A Day At The Zoo

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One Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: I wrote this fun little story for the 2014 SSHG Promptfest. It was my first time participating, and I have to say, I absolutely love the way this turned out. I hope all of you enjoy it as well. My prompt was that Hermione and Severus take the Potter kids to the zoo.

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A Day At The Zoo

Severus looked over to his wife of two years with a pained expression. The thought of what he was going to endure made him cringe. He was not looking forward to a day filled with Harry Potter's spawn screaming in his ears.

"Stop making that face, Severus," Hermione chided him as she moved around the living room. Her yellow dress swished around her knees with every moment. "We're due at Harry's home soon."

He crossed his arms, a huff escaping his lips. "I don't know why we're doing this."

Hermione stopped what she was doing to stare at him. She put her hands on her hips in a way that was very reminiscent of Molly Weasley, which made Severus want to cringe again. "Harry and Ginny are my friends, Severus. We promised we would watch the kids for the day to give them some alone time." The stern tone of her voice told him that she was not messing around.

Severus snorted at her statement. "Alone time for them to produce more spawn."

"Severus!" Hermione scolded. "It's not that big of a deal. We're just going to take the three of them to the London Zoo. No magic, no worries."

"Hermione, have you met those children?" Severus inquired. "They're little devils!"

She laughed. "I know, but they're cute."

He shook his head in protest. "It'll be a disaster."

"I think it'll be good for you," Hermione said with a soft smile. She moved forward and gave him a hug and a quick kiss on the forehead.

He ignored her. "I still think it's a bad idea," he said once more.

"Unless you want to spend the next week on the couch, you're coming with me." She glared at him.

He mentally debated in his head the pros and cons of each situation. Figuring he didn't want to invoke Hermione's wrath or sleep on the couch, he nodded his head. "All right," he conceded. "Let's go get them."

"I'll drive!" she said quickly, snatching the car keys before he could. "And go change, Severus. You're not wearing those robes to Muggle London." She flashed him a cheeky grin before heading towards the front room.

His eyes narrowed slightly as she disappeared. This was going to be a very long day.

Severus joined her near the door after changing. Instead of his usual wizarding clothes, he was now wearing a pair of jeans and a charcoal pullover sweater. He knew he'd be warm in the sweater, but he wanted to avoid short sleeves.

Although it had been eight years since the war, people still treated him negatively. Even Muggles would stare at his mark and make judgmental comments. Today, he could do without the whispers.

"Come on, Severus," Hermione said, gently touching his arm. "It won't be that bad."

"That is your opinion, not mine," he said curtly. He exited their house and moved towards their four-door sedan.

Hermione huffed as she locked their front door. Moving to the car, she entered the driver's seat. She knew better than to speak with Severus when he was in a foul mood, so she drove to northwest London in silence. She came to a stop outside of Grimmauld Place.

"Do you want to come in or sit in the car?" she asked as she unbuckled her seatbelt. Hermione looked to Severus as she waited for his answer.

"I'll come in," he said gruffly. He stepped out of the car and looked up at the old Muggle building. The two Muggle buildings on the side were dilapidated. The shutters were hanging crookedly, bricks were missing, and the front doors needed a fresh coat of paint. It was a dump; he didn't know why Potter wanted to raise his family there.

As Hermione and Severus stepped onto the sidewalk, number twelve came into view. It looked much different from its neighboring homes, as Ginny and Harry had renovated when they moved in. Walking up to the door, Hermione rang the bell.

The door flung open, revealing a frazzled Ginny. "Come in!" she said excitedly, stepping aside. "They're just grabbing their coats."

Hermione hugged Ginny in greeting. "How are you, Gin?" she asked as the three of them moved into the drawing room.

"I'm utterly exhausted. Lily's in her terrible twos, but luckily, it's nothing compared to James' or Albus'. She's wearing me thin though, Hermione." Ginny shook her head. "I am so grateful you two are taking the kids."

"We really appreciate it," Harry added from the doorway. James, age seven, Albus, age five, and Lily, age two, all stood with their father. Lily looked happy to see her Aunt and Uncle while the two boys seemed slightly more apprehensive.

Hermione grinned at the kids while Severus grimaced.

"Hello, Aunt 'Mione and Uncle Sev," James said. He went over and gave his aunt a hug.

"Hi, sweetie," Hermione replied. "You ready for a fun day at the zoo?"

He nodded as a huge grin appeared on his face. "Can we see the monkeys?"

"Of course we can," she said with smile before whispering. "We can see the lions, too." She gave James a wink before looking up to Severus. He had caught her little Gryffindor reference. Severus was certainly the serpent in a den of lions. He just rolled his eyes at his wife's silly antics.

Turning to Ginny, Hermione asked for Lily's pushchair. Ginny left the room, returning moments later with the pushchair. "All right, I think we have everything. Severus?"

"I'll get the deviants in the car," Severus replied. "Let's go." He left the room, James, Albus, and Lily following him. He closed his eyes, trying to push away the oncoming migraine. Their shrill cries of "Uncle Severus" and "Uncle Sev" filled his ears. It was going to be a long day.

Hermione sighed at her husband's depressive mood.

"Are you sure about this, Hermione?" Ginny asked apprehensively as she watched Severus leave the house. "We don't want to be a bother."

Hermione smiled. "Don't worry, Ginny. He loves the kids, he's just... Severus." She laughed.

"Did you tell him yet?" Ginny asked excitedly.

"Tell him what?" Harry asked, looking back and forth between the two women.

"No, not yet," Hermione replied, ignoring Harry's question. "I'll tell him after the day is over."

A slow smile spread onto Ginny's face. "You wicked, wicked girl. Well, have fun! Call me on the mobile if you need anything."

"We'll be fine," Hermione said, moving towards the door. "Have fun you two!" she went to the car and saw that Severus had already buckled everyone in. "All ready?" she asked as she got behind the wheel.

"Let's go," Severus said. "The little demons are all secure."

Hermione chuckled. "All right, here we go."

James and Albus chattered excitedly as they rode to the London Zoo. Thankfully, they didn't have far to go.

Hermione quickly found a spot in the car park. Before getting out of the vehicle, she reached over and grasped Severus' hand. "Just relax, okay?" She looked at him, giving him a warm smile.

"I can't promise anything," he replied as the corners of his mouth twitched into an almost-smile.

Moments later, they were all set to go in. Lily was in her pushchair and Albus and James were both hovering near Hermione. They walked towards the entrance, bought their tickets, and went inside the zoo. Severus followed close behind, not wanting to lose sight of his wife or nephews.

"Where should we go first?" Hermione asked. She showed James and Albus the zoo map.

"Here!" Albus shouted, his finger jabbing the map.

"The peacocks?" Hermione asked. Albus nodded. "All right, we're off to see the peacocks!"

It was a nice, warm Spring day. As the sun shone down on them, Hermione couldn't help but enjoy herself. It was the perfect day to go to the zoo, and she enjoyed the chance to act a bit silly. Her nephews and niece always gave her a chance to joke around and relax. While she often had fun with Severus, she knew he wouldn't appreciate her singing kid songs for no reason. *Although, he'll soon have to get used to the idea*, Hermione mused.

Although Severus didn't goof around with the kids as Hermione did, it was obvious he was enjoying himself. Whenever they stopped at an exhibit, he would tell James, Albus, and Lily about the animals there. He was careful to answer their questions thoroughly, but not too much to the point where they would be bored.

The majority of the day went quite smoothly. They visited the peacocks, zebras, lions, warthogs, and tapirs. Lily loved the colors on the peacock while the two boys particularly enjoyed the warthogs.

Severus had stopped inside the gift shop to purchase Lily a small stuffed lion. She loved it immediately. As they visited the exhibits, she would whisper to the lion and explain what animal they were seeing. Hermione found the whole ordeal to be quite adorable.

Disaster struck, as it always did, near the monkey exhibit. As they were walking through the Rainforest Life exhibit, Lily started to fuss in the pushchair.

"Lily, sweetie, what is it?" Hermione asked.

Lily didn't answer. A grumpy expression appeared on her face as she continued to wiggle in her seat. Her lower lip wobbled as her eyes grew wide. Before Hermione could react, Lily let out a shrill cry.

Hermione wasn't sure what started it, but she knew Lily wouldn't stop. She imagined that the poor girl was tired from being out so long and was ready for a nap, but try as she might, she couldn't get Lily to stop crying.

As Lily continued to cry, Albus and James began to fight. It started out as Albus teasing James about something when all of a sudden, it escalated. James had tackled Albus to the ground and was now beating on his little brother.

Hermione crouched down in front of the pushchair. "Lily, sweetie, why are you crying?" she asked the two year old. Lily only cried harder, much to Hermione's frustration. She reached out and gently brushed some hair from Lily's face.

Then, to make matters worse, the monkeys started screeching. They bounced around the exhibit loudly, adding to the chaos.

Tears in her eyes, Hermione looked to her husband. "Severus, do something!" she cried.

Severus quickly moved into action. Grabbing the back of James' shirt, he pulled him upright and off of Albus. "Leave your brother alone," he said, his voice dark and menacing.

James nodded as his eyes widen in fear. "Yes, Uncle Severus," he said dutifully. He had been on the receiving end of his Uncle's frustration before and did not want to repeat that experience.

Turning to Albus, Severus looked at him firmly. "Now, do not tease your brother. There is no reason for you to act so crassly while in public. Do you understand me?"

Albus nodded quickly. "I'm sorry, Uncle Severus."

"Apologize to James," Severus said sternly, pointing to James. "And you had better mean it."

Albus shuffled his feet awkwardly as he looked to his older brother. "I'm sorry for teasing you, James."

James nodded. "I'm sorry for pushing you."

Severus crossed his arms. "Now, I don't want any more problems from the two of you for the rest of this trip. Do I make myself clear?"

James and Albus both nodded.

"Good," Severus said, breathing a small sigh of relief.

"Um, Uncle Severus?" Albus said, peering around his uncle to look at the scene before him. "You might want to help Aunt Hermione out."

Severus turned quickly and saw Hermione was still trying to calm Lily. She was bouncing Lily's small stuffed lion in front of her in an effort to make the toddler laugh.

"Severus," Hermione whimpered, needing him. She didn't know what else to do and it was frustrating her to no end.

Severus quickly approached Hermione and Lily. Reaching down, he picked Lily up out of the pushchair and held her in his arms. Quickly brushing off his awkwardness, he began to gently bounce her. One hand gently rubbed her back as he made small shushing noises.

Eventually, Lily stopped crying. She sniffed, looking up at her uncle.

"There now," he said as he gently wiped away the tears on her face. "How about we go get some ice cream? Would that make you feel better, Lily?"

She looked up at him. Her bright brown eyes shone with unshed tears. "Ice cream?" she whispered.

Severus nodded. "If you stop crying, then yes, we can get ice cream."

Hermione watched on in amazement. She had no idea Severus would be able to calm Lily so quickly like that. It seemed that despite how much he disliked children, he was actually quite good with them. She smiled, knowing he would make an amazing father.

"Can we get ice cream too, Uncle Severus?" Albus asked, looking at him nervously.

"Do you both deserve it?" Severus asked as he placed Lily back in the pushchair. She hugged her stuffed lion tightly.

"No," James said with a frown. "And we're sorry about that, Aunt Hermione."

Hermione smiled. "Thank you for apologizing. I'm sure it wouldn't be fair if Lily got ice cream and you two didn't."

Severus smirked as he moved to Hermione's side. "No, I suppose it wouldn't be fair."

Albus beamed. "Thank you!" he cried, giving both Hermione and Severus hugs. James ran forward and hugged them both too.

Severus, who was still unused to such affections from children, simply patted him on the back. Hermione returned each hug with equal fervor.

"Now, why don't we get some ice cream?" Hermione said with a smile.

The five of them headed to the car. On the way home to Grimmauld Place, they stopped at Harrods for ice cream. Lily and Severus had chocolate, Albus had pistachio, and James and Hermione had toffee fudge.

Lily had ended up with chocolate ice cream all over her face, much to Severus' displeasure. She giggled wildly as he wiped her face clean.

Hermione sternly told the two boys not to get any ideas about being messy. She knew they both took after their namesakes and didn't want any mischief.

James and Albus agreed, although the little grins wouldn't leave their faces.

Later that night after dropping the Potter kids at home, Hermione and Severus lay in bed.

"I'm exhausted," Hermione said with a huff. She snuggled deeper under the covers to get closer to Severus. Her arms wrapped around his bare waist.

"Today was..." Severus paused, carefully choosing his words. "Interesting."

Hermione glanced at him, a small smile appearing on her face. "They aren't that bad, right? I know you like them deep down."

Severus smirked. "I wouldn't say I like them." He looked down at Hermione before pressing a kiss to her forehead.

She laughed. "Whatever you say, Severus. I saw you with Lily; you're a natural."

He snorted. "I am no such thing."

"No, you are," Hermione said grinning. "You were always so good with children at Hogwarts. Everyone respected you."

"No, they feared me," Severus countered, shaking his head. "Children fear me. Fear and respect are two very different things, Hermione."

"Well, your niece and nephews don't."

"They do," Severus said with a chuckle. "I thought both James and Albus would wet themselves."

"Well, you did reprimand them, and I suppose you can be quite scary when you do that," she conceded. "But you are good with children, Severus, even if you don't quite see it yourself."

"I suppose," he said, wondering where his little witch was going with this conversation. Didn't she tease him enough?

"Which is good," Hermione said after a pause.

He arched a brow at her words. "What in Merlin's name are you on about?"

Hermione turned to face him. Her heart beat wildly in her chest as she leaned forward and pressed a kiss to his cheek. "It's just good that you're good with children."

"Why is that good?" Severus asked, narrowing his eyes at her.

"Because I'm pregnant!" Hermione half-shouted in her excitement. She held her breath as she waited for his reaction.

Severus' eyes widened as his breath caught. He looked at her and saw the pure look of excitement on her face. Did she mean it? Were they truly? "We're pregnant?"

Hermione nodded. "I just found out yesterday." A small squeal of excitement escaped her mouth. "Can you believe it, Severus? We're having a baby!"

He quickly covered his body with hers as he kissed her passionately. "I love you, Hermione," he said quickly between kisses. "You beautiful" ...kiss... "perfect witch." He peered down at her as a softness graced his usually stoic features. He looked more content than Hermione ever remembered seeing him.

Severus had never imagined that he would be a father. While they had discussed children, the two of them never flatly decided if they would have them or not. Hearing that they would, however, was the best news he could ever receive. Seeing how happy Hermione was made his heart feel as if it would burst.

Hermione grinned as a laugh escaped her lips. "See? Good thing you got some practice in today."

Severus smirked as his hand gently trailed down her side. "Why don't we practice something else now?"

His husky voice sent chills down her spine. "I'd like that," she whispered before he covered her lips with his own.