

That Voodoo That You Do So Well

by Clairvoyant

An incident at the international potions conference causes Severus to forget social convention. Hermione sets him straight as she calms him down in her own unique way.

One-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Crack. The noise of an inelegant Apparition startled Hermione "Eep!" waking her from a research-induced stupor, the heavy reference tome in her hands *A Hundred and One Household Spells for the Domestically Challenged Witch* by Molly Weasley slipping to the floor. *Thud.*

The sound of muffled thunder heralded the unexpected arrival of none other than her husband and business partner, Severus Snape. His footfalls could also be described as thunderous, not only echoing but vibrating the walls as he *glided* through their home.

"Hermione!" he bellowed. "Where are you?" He happened upon his wife lounging in his wing-backed chair in the sitting room, her bare legs draped enticingly over the armrest.

"Oh, Severus," she said sweetly, trying oh so hard not to snicker. "I didn't hear you come in; you're so stealthy." She rose to meet him, not bothering to close her gaping dressing gown.

"Humph," he muttered, daring to sneer at her.

She ignored his less than warm welcome and gave her husband a proper greeting, wrapping her arms around his neck, softly brushing her lips across his, moulding herself to him.

"I didn't expect to see you for another two days. Why are you home so early from the conference?"

He sighed with theatrical aplomb, rolling his eyes for added effect. "An incident occurred during my presentation," he spoke through clenched teeth.

She waited a few beats, expecting some bitter diatribe to spew freely from her loquacious, yet stoic husband. When that didn't happen, she gave him a bit of a prod. "And?"

"I'm simply too tense to talk about it now."

She pulled away from him. "But you felt well enough to perform a transcontinental Apparition? Are you mad?"

"Well..." He avoided her accusing glare, choosing to stare at his shifting feet. "I promise to tell you all about it once I've decompressed a bit." He dropped gracefully into his favourite chair and bent forward to warm his hands by the fire.

Sudden inspiration flew into Hermione's brilliant mind. She perched on the arm of the chair and pressed against him, her bosom threatening to smother him. "Decompress, you say? I know just what you need."

"Oh, really?" he drawled, one very curious eyebrow shooting upward as he wound his arm around her waist.

"Yes!" she exclaimed, jumping up and running from the room only to return moments later, waving the latest edition of *Potions Monthly*. "Letters to the editor. I know how much you enjoy that."

"I had something else in mind, darling," Severus murmured, patting his thigh, beckoning her to sit upon his lap. "Why don't you..."

"A response to a letter appearing in last month's journal," she read aloud as she leaned against the mantel, ignoring his invitation to cuddle. "Dear Sir..." She paused mid-sentence, turning to face Severus. "You know, this decompression isn't quite right."

"You're telling me," he mumbled.

"I know what to do." She crawled onto his lap, and as she snogged him senseless, her free hand snaked inside his robes. Hermione had learned sleight of hand distraction from a great Slytherin wizard a master of manipulation himself yet Severus never knew what hit him. She leaped up, perched his reading glasses on the tip of her nose, and Transfigured her dressing gown into a feminine version of Severus' teaching robes.

"Hermione, what are you..."

"Dear Sir," she began again, speaking in a low, dangerous voice meant to imitate that of the author of the letter.

Severus' eyes lit up and the corners of his mouth lifted just a bit as he watched her pace back and forth, her robes billowing in a familiar fashion.

"While I could find no fault in the article 'Cost-Effective Brewing in Tough Economic Times,' published in July's issue, I'm appalled by a particular letter, written in response to that article and appearing in last month's issue. The author of said letter, Mr. Horace Slughorn, put forth the suggestion to use low quality ingredients in potions that have 'less than exacting standards in brewing, such as Pimple-Removing Potion and Foot-Soothing Balm.'

"Consider the former. Cheap, yet inadequately processed bubotuber pus would be inactivated by the witch hazel in the potion; apply that to the skin, and one isn't removing pimples but creating painfully explosive boils, highly attractive especially for teenaged wizards and witches. Now examine the latter. Brewing Foot-Soothing Balm is a time-consuming process because the young, tender theobroma leaves must steep exactly twenty-four hours to fully utilize its vasoconstrictive properties. One could reduce the brewing time by using mature leaves, but this would adversely increase the theobromine content of the cream, and instead of experiencing pain relief for tired, aching feet, the consumer would be dancing continuously for four hours.

"There is no such thing as a potion with 'less than exacting standards.' Using anything less than the highest quality potions ingredients is a danger to public health and safety and an insult to ethical potioners everywhere. Brewing potions is not only an art but an exact science, calling for precise ingredient quantities and preparation, never a pinch or a dash of whatever. Those same rules apply to quality.

"Perhaps Mr. Slughorn should concentrate on honing his craft rather than dropping the names of all his famous acquaintances or amassing his fortune through the production and sales of poor quality potions. Sincerely, Severus Snape, Certified Potions master, Order of Merlin, First Class."

She finished with a low, sweeping curtsy, and Severus rewarded her efforts with enthusiastic applause and rich, deep laughter a sound rarely heard anywhere, including their home.

"Bravo!" he shouted, wiping the tears from his eyes. "I can't remember the last time I laughed so hard."

She climbed onto his lap and wrapped her arms around him. "Have you *decompressed* enough to tell me about the conference?" She tried to coerce his confession with fluttery kisses along his neck and jawline.

"Alas, no," he sighed and shook his head solemnly. "I'm still too wound up to discuss it." He fixed her with a sultry, half-lidded gaze.

"What do you suggest then?" She ran her finger from his lips, down his chin, ending at his Adam's apple where she toyed with his collar.

"For starters, I want to see you out of those robes and..."

"I know just what you need," she exclaimed and sprung from his lap once again. "A good strong drink."

His frustrated groan hung heavy in the air like a cloud of Instant Darkness Powder.

On her way to the liquor cabinet, she Transfigured the black robes into a laced-trimmed, satin negligee. She could feel his eyes raking over body, and she made quite a show of preparing his dirty martini. First, she used a Chilling Charm upon the glass; next, she mixed the gin, vermouth and olive brine in a cocktail shaker, her breasts bouncing with every shake four shakes to be exact; finally, she poured the drink into the glass and dropped in two olives, licking the salty residue from her fingers.

"Oh, Merlin," he moaned, watching her hips sway side-to-side as she sauntered toward him, cradling the glass between her two hands as if it were a precious potion.

"Here you go, love. This ought to loosen you up a bit more." She perched on his lap again as he savoured his first sip of the bitter, dry, and slightly salty cocktail.

"And where is your drink?" he asked, taking another slow sip.

"None for me. I'll need my wits about me for your relaxation therapy." She had a mischievous, yet playful glint in her eyes. She plucked an olive from his drink and traced his lips with it before she popped it into her own mouth.

"Cheeky witch. What else is on your agenda tonight?"

"Well, after you finish that martini, I'll treat you to a massage, and then..." She watched in wide-eyed wonder as he downed the drink in one gulp and almost choked on the olive.

"Done," he gasped, needing a few seconds to recover from the deluge of alcohol.

"Bedroom," she directed.

Despite his slightly tipsy state of being, Severus performed a flawless Side-Along Apparition, arriving safe and sound in the master bedroom with Hermione held tightly in his arms.

"Shirt off. Face down on the bed. Now." She barked those orders in a low, seductive voice, hoping to appear more like a kitten with a whip than snarling dog.

He undressed quickly clothing strewn willy nilly on the floor and over various pieces of furniture as he scrambled across the bed, for to incur her wrath would be folly, especially when her plan for decompression held such promise.

From her bedside cabinet, Hermione chose the sandalwood-scented massage oil pre-warmed by a charm, of course and joined Severus on the bed, straddling his hips. She tipped a Galleon-sized dollop of oil in the palm of her hand and rubbed her hands together to further warm the oil before spreading it over his skin, using feather-light strokes. She began to knead his tense muscles, starting with his shoulders which were hunched up about his ears.

He melted under her touch. His shoulders relaxed to their natural position below his neck. "Damn, Hermione, but you have magical fingers."

She smiled smugly. "And later, I'll have you swearing like a butterbeer-marinated house-elf. But I'd really like to hear about the conference." She halted all action as she waited for his explanation.

"I'm still feeling rather agitated. Perhaps a bit more massage would relieve my tension." He inhaled sharply as she worked on a particularly hard knot at his right shoulder blade. "Very well," he conceded. "You have sufficiently loosened me so I'm able to *regale* you with the sordid details."

She continued to lightly knead and caress his arms and back. Hermione wholly expected his ire to flare while he told his tale of woe, and she hoped her touch would temper his annoyance.

"I had just finished detailing our two year struggle to create the new and improved Wolfsbane Potion: my initial idea to combine it with Wit-Sharpening Potion, allowing the victim to maintain full human mental acuity despite the physical transformation; the endless search for the perfect sequence of ingredients, the proper brewing temperature and the exact stirring pattern; our fight with the Ministry to approve clinical testing on humans; and finally, the successful distribution to lycanthropy clinics throughout Great Britain and the continent.

"During the question and answer session, someone asked if we had discovered new, unexpected benefits by mixing together the two potions. I highlighted the added bonus of ginger root as a flavour- and mood-enhancer aiding in stress relief during the peri-transformation period an anti-emetic preventing nausea, and anti-inflammatory easing the physical discomfort of the disease.

"And then, out of nowhere, comes this Yankee Potions mistress, waving her arm in a manner reminiscent of a former student of mine...Owww," he yelped, a sharp reaction to Hermione's thumb stabbing his tender subscapularis muscle for one brief moment.

"But did she have a legitimate question? Nooo! She had the audacity to suggest substituting peppermint for the ginger root, claiming it would serve the same purpose in the potion, provide the same added benefits, but because it's easier to prepare and cheap to obtain, the potion could be brewed in less time and would thus be more cost-effective.

"Well, I was in no mood to remain after that hijacking, so I concluded the session and came home directly. I was unaware those Americans take that cowboy image of themselves so seriously. Yippee ki yay, indeed. I'm never attending another *international* potions conference again."

She stopped the massage mid-stroke and flipped him over to face her. She assumed her best glare a homage to Minerva McGonagall, scary but in a sexy, feline way.

"I can't believe you did that."

"I did." He smirked.

"You just up and left without telling anyone?" Her voice became exponentially shrill with each passing second.

"I did and would do it again. The nerve of that insolent witch."

"Severus Snape," she snapped. "Once again you've made a mountain out of a mole hill. I only hope your abrupt departure didn't inconvenience the organizers. Oh, who am I kidding? I'll probably have to smooth plenty of ruffled feathers tomorrow. You're lucky I'm such a skilled diplomat. And I know the *Yankee* Potions mistress you are speaking of, Severus. I've read a number of her articles in the *Journal of Holistic Healing* and *Potions Monthly*. I agree with her idea to use peppermint instead of ginger root. You're just upset because you didn't think of it first."

"If you are done with taking me to task, then..." He looked expectantly at her, but when she didn't move, he twirled his hand in a circle, the international gesture meaning 'get on with it.'

"Oh, you insufferable man," she huffed, flipping him over again and resuming the massage in a less than delicate fashion. "I hope you feel better now that you've vented your spleen. I know I do."

Hermione's rough rub down diminished her anger but elicited pitiful moans from Severus. Her movements softened, her touch light once more. She continued to massage him, silently kneading away all the little bedevilments which annoyed her hair-triggered husband. "I hope that's good enough, Severus. My arms and hands feel like limp noodles."

She ended the massage and leaned forward to whisper in his ear. "I think you're ready for the final relaxation step."

He did not respond with words but rather with a low, wheezy purr. Hermione curled up beside him and spelled the velvet duvet beneath them to wrap around them, a luxurious cocoon of warmth and softness.

"Apparently Operation: Decompression has worked too well. You'll have to wait until the next international conference to learn the full extent of my evil plan. Goodnight, my cranky Potions master."

A/N: This story was written for the very lovely, very thoughtful, and very prolific TPP reviewer, braye27. In 2010 she was one of the three top reviewers on the archive. She's also known as beffysue on LJ, and she's just plain Beth to her friends.

They say it takes a village to raise a child. In this instance, it took a village to write this gift fic. Let's hear it for the team: sempra as alpha reader extraordinaire, kittylefish as brainstorming co-conspirator, and astopperindeath as beta reader and brainstormtrooper.

Original prompt: How about if Severus has returned from a Potions Society meeting where he was the Guest Speaker and is livid about some of the questions/challenges to his talk that a young underheaded new member of the Society asked. Hermione knows he just needs to vent a little and have a good laugh followed by TLC as only she can provide, and he'll be all over his "lividness."

You probably know by now that I substituted a special guest for that young upstart.