

Talents and Rewards

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We all have talents and deserve rewards, even Hermione and Severus.

Chapter One

Chapter 1 of 1

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"What did you do?" Hermione bit out in a shrill voice as she stormed into his lab.

"I don't know what you are talking about, Hermione. He seems to be perfectly normal to me," Severus said, the smirk on his face making it clear that he knew exactly what she was talking about.

"Sure, he does. Because Harry Potter always cries when the chocolate biscuits are gone and asks for me to take him to the loo. You are not going to get away with this!"

"Auntie Miaaaaa! I need help with my unders!" Hermione heard Harry's voice call from the restroom. The timbre and tone was that of a man, while the words and inflection were that of a child.

With a sickeningly sweet tone, that was wholly wrong coming from person displaying such a deadly glare, she called back, "Now, Harry you are a big boy. I'm sure you can do it yourself."

"Okay..."

Hermione stepped in front of Severus, blocking his view of the bubbling cauldron. A finger poked into his chest in a sharp and angry manner. Growling in frustration, she ground out between clenched teeth, "Now you know *WHY* my friends refuse to visit. How old is he? I know you gave him the mental de-aging potion we've been working on. Now, how old?"

Severus' black eyes sparkled at her, the corner of his lips twitching in delight. "Four, maybe five. It took off approximately twenty mental years." His tone was clearly amused and completely unfazed by her anger. Truth be told, he loved when she got angry and never missed an opportunity to rile her. It didn't hurt that he'd been able to include Potter as well this time.

"Argh, I can believe you!" She shook her head, trying to get the rampant locks off her face. Her eyes, alive with anger, narrowed sharply and bore into him as her foot stamped imperiously. "You have not heard the end of this, Severus. How long until he is back to normal?"

"Two hours. Now, go enjoy your friend's visit," he said, stepping smoothly to the side as he moved himself out of her direct contact. Then, with a wave of his wand, he placed a stasis spell on his cauldron and began to move toward the door. Ignoring the indignant sputtering that was still coming from her, he drawled, "Now, if you will excuse me, I believe it is time for dinner." And with that he was gone.

"We get to sit at the big table?" Harry asked as they walked up the stairs to the Head Table in the Great Hall.

Hermione rolled her eyes as she looked back at Harry. Leading him up the stairs to the dais by the hand, she told him in a mockingly cheerful tone that is often found in the voices of exasperated adults, "We sure do. Now, we need to be on our best behavior today and if we are good we can have some pudding. Sound good?"

Harry beamed at her, oblivious to her irritation. "I will be super duper good, Auntie Mia! I love pudding!" His head bobbed up and down with enthusiasm as her eyes once again rolled.

"I know you do! Now, here you are. You sit in this chair, right here," she said, gesturing to the chair that at the very far end of the table. It was a small thing to be thankful for, she knew, but at least with him at the end of the table, she could keep him from speaking to others.

As he sat in his chair, Hermione tapped her wand to his plate and watched it fill with a plethora of child friendly fare. "The house elves really are amazing," she thought with a shake of her head.

Harry squealed, "Oooh! I love fish fingers and chips!" He began to shove the food, messily, into his mouth.

Grimacing at the display, Hermione sat down and sighed. Absentmindedly, she took up her wand and summoned her own dinner.

"Yet another visit ruined. Blast, Severus!" she thought.

She had lost count of how many times he'd run off her friends. It was akin to a reflex for him. Hermione was pretty sure that after so many years of antagonizing her little group of friends, his reactions were nearly involuntary. It truly seemed that he simply couldn't hold himself back. However, if she didn't stop him soon, she wouldn't have any friends left to invite, period.

As she sat quietly, thinking of ways to get revenge, or at the very least, ways to get him to tone down his antics, she felt the man of the hour sit in the chair next to her.

"What are you doing here?" Hermione hissed under her breath.

He raised an eyebrow and turned toward her with mock surprise. "What you are talking about, Hermione?" he asked. "I always sit in this seat."

She let out an exasperated huff and turned, angling her body away from the insufferable man. She might as well try and eat her dinner; then, she could get Harry, who was now delightfully humming a song, out of the Great Hall as quickly as possible.

"Auntie Mia! Can you do this?" she heard Harry ask.

Paying him little mind, she asked, "Do what, Harry?" As she waited for his response, her eyes fixed on the plate of food before her. Mechanically, she took a bite and began to chew, thinking it best to get the dinner over with as quickly as possible.

"Can you swallow and hum at the same time?" Harry asked enthusiastically.

A muffled, and clearly surprised, chuckle came from the direction of Severus.

"What?" Hermione coughed out, struggling to keep the food in her mouth, as her mind processed Harry's unexpected inquiry.

"Swallow and hum at the same time, Auntie Mia," he repeated, slightly louder. "Like this... hmmm." Harry, sensing her confusion, demonstrated his newly discovered talent.

Again, Hermione coughed. "Um... well," she stammered, her brain unable to form a coherent reply. "Harry, I don't... um." Finally, as her brain seemed to catch up, making sense of what he'd asked her, she found herself torn between wanting to laugh and being appalled that someone may have heard him.

Hearing a snort coming from the direction of Severus, she turned sharply and gave him a warning glare, while she fought, with everything she had, the giggle that was bubbling to the surface.

"Well, I don't know if Auntie Mia can, Harry," Severus said in an uncharacteristically conversational tone. "However, I'm sure she'd be willing to try. One would expect that she'd be excellent at it, given that she is a know-it-all."

Hermione eyes went wide as she processed Severus' words, her nostrils flaring with indignation. She turned away from him quickly, but not before she could stop the small laugh that slipped from her lips. This was followed by several more coughs as she struggled to clear the food from her throat.

He leaned towards her and continued in a relentlessly teasing tone that was only slightly quieter now. "I do not know about those two, specifically, together. However, I do know she tends to enjoy trying out *new* things inside closets. Perhaps, later she can give it a try. I am sure that she'd be wonderful at it."

Her cheeks began to burn a brilliant red, at his words. Finally, getting her coughing under control, she swallowed the bite that had been threatening to asphyxiate her and looked down at her plate with amused, yet slightly horrified, eyes. "Merlin," she said, a little breathless. "You're going to make me choke."

"Well, we could try that too," he added without missing a beat.

Hermione quickly turned toward the man. "Severus!" she warned, still fighting between amusement and mortification at the subject matter.

"What? I'm sure you would be...wonderful at it, that is," he said with impish sincerity. "We can try later if you'd like. It would be my pleasure. I shall be at your disposal this evening."

She was going to kill him! However, aware that this was neither the time nor the place for such behavior, even if he did not recognize it as such, she chose to ignore him.

Quickly deciding that it had been a mistake to bring Harry into the Great Hall in the first place, Hermione threw her napkin onto the table and stood swiftly. "Harry!" she chirped, her voice coming out slightly higher than usual.

The surprise man-boy looked up at her and whinged, "I'm full up, Auntie Mia. May I have pudding now?"

"You know what, Harry?" The feigned enthusiasm was once again clear in her voice. "How about I take you to the kitchens? We can meet the elves, and they will make you any pudding that you want! Doesn't that sound fun?"

Harry's face lit up with excitement. "That sounds fun! Let go!" Faced with the desires of his four-year-old dreams, he jumped up, as only a child in a man's body could. As he stood, he flung his chair harshly backward, causing it to topple over rather loudly behind him.

Heads around the hall turned towards the commotion.

"Great," Hermione muttered under her breath as her eyes narrowed in on Severus. "Just what we need, more attention." She turned toward Harry and smiled again. "Let's go, Harry. I'll introduce you to Dobby. You'll love him!"

Taking Harry's hand in hers, she turned to leave the table. After a step, she paused for a moment before angrily hissing to the smirking professor, "Don't you dare think you

are getting off the hook for this, Severus. We will have words! Tonight!"

"Not to worry, my dear," he said, looking rather pleased. "I am counting on it."

Her hair flounced violently as she whipped her head away, choosing to ignore his parting words. With a false calm that bespoke her years of dealing with stressful situations wrought from the interactions between the Slytherins and Gryffindors in her life, she led the savior of the wizarding world from the Great Hall and away from the interested eyes of the student body and staff of Hogwarts.

He felt rather than saw her entry that evening. The potions bottles sitting on the table before him began to tremble as all the warmth in the air around him was sucked from the room. He knew she must be in full snit if she was losing control of her magic to such a degree. Considering the situation, it seemed a waste to not make the most of her anger. He had worked exceedingly hard to get her this mad, and it was rare that she got so riled these days.

"Hermione, love," he called, "I'm in the lab." His voice was filled with innocence sincerity, which he knew would irritate her immensely.

"Don't you, *love*, me!" she shouted, storming into the lab with wild magic sparking behind her. "You insufferable, poor excuse of a man. I can't believe you did that. Dosing my friend! Harry Potter, no less! With an untested potion! Then, on top of that, you taunt and tease me through dinner!"

Severus' eyes fixed on the railing woman as she spewed off insults like the a champion. Her arms flailed with her words, emphasizing each insult almost as much as her tone. Her hair, which was once again flying wildly around her face, gave an otherworldly quality to her as it sparked with magic. However, the most captivating parts of her were her cheeks and glittering eyes. The same cheeks, which at dinner had worn a the bright blush of embarrassment and mortification, were once again flush, now in anger, while her eyes shone with wild uncontrolled magic. This, to him, was what true beauty was made of. She was an amazing minx of a woman, and he knew she deserved every bit of the immense love he felt for her.

"Do you know?" she continued without pause. "He remembered everything! Everything, Severus! You should have seen the horror on his face as he puzzled out the dinner conversation. He is mortified that he asked me THAT! And in the middle of dinner, no less. Not to mention your lovely, and I might add, helpful, responses. He told me he thought it best if he didn't come back here to visit! From now I'm relegated to visiting him away from Hogwarts! You know how I hate meeting him outside of Hogwarts. I always get stuck dealing with either Molly or the press! Or both! This is your fault, you git!"

As she finished the rant, breathless, she finally noticed his lack of proper response. This, coupled with the intensity of his gaze, caused her to realize it was likely he hadn't heard a word she'd just said. Suddenly, he began to stalk across the room, drawn like a magnet to her fierce beauty, a determined look flashing across his face.

Taking in a surprised breath, her mind whirled in realization. 'He's done it again! Blast!' she thought. It was an old game of his, and she never could understand what it was about her anger that he loved so much.

"You wicked man. I hate it when you do this," she growled as he drew near. The heat of his body radiated out toward her as his eyes seared straight through to her core.

"Do what, Hermione?" he purred seductively. His hands, swift but gentle, pulled her body flush with his. Then, bringing his fingers up to her neck, he gently stroked her silky skin until her body shuddered out a small shiver.

"You know what you've done," she huffed, her once firm voice faltering. Her eyes fluttered closed as his fingers worked their way into her hair. Allowing her head to fall forward onto his chest, she pressed her face into his robes. His scent surrounded her, and arousal began to grow within her body. Letting out a small mew, she pulled her head back up to look at him with a smirk. "You were quite busy today. Weren't you?" she murmured.

Lowering his face down to hers, he mumbled softly against her lips, "Well, I do try."

Quickly, she pulled back from his lips and looked directly into his eyes. "You are aware that you shan't get off that easily, my love. You went too far this time, Severus. You can understand that, right?"

Severus sighed, "I will confess that it was not my goal to isolate you, Hermione. Had I known that your friends were on the verge of abandoning you completely, well, I would have been more subtle in my approach, to say the least."

Hermione huffed. "Slytherin."

"I am what and who I am, my dear. You learned that long ago," he told her. "And, although it goes against every value that I hold dear, if you demand it, I shall write to Potter tomorrow and apologize for the potion. As far as dinner, well there is no apologizing for that. You must admit, it was pure genius," he finished with a smirk.

Hermione smiled, rolling her eyes at him. "I must admit it, you say." She clicked her tongue thoughtfully. "Oh alright, yes, it was rather funny. Although, I am rather put out that you implied I've never done such things for you. We've been married for five years, and as such, it quite besmirches my sexual prowess for you to imply that."

"Now, kitten," he chided, "if you recall, it was your friend who asked if you could perform both acts at the same time. I simply replied honestly. The truth is, I do not know if you can accomplish both, simultaneously. However, you will also note, I did feel it necessary to express my belief that, should you try, it would be a task in which you would most certainly excel. I am perfectly aware that you can do either, individually. I must confess that when I consider it, it seems that both acts, performed simultaneously, would be rather, umm... difficult. And as far the bit about choking..."

"Alright, enough teasing or you'll most certainly never find how talented I am," she warned, as she pulled his lips back toward hers.

The heated touch of her lips to his sent all thoughts and awareness spinning from his head. For a time, as their lips moved against each other, all he knew was her. Her scent, her touch, and her sounds were his world. Then, as he felt her press her body hard against him, she broke the kiss, freeing his mind from its complete worship of her. Once again able to think, he quickly grasped her hand, and with great satisfaction, he led his wife from the lab and into their bedroom. It had been an eventful and productive day; he'd be damned if he was going to waste his hard earned rewards or her talents.

A/N: If you don't get the joke, please don't ask. I refuse to explain it to you. This story was inspired by an actual dinner conversation that took place between myself, my husband and our 7 year old daughter. Yes, she really asked me that. Yes, I about died as I choked and laughed. Yes, my husband really did say all those things. Needless to say, our children were rather confused at their parents odd behavior.