

Bad Hair Day

by Minerva

A chance comment on encountering Severus Snape on a bad hair day leads to mortification (hers), teasing (his) and eventually to Emma, Elizabeth and Simon Granger-Snape.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 11

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"Dear me! If we had children together they'd have a chance of manageable hair!"

Only Snape's startled expression told Hermione that she had voiced her thoughts aloud. Mortified, she turned around and fled to the safety of her bedroom.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 11

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Ten years after Voldemort's demise, Hermione Granger's time at the MLE was mainly spent behind a desk. Having risen steadily in the department, her job now was to oversee the implementing and introduction of new laws.

After some Death Eater trials had failed spectacularly due to technical issues – it seemed Pureblood bias didn't prevent the accused Voldemort-sympathisers and their lawyers from learning some things from Muggles – Minister Shacklebolt had asked Hermione to establish procedures and to train the department heads of the Aurory in following them.

For this last operation, Kingsley had even asked her to come out in the field and oversee things. Observations, monitored Floo-talks and slow-motion analysis of Severus Snape's and Lucius Malfoy's Pensieve memories of Death Eater meetings had finally led to what was believed to be the last remnant of Death Eater activity.

The Aurory, Shackbolt himself – he did well enough as Minister but every so often tried to get some action away from his desk – and Severus Snape were hidden together with Hermione in the swamps of East Anglia. The Potions Master - despite working independently as researcher and brewer of rare and difficult potions - had helped out before as a Dark Arts consultant and had discovered and disarmed countless traps in similar operations.

After finding a magic-detecting hex, they were even denied the comfort of warming and drying charms, and tempers were getting short on the third day.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 of 11

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But the final strike had been successful with only minor injuries on their side. With the prisoners dispatched to Azkaban, Kingsley had offered old emergency Portkeys to Grimmauld Place to his team who looked nowhere near fit for Apparition.

As it was nearing four in the morning after a three day stake-out and even the imperturbable Severus Snape was looking grey with exhaustion, they had taken them and stumbled to their old rooms upon landing.

Thus, Hermione Granger found herself the next morning still in her boots, eyes gritty and hair at its worst since her seventh-year "camping trip", dying for a shower. As the two working bathrooms of the old house were likely to be blocked soon, she opted against turning around and sleeping in. The law expert winced at the pull of dried mud sticking her hair against the pillowcase and stumbled bleary-eyed into the second floor bathroom.

Where she encountered Severus Snape as he tried to ply his mud and blood soaked shirt from his body. His hair was in an undescrivable state, but only exhaustion and sleep deprivation could account for her words.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 of 11

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Snape had woken up with more aches in his body than usual. His joints had not taken kindly to a three-day encampment in the mud without the benefit of warming charms.

Thankfully hearing no clanking pipes – everyone else was apparently still asleep – he made his way to the nearest bathroom.

A long scratch on his upper arm had bled profusely, and Snape was in the process of peeling down his torn shirt. He did not hear the bathroom door open.

Children? What children? Granger obviously had not meant to say that aloud. Scrutinizing his lank and matted strands in the mirror, he had to concede that she was right. If Mendel was to be believed, a combination of his and her hair – this morning Granger's had looked like the inside of a horsehair mattress after inept fifth years had practiced slicing hexes – might produce shiny, full bodied dark curls.

Snape had not seen a lot of Granger during the past years, but when working together with her he had been pleased that she had grown into her own. Gone was the ever-present need to prove herself to the Wizarding World; no longer did she try to make people see her own way of thinking with all the subtlety of the Hogwarts Express in full steam. The Potions Master was quite sure that the old fire was still there, that there still would be some colour coordinated charts in her drawers, but was relieved that he had never been subjected to one of her bossy and impatient speeches.

While he could sympathize with her – having to explain everything twenty times over was not something he liked either – this more restrained behaviour of the MLE official had helped him making the transition from hand-waving-11-year-old to reliable working partner. Working partner, all right, but children?

Snape did not fool himself that Granger might be harbouring romantic feelings for him, but put that uncharacteristic outburst down to three hours of sleep, a mind that would not stop analyzing what it saw and an underlying tendency to voice her thoughts out loud. She was a Gryffindor after all.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 of 11

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Hermione spent an uncomfortable half hour fretting over her comment to Snape. After all of the times she defended him to everyone who dared to utter uncharitable words about his appearance, she had put her foot firmly into her mouth. The thought had popped into her head at random; she had not meant to belittle his hair any more than her own. Well, she would apologize and hope for the best.

Snape was having coffee and toast in the kitchen of Grimmauld Place. He had not the best memories of the place, but hadn't had the heart to refuse the offer of Potter's dreadful old elf, Kreacher. When a nervous-looking Granger edged into the room, he decided that the delay had been worth it.

"Snape, I am sorry. I have been reading this book and at the moment am trying to re-do Mendel's experiments with pea-blossoms ... what I want to say is that it just popped into my head, as a scientific theory. In no way did I mean to belittle your appearance."

"Calm down, Granger. I know you well enough to realize that, had you meant to make a dig at my hair, it would have been more eloquently worded, complete with cross-references and footnotes."

He was making fun of her! Relieved did she take a seat while Kreacher put her breakfast in front of her.

"You realize that there's no guarantee, don't you? They could have your hair and my temper. Or my nose and your bossiness. While we're at it I'd like to state that I do not want more than three."

With that, he left her dumbfounded, sitting with her toast halfway to her mouth.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 of 11

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Three days later Kingsley Shacklebolt was slightly surprised by Snape's attendance at a meeting for the purpose of analysing the latest mission. Usually, the solitary man avoided such things like the plague, sending his input via owl in precise and cutting words that made the Minister of Magic wince in sympathy for Snape's former pupils. He put the thought aside in favour of listening to Hermione Granger's presentation – precise, but slightly too long, as always.

Hermione was taking her time in leaving the conference room. She wanted everyone to be gone because she didn't trust her temper. Did they really think she wouldn't see their eyes glassing over halfway through her presentation? Save for clobbering them over the head she couldn't think of anything more to make them get her point.

Still fuming, she hadn't noticed Snape lingering on, shrinking his robes and looking surprisingly at home in dark Muggle jeans and a turtleneck sweater.

"Do you want my advice?"

Of course he would notice the inattention of her colleagues, having been a teacher for so long. As she hadn't noticed any derision in his address, she nodded.

"Yes, please. I must admit I'm at the end of my wits."

"Your presentation was very thorough but the team has probably heard it before. I think you should encourage them more, coddle them, if you like, about things they got right this time. Cut the rest short. And put more stress on your fourth topic; that is a Muggle concept I doubt anyone save Potter, you and me understands. It is completely alien to somebody with a Wizarding background."

"Excuse me? Severus Snape is telling me about positive motivation?!?"

"Don't play dumb, Granger. Potions and law are two different things. If I hadn't kept them on their toes, the dunderheads would have blown themselves up by the dozens. Did you know that the Potions Masters before me had an average death count of two pupils per year?"

Hermione could tell he was completely sincere. Not wanting to continue right in the MOM she offered, "I want to get out of here. Will you come with me? My chocolate intake is too low right now for me to appreciate your input."

It was Snape's turn to look surprised, but he acquiesced readily enough and followed her to a small Italian bakery.

With a double espresso and a chocolate cake in front of her, she looked markedly calmer. His eyebrow nearly got lost in his hairline at the speed the first half of the cake vanished.

"Don't look at me that way, just try it."

He did, and Hermione had a hard time defending her cake hence. They parted amicably.

During the next few weeks neither thought a lot about the other. Maybe Hermione now and then compared how other men wore their black jeans to how Snape wore his. Maybe Severus' memory of their meeting in the café was triggered by chocolate cakes, spoons, Italian shoes, Italian soccer teams ...

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 of 11

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At the Order's annual Yule meeting Kingsley Shacklebolt was surprised to see Snape, who had nearly always managed to avoid that particular gathering held at the Burrow. He vaguely remembered having been surprised by Snape's attendance somewhere before but was sidetracked from following that train of thought by Molly calling everyone to dinner.

Only when the party was already winding down, did Hermione Granger find a way to talk to Severus Snape. She thanked him for his advice concerning her work and asked after an article of his in "Potions Quarterly". When George Weasley realized they'd been talking quietly to each other for nearly two hours, he tried to hover a sprig of mistletoe over them. Neville cringed – it had been a truly fine specimen of mistletoe – when the thing was hit by two spells nearly at the same time without the intended victims interrupting their conversation.

"Mistletoe is a sure sign this party has been gone on too long. I will be taking my leave. Have you by chance thought about names, Granger?"

"Only as far as I'd prefer to name our offspring neither after Roman emperors nor Shakespearian characters. And shouldn't you call the mother of your children by her first name?"

"Very well, Hermione."

"Good night, Severus."

Hermione's chocolate intake over the Christmas holidays had been high, but still she found herself deserving a treat. Although happy to have repaired her relationship with her parents, the Granger Christmas bash had been exhausting. Her aunts and great aunts were nosy, her cousins between condescending and bitchy – depending on their alcohol intake.

Therefore a trip to a certain Italian café for an espresso and two hours of uninterrupted rereading of *Pride and Prejudice* sounded like a plan.

Severus had enjoyed Christmas at the Malfoys. Lucius and Narcissa had been delighted to have him over. Snape had been pleased to spend time with his godson, Draco. The young man's wife, Astoria had recently given birth to their first child, a boy named Scorpio. The company had been pleasant, the conversation warm, but after two days Snape was feeling a certain wistfulness. He thanked his hosts, said his goodbyes to the young family and walked down to the apparition point of Malfoy Manor.

On a whim he decided to detour via London, hit the bookshops and perhaps have a coffee.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 of 11

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Author's note: Thank you for following this little story; I am thrilled with your reviews. I am very happy to announce that Dreamy_Dragon has agreed to beta. Thank you, Dreamy! Besides spotting numerous mistakes and missing commas, Dreamy has found a plotting mistake: at the end of chapter seven, I let Hermione read "Jane Eyre" in the café. For reasons that become clear in chapter eight, she now reads "Pride and Prejudice". The quote is from Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice", obviously. Furthermore, I do like the name of Sean; it's just Hermione that doesn't.

Deciding to be honest with himself, Severus resisted the urge to quell the pleasant surprise he experienced when he laid eyes on Hermione Granger, engrossed in a well-thumbed book, a slice of chocolate cake in front of her.

He made his way over to her table and, when he'd read the book's title, remarked in his haughtiest voice, "The cake is tolerable, I suppose, but not dark enough to tempt me."

"Severus! How wonderful to see you! And I seem to remember that you liked that particular cake well enough last time."

"Well, yes. But the Malfoys' pastry elf has outdone herself over Christmas. I don't think I want to see any more sweet concoctions before Easter."

Hermione had cleared away her jacket and bag from the second chair at her table, so it was only polite to sit down. She proceeded to ask after his sojourn at Malfoy Manor, but offered only a short statement about her own holiday.

Severus' spy instincts kicked in as he noticed her somehow dispirited manner despite her apparent delight in meeting him. The self-deprecating part of him observed that any person in wizarding Britain would have to be really desperate if they were ecstatic to see him. Plus, the cake and *Pride and Prejudice* were quite obvious pointers.

"What's wrong, Hermione?"

Looking anywhere but him, she started to fidget with her pastry fork. With a small shrug, she finally said, "I keep telling myself that it is really stupid of me to let myself be affected by the behaviour of mean-spirited relatives I see only once a year. It will pass soon enough. The reason why I'm so maudlin is probably that my parents and I were very close before I altered their memories. Now they're trying, but they aren't able to fully trust me anymore. And to prevent that rift from becoming obvious over Christmas, they invite more and more people every year."

"Hermione, you know that they were targets. Not just in the general sense, but they'd already been singled out. I was heartily glad of their vanishing act because the task of killing them would most likely have gone to me."

"Intellectually I know all this. It is just that great-aunt Vivian and her offspring, Samantha and Kimberley, were particularly nasty this year: make-up tips, invitations to go shopping for more feminine clothes, repetitions of 'Oh, so you're thirty already!' accompanied by ticking noises—"

"I take it you haven't told them about me and Emma, Elisabeth and Sean?"

This drew a smile from her. "Sean? Really, Severus, I can understand the need for alliteration, but Sean? Simon and Samuel are perfectly good names as well."

"So you're all right with Emma and Elisabeth?"

"Of course." She waved her book.

"And no, I didn't tell them about us. You're free finally, neither subjected to Death-Eater gatherings nor staff meetings. I just couldn't condemn you to a Granger Christmas bash. If I hadn't kept mum, they would have organized an Easter meeting on the spot just to meet you."

"You're too kind. For a moment I thought you were ashamed of me."

"Never, Severus. Never."

He did eat half of the cake despite his earlier protestations, and they parted amicably after a relaxed afternoon spent reading and drinking coffee.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 of 11

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Author's note: Thank you again for your kind support; it has been a pleasure reading your reviews. And many thanks to my beta, Dreamy_Dragon.

Over the next two weeks, Hermione spent a lot of time evaluating her conflicting emotions concerning Severus Snape. Wishing to talk to him for the third time in two days about something she'd read about in a journal, she finally summoned her owl on Thursday evening.

Severus had spent his birthday in a strange mood. Part of him was unaccountably convinced that in his forty-ninth year he would finally find contentment—happiness even. Those thoughts usually crept up after he found himself wishing to talk to Granger—no, Hermione—about something.

Then he would force himself to be realistic: she was quite a brilliant, reasonably pretty witch who was twenty years his junior. There was no way she'd be seriously interested in him in that sense, even though she'd been a good sport about their sort of flirtation that had originated from a chance comment.

Hermione's letter requesting a meeting on Saturday morning in *their* café therefore took him by surprise. He sent back a positive reply immediately and on said morning found himself contemplating whether to wear the dark green or the charcoal-grey turtleneck with his favourite black jeans.

Hermione's decision about her dress took a little longer. Finally, she settled on a honey-coloured knit dress and her brown suede boots.

Severus was already there when she arrived at the café. Watching him through the window, she noticed that he seemed to be a little tense. Her spirits sank.

He must have guessed her reasons for suggesting this meeting and probably dreaded what was to come. What had she been thinking? Why would he be interested in her? Hermione had read his name linked to some truly striking women in the past; he needn't settle for a socially inept bookish law expert. And then there was the spectre of Lily Potter...

She had asked him to be here, and she would not chicken out now. She'd take his rejection with dignity and then mourn her crushed hopes in private.

Determined, Hermione pushed the door open.

Severus stood up and took her coat, then held her chair. They placed their orders.

"How are you?"

"Fine, thank you."

"Kimberley and Samantha are forgotten until next Christmas?"

"Yes, yes, quite."

Hermione's smile was short-lived and Snape grew apprehensive. Whatever her reason for suggesting their meeting, it was serious.

"Severus, please let me say my thing. And if you need to let me down afterwards, please do it gently."

"Why would I be anything other than gentle with the mother of my children?"

She became agitated at this words. "That's just the point, isn't it? I am not the future mother of your children! This is just a running gag that's been going on too long!"

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 of 11

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Chapter 10

Thank you all for your reviews; I am truly awed by your responses. As I cannot personally serve you all a slice of chocolate cake, there will be an epilogue. Last, but not least, many thanks to my beta, Dreamy_Dragon who has been simply wonderful.

Severus felt as if someone had drenched him with cold water. This was what she was on about? He'd been expecting something like an incurable illness or a move to another continent. Their harmless joking had her in such a state?

Only then did he realise how comfortable he'd become with his fictitious family, how the idea of having one for real had grown on him. Having a relationship, children even, not just with anyone, but with the woman across the table. The very same woman who—by all appearances—seemed to abhor the very thought of even joking about such things with the greasy bat of the dungeons.

"—for real."

Reining in his anger and disappointment, he looked at Hermione. She seemed to be waiting for an answer, looking tense. And hopeful. The silence grew, and the longer it lasted, the more her face fell. Then her last words registered. He cleared his throat. "Could you please say that again?"

She blushed deeply, seemed to summon her remaining courage and answered in a clipped voice, "I was asking you to consider a real relationship between us."

The last time his thoughts had been in such a scrambled mess had been during his O.W.L. examination in Transfiguration. He was sure of his own feelings, however. He felt elation and joy, pure and simple. Severus Snape was given a chance to be happy finally.

His emotions couldn't have shown on his face because he became aware that Hermione's eyes were looking suspiciously moist, and she was rummaging in her bag.

"Hermione, please wait."

For good measure, he took hold of her hand.

"Yes, I would very much like to have a relationship with you. For real."

Hermione dropped her shoulders as some of the tension left her, and she was composed enough to answer, "Oh, good. Good!" Hermione left her bag where it was and took hold of Severus' hands, blushing again.

Severus had a choice of grinning goofily at her or to start talking. He chose the latter.

"When you were so serious, I feared you wanted to tell me either that you were terminally ill, or that you'd been promoted to the MoM's embassy in New Zealand. Then, your outburst led me to mistakenly believe that you were fed up with our joking because, ah, because of what we—"

"The reason I nearly ran away was that I didn't dare to hope you might consider me in that light. When you didn't answer at once, I feared you were searching for the right words to let me down gently."

Severus became serious again. "I do want what we were joking about, but I do not know how."

Hermione squeezed his hands. "I do not know either. We'll take it one day at a time."

Looking over her shoulder, she realised that she wouldn't be able to claim a first kiss from Severus in a café that had filled up with people exhausted from their after-Christmas-bargain-hunting, even if there weren't a table between them.

"Let's take a walk."

They paid and left the café.

Even though they were both intelligent people, they hadn't counted on London's streets being just as crowded as the café, which is why their little walk finally came to mutually satisfying conclusion in an alley next to a skip at a Marks and Spencer's back entrance.

The End

Epilogue

Chapter 11 of 11

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Epilogue

Over the next few months, several things happened.

Hermione learned that one of the few happy memories Severus had of his father was Tobias Snape taking his son to the cinema to watch Sean Connery as *James Bond*, hence his partiality for the name Sean.

Lucius Malfoy learned that his wife needed little provocation to completely change the decoration of their main drawing room. The case in point being that Severus Snape announced his plan to bring his significant other along to their party at Beltane.

Severus Snape learned that even a night out playing pool with Harry Potter, Ronald Weasley and Neville Longbottom was preferable to staying home when his fiancée was having her night in with her girlfriends, complete with lots of prosecco and singing along to every single song of *Bridget Jones*.

And some years later, Emma, Elizabeth and Simon Granger-Snape eventually learned not to interfere with their parents' *special day* on the 15th of January, even if they only did such boring things as eat one slice of chocolate cake with two forks and afterwards share a kiss in an alley next to a Marks and Spencer's back-entrance.

All three Granger-Snape children had perfect dark curls, although Simon lost his quite early in a potions accident of Longbottomish proportions.