

# View from Stained Glass

by Fawkes\_07

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## (one shot)

Chapter 1 of 1

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The mermaid was blowing stained-glass bubbles, which floated to the top of her frame and vanished despite the ridge of lead around their edges. Being a window rather than a portrait had definite advantages, but not so much during the spring holidays. The mermaid had an external view of happy couples of all species pairing up for the season, but inside, the flux of lovely, naked, young people dwindled to almost nothing. This was both boring and frustrating. She was a visual medium, after all, and liked to *look* as much as she liked being admired.

At the first sound at the door, she slid the bubble wand back into a leaded panel and settled in anticipation onto her tail.

The girl entered the room, took a careful look around, then dashed back to the door and cracked it open. After peering cautiously into the corridor, she flung it wide and waved. The man arrived a few seconds later. The mermaid pushed off her frame with delight and executed a graceful backflip. She wished she'd had time to configure the marble tub into a heart shape, but they'd given her no warning. Silly young lovers!

The man stood before the door for a terribly long time, muttering incantation after incantation. The girl nodded in approval at first, then furrowed her brows, then finally rolled her eyes and stalked off to fetch some towels. He was still at it when she finished that task. She glowered at his back in raw annoyance, and promptly undressed without fanfare and slouched into the tub. She made a wry face when he finally turned around and began unfastening his many, many buttons.

"There's a *bolt*, you know," she said crossly. "People respect it; we're prefects after all, not to mention that we're subject to the same in retribution if someone plays a trick."

"My dear, I'm familiar with the customs at Hogwarts," he replied in a condescending tone, which didn't seem to bother the girl. "I will remind you that neither the faculty nor the ghosts have any qualms about bypassing that bolt, or the window, or the drain in the bottom of the tub, for that manner." His black robes began to sag around his shoulders, still not quite loose enough to fall away.

She looked down, startled, at the drainpipe at her feet, and raised a bashful hand to her lips. "I suppose not," she conceded with a giggle. "Well, no intrusions, then."

"Precisely." At last the first layer settled in a heap around his ankles. His white shirt had at least as many buttons as the teaching robe.

She glided to the side of the tub nearest him and watched with interest as he continued working the buttons. He smirked and deliberately slowed down the process, meticulously fingering each one before twisting it through the eyelet. Both the girl and the mermaid watched in rapt attention for a few moments, but both recognized at about the same time that there were *a lot* of buttons to go. "Will you need a bit of help with that, Severus?"

He slowed even further. "Impatient little minx." Abandoning the shirt front, he set to work on the cuff of one sleeve.

She wrinkled her nose and pushed off the marble wall to the center of the tub in a lazy backstroke, certain parts of her catching his eye as they crested over the surface of the water. He stopped his efforts for a brief, hungry look, then set back to work with renewed speed. The shirt soon joined the robe, and his trousers, being sensibly constructed with a zipper, followed in no time at all.

The girl looked quite relaxed floating on her back, and he slipped into the water without disturbing her. He must have made a little noise, however, as she opened her eyes and gave him a languid smile. "It's about time, too! I'm surprised the water's still warm." He narrowed his eyes and shook his head, looking quite torn between dunking her for her cheek and ignoring it completely in favor of a new topic.

He finally settled for the latter, slowly lifting her from the water by the shoulders and watching in fascination as her hair, floating free in a wild mass, coalesced into a flat, straight bundle behind her. He lowered himself further into the tub and settled her onto his thigh for a kiss.

"Mmm," she purred, "now that's better." However, her actions did not follow the words; she withdrew from him with an impish grin and splashed over to the row of taps, perusing them with careful scrutiny as she selected some suds.

"It was," he growled pointedly, plopping on the underwater bench in frustration.

Twisting a tap, she drew a handful of green gel before letting it run into the water. "Jasmine Tea," she said, sniffing it with a blissful expression. He raised an intrigued brow, which arched even higher as she came closer. His anticipation turned to alarm, however, as he realized she was aiming for the top of his head. In an unlikely display of chagrin, he yelped and dove under the water, which induced the girl to erupt in peals of laughter.

"For heaven's sake, you act like I'm about to pour boiling oil over your head! Get back here," she admonished sternly, though her eyes twinkled.

"Hermione, you are not going to wash my hair." He sounded almost petulant.

Her eyes bugged out, and her smile spread from ear to ear. "Hark at you! Why in Merlin's name do you think I asked you to bathe with me, you silly man? We could just have a dip in the lake for an underwater snog, you know."

"Provided you don't mind near-freezing temperatures, grindy low bites, and the sensual treat of a tentacle probing your--" She cut him off with a vigorous splash.

"I'll grant you the temperature, but I won't let you blame the squid; he's always been a perfect gentleman when I've been swimming."

"Obviously you've never been tossed in the lake in the springtime when he's amorous."

She waved at him dismissively, then caught a dribble of gel on her other arm, pushing it back up into her cupped palm. "Now look what you've done, it's spilling." She refilled her hand, then closed the tap. "No more nonsense," she said as she advanced.

He stood up, bubbles running off his chest and arms. "I'm quite serious, Hermione; no shampoo." She frowned, realizing that she could reach the top of his head, but would undoubtedly spill the gel in doing so, especially if there was a struggle. The mermaid flipped her tail up high and set her elbows on her frame, leaning as far forward as she could, her eyes wide with interest.

"What's the matter, love?" said the girl, suddenly tender and serious.

At first he glared, his lips clamped shut, but his scowl was no match for her look of gentle concern. He sighed with a noisy huff and returned to his seat on the bench, but warded off her approach with his eyes. "It's hard to explain," he finally mumbled with a glum expression, already knowing that such reasoning would get him nowhere.

She eased into his lap, still cradling the gel in her palm, but did not attempt to put it on him. Instead, she stroked his face gently with her other hand, using the backs of her fingers. He looked as though he would prefer the boiling oil treatment she'd mentioned earlier.

"Why must you be so damn persistent, Miss Granger?" he snarled.

"Why must you always be such an enigma?" She paused. "I love you, Severus. Whatever it is, you can tell me. Haven't we been through this before?"

He growled incoherently, then set his jaw. "You are impossible, Hermione."

She grinned. "I'm very possible. I'm just highly improbable. Now what in the name of Merlin's bum on toast do you have against washing your hair?"

Shoulders dropping in resignation, he said nothing, but bowed his head. She frowned, then set her own jaw and sloshed the gel onto his hair with brisk determination. To her surprise, it barely frothed, though she worked it in vigorously. "Rinse," she ordered, puzzled, and returned to the tap for a new dollop of gel as he ducked under the water and shook his head.

After repeating the process three times, lather began to form in his hair, though the bubbles in the rest of the tub had all gone flat. When he came up for air after the last rinse, she didn't even need to speak; the look on her face conveyed her intention to get to the bottom of this mystery.

"Just wait until it dries," he said, a note of honest contempt in his voice. "You'll see."

"Indeed, I don't think I can wait," she said, and leaned over the marble floor to fetch her wand. "*Evanescagua*," she incanted quietly, careful to aim only at his head, lest she empty the entire tub.

The spell writhed through his hair, which continued to stand on end even after the magic dissipated. The girl looked as if she might die from the strain of withholding her laughter, but to her credit, she didn't even smile.

"Oh," she finally squeaked.

He huffed another noisy sigh, then looked her in the eyes again. "Have I convinced you that some mysteries are best unsolved?"

Her composure was weakening in the glow of his near-Afro. "H-has it always been like that?" she managed to blurt.

He gave her a glare that would level a mountain. "What do you think?"

"It might have been a curse, you know..." That was it, she'd found the limit of her strength. Turning away in desperation, she laughed relentlessly and shamefully, not even ceasing when the man snorted in indignation and yanked her under the water.

"I'm so sorry, Severus!" she pleaded when she came back up. "It's just so... unexpected!" At his scowl, she snickered anew, covering her mouth with her hand. "Well," she began, attempting to compose herself, "this certainly explains a lot... yes, quite." She mashed down the nearest tuft experimentally; it sprang back to shape in the direction of its choice as soon as she let it go, creating the early stage of a cowlick.

"You understand now why I lack sympathy for your complaints that your hair is unmanageable," he grumbled. "At least you have not been forced to go through life resembling a cavy trapped beneath a hair dryer without the benefit of gravity."

She nodded in complete agreement. "And you've tried--"

He interrupted, rolling his eyes. "Everything, Hermione. Not even magic can tame it. Petroleum jelly mixed with olive oil is the only option."

She continued to experiment with manual compression of the unruly locks for some time before conceding defeat. "Good gracious," she murmured in awe. "Your hair is exactly like Harry's." The girl was so captivated by his hair that she never noticed the man's expression.

But the mermaid saw it. She had met Harry once, when he'd brought a golden egg filled with beautiful music into her *salle de bain*. Their hair was strikingly similar, along with the shapes of their bodies and certain parts of their faces. She wondered what caused the flicker of pure anguish in the man's eyes.

FIN

Footnote: The cavy, or guinea pig, is proof that not only does God exist, she has a MAJOR sense of humor. Such a perpetual bad hair day simply could not evolve by chance. For those of you having trouble envisioning the cavy described above, a visual aid, provided by my own Mr. Flibbert:



No wheelers were harmed in the production of this photo.

Thanks also to Mar for this wonderful illustration:



You know, the resemblance to Mr. Flibbert is really striking.