

Speak Now Or Forever Hold Your Peace

by septentrion

Harry and Ron are persuaded that Hermione has done something to Snape to get him to marry her. My answer to the 31st Potter Place Winter 2007 Prompt Challenges (details at the end of the fic).

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: last time I checked, the characters still belonged to Jo Rowling.

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"Come on, Ron, we're late!" yelled a dark-haired, green-eyed young man to his red-haired friend. They were both wearing fine dress robes, and were obviously hurrying someplace.

"No," said friend panted. "We still have time." He shut the door behind him and joined his friend on the dark landing.

They disappeared out of thin air with a loud crack and reappeared nearly as noisily in front of a small church on the outskirts of London, not caring whether they were seen. They sprinted through the wooden door and shouted as soon as they came inside, "Stop! Stop it! This wedding can't take place. The groom has been coerced into it!"

The bride, one Hermione Granger, went paler than the ivory of her dress. She gripped the back of her chair, incredulously staring at her two best friends dashing along the aisle toward her and her fiancé. Well, they weren't her two best friends anymore. As for the groom, Severus Snape couldn't get paler than his usual complexion, so instead he frowned. They waited for the two well-intentioned young men to reach them in front of the altar, while the priest was thinking that obviously something had been wrong since the beginning, given the strange attire of most of the party. Harry, who was feeling quite hot after his rush, drew something that looked like a vial from his pocket, and held it out to the groom.

"Sir, we were looking for some sheets of music Hermione told us she had forgotten, when we found this in the dresser drawer of her living-room. There is still some potion in it, and I know for a fact that this is a love potion. She has probably given it to you to get you to tie the knot," he said in one breath, despite his light panting.

Severus, a ghost of a smirk on his lips, took the vial, careful not to touch the sweaty palm of Harry Potter, uncorked it and sniffed the content. In the meantime, Hermione's speech had come back to her.

"How could you? I didn't ask you to search my flat! I told you I had forgotten sheets of music on the chest of drawers in the hall of my flat! This wasn't a bloody Auror investigation!" she screeched. Her skin had now turned a vivid red complexion, which looked as unhealthy as her previous pallor; her eyes were brimming with tears,

though this did nothing to hide the glint of hurt and anger in them.

Everyone noticed that she didn't deny the accusation. Interesting.

Then Severus' deep voice rang out under the intersecting ribs of the ceiling. "It is indeed a love potion; but why do you think, Potter and Weasley, that Hermione would need to resort to a love potion to make me marry her?"

"This is a grave accusation indeed," an irate Mr Granger interjected from the first row of pews. "You're just implying that our daughter cannot get the love of the man she's chosen!"

"Well, I'm waiting," Severus said ironically, his arms crossed over his chest, his right forefinger tapping rhythmically on his left forearm. This time, his voice was covered by the hubbub that had taken hold of the assembly.

Everyone had an opinion on the subject: perhaps it was she who had unknowingly been given a love potion; the git was unable to love, she *ought* to have poisoned him, though what she saw in him was a mystery; love potion? Only superstitious people still believed in that nowadays; etc.

No one noticed the fearful expression on Hermione's face, as she was staring at her fiancé through her tears that were now running freely along her cheeks. Her hands were trembling uncontrollably.

The priest thought it'd be best to try and get the situation under control as quickly as possible. He climbed on a small dais at the side and spoke loudly in the microphone. "Please, everyone, be silent!" His injunction, magnified by the speakers hanging from the pillars, had the desired effect. "Instead of voicing without order or discipline our opinions, we must hear what these two young men have to say. In silence," he added when the crowd gave signs of giving in to their agitation once more.

Harry spoke. "This man," he said, pointing at Severus in a very theatrical gesture, "has never liked me, nor my friends. He made our life at school miserable when he was our teacher. I've never heard him having a nice word for anybody. He was a murderer, but he wriggled his way out of a life-time sentence thanks to evidences left by the man he'd killed. However, after his trial, he told me that he was his own man; that he would never bow to another again, even if Dumbledore came back from the dead." Gasps were heard in the crowd, especially from the ranks of the Order of the Phoenix members. Only the remembrance that there were Muggles around them kept them from drawing their wands out. "He insulted my friend, the one he was going to marry, each time he could. This man despises us, Hermione included. He doesn't know how to love. So, the only explanation for such a change of heart is that he isn't himself. I believe he's been given a love potion by my friend who, for a reason I can't fathom, is deeply in love with him. And it is very like Hermione to love the underdog." He bowed his head out of grief and shame for his friend. He was unable to meet her eyes at the moment. He shouldn't have feared for that.

In the silence that followed, everyone noticed the bride sobbing freely, her face covered by her gloved hands. Her bouquet was lying at her feet; rose petals were scattered on the floor around it.

No one had noticed that the groom, the alleged victim, had yet to accuse his bride of misbehaving. His eyes were firmly set on her nonetheless.

"Miss, is this true?" the priest asked in the microphone. As a rational man, he had faith in God, believed in the Devil and the angels...if not, what would the meaning of life be?...but he didn't believe in love potions. Yet, if the young woman was one to stoop to using such silly products, the man could very well be better off without her.

"Hermione," Ron said softly. He'd been silent until now, but he couldn't let his friend make such a grievous mistake that would backfire on her sooner or later. "Tell us, did you do it? Did you give him," he jerked his thumb in Severus' general direction, "a love potion?"

Murmurs were coursing through the assembly, but not to the point of muffling Hermione's intensified sobs. After a few minutes, she got a hold of herself and she showed her reddened face. She really wasn't a pretty bride in this moment. Even her elaborate chignon looked like it was going to collapse at any moment.

"I did give Severus a love potion," she managed to say between sobs.

The Grangers cast a horrified look at their daughter; some people declared that they were convinced that it had to be the other way around. Not many people seemed surprised that a love potion had been involved in this surreal wedding. Not even the groom.

"Well," the priest resumed in the microphone, "it's now to Mister Snape to decide if the wedding will take place or not."

At that, a full-blown smirk developed on Severus' face, which grew larger and larger. He was soon openly chuckling. This was better than a performance at Shakespeare's Globe, and he was enjoying himself immensely. He would have a very memorable wedding, not that it wouldn't have been memorable to him otherwise. He addressed Hermione in a soft, yet carrying voice. "My dear, I am very knowledgeable in potions. Do you really think you could have slipped me a love potion unnoticed?"

Her eyes widened in alarm. "You've known all along?" she stammered.

"Yes, I have. I recognised the taste in the drink you offered me that day. What you didn't know is that I always have a universal antidote with me, an old spy habit. I took it right away, so no harm was done. But my curiosity was roused. Why would such a young woman like you give me a love potion? To ridicule me, or out of genuine interest? I decided to court you, to act as if I were under the potion influence, to find out your motives." He came in front of her, but didn't completely turn his back to their guests. "With time, I fell under the influence of your very own spell, one that your person has cast on me: I really love you, Hermione, and I want nothing more than to be bound to you in matrimony."

A very emotional Hermione threw herself into Severus' open arms, leaving a slim, shining trail of mucus on his black robe. He held her tightly against him. The pearls that kept her chignon in place were evicted by his movement, and her hair tumbled ungracefully down her back, but neither of them cared.

Women in the assembly dabbed their made-up eyes with pristine handkerchiefs, trying to keep their mascara on their eyelashes...none of them fancied the "panda look". Men were suddenly victim of dust attacks on their eyes, which allowed them to dab at their own orbs without making fools of themselves.

"Gentlemen, if you will?" Severus motioned to the gobsmacked Ron and Harry to take their places as Hermione's attendants, and the ceremony resumed, or rather began, without further ado.

The events of that day fed the Wizarding world's gossip for many years, and were a much appreciated tale in many circles. It was a tale that would be told and retold at Sunday family meals for many generations of Snapes.

Prompt 31. Everyone always believes that Snape has done something to make Hermione fall for him. How about the opposite. People think Hermione has cast a spell or potion on Snape to like her in his Snarky way. While Harry & Ron believe there is no possible way for the mean git to feel for their best friend. They believe Hermione has done something to Snape. Hermione can do something or Sev can really feel for his beloved.