

China Doll

by bound_by_passion

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Even the cauldrons were angry. The gentle, almost continual bubbling was usually good background noise, but today they seemed to spit and growl, howling out with the harsh sound of a million ingredients annoyed at being used by such dimwits. Smoke, thick to the point of becoming opaque, curled lazily up towards the ceiling, where it transformed into clawing talons that captured the light and fire from the lanterns.

A voice, female, piped up from the front of the room. Severus turned to look, his black eyes falling upon the perpetrator daring enough to break his unequivocal law of quiet.

"Please, Professor," she said, woefully oblivious to any and all negative stimulus. "There is a mistake in your notes. It should be four ounces of diced ragwort, not three. The potion will be less effective without the extra."

The sweet little control freak. The one with her untameable hair plaited in such a pretty, innocent way. With the pink lips that looked so soft, and the dark eyes only a touch lighter than his own. She was like a little china doll, painted for the pleasure of the masses. Only, she spoke back, her cupid-bow lips curving around sharp retorts.

She was sat at her desk now, head bent over reams and reams of notes on nothing in particular. It was a waste of parchment. He knew as well as any other that she had the facts committed to memory and could reiterate them upon request without the slightest cause for hesitation. She had always been like that: thorough, clever and just the slightest bit anal-retentive.

Some would say it was refreshing to have such a willing, co-operative student. To Severus, each snivelling adolescent was just as repulsive as the next, with their hormones and issues, no matter how clever.

He wonders why he ever became a teacher. The answer is startlingly clear, even if he refuses to acknowledge it himself. He was needed. Potions masters are hard to find these days, and everyone loves to know they're in demand. And when you play both the light and the dark, it's nice to have your own area of grey.

The school is grey, as are uniforms.

Besides, students like Miss Granger are a rare treasure to behold. As easy on the eye as they are to irritate. Lust is a beast similar in classification to hate, and almost as addictive.

"Miss Granger, I would appreciate it if you kept your lack-witted comments to yourself."

His pale hands stretched like the brace-supports of a spider's web across the surface of his desk. Stormy eyes bored into her skull, seeing past her timely façade and almost to the point where her soul meets her skin.

But there was no fear there, as he was expecting. There was irritation and something else instead. Something odd.

"Have you ever thought it prudent to keep your pretty little nose out of other people's business? I create potions for a living. Can you say the same?"

The fire in her eyes faltered a little, tamed by the icy water that coated his acerbic tone. He watched as she shuddered.

"No, sir."

Her voice was meek to the point of being drowned out by the hissing and the bubbling.

He feels satisfied by her abrupt fall to earth, coming off her high horse with enough of a bump to land her with a concussion.

Sometimes he does it to see the pain in her eyes, to prove he can still win. That he is better than her in every way.

He does it because he wants her.