

Joys of the Countryside

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Answering the Country Life Challenge on GS100

One-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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AN: Thanks to septentrion for betaing this one-shot.

Joys of the Countryside

"When I said that I wanted to get away from it all, this *isn't* what I had in mind."

"I said I was sorry! I didn't mean for us to fall over as soon as we Apparated, breaking our wands."

"Hermione, you should know better than to Apparate somewhere you have only seen in a picture. Especially when taking someone with you Side-Along."

Huffing, Hermione swatted at the cloud of insects surrounding them. "I should have known better than to go to the picturesque Lake Vyrnwy. Why didn't I realise that midges and water go together in the wild?"

"The only blessing is that these are not Scottish or Irish midges. Still, they are vicious enough." Severus winced, swatting at his own cheek.

"Hey, it could be worse—"

"Don't say it!" Severus groaned as the first few heavy drops of rain fell, glaring at Hermione, who was the picture of wounded innocence.

"It's not my fault! I was just going to say that we could have landed in the reservoir."

"If we had, at least our wands would not have shattered, leaving us stranded here. Don't you know how much I hate Wales?"

"You've never mentioned it before."

"Whenever Albus thought I needed a break, he sent me to his holiday home in the deepest valley in Mid Wales. There's only so many sheep I can stand to look at."

"Oh. Wales is infamous for rain, too." Hermione pushed back her soon-to-be sodden hair from her face, seemingly unaware of how the move drew Severus's attention to her soaked, clinging white shirt.

"I do not mind the rain so much," he murmured.

"A gentleman would offer his robe in circumstances such as these," Hermione reproved him, the smouldering look she exchanged with him at odds to her words.

"A gentleman would look away, too." Severus's eyes remained glued to Hermione's chest. "However, I never claimed to be a gentleman."

Hearing approaching people, Severus swore softly. It seemed that the Lake, wet conditions or not, was a popular place for cyclists. He wasn't about to share this sight with anyone. Lunging forward before the noisy Muggle contraptions and their riders were in sight, he grabbed hold of Hermione, Apparating to a place of his choice.

A muffled squeak escaped Hermione as the near silent 'pop' caused by the magical mode of transport faded.

"What— How— Where—" she blurted.

Closing her eyes, flushing with embarrassment, Hermione answered her own question. "I forgot. Apparition doesn't require a wand."

"No, it does not. Now, allow me to show you what I had in mind with a countryside retreat... Welcome to Prince Hall." Severus gestured to the manor house which had just appeared behind him at his words.

Hermione was silent for a long moment, taking in the proud building and sumptuous gardens with an admiring gaze.

"My maternal grandparents knew how to live in the country." Offering her his arm, Severus lead her down the tree-lined avenue, passing the bubbling fountain.

"Damp is a good look on you," he commented, only to be shoved into the fountain with a satisfying splash. Flabbergasted, he stood up, spluttering, wet linen robes clinging to him, hair plastered across his face. Clearing his vision with a shaking hand, he scowled at his attacker.

"Looks good on you, too!" Hermione guffawed, before sprinting for the house, Severus in hot pursuit.

She thought that she was safe when she reached the door before him, sure that she would be able to find somewhere to hide inside. Upon opening the door, she was hauled inside, shrieking with surprise.

"I think you need more Apparition lessons," Severus stated sometime later, shrugging into a dressing gown after their shared ablutions, spare wand safely ensconced in the pocket.

Hermione was fruitlessly hunting for her discarded wet clothes, pausing to kick at his shin. Effortlessly dodging, he offered his spare robe to her.

"Much as I appreciate the view, the house elves will be here soon to clean up the room. I'd rather not share it with them."

Abruptly halting in the act of tying the sash on the robe, Hermione slowly turned to him, eyes narrowing dangerously. *You have house elves?*