

Heat and White Elephants

by keketamunet

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: J. K. Rowling created the Harry Potter universe and all the characters in it. Ernest Hemingway wrote 'Hills Like White Elephants.' I wrote and invented the rest. I make no money off this writing and am using it as an exercise.

Heat and White Elephants

"Bit of hot weather we're having, don't you find?" Hermione Granger tossed the sentence out in what she hoped was a casual voice. That Saturday afternoon in London, England was stifling hot and had caused her to take a break from her reading and seek out lemonade at the nearby little café while she waited on her train. Because the café was packed with people, Hermione had taken her drink outside and appropriated the first available stool without paying attention to the people around her until after she'd sat down, arranged her bag, and sipped her drink in quiet relief. Then she'd glanced to her right to see a couple cozy and secure in their romance, a little further down a transit officer chatted up a woman with a low cut blouse, and another man was frantically reading some kind of report. Hermione scanned the crowd without much interest until she looked to her left. A burly man was vacating the seat which had blocked her view of the other patrons, but she wished he'd stayed, because when he left, her eyes locked with a pair she recognized.

Hermione saw that Professor Severus Snape was dressed in black slacks and a pale green, loose oxford button-down. The color threw her for a moment, but she could see his eyes widen, startled. Not wanting a scene, she forced out the first words she could grasp and form. "Bit of hot weather we're having, don't you find?"

His face pulled into a frown, and he slid quickly over to the newly vacated seat next to her. In a smooth movement, he shifted around to face the teeming crowd, eyes scanning while his right hand moved onto the back of Hermione's stool, coming to a rest near Hermione's left shoulder. "Extremely hot. Someone could have a stroke in this weather."

Hermione, too, glanced around the throng of people before taking another sip of her drink. "Only if that someone is foolish enough to stay out unprepared too long."

"I see." He scanned the crowd again. "And how did you prepare to survive this heat?"

"Lots of fluids mostly, time in cool dark cafes, moving around but not over exerting myself. And I read, of course. In the shade." Hermione took another sip. "How do you survive?"

Black eyes regarded her for a moment before returning to watching the crowd. "The same as you do."

"One day at a time then?"

"Yes."

"We all do that, I suppose. Live with the oppressive heat; deal with the turmoil and sadness it brings. We move on eventually when the seasons change."

A long silence and then he said, "I expect a cold winter will follow this heat."

"Winter could be milder than you think. What with temperatures so high now, it might burn itself out in time but leave enough warmth for a less harsh winter."

"I have my doubts."

"Everyone does. You should finish your drink and move into the shade soon so you don't stroke."

"I wasn't worried about myself, Miss Granger."

"Well, I worry about others sometimes."

He chuckled. "I'd noticed." Still, he lifted his drink to his lips and took some of the liquid. "I didn't expect it to be quite so hot out here."

Hermione paused a moment. "Me either. I'm heading to Sussex to do some research."

"And you didn't expect this weather?"

"No, I was just minding my own business, tracking down a book, as usual." Hermione glanced around the crowd and then at the dark man next to her. "And you? Were you planning for this today?"

"No."

"Then perhaps we should both just drink and talk and find our shade."

"Shade."

"A cooler place where things are more comfortable."

"No place seems cool enough these days."

"Not too hot in Sussex as far as I know. And things will cool off in time."

He was silent, the muscles of his hand flexing around the paper cup. He raised it to his lips for another sip, a pause, and then another sip. "The weathermen always seem to have the wrong information."

Hermione snorted drawing a look from her companion. She shrugged then said, "Yes, some of them are real hotheads, spouting out the first bit of weather that hits their radar, but they don't look at the currents and history. They don't look for patterns and end up misinforming the public with their rash conclusions. Lots of people suffer from their misinformation."

Snape's right hand, which had been resting near Hermione's shoulder, dropped to his lap. "You seem to know a lot about the weather."

"That's my job as a resident Know-It-All, but seriously, I just don't trust the weathermen and look at more than one source. Personal experience helps too, but I could be wrong. I wasn't expecting this heat today in this station."

"Seems a little cooler now."

"A little."

"And you predict Sussex to have some decent shade?"

"Or at least a better weatherman."

"That would be... a change."

A whistle alerted those waiting at the train station of a train pulling in. The transit officer took a piece of paper from the lady he'd been chatting up. The couple arranged their bags. The man reading his report grimaced and kept reading. Hermione gulped down the rest of her drink. Snape followed suit, crumpling his cup and tossing it under the seat. Hermione eyed his movement before speaking again.

"Ever been to Sussex, Professor?"

"No."

"I go a couple times a year. I like to spend the last week of the summer there. It's a little cooler at that time."

"Perhaps."

"I just hope the heat doesn't follow you."

"Or you."

"I never intentionally bring heat."

"The weather can be unpredictable."

"Best to prepare for it anyway, though."

"Your train?"

"Yes."

"I'm sure the cars are cooler than here."

"Go on inside, Professor. The café is clearing out now, and you can find some shade."

"Safe trip, Miss Granger."

Hermione tossed her paper cup into a dustbin on her way to the train. When she glanced back, Severus Snape was gone. The compartment on the train was cooler than the oppressive heat, and Hermione chose a seat, opened her book, and continued her research. Thirty minutes into her trip she could see hills and paused to consider that if she squinted, they could look like white elephants.

Author's Note: Thank you to my beta, AnwylArwn. Also, thanks to Harmony_Bites for suggesting that I post some of my writing exercises online. All comments and criticism about the story welcome.