

Delicate

by Savva

To all those brilliant mathematicians, physicists and other scientists out there, who are almost always eccentric and sometimes just downright weird, but never the lesser men. Hermione Granger/Xenophilius Lovegood

One

Chapter 1 of 1

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This little one was written for the RarePair Reverse Cliché Challenge...Hermione seduces the reluctant older wizard.

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Delicate

To all those brilliant mathematicians, physicists and other scientists out there, who are almost always eccentric and sometimes just downright weird, but never the lesser men. My grandfather was one of them.

Now

Stark naked, Hermione stood in front of the shower and listened to the sounds of a man inside. She needed to think, or maybe she merely needed to restore her confidence, which, pathetically, she had lost only a minute ago. Either way, she had suddenly felt it necessary to pause and regroup. She kept asking herself how it had happened, how the hell she had got herself into this. How had she come to be standing in front of Xenophilius Lovegood's shower without a stitch of clothing on, about to step inside? Alas, her mind chose to turn blank, and at that particular moment she had no idea. None, zero, zilch.

Thank goodness that she at least still remembered how it had all begun.

Before

It had all begun when she decided to leave the Burrow. Actually, to evacuate the Burrow would be a more accurate phrasing. Desperate to find a place to stay, she was grateful for Luna's offer of shelter.

When she first moved in, Xenophilus Lovegood was just Luna's father to her...an eccentric scientist with more than a little strange fashion sense and a peculiar habit of mumbling continuously. Who could have known that it wouldn't stay that way for long? Hermione could never have imagined anything between them, and yet ...

She remembered perfectly well the moment when he had raised an impatient hand in the air, causing a few unnerved butterflies to flutter out of the chest pocket of his yellow velvet jacket, and said, "Please, call me Xeno. There is absolutely no sense in formalities. We have known each other long enough."

So he became Xeno to her, although he was still just an eccentric scientist with bright blue eyes and butterflies always fluttering around him. She had wondered, more than once, why those delicate insects followed him everywhere. Unable to come up with any logical explanation, she concluded that they probably just liked his yellow suits.

Weeks passed, and somehow Xeno grew on her. She couldn't pinpoint when she had begun to notice him, actually *to notice* him. Had it happened after he healed the paper cut which had been given to her by yet another letter from Ron? She really couldn't say. All she knew was that while Xeno was massaging a citrus-scented salve of his own manufacture into her hands, murmuring, "You have such delicate skin, Hermione. You have to be careful and take good care of it," she suddenly realised that his hands were warm and manly. Well, maybe not actually manly, but certainly much bigger than hers.

She had been unable to hold back a delighted half-sigh-half-moan of pleasure and had whispered a rather husky "Thank you" right into his ear, only to be flabbergasted when he muttered, "Yes, yes, of course," and hastily moved away from her. Had there been the shadow of a blush on his cheeks, or had she just imagined it? Her imagination did run wild sometimes.

However, she definitely did see something on the weekend of the summer solstice when Luna went off to hunt fern-flowers with Neville. Hermione woke up to the sound of Xeno humming a tune in the kitchen. When she came down, there were pancakes ready for her. Though Xeno himself ate a dandelion salad, claiming that it was extremely healthy. After they finished breakfast, he announced that he had promised Luna to entertain her. And so he did, much to her surprise.

First, he fixed her hair into an elaborate French braid. Then he offered to colour her nails, dispelling her apprehensions by saying that he had done it hundreds of times for Luna. In the end, she wasn't disappointed...her nails looked fabulous. He even painted a different species of orchid on each of them. When she asked him how on Earth he had learned to do all that, he said with a wistful smile, "I'm a single father. I learned to do a lot of things while Luna was growing up."

Those words conclusively altered Hermione's view of Xenophilus Lovegood. She had never thought about that side of his life before. How had it been for him...to lose his beloved wife and look after Luna on his own? He *had* managed to raise a terrific daughter, after all.

That evening, they sat outside on the front steps, watching the moths that gathered around a gas lamp. He was telling her all about nocturnal insects when a cloud of fireflies appeared out of nowhere and hovered before them. He extended his hand toward the cloud, and to her astonishment, one of the fireflies landed on his open palm. Taking her hand into his, he gently transferred the firefly onto her finger. "Look at this little creature," he said. "Do you see how delicate it is? How beautiful it is? You are even more delicate, even more beautiful. Don't let Ron or any other wizard tell you otherwise. Witches need nurturing and tender care. Believe me, I know. I learned it the hard way."

With that, he drew a heavy sigh and went inside. Hermione sat alone for a while, thinking about what he had said. Neither Ron nor any other wizard had ever called her delicate. They called her *sexy, pretty, hot*, but never *delicate*. Was she truly?

Yes, it was that night when everything changed between them. Next morning, she watched him with different eyes as he tended to his flowers. He was only wearing linen trousers, and his lean body seemed to shimmer in the morning sun. Though not very muscular, he was not unpleasant to the eye. His flaxen locks were gathered with a string, and a flock of butterflies fluttered around him, as usual. Something warm began to grow in Hermione's heart while she watched him from her window, something unfamiliar. That sudden warmth made her wonder if the feeling flowed both ways or she was the only one affected.

She learned the answer later that day when Xeno took her to a natural spring. There, when she casually asked him to swim with her, he hastily declined and, muttering something incoherent about wild berries for dinner, ran away from her into the forest. This time, she was absolutely sure that there was a bright red blush on his face.

Why had she chosen to stay, then? Why hadn't she moved out that very night? Hermione hadn't a clue. All she knew was that she loved the way he made her feel...delicate and beautiful. And, frankly, the awe in his eyes was kind of addictive.

For the following few weeks, she circled him carefully, cornering him wherever she could with important questions about such topics as the migratory habits of Crumple-Horned Snorkacks. She watched him intently while he dutifully answered, finding him more attractive by the minute. The fact that he blushed adorably every time their eyes met only added to his allure. The poor wizard even began to stutter slightly whenever she was around. It was incredibly sweet, really. Plus, he wasn't actually that old, and he was quite good-looking, apart from his fashion sense and love of everything yellow, of course. He had amazing hair with a slight wave, a straight Greek profile, and full, sensual lips. His blue eyes were kind, with just a hint of sadness. Honestly, how could she not have noticed it all before? Day after day, the warm, unfamiliar feeling grew and grew.

Finally, this last Sunday, he delivered the final drop that filled the cup of fondness in her heart. It was the evening of a hot and humid day with the inevitable thunderstorm in the afternoon. Hermione was reading, and Luna was drawing something in her notebook, when the door flew open with a loud bang. There on the threshold stood Xeno, totally soaked, with his hands full of wet, exquisitely fragrant, bright purple lilacs.

"I heard they smell best in the rain," he said with a smile, and the scent of lilacs filled the room. Hermione couldn't tear her eyes from the wizard, who just stood there as happy as a child, looking at her with joy and not noticing the puddle forming around his feet. His hair was all over his face, his shirt was thoroughly wet and transparent, and his breeches clung to his lean, long thighs. Somehow, he looked so damn sexy and so sweetly naïve at the same time that Hermione's heart was forced to make a dangerous, acrobatic somersault in her chest at the sight. He was gorgeous. Absolutely, utterly gorgeous in his unique odd way, and she wanted nothing less than to snog him to death and then some. And she would probably have done it, if only Luna hadn't been there.

That was the moment that led Hermione to have a talk with Luna the next day. Thank goodness, Luna was her usual imperturbable self and only said, "Of course you should go to him. In fact, I think you had better go right now, because I'm afraid that otherwise you'll burst." Only when Hermione hugged her and began to leave, Luna added, "Just be gentle with him. His heart is delicate, you know."

"I know, and I will," Hermione said and Apparated.

Now again

"Have you got the guts?" she asked herself. "Come on. You know exactly why you are here and how things have come to this. Don't be a coward. Get on with it." With these words, she stubbornly jerked her chin up and stepped into the shower.

Xeno, stunned, only managed a stammered "H ... Hermione?" before she covered his lips with hers. Of course, he didn't resist. Soon, their bodies were intertwined in every possible way, and as his lips traced her wet skin, he was whispering with awe, "So delicate, so beautiful, so perfect."

Delicate like rain

Delicate like snow

Delicate like birds

Delicate just so

Delicate like air

Delicate like breeze

Delicate like you and me

A delicate advance

A delicate retreat

Delicately planned

Delicate like peace

Delicate like a touch

That's delicately brief

Delicate like you and me

Delicate like trinkets on her bracelet

Delicate like a bracelet on your arm

Delicate like sweet arms around me

Delicate like me on top of you

Delicate like words

Delicate how time

So delicately runs

Then delicately dies

Delicate how eyes

So delicately breathe

Delicate like you my dear

Delicate like me my love

Delicate like you and

Delicate like me and

*Delicate like you and me**

***Delicate / Terence Trent D'Arby**