

# An Evening at the Manor

*by karelia*

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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With a flourish, Lucius exposed his hand.

Three aces.

"Damn you," Severus muttered and threw his hand down. Three jacks didn't cut it this time.

Hermione looked relieved; she'd folded before anyone had raised the stakes.

Narcissa's expression remained that of the most cliché poker face.

"Who's dealing?" Hermione asked, her eyes blinking rapidly.

"It goes clockwise, so—" Severus thought for a moment "—Narcissa's turn now." Then he turned to her. "It's meant to be fun, dear—not some chore."

Hermione nodded, looking unconvinced, and Narcissa offered a non-committal smile to nobody in particular and dealt.

A gasp escaped Hermione as she inspected her cards.

"More cards?" Narcissa asked, her voice laden with saccharine.

"N- no, thank you," Hermione managed, and Severus wondered if she'd ever learn the art of playing poker. Well into the second month of their weekly poker meetings now, he doubted it. "I'll have two," he said.

Lucius dropped three cards and gestured.

Narcissa exchanged none of her cards.

"Fold," Severus said and threw his cards down.

"Two Galleons." Lucius threw two coins onto the small pile.

Narcissa looked thoughtful for a moment, then delicately placed her cards face down.

Hermione placed three Galleons on the table, her eyes meeting Lucius's.

"Fold it is, then." Lucius threw his cards down.

Severus moved the Galleons in front of Hermione. "What did you have?" he asked.

"I..." Hermione whispered, "I had an ace. Highest card I've had all night."

Narcissa burst out laughing. "You won on an ace? Brilliant, Hermione, just brilliant!"

The men joined in the laughter, and Hermione blushed.

"Well, it *was* the highest card I've had so far." She sounded defensive, and Severus put his arm around her.

"You won your Galleons back, so you've done well, dear," he soothed her and was awarded with a beautiful smile, as if a few Galleons mattered.

"Severus, your turn to deal." Lucius sounded impatient.

Severus dealt and then turned his attention to his wife. By the look on her face, her cards weren't good. He sighed inwardly, wondering how long it would take for her to become a decent player. *Never mind. She is brilliant in many areas. She doesn't have to be brilliant at poker, too.*

She asked for two cards.

"Hm." Hermione looked thoughtful. "Okay, one more Galleon, I guess." She moved a coin to the middle of the table and turned her attention to the wine glass in front of her.

Severus couldn't help but wonder if she had an ace again. He sighed inwardly.

Narcissa folded, throwing her hand face down.

Lucius followed with more gusto than his wife.

"No. No more," Hermione replied in answer to Severus's questioning look. She laid her cards out. A pair of twos.

Against Severus's pair of sevens.

"You wasted a Galleon on a pair of twos?" he asked, incredulous.

Hermione shrugged. "I'm learning slowly, you know. Before our hand-fasting, I didn't even know this game existed. And I'm not a Slytherin."

Everyone laughed at that, making her blush again.

Narcissa returned to her non-committal expression, nodding at her husband to deal the final round.

Severus kept a close eye on Hermione's face. She was about to fold; it was obvious to him. He turned to his own hand and swapped two cards *Ah, full house. Yes, perhaps she should fold now.*

To his surprise, she put only one card down. *Maybe I should explain the rules to her again...* He regarded her as she picked up the one new card, but she neither smiled nor frowned nor sighed nor moaned. *She must have two kings or even two aces...*

Lucius raised the stakes by two Galleons.

Narcissa followed.

Severus folded.

Hermione raised four Galleons.

Narcissa folded.

Lucius added eight Galleons.

Hermione called.

Lucius bared his hand. A two of hearts, a three of diamonds, a four of spades, a five of hearts, and a six of hearts.

Hermione smiled shyly and laid her first card down. A ten of hearts.

Then a jack of hearts.

Followed by a queen of hearts.

When she exposed the king of hearts, a gasp went through the small group.

Putting down the ace of hearts and reaching for the coins was one fluid movement.

"I suppose that makes me the winner of this week and drinks will be on me next Friday," she said, any and all timidity wiped out.

Everyone rose from their seats. "Time to go home," Severus said, putting his right arm around her shoulder.

"Indeed," his wife agreed, then turned to Narcissa. "Coffee on Wednesday?"

Narcissa smiled a very warm smile. "Absolutely, darling. I believe it'll be a very good day for coffee and shopping."

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As the couple climbed into bed, Severus couldn't help but comment on Hermione's very recently acquired enthusiasm at socialising with Mrs Malfoy. "What did Narcissa do that made you suddenly so willing to spend time with her?"

Hermione didn't suppress her grin; it was dark after all. "Oh, let's just say she's very... knowledgeable about card games."

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**A/N:** Original prompt: SS/HG, LM/NM - card/poker/bridge night at the Manor. Humor.

Thank you, Rivertempest, for a wonderfully challenging prompt. You'll probably laugh when I say it took an entire village to write this, but it is the truth; I'm pretty clueless about card games. So, thank you to blue\_paris, Little Man, and Dorkboy for being very patient explaining poker rules in a way I could comprehend. Further thanks to Lady\_Dragonsinger for reading through for consistency, and grateful thanks to linlawless for the initial and then final beta!