

From Zero to Ten in a Single Conversation

by linlawless

A conversation goes in an unexpected direction. Review-a-Thon prize for phoenix.

A Ficlet

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: Please note that there is a passing mention of a miscarriage that happened in the past to secondary characters. If this will bother you, please read no further.

Entering the library, Lucius bent to kiss his wife's cheek, startling her from her book -- not that he was surprised, of course. She turned to capture his lips briefly. Drawing away, he smiled. "I knew I'd find you here."

She grinned. "I don't think you get credit for knowing something that obvious." Patting his hand, she asked, "How was your day?"

In a well-practiced move, he lifted her, book and all, from the chair in order to settle her on his lap. "Fine, thank you, my dear. Yours?" He stole another kiss before letting her answer.

"Er... It was interesting, I suppose."

Lucius's gaze sharpened. "Interesting? How so?"

"Well," Hermione said, "I bumped into Luna today in Flourish and Blotts."

"Ah," Lucius said. "I imagine that's *always* interesting, to say the least. What's she hunting now? The last living dodo bird?"

Hermione smiled. "No, she's not hunting anything at the moment. I think I mentioned she's pregnant? She's about five months along now, and apparently, she's sticking close to home to ease Harry's nerves."

Lucius raised an eyebrow. "Potter must be over the moon."

"Yes, he's quite excited. He's always wanted a family, and they were trying for ages. And after she miscarried last year... I think he had begun to think they were going to have to adopt." Hermione paused before adding, "In any event, we're having dinner at Godric Hollow Saturday next."

"Really?" Hermione knew him well enough to recognize the genuine pleasure in his smile. After all, nurturing a positive connexion to the saviour of the wizarding world could only enhance his own standing, and though his ambitions weren't quite so... well, *rabid* as they once had been, she would never expect him to completely lose his interest in maintaining or improving his status. Making sure he kept that tendency within acceptable bounds added a nice touch of spice to Hermione's life; she had always

loved a good challenge.

Later that evening, as they sat companionably reading before the fire in the library, Lucius found himself unable to concentrate. His thoughts were plaguing him in a way that he detested and in a direction he generally avoided at all costs. They chased themselves around and around in his mind, but in essence, they boiled down to a single, worrying idea: *What if I'm too old to keep her happy?*

Hermione's brisk tones broke into his reverie. "You might as well tell me, you know."

"Tell you?" Lucius said, doing his best to sound as though he had no idea what she meant. Even as he spoke, he knew the effort was pointless. Unlike his ex-wife, Hermione didn't let him pretend. These days, he was never permitted to deny the obvious simply because it was unpalatable.

Which was only one of the many reasons he adored her.

Now, she rolled her eyes at him. "Don't give me that look. Something is clearly bothering you. You haven't turned the page once in the last fifteen minutes. Unless you expect me to believe you've found the meaning of life on that particular page, you may as well tell me."

He opened his mouth, fully intending to fob her off with some platitude or other, so he was rather perturbed to hear himself say, "Do you ever regret it?"

She frowned. "Regret what?"

He waved a hand around the room, trying to give her the impression that her answer didn't mean as much as it did. "This," he said, and when she looked at him blankly, he clarified. "Marrying me in the face of so much resistance. Giving up some of your friends, feeling the disapprobation of so many people..." He paused, then added softly, "Being with someone so much older than you. Choosing someone who already raised a child..."

Hermione stared at him for a long moment, then slowly closed her book and set it on a small table. Standing, she held his gaze as she approached. When she reached him, she took the book from his unresisting hand and placed it gently on the table beside his chair. Settling herself on his lap, she kissed him gently. "Is that what's bothering you? You're afraid I'll want children and leave you because you don't?"

"Well... When you say it like that, it sounds rather unlikely, doesn't it?"

She smiled and kissed him again. "Especially since you've developed quite a habit of giving me anything I even hint that I might want."

"I have, haven't I?" Lucius agreed, feeling much better already. Tangling his fingers in her hair, he watched the way it wound around them. Surprising himself with the realisation, he said, "I'm not really opposed to having more children, you know. I'd rather like to see a little girl with bushy blonde hair and your eyes – and brains," he added.

"What if we had a little boy with straight brown hair and *your* eyes? And your ambition?"

"I would endeavour to cope, my dear. And we'd simply have to try again."

"You know, Lucius," she said with a suddenly mischievous gleam in her eye, "I think perhaps we ought to start our family straight away. After all, who knows how many tries it will take for the genetics to cooperate and provide a little girl with the right hair and eyes and brains? At your advanced age, we need all the time available to us..."

Lucius laughed outright, his humour fully restored. "You needn't worry about that, my dear. We'll simply give up if we reach double digits before we get it right."

"Double digits?! When we married, you very specifically told me you didn't want *any*, and now you want *ten*?"

"What can I say, love? You make me feel very young." He kissed her soundly. "Now, I believe you said something about starting right away?"

Laughing, Hermione pulled him to his feet and led him toward the stairs. "I'm willing to *consider* two – if you're prepared to be very, very persuasive."

"Persuasion is my very best talent. You'll see."

Hermione's smile was sensual. "I shall look forward to it, my dear."

Another A/N: Written for phoenix as a Review-a-Thon prize. The prompt was for LMHG; she commented: "Something set a little further in their relationship could be fun, something that perhaps has him reflecting on the age difference, something like her expecting their first child or being on Platform 9 ¾ for the first trip to Hogwarts." I hope you like the result, phoenix!

Thanks, as always, to my alpha/beta/Britpicking team. You're all wonderful! Sorry if my tinkering has undone any of your work!