

Dinner Time

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Chapter 1 of 1

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"No, no, no, you're doing it all wrong. Here ... let me do it." Hermione took the bowl from Snape and forcefully nudged him away from the countertop with her hip. She turned her back to him as she concentrated on her task. "Honestly, Severus, you'd think that with all of your potions experience, you'd be a better cook," she said with exasperation.

Snape glowered at her and crossed his arms silently.

Without looking at him, she spoke again. "You really shouldn't sulk about this. You can't be the best at *everything*." She resumed her previous task with slightly more force than necessary, trying to counter the smile that had crept into her voice as she baited him.

Still slightly stung at being usurped in the kitchen, he contemplated his options. He might not be as good as she was at cooking, but he was *very* good at something else. Something he would like to use to his advantage. Right now.

His lips quirked into a small smirk as he mulled over his next move. He stared at his wife's back as she continued her work in the kitchen. Her bushy hair had been slightly tamed and was pulled back off her face on the sides. A majority of it covered her neck and continued to fall just past her shoulders.

Silently, he walked up behind her. She was so engrossed in her chopping that she did not hear his approach. She only became aware of his presence when he simultaneously used one hand to move her hair off her neck while the other grasped her hip and pulled her back against him. His lips descended mere moments later onto her neck. First kissing and then nibbling his way down to the one spot on her neck, which he *knew* was her weakness; she claimed it made her knees turn into jelly.

Hermione's gasp of surprise quickly changed into a low, quiet moan. The knife clattered to the wooden cutting board with a quiet thunk as her whole body melted back into his frame.

He grasped her tighter and doubled his efforts. She was absolutely intoxicating to him. He loved nothing more than to hold her in his arms, kiss her senseless, and forget everything else that was going on in the world.

Their stolen moment of quiet passion was interrupted by their two-year old daughter, Miranda. She had been playing quietly in the corner with her toys. Having grown bored with them, she now wanted her parents' undivided attention. Miranda walked over to her father and tugged insistently on his trousers.

Snape sighed resignedly into Hermione's neck as she, in turn, chuckled slightly at Miranda's poor timing.

"Da! Up!" said their daughter with typical childlike lack of patience. Her wide, dark brown eyes that peeked from behind black curls implored his immediate acquiescence. Miranda was his absolute weakness, for he found that he could not bring himself to say no to her.

He was still a snarky man with a quick-fire temper. He would never change in that regard. But in the privacy of his own home, and with the family he never expected to have, he lowered his guard slightly.

"Up!" Miranda demanded, tugging again.

Snape reluctantly released Hermione with one last kiss to her neck and leaned down to scoop up the other love of his life. Miranda giggled gleefully in response. He stepped back further away from his wife in order to spin his laughing daughter around.

Her mirth increased tenfold, and the delightful sound of her laughter filled the kitchen with joyous noise.

Hermione continued preparing their dinner as Miranda occupied all of Snape's attention. Growls and giggles between father and daughter soon accompanied the thunk of the knife, the scrape of spoon against a bowl and the hiss of gas as the stove ignited.

Finally finished to a point where she could pause and return her attention to her family, Hermione turned around to a wondrous sight.

Snape had allowed Miranda to play with the various harmless ingredients that littered their dark wooden kitchen table. Miranda's hands were now white with flour, and she had left a distinctive swipe across his face with the white powder, not to mention the tiny little handprints across his formerly all-black coat.

Hermione could not help the laughter that burst forth from her lips. She staggered slightly due to the intensity of her reaction. Snape simply looked at her in puzzlement as their daughter, happily ensconced in his lap, giggled and pointed at her near-hysterical mother.

Hermione finally recovered and wiped the tears from her eyes. Initially contemplating showing him his reflection in the cookware, she decided on a more personal approach. She walked over and kissed his prominent nose tenderly and used her hand to wipe the rest of the flour off. When she pulled back from the kiss, she held her hand towards him, palm facing him, so he could see the flour that she had just removed.

Hermione giggled again as Snape frowned.

"Very funny," Snape muttered in a tone which spoke of the fact that he did *not* find it amusing.

"Your daughter seems to think so," Hermione pointed out.

"Our daughter is two. Everything is amusing to her," he countered as Miranda giggled again in support of her father's statement.

"True," Hermione allowed, "but it is amusing nonetheless." She picked up her wand from the countertop and muttered a cleaning spell at the table. Preferring a more personal touch for her now-grubby daughter, she ran warm water on a cloth and handed it to her frowning husband to clean their daughter's hands. Hermione turned back to the counter to prepare Miranda's dinner.

She silently handed Snape the bowl of pasta and sauce, as it was his turn to feed her.

Miranda was happily beating her fists against the tray of her highchair as she eagerly eyed the food.

Hermione once again turned her attention to preparing their meal while Snape encouraged Miranda to chew before swallowing. She pretended not to hear the creative ways he used to get their fussy eater of a daughter to eat the entire contents of her bowl.

A sharp intake of breath, the accompanying baby laughter and a clattering noise prompted her to turn around again. She should have expected the sight that met her eyes as she turned around.

Miranda's hands were covered in sauce; that was to be expected. But Hermione had not anticipated her *husband* to be covered in sauce as well. It appeared that Miranda had taken a handful of the pasta and, instead of putting it in her mouth as she should have, had flung it at her father. He must have jumped in surprise and knocked the bowl to the floor.

Snape turned his gaze from his darling daughter to his wife, who was now standing with her hand over her mouth. Strands of spaghetti were plastered to his hair, adhered to his cheek and drooped onto his shoulder. Spatters of red sauce reached as high as his forehead, standing out against his pale skin. Having recovered sufficiently, Snape retrieved his handkerchief from his pocket and mopped up his face.

Hermione snorted from behind her hand, and not wanting to laugh outright in her husband's face yet again, she fled from the kitchen straight into the living room. He could hear the thump of her body; he presumed she had thrown herself facedown into the cushions in order to muffle her laughter.

Grabbing his wand, he used a cleaning spell for his person and the kitchen. He took the damp washcloth and cleaned off his highly amused daughter with tender strokes. He picked up his now-clean daughter and walked into the living room in search of his wife.

Hermione was indeed face-down in the cushions and was shaking in muffled laughter.

"For Merlin's sake, I'm not going to hex you for laughing at something that our darling daughter perpetrated," he said, slightly exasperated. This only caused her to laugh even harder.

Snape rolled his eyes and sighed. He just wasn't going to win anything tonight. He failed to fully comprehend the level of amusement that Hermione saw in his situations this evening.

He set his daughter down on the carpet near her favorite toys, set the wards on the room to prevent her from leaving without either of them knowing, and joined his wife on the couch.

"You are being incredibly silly tonight, woman. Whatever has gotten into you tonight?" he questioned.

Hermione took a few deep breaths and sat up enough to roll on her side to face him.

"When we first became serious about our relationship, I never pictured us with a family. Not to say that I did not want one, but I hardly pictured you as a family man."

Snape had to agree with her. He had never envisioned himself as a father, either.

Hermione continued, "I love times like tonight where my darling black bat of the dungeons gets bested by a child."

Snape snorted in amusement.

Hermione wasn't finished, and she grasped his hand in hers as she spoke again. "I only hope to have many more of those moments again, in seven months' time."

She looked at him pointedly as his jaw dropped slightly in shock. She had wanted to tell him sooner, but had wanted to be absolutely sure before she brought it up.

"Do you mean..." He trailed off as she took his hand and placed it on her stomach.

"I do, my darling Severus. Miranda will soon have a brother or a sister."

Snape's face broke out into a genuinely pleased grin.

Hermione grinned back in response.

Snape pulled her closer into him and kissed her soundly. When they broke for air, she turned and leaned against him as they both watched Miranda play happily with her toys.

Suddenly, his voice, low and rumble, sounded in her ear.

"Want to try for twins?" he said teasingly. Hermione swatted lightly at him, and he ducked slightly.

"Oh, Severus, you know it doesn't work like that," she said with mock exasperation.

He raised an eyebrow at her and wiggled it a little.

"You never know..." he joked in return. Hermione laughed at his facial expression, and this time he joined in her mirth.

They spent the rest of the evening, playing with their daughter and marveling at how different their lives had become.

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