

It's Not Easy

by Amita

Intrigue at Hogwarts during the seventh year.

Chapter 1 of 1

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Prompt from Hermioneweasley1972: It's not easy when it's about as long as you are tall.

"You should want to do something for the common good," she said.

"How kind of you to remind me of my uselessness," said Cormac. "I assume your diplomatic skills at recruiting are the reason Harry, Hermione, and Ron left you here at Hogwarts."

"How kind of you to remind me that I was left behind. Your graciousness is exactly what we need."

"I must have something you want besides social skills," said Cormac.

"We want someone to spy on Pansy," said Ginny. "We think she's been delivering confidential messages. She's struggling through Arithmancy, and you're good at it."

"Is that the best you can come up with? No wonder the other side is winning."

"You'll think of something," said Ginny.

It was a week before an opportunity presented itself. Pansy was striding by him on the way to Charms when he asked, "Did you get problem four in Arithmancy. I couldn't figure it out."

"What?" she asked, giving him a strange look and continuing to class.

He noticed she glanced at him several times during lunch – her desire to demonstrate superiority warring with her disdain for the lower orders. Later that afternoon, a shadow fell over his manuscripts, and he looked up to see Pansy.

"Are you really having trouble with problem four?" she asked.

"I was going to take a break to clear my head, and then I'll probably get it," he said.

"Oh, it's easy," she said. "Look, I'll show you."

She made a few sketches for him which he studied intently until he said, "Hey, that's great. Thanks, Pansy."

She gave a superior smile and turned to leave. He waited. Did he do it? She turned back and asked about problem six. He lied that he hadn't tried that one yet, but he could look at it now. Perhaps she could help. Yes, perhaps she could. So far, so good, as he pretended to stumble through it until she finally took his hints on how to solve it –

except she was more human than he wanted her to be.

"Well, guess who you've taken under your wing," Ginny said to him that evening.

"Isn't this what you wanted?" he asked.

"Of course," said Ginny. "Carry on as you like. I can't stop you."

A month later, he was saying, "That's a good Charms essay, Pansy."

"What are you on about? Are you trying to get in my pants?"

"I don't fancy you. I'm trying to spy on you."

Nothing like the truth to put a witch off her stroke, eh, what?

"You're trying to kid yourself, but it won't work," she said. "I've noticed the way you look at me."

"You're the one who'll be trapped," he replied. "You have a plan, a plan that fits you and satisfies all your needs. You plan to act cool but just a bit vulnerable, and as time goes on, you'll act as if you're more and more attracted to me until I can't get you out of mind and the hours not spent with you are wasted, and finally, when I confess my utter devotion, you intend to spurn me with great glee and gloat for days on end as you enjoy my total devastation. But your plan will backfire, Pansy. Your feelings will follow your acts, and when the time comes to humiliate me in front of the whole school, you will discover that by your actions you have insinuated me into your life and you cannot give me up."

"What a romantic you are," said Pansy. "Do you want to work together in Potions?"

That night, Cormac looked up to see Ginny Weasley standing in front of him and glaring. "You and that Slytherin witch are becoming inseparable. What was that conversation you two were having? It looked intense."

"She was talking about herself," admitted Cormac. "It's inevitable. Arithmancy derivations stir the soul."

"Stir the soul?"

"You have to be in Arithmancy to understand. Some of the procedures are convoluted. Take the last one. It's not easy when it's about as long as you are tall."

"I see: I don't understand. How could I? You don't care to have a conversation with any of the normal girls around you." She caught her breath. "And I'm not that short."

"I'm only spying on Pansy."

"Are you certain?" asked Ginny.

"I'm watching her every move."

"I've noticed that," said Ginny, stalking off.

It was late on a Saturday night when Cormac spotted Pansy on a back trail to the school. He was desperate for a way to sneak back into the castle since he had stayed too long at the café, dreading the return to the iron regime. *She's more clever than I thought if she's found a way to sneak in.* Then a pang of jealousy hit him. *Who's she been seeing?* He followed as the pain grew, both wanting and not wanting to find her with a companion.

There was a rush of wind overhead and a scream as two Aurors pounced on the exposed girl. Without thinking, he rushed forward, screaming hexes that had the two ambushers unconscious.

"We've got to get out of here," he said, pulling Pansy away from kicking the downed Aurors.

"We can hide in a broom shed," she said. "When it's light, we can enter the school with impunity since I'm Head Girl."

He spelled the cloaks into warm blankets, and sat beside her on a bench. She began shaking, and he held her and stroked her hair until she was calm.

"Thank you, Cormac," she said.

"I'm glad I was there," he said.

"Really?"

"Yes, really."

She was wrapped in his arms and crying on his shoulder.

She broke away. "If you tell anyone about this, I'll carve your heart out," she said.

"No one will ever know," he said.

"Oh, I see, you don't want anyone to know you're fond of me," she said. "It would ruin your reputation."

"It's not that," he said. "If people discover what I did tonight, they'll conclude I must have been spying on you. My life as a secret agent would be over before it began."

"That *would* be embarrassing," said Pansy, moving into his lap.

Holding Pansy blanked out Cormac's mind. When he returned to earth, her head was on his shoulder, and her fingers were tracing his locks. She occasionally nibbled his ear.

She's being gentle with me, thought Cormac.

His spirit soared.

"You saved me," said Pansy. "Did you want to see the secret message?"

"How would I explain getting it?"

"That's easy," she said. "The Aurors knocked me out, and before I came to, you found the message, copied it, and put it back."

"How would I find it?"

"It's hidden in my bra. It's the first place you'd look."