

Surprises

by tiddlywinks

"The issue in question was the (surprising) fact that Severus Snape was Not A Cuddler. Of course, to many, this would not be much of a shock."

She was glad of the dark, for it meant he couldn't see her eyes.

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: If bad grammar were a murdering, kidnapping rapist of doom, and my inestimable beta Deeble a bounty hunter... well, let's just say that the world would be a much safer place.

Also, while I have your attention, "The characters displayed in this story are not mine and do not belong to me. No profit is being made from this story. Now that I am done, I will Obliviate and put them back where I found them (which is my flatmate's bookshelf, second shelf from the top)."

Hermione Granger was surprised.

That was to say, she wasn't surprised. She was surprised that she wasn't, as she had expected to be surprised. But she hadn't been. Which was surprising.

The issue in question was the (surprising) fact that Severus Snape was Not A Cuddler.

Of course, to many, this would not be much of a shock.

But Hermione, with a Gryffindor grasp of Slytherin subtlety, had harboured a smug expectation that the face her would-be lover projected to the world would be proved false. Severus was a twisty fellow. When engaged in actual, private conversation, he quite often revealed that he was not what he seemed. Therefore, his standoffish behaviour would undoubtedly be revealed to be nothing but a persona. Passionate sex and other such strenuous physical activity could then ensue, followed by the aforementioned Cuddling.

Hermione had been quite proud of her reasoning. She had been looking forward to having the logically-discarded "preconception" of Severus Snape as a cold and aloof man broken for her at around, oh, eleven p.m., weeknights. Perhaps eleven a.m. on Sundays. And – with a blush – quite possibly again at three.

To an extent, it was true. Maybe not exactly to the above timetable, but she had broken through to the remote and distant Potions master. More than just physically. "Arm's length" was a phrase that could only apply to the amount of sinewy muscle that cherished her between the sheets as if she were fragile and feminine, something that she was most definitely not. Or perhaps it instead referred to the maximum distance he had gone from her while she had been recovering from Bellatrix Lestrange's last hex. It had been this that finally convinced her friends that their relationship was serious.

He cared; she knew that he did. It was in the way he would narrow his eyes at the salad she had on her plate in the Great Hall and serve her a generous portion of whatever meat was on offer for the evening. It was in the way his hand would rest lightly on the small of her back when entering a room together. It was in the way that he talked to her about his uncomfortable school years and his guilt over Dumbledore's death, no matter that he had been cleared by the Wizengamot. He was nothing if not involved. Emotionally, physically and mentally, it could not be denied that there was something between Severus Snape and Hermione Granger. And no man is ever aloof with 5'6" of naked female writhing underneath him. It just can't be done.

Yet somewhere from grunt to groan, it was lost, although it had taken a while to realise.

Their first time together had been a rather ignominious screw against the potions bench, after which she had to go attend to her apprentice Charms duties without any underwear, knickers being hard to wear when they are wet, ripped and in somebody else's pocket. Their second time together had been a rather heart-stopping interlude down at the lakeshore after sneaking out during a Leaving Feast. Knickers are equally hard to wear when they are wet, ripped and lost in underbrush. But their third time, the occasion they had actually made it to a bed, the first time she had tried to initiate the customary post-coital snuggle, she had been rudely surprised. Or rather, not surprised. Whatever.

The sensations she used to enjoy with others as evidence of a night well spent – the prickle of drying sweat and the pleasant ache between her legs – became uncomfortable with her arm half-draped over an unmoving partner. She knew he couldn't be sleeping, not yet, and although he hadn't gone so far as to roll over with his back to her, she could feel the physical rejection all the more sharply in comparison to the mind-blowing sex they had just shared.

She found herself holding her breath for the smallest affection. Something she had hated with her previous lovers, their happy hormonal stupidity at not figuring the relative weights of involved parties, had become a longed-for event with the Potions master. There was nothing quite as heartbreaking as the satisfied thump and grunt of a back hitting cool sheets of the mattress next to her.

Many things could and have been said of Severus Snape, but Hermione wondered whether she was the only one who had ever thought that he was the sort of person who made one acutely aware that there were two sides to a bed.

For some reason she hadn't spoken of this to anyone, not even him. She still tried, sometimes, to say with gestures what she couldn't with words. A questing hand, an outflung leg, a soft kiss on the side of his neck ... Currently, she rested now with her forehead at an awkward angle against his shoulder, with one arm tucked over his waist, and the other hand curled up against her chest. Her fingers fluttered self-consciously at her breastbone, sympathetically reverberating with the softening breaths of the man who had just made love to her.

Back in third year, when Hermione had been trusted with a Time Turner, she had done her best to fulfil the responsibility and (naturally) had run off to the library to research everything that she could about Time and its management. She had studied classical paradoxes, alternate universes, even Muggle theories of magnetic fields and gravity distortion. But nowhere in the many books she had perused had she ever come across the stretching of time that that can occur only after a good orgasm. Or how to predict the exact point that it could segue into the kind of discomfort generally only experienced after one-night stands. Embarrassment, as most people know, works on a timeline of its own. Perhaps that's why it was never mentioned in her textbooks. It generally takes longer than your average stopwatch would show and has a disconcerting ability to drag one back to the event even days afterward. It was the most insinuatingly painful non-documented manipulation of time that Hermione had found in her twenty-odd years of life, and she felt somehow cheated that no one had told her this.

She was waiting silently now, heavy breathing reduced to a steady rhythm. Any minute, she expected to hear the rumble of Severus' deep baritone mortifyingly telling her to move or to sleep. At best she anticipated something suggestive for another round. Instead, there was nothing but the rustle of material as Severus' leg shifted infinitesimally farther toward the edge of the bed.

What really was surprising, a little voice said as she slid her arms back from the still figure next to her to the familiar grip of pillow to stomach, was how it still managed to surprise her.

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