she will be closer to both you and Hermione."

Hermione rose from her seat and offered her hand to Severus.

"Come, dance with me, please."

Severus took her hand and followed Hermione to the dance floor. Taking her in his arms, he gave a contented sigh as Hermione nuzzled against his chest.

"We don't have to rush into having a child, little one, it was just a thought. If you don't"

Hermione pulled back slightly and placed a finger against her husband's lips.

"Shush, don't say anything. Listen to me, please. I love you, I love Bill and I love my children. I never dreamt that I could be so happy, I'd love to have a child with you, but there is no need to rush. Victoire loves you like a father, Rose and Hugo adore you. We may not have all the time in the world, but we don't have to drop everything in order to have a child... and they always say practise makes perfect. How about I stop taking the potion and we see what happens? So that instead of trying to get pregnant we just stop trying *not* to get pregnant and just let Mother Nature take whichever course she sees fit for us."

Severus wasn't sure when he and Hermione had ceased to dance. He stood silently considering Hermione's words: she was right, it probably was best to let nature take its course, whatever that may be. He pulled Hermione closer and smiled as he felt his husband's arms wrap around them both.

"That sounds like an excellent plan to me," Bill whispered before nibbling the outer shell of Severus' ear as his hands rested upon Hermione's hips. "How about we go 'practise' now? I mean, we need to perfect our technique..."

"Speak for yourself," Severus growled as he moved Bill's hands aside. "I've not heard either of you complain about my technique!"

Hermione giggled as she looked at her men.

"I've certainly got no complaints, but it wouldn't hurt to *brush* up on a few things."

"Merlin's beard, I'm officially an old bat; I'm not sure I can take the pace anymore!"

Hermione lifted the hem of her dress slightly knowing full well that Severus loved it when she wore high heels.

"Oh, I think you can." She smirked as she turned and headed for their bedroom. "Come on, birthday boy, come and unwrap your final present."

"Happy Birthday, old man," Bill whispered as he took Severus by the hand. "Let's go start our 'revision' with Madame Snape."

Severus gave a small snort before following Bill through to their bedroom. This had been his best birthday yet, and if things went the way he hoped, the coming year would be his best to date. Even if they didn't have a child of their own, he knew that Hermione and William loved him unconditionally, and that was more than he could have hoped for a decade ago.

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