

Pleasurable Pastimes

by TempestOfDreams

Two project proposals, one grant. Who wins?

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's notes:

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This was a story for mollilicious as part of the summer 2007 SS/HG Exchange.

Prompt: Snape and Hermione are in competition for a limited resource (potion ingredient, time off from Hogwarts, promotion you get the idea). The battle of wills starts small and escalates until they have forgotten what they were fighting over to begin with. Some outside authority (Headmistress, Wizengamot, Minister of Magic, etc.) forces them to sort things out. The more snark the better. Explosive, angry sex a plus but not necessary.

Disclaimer: The usual, I would imagine. If you recognize it, it belongs to the estimable JKR. No profit is being made off this work.

Severus' office door slammed open without warning. He looked up from his grading to see a very irate Madam Hermione Granger standing before him.

"Professor," she bit out, throwing a piece of parchment on his desk. "What is the meaning of this?"

He lifted a brow and kept his eyes on hers as he reached for it. There were always any number of things that might irritate the Hogwarts librarian; however, he didn't offhand know what he might have recently done to move irritation to ire. Only when he had the document settled in his hands did he glance down to see.

Looking at it, he frowned. What was the problem? "It's my grant proposal, of course, Madam Granger. I am applying for a Ministry-sponsored grant to fund a new Defence Against the Dark Arts practical classroom by reconstructing a section of the North Tower."

"Hermione," she corrected distractedly. "I've told you time and time again to please call me Hermione. And you knew I was applying for the same grant! I'm planning to expand and update the library with texts from other countries, including all the books from that American botanist that you keep asking for!"

Severus felt a mild pinch of guilt, but it was quickly suppressed. He had planned this practical classroom for years and had just been waiting for a source of funding. Clearing the battle-spell-destroyed sections of an old castle was an expensive, time-consuming job; it included diagnosing the potential for Dark spells that might be lingering before removing the rubble. During the post-war years, Severus hadn't had the time to do it, and Hogwarts hadn't had the money to hire anyone else who was qualified.

"*Madam Granger*, I assure you I had no idea you were applying for the same grant. That said, this is a project that has been on hold for lack of funds. It is sorely overdue

and quite necessary."

"What do you mean, you had no idea I was applying for the grant? I announced it weeks ago in a staff meeting, *Severus!*"

He snorted. "Was I there?"

"Yes, you were. When I mentioned that the current library collection was generally out of date and definitely narrow-minded since the only texts it contains from the last century are British, you even nodded in agreement!"

"Are you sure I wasn't nodding off to sleep?" he shot back, hoping to prod her into covering more detail. Severus wracked his brains to figure out what staff meeting she was talking about. While it didn't bother him to be in competition with another staff member for the funding, he suspected that it might be best to find out what he was actually competing against.

She gritted her teeth and crossed her arms over her chest. "Damn you, Severus Snape! I honestly thought that you had stopped hating me and baiting me, for that matter."

"Why on earth would I want to stop such a pleasurable pastime? However, I apparently have been lax lately, if I gave you that impression. What staff meeting?"

"The one last month where Filius and Pomona had that long discussion about new ideas for promoting inter-house activities," she snapped. "Obviously, in your disinterest for that topic, you missed a large chunk of the next agenda item, which was my grant proposal. I do recall that you left your copy on the table. I just thought you were done with it. Apparently you never looked at it. Lovely dedication you have as a staff member."

The woman clearly had an inflated view of her own importance if she thought he was likely to pay attention to her or her 'agenda items' at a staff meeting. He went because he had to and because he had a responsibility to represent his House and find out anything of relevant interest to the Slytherins or his Defence classes.

"If I couldn't tell when Filius and Pomona stopped blathering and when you started talking, then clearly your proposal was just as tedious," he commented. "Small wonder I missed it. For my sake, I hope your written proposal was the same. It will make my own stand out. You can apply next year when you've applied *yourself* to getting to the point."

Based on the look on her face, he wouldn't have been surprised to see steam coming out her ears without the impetus of Pepper-Up Potion. He smirked and went back to his grading, ignoring the irate woman in front of him.

"I *will* get the grant this year, mark my words," she said, slamming the door shut behind her.

He didn't look up from his work. "No, I will, Madam Granger," he replied to his empty office.

Fortunately, they were both right. Unfortunately, the grant money was split in two, and each of them received half the promised amount. "It's time to get Hogwarts back in shape and up-to-date, Professor McGonagall!" the Ministry representative announced to the Headmistress pompously when he arrived at the school to present the funds.

Judging by her pinched expression, Minerva clearly wanted to mention that Hogwarts was out of shape, so to speak, because the Ministry hadn't provided the school with any of its regular maintenance allotments, much less capital to rebuild or improve, ever since Potter and his followers had ignored the Minister and gone off on their own to defeat Voldemort. Since his followers had included several of the Hogwarts staff and many of the older students when it came down to the final events of the war, the Ministry was not interested in giving money to those same parties after it was all over. In public, the Minister lauded them, but when it came to funding, he ignored them.

Madam Granger kept a neutral expression on her face and gave polite thanks during an impromptu presentation ceremony in the Entrance Hall. Severus didn't bother and instead spent the time scowling at the lackey who had brought along a reporter and photographer. He had no intention of being the subject of a "feel-good" story on the front page and deliberately put his back to the camera when he shook the Ministry representative's hand for as short a time as he could manage.

That prompted grumbling from the newspaper staff, but the official took the message, rounded up his entourage and left, looking annoyed and harassed but relieved.

Minerva left as soon as she had closed the main doors behind them.

That left him alone with Hermione, and when she dropped her calm façade, she looked as enraged as she had the day she stormed into his office. He knew the feeling he could make significant headway with his half of the money, but it was unlikely he could complete his project. On the other hand, he wasn't sure what she was planning for the library that could possibly take so much ready cash...

"I see you managed to make your grant proposal at least somewhat passable, Madam Granger. Hermione," he deliberately corrected himself. "What exactly are you planning to do with the money again?"

"What do you want?" she asked, narrowing her eyes at him.

Apparently he had been a bit too obvious. "Excuse me?"

"If you had wanted to know what I planned to do with the money, you could have asked me at any time."

"Perhaps I was so certain of my own proposal that it simply didn't occur to me to do so," he said.

She rolled her eyes at him. "Which explains why you just 'suddenly' decided to use my given name, *Severus*. I don't think so. Let's see . . . Shall we reason this out?"

Her uncharacteristic sing-song tone grated on his nerves, but he kept silent, crossing his arms and leaning back against the wall, deciding to wait her out.

"Point one: you suddenly call me 'Hermione' as I've been asking you to for months, if not years, indicating a desire to foster camaraderie, which is definitely not your style.

"Point two: you specifically ask what I plan to do with the funds, even though you previously had no interest in that whatsoever.

"Point three: there's a distinct possibility that only receiving half the funds will severely limit the amount of rebuilding you can now contract out for, though it should at least cover all the clearing away and basic recreation of structural elements."

That observation was a little too accurate. He lifted his brows. She noticed.

"Unlike you, Professor Snape, I am interested in seeing what other projects the Hogwarts staff members have an interest in pursuing, so I actually read your proposal when Minerva circulated it. Including your budget.

"Which brings me to point four: you want to know if you can weasel any of my grant money out of my project. To which the answer is emphatically *no*. In order to pursue my own project, I need to expand the library, which has to be done at least partially without the aid of magic for various reasons I won't bore you with."

He nodded, conceding her logic. "Come, now, Madam Granger, it can't possibly be something that can't wait a year or two."

"I beg to differ, Professor Snape. Because of the war, people are still interested in making sure the students are prepared to face the worst. You can get funding at any time. The library, on the other hand, can only be funded when someone sympathetic to progress is making the decision. That can't be guaranteed."

"I'll owe you a favour," he responded. "Surely that would make it worthwhile, to have me in your debt?"

She snorted. "You'd find some way to avoid repaying me. Forget it."

"Ungrateful woman. Who do you think you are? I have seniority here," he sputtered, knowing he was losing his temper, but unable to stop snapping out anyway. Not that he particularly cared.

She crossed to stand directly in front of him.

"You need to grow up and actually do your job," she replied. "Pay attention to Hogwarts rather than just your precious little Slytherins. The only good thing I can say about them is that they're not Death Eaters-in-training any longer. But they're spoiled brats who wouldn't know an honest day's work if it bit them in the arse; they'd still rather cheat or, if that fails, pay someone to do the work for them." She spun around and stomped off in the direction of the library.

"Just because you're not getting the same public Best-Friend-of-Potter preferential treatment as Weasley isn't any excuse for perpetuating your house stereotypes, Madam Granger!" he called after her, deliberately ignoring his own tendency to do so.

Annoying, irritating Slytherin, she thought. He was being shockingly obvious in hounding her, as if he thought she might respond better to Gryffindor tactics than Slytherin ones. Hermione had lost track of the number of times he'd cornered her in the last few weeks. First he'd tried charm...

He put his hands on the library counter and leaned in as she checked out his books. "Madam Granger, surely you're clever enough to figure out a way to stage your project so that we can both get all our building done with this grant funding."

"If I did that, I wouldn't have any funds left over to buy your precious botany books, Professor Snape. Particularly your botany books," she retorted. "Not a chance. Make do." She shoved the library books back at him, deliberately hitting him in the stomach.

His lack of experience in charm was quite obvious. And when that had repeatedly failed, he resorted to insults, and not just about her...

"You're wasting money on unappreciative, brainless idiots, Granger. Why bother?" He had caught her as she entered the staff room and stood in the doorway, blocking her path.

"Because for all our sakes, I hope they aren't as brainless as you claim them to be, and I'll do everything that I can to make sure that the people running tomorrow's Ministry are as ready as possible."

He leaned against the doorframe. "I hope you're not planning on using Potter and Weasley as examples of 'ready'. And why did you come back here, anyway? Scared of the big, bad world?"

"Is that why you're still here after all these years? Oh, no, wait . . . That's because you're such an arsehole that no one else would hire you!"

A few days ago, Minerva had quietly let them each know that she had found a matching grant so that they could complete their projects. Hermione suspected the money might have come from Harry, but didn't dare ask, as she didn't want to risk Severus finding out if that was the case. No need to anger him any more than necessary. For some reason, getting the matching funds already seemed to be making their tension worse, as was evident by their current conversation during dinner.

"I can't believe you think it's worth investing money in books on housecleaning charms of all things," he snapped after tersely asking her what books she planned to buy, anyway.

"Speaking as a Muggle-born, those books would come in remarkably handy while trying to assimilate into the wizarding world!" she shot back, viciously stabbing the roast potatoes on her plate and pretending that she was stabbing him instead. "Just because *you* think something's worthless doesn't mean everyone else does! And it wasn't my idea, anyway Filius suggested it."

Severus shoved his plate back and glared at her. "Why would you listen to an idea like that? Clearly you should be prioritising your purchase requests!"

"At least Filius intends to reference those books in class. You just want to putter around with your personal research, and you expect Hogwarts to pay for your resources!"

"Shut up," Minerva cut in from Severus' other side. "Both of you. Your voices are getting louder and louder, and the students are starting to take notice!"

Hermione frowned at her and carefully lowered her voice before continuing, unwilling to give up the verbal jousting match. "Well, he should be used to that by now impersonating a black bat usually does catch people's attention," she muttered.

His response was just as quiet. "Better a bat than having hair like a porcupine and a personality to match."

"I have a personality like a porcupine?" Talk about hypocrisy. "Perhaps you should have a conversation with yourself sometime."

"I prefer to talk to others rather than blather on to myself like you do, thank you very much," he replied.

"I do not blather on to myself!"

"You do too. You had a long conversation with yourself yesterday about possible ways to prevent the students from messing up your books."

"Enough," Minerva stated firmly. "If you can't behave yourselves, leave."

Hermione looked at Severus. Severus looked back. By unspoken agreement they stood up simultaneously and walked along the teachers' table to the side door.

"Good riddance," they heard Filius mutter from behind them as they exited.

They shot each other glaring looks as they each headed towards their own domain.

Minerva closed her eyes and reached into an inside pocket of her robe to find a corked bottle of headache potion that she seemed to need continuously these days. What in Merlin's name had gotten into Severus and Hermione? Staff meetings had gone from humdrum chatter (with the exception of Severus, of course) to verbal skirmishes that were going to draw blood soon. Possibly literally, if she wasn't careful to make sure they kept their wands away. She took a gulp of the potion as she listened to them again.

"I hardly think that your entire Potions class would fall apart if you'd just take the time to explain something to a student rather than simply insulting her!" Hermione snapped from her spot on the far side of the room.

Severus slouched further into the leather chair by the fireplace. "The world's a nasty place, Granger"

"Madam Granger, or Hermione," Minerva corrected tiredly, glancing from one to the other and then pointedly back at Severus. "Could we please at least respect each other?"

"and the students need to be prepared for it," he continued, ignoring her.

Hermione looked about to spit nails. "Ellen is eleven years old! She doesn't need to be toughened up yet. She just needs to learn enough to get through her first year of Hogwarts . . . and preferably in such a way that she wants to come back for the next!"

"Clearly, she at least needs to be taught that whining to other people doesn't do anything but make her look like a tattletale!"

Minerva pocketed the headache potion again and stood up. She had to put a stop to this somehow. Their spats were becoming infamous among both the staff *and* the students. "Meeting adjourned," she said, meeting the eyes of the other occupants of the room.

Everyone quickly stood and filed out except Hermione and Severus, who stood up but stayed put. Apparently leaving first would be conceding defeat.

Enough was enough.

"Professor Snape and Madam Granger," Minerva snapped. "I was labouring under the misconception that I was managing a capable, professional staff. Instead, I seem to be managing a nursery school! I assure you, if I had wanted to do so, I could have."

"What are you talking about, Minerva?" Hermione genuinely looked perplexed.

Severus snorted. "I think she's referring to you," he replied. "All your incessant chattering and insults is like listening to three-year-olds squabble and cry over a favourite toy."

"Excuse me? *My* insults? Who's insulting whom? Just because you can't keep control of your classroom without resorting to childish displays of temper"

"No more!" Minerva shouted, wordlessly casting a Silencing Charm on both of them so that she could finish speaking without further interruptions. Severus crossed his arms, and Hermione put her hands on her hips. Both glared at her.

"Now that I have your attention," she continued, "it is about time for the two of you to work this out. It has been going on for *months*, and the rest of the staff are completely tired of it. It's impossible to get a word in edgewise when you're both in the same room, as all you can do is toss insults back and forth.

"You might recall that this started with your fight over the grant funding. May I point out that *both projects have been completed for over a month?* And yet you're still constantly taking jabs at each other.

"Then again, maybe you don't recall it," she commented at the identical, perplexed looks on both of their faces. "Which means I have absolutely no idea why the two of you can't just go back to ignoring each other like you did before. Perhaps it's giving you both an adrenaline rush that you've become addicted to. I don't know.

"But it has to stop. Now. It's a Friday night, and conveniently neither of you are on duty today or tomorrow. You can just stay in here until you work it out," she finished, crossing to the door. She quickly released the Silencing Charm and exited, closing the door behind her and using a variant of a standard Locking Charm. Having been cast on a Hogwarts door by the current Headmistress, it would stay there until they either met the requirements to exit or until she let them out.

"Nice job, Granger, you've really botched it this time," Severus said as the door slammed shut. He pulled out his wand and tossed a few cursory spells at the door, but just as he'd thought, he wasn't going anywhere anytime soon.

Hermione stared at him. "Me? What are you talking about, Mr. If-things-don't-go-my-way-I-throw-insults?" She took a step towards him and bunched her fists at her waist. "Who started this entire thing after the grant money was split, anyway?" Another few steps forward. "Not me!"

"Granger"

"And why are you calling me Granger, anyway? Did what little respect I might have gained from you completely fade away at some point? If you can't call me Hermione, at the very least give me the courtesy of being addressed as Madam Granger. Especially in front of the students. You called me Granger in front of several seventh-years just a few days ago, and I admit I really resented that."

"Very well, I will"

"I'm starting to feel as if you see me as a student all over again. I'm surprised you haven't tried to take points and give me detention! Or is the recent increase in Gryffindor detentions because you're taking it out on the current students by proxy? I knew you could stoop low, but that's just taking it too far. You're a real bastard, do you"

"Yes, yes, I know, I'm a miserable bat, the greasy git and all that," Severus cut in. She was on a roll, and while Minerva had been a bit too accurate in her assessment of the adrenaline rush, he didn't want to be stuck in the room all night. "But shut up already, or else we'll never get out of here!"

Hermione closed the remaining distance between them and poked him in the chest. "And whose fault is that?" Cutting her off wasn't going to be that easy. "You were the one who started this whole thing. Did you really think I was spineless enough to fall into line with your plans for the grant money?" Her eyes flashed and she shoved at him.

He was prepared for it, though, and simply raised his hands to grab her own and hold them away which in turn ended up bringing her nearly up against him. Without realising what he was about to do, he leaned down and kissed her, hard, before breaking off and repeating, "Shut up, Hermione."

She looked up at him in a dazed sort of way, clearly not expecting that any more than he had. "What was that for?" she asked.

He lifted a brow. "Did it work?" he countered.

"Depends on what you wanted it to do. If you wanted to take me by complete surprise, yes. If you wanted me to forget about our argument, definitely not. If you wanted"

He cut her off again with another nearly bruising kiss. He let go of her hands so that one of his own could delve into her hair and hold her head in place while the other snaked around to her backside and pulled her up close against him. It took just seconds before her hands slipped around to his back, as well.

A much better use for adrenaline, all around he thought as he quickly grabbed his wand to cast a Cushioning Charm on the floor before setting it aside and pulling her down. His now-free hand snaked under her robes and blouse, and when no protest came, he started pulling them off her. She returned the favour with his own robes.

It was fast. It was *not* gentle. It was the adrenaline rush poured into a sexual outlet. But unlike his past experiences in this vein, it was with someone he could trust not to stab him in the back literally when they were done.

It was, hands down, the best sex he'd ever had. And it was with Hermione Granger.

He collapsed onto her, breathing heavily, after they both climaxed.

"Do you think Minerva will let us out now?" he gasped.

She smacked him. "If that's what that was all about, you don't deserve it."

"I meant that I was hoping to move this to more comfortable surroundings. Cushioning Charms only go so far."

"Likely story."

He snorted and raised his head enough to make eye contact with her. "I agree to call a truce whenever we're in the company of the staff or students as long as you realise that the truce isn't in effect when we're alone."

She pondered that for a full minute before answering. "Deal."

The door gave an audible click as it unlocked.

Hermione devoutly hoped that the magic worked independently of Minerva finding out just how they fulfilled her requirements to work it all out.