

French Culture

by septentrion

Hermione teaches French to Severus, French kissing included.

One-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Written in answer to a dare by Juno Magic. She wanted a ficlet in which Hermione would teach French to Severus. One of the lessons had to include French kissing in the Great Hall.

Thanks very much to Dacian Goddess for her beta skills.

"What is a 'pig-turkey'?" Severus asked Hermione.

"A what?"

"A 'pig-turkey'. Here, read: '*Le cochon d'Inde de Neville avait encore des plumes, c'était plutôt un cochon-dinde, comme l'avait fait remarquer le professeur.*'"

I understand that 'cochon d'Inde' is not to be translated as 'pig from India' but as 'Guinea pig', but I really can't understand 'cochon-dinde'."

Hermione pried *Harry Potter et la coupe de feu* from her teacher's hands as if the gesture was very familiar to her and looked at the paragraph that had him in dismay.

"It's a pun," she explained. "'Cochon d'Inde' and 'cochon-dinde' are pronounced exactly the same. The students are supposed to Transfigure turkeys into Guinea pigs, or 'dindes' into 'cochons d'Inde'. But Neville's Guinea pig still had feathers, so McGonagall teased him by calling his Transfigured animal a 'cochon-dinde'."

"Really, you could have chosen another book for today's lesson, Miss Granger. Not only is it about Potter, but it also contains silly puns."

"Puns you didn't even notice, Professor," Hermione replied tartly. She would not let him disparage her friend.

"I am still learning." He was annoyed by her attitude. And by her choice of reading material, too.

"Well, you'd better learn quickly, because if you don't, you won't be selected for the International Board of Potions Masters. You have to master another language to be admitted, and *you* chose French."

"Don't I know it!"

"And learning a foreign language also entails discovering another culture, you know. You can't just string together one word after the other."

Severus narrowed his eyes. "You're not going to force me to eat mouldy, stinking cheese and to drink cork-tasting wine, are you?"

"Mouldy, stinking cheese? Cork-tasting wine? That's called 'having character', sir! Besides, you're reducing the culture of an old country to its food." Hermione's voice was getting higher with each word.

"Of course I reduce it to its food. That's what France is famous for!"

At that point, Hermione and Severus were shouting in each other's faces, their noses nearly touching.

"But there's more to France than just its food." She spun on her heels and moved away from him; she needed space to pace. "They have history!"

"So do we."

"Castles, churches, beautiful landscapes..."

"So do we."

"... 'art de vivre', the sense of beauty and refinement..."

"So do we."

"... more relaxed relationship between men and women..."

"That's enough, Miss Granger. You've made your point."

"It took you long enough..." She shut up when she remembered to whom she was talking.

Severus glared down at her. "I've let you take too many liberties with me. Ten points from Gryffindor."

"I'm trying to help you, sir." She could not help but protest.

"Since you're so knowledgeable about a country you visited for a fortnight holiday five years ago, I'll ask you to teach me about castles, churches, beautiful landscapes, 'art de vivre', sense of beauty and refinement, and a more relaxed relationship between men and women in your next lessons."

"But, I had planned to teach you..."

"No but!" Severus roared. "You will do as I ask. Let's see how you enjoy teaching a programme you've had no say in." By the time he finished his tirade, he was jabbing his index finger into Hermione's breastbone rather painfully. Yet his eyes were unfocused, as if he wasn't really scolding her but rather someone who wasn't in the vicinity. Probably the Headmaster, then. She decided to take pity on him.

"Fine! I'll teach you about castles, churches, beautiful landscapes, 'art de vivre', sense of beauty and refinement, and the more relaxed relationship between men and women," she said through gritted teeth.

"Good. I'll see you next week, Miss Granger."

When Hermione joined Severus for his French lesson the next week, she had a stack of rather old-looking books in her arms. Severus deciphered *Manuel d'archéologie française* on the edge. The author was called Camille Enlart.

"I thought we might cover castles and churches in one lesson," she announced as she put the pile of books down on Severus's desk.

Severus eyed them with mistrust. "Doesn't an abridged edition exist?"

"No. And Camille Enlart was one of the best French archaeologists."

"Good God! You're going to drown me with technical terms that nobody ever uses!"

"You asked that I teach you about castles and churches, but you didn't specify what you wanted to learn about them. I just made a guess," she finished smugly.

Severus sighed dramatically and pinched his nose. "Let's begin, Miss Granger."

Actually, Hermione had made a selection of some pages in the books, and the lesson revealed itself to be quite interesting, though Severus would have denied enjoying learning about *triforiums* and Vauban's fortresses with the last of his energy.

For their next lesson, Hermione came to Severus's office with an assortment of regional magazines and a basket.

"The magazines are to show you the different landscapes in France. The basket contains the essential ingredients for a successful aperitif, which is part of the 'art de vivre à la française'."

"Are you trying to get me drunk?"

Hermione blinked. "What? No, of course not. Are you trying to tell me you don't hold your liquor?"

"I can hold my liquor like the next man, Miss Granger," Severus scoffed, "but I hardly think drinking alcohol with a student is appropriate."

"Since I'm here to *teach* you French, could you please consider me as your colleague for the occasion?" She flashed him an encouraging smile, and her face shone as if bathed in sunlight. He must have mellowed since the Dark Lord's fall, for he didn't find it in himself to deny her request.

"I agree not to consider you as a student, but you will continue to call me 'Professor' or 'sir'," he said sternly.

"Good. Now, I need a place where I can put the bottles and the petit four." Her eyes were set on his encumbered desk, the only plane surface in the room. Severus understood her unspoken message, and scowling, he cleared the piece of furniture with a silent swish of his wand. The rolls of parchments, inkpots and quills neatly stacked themselves on a shelf.

"Does it meet with your approval, Miss Granger?" Severus asked sarcastically.

"Quite," Hermione answered with a sweet smile, which in the universal female language meant: "I know what you're doing, but you won't win this one." Then she set out to empty the basket on the ink-stained wooden surface. There were several bottles of mainly different shades of yellow liquids, packets of cocktail biscuits, cherry tomatoes and every kind of canapés imaginable.

"French people like their '*ah-peh-ree-teef*' very much and indulge in that ritual as often as possible. Paul Morand, a French diplomat and novelist, said that 'The aperitif is the Frenchmen's evening prayers'. It might even last longer than the actual meal," Hermione explained while arranging the items tastefully and conveniently at hand reach

on the desk, "or even been used as the meal itself. In this last case, it's called '*apéritif dînatoire*'. You provide your guests with as many canapés, cheese, biscuits, vegetable and fruit, cooked pork meats, and so on, and people can pick up what they like. It's easier than cooking an entire meal, and nobody goes hungry."

From his seat, Severus was watching the proceedings and listening to Hermione. "You know we are expected in the Great Hall for dinner in an hour? So I hope this isn't an '*ah-peh-ree-teef dee-nah-twah-re*', as you put it."

Hermione raised her head from her preparations and looked him in the eyes, a smile hovering over her lips. "Not at all, sir. This is just a regular aperitif." She grabbed a glass. "What would you like, ir? A canapé? Some biscuits? Chee..."

"I thought the object of aperitif was to drink alcohol?"

Barely taken aback by the interruption, Hermione resumed her speech. "It is, but it's customary to put something more solid in your stomach first."

"How thoughtful," he sneered but helped himself to two canapés, one with salmon and the other with a slice of hard-boiled egg.

"What would you like to drink? Muscat? Pastis? Suze? Sparkling wine?" She pointed the different bottles with each of her suggestions.

"No beer?"

Casting her teacher a look bordering on pity, Hermione answered with a hint of impatience in her voice, "No, no beer. Beer is never drunk for aperitif. At any other moment, to accompany the meal, to quench one's thirst in the middle of the afternoon, really whenever you want, but never for the aperitif. Now, what would you like to drink?"

"Sparkling wine, I think. How is it called in French?"

"*Vin mousseux*."

Hermione Conjured two flutes, opened the bottle magically and poured the sparkling yellow liquid into the elongated glasses. She barely managed to keep the foam from flowing over the rim. She handed one of the flutes to Severus.

"*À la vôtre!*" she said cheerfully while toasting her teacher. Then she sipped her *Clairette de Die*.

Severus reciprocated her toast and drank.

"I suggest we go over the magazines while we're having our aperitif," Hermione said after a couple of silent minutes.

"Agreed."

Together, they ate, drank and looked over the magazines, enjoying the photos of picturesque villages, impressive mountains, tormented coasts and endless country. The bottle of Clairette was empty...as well as the trays of canapés...and the bottle of Suze was not far behind when Severus noticed the time. And the Muscat was not untouched either.

"We're... laaate," he slurred, slightly swaying on his chair, pushing aside a magazine rambling on about the charms of Provence. "Di... dinner is ooover."

Hermione's head was pillowed on her crossed arms on the desk. Her unruly hair was mingling with crumbs and spilled alcohol. She'd stopped commenting on the magazines a while ago.

"You don't hold your liquor," she said slowly, as if trying not to bump into her syllables.

"It's... not... true..." He was visibly making an effort not to sound sloshed. Then he added quietly, as if for himself, "I think... the French... might beee... on something there. If... if that's evening," he sighed, "prayers, I'm going to... to... be a believer... or a Frenchman."

Hermione heard him and snorted. "I think I'm going to go to the Great Hall," she enunciated clearly enough. "Perhaps there will still be something left to eat..."

She stood, and Severus stood with her. Unsteadily, they reached the door and went into the corridor *I don't remember the corridors being so narrow*, Hermione idly thought through the haze residing in her mind. *The armours are not in their place tonight*, Severus noted as he nearly bumped into one for the third time. It was only logical that they ended arm in arm before they arrived at the Great Hall. It made the corridors straighter. They managed to open the doors leading inside through their combined efforts and stopped short at the sight of the empty room.

"Too laaate," Severus said in a singsong voice. He moved forward and ungracefully plopped down on a bench at the Ravenclaw table.

That was very uncharacteristic of him, Hermione reflected, so she joined him.

"We were too engrossed in the intricacies of French culture," she said, very proud to have managed such a complex sentence in her state, even if it took her twice as much time as usual to utter it.

"Very intricate, indeeeed." Severus propped his two elbows against the table behind him.

The alcohol has really loosened him, Hermione thought. She herself felt bolder. She turned to him and gave him what she hoped was a naughty smile. "We're far from having covered the entirety of French culture."

Severus tried to raise an eyebrow, but his gesture looked more like wiggling. He leaned slightly in Hermione's direction. "Is there anysh-thing more important than '*ah-peh-ree-teef*'?"

Hermione angled her body to come relatively face to face with Severus. "Yes, there is.

"It is called a French kiss."

Severus was so startled that he drew back abruptly but, having forgotten about his surroundings and his inebriated state, he ended up lying on the stoned floor *Not loosened enough*, Hermione regretted inwardly.

"You... You can't be serious!" The shock seemed to have cleared his mind a bit. He struggled to stand up, but his uncooperative body didn't allow him more than to sit up, which still left him in the disadvantageous position of being lower than Hermione. Yet, instead of taking advantage of his predicament, she kneeled in front of him, adjusting her robe so that her knees wouldn't be in direct contact with the floor.

"I am very serious, sir. I wouldn't be a thorough teacher if I overlooked that part of the curriculum."

Severus narrowed his eyes. He saw her game now; she wanted him to feel embarrassed because he had upset her lesson plan. The tables were about to be turned, though the imagery nearly made his head spin. "You're quite right, Miss Granger. Tell me what you know about French kissing, but after we have relocated to a more comfortable seat. Do you think you can make it to the bench on your own?"

Hermione didn't even dignify his barb with an answer; the bench was twenty centimetres on her right, so of course she could get to it unaided. She even managed to sit on it on her first attempt, though her bum was rather on the edge. Severus sat next to her and looked at her expectantly. "Well?" he asked.

Hermione breathed deeply. She could do it, even if her head was starting to clear. "The mechanics of the French kiss are easy to understand: it is basically a kiss in which one's tongue enters their partner's mouth and vice versa. But there's more to it than that. One doesn't have to shove one's tongue straight away into one's partner's mouth. You can begin with touches, light kisses involving only the lips..."

"Does your lecture include demonstration?" Severus interrupted her.

"I... er..."

Severus smirked. She would be the one to be embarrassed by today's lesson, not him. "I assure you that mere words don't convey your meaning well enough. Some hands-on...pardon me, I should say lips-on...experience is necessary." The slur had started to disappear from his language. Not a good sign at all.

Hermione reddened up to her last chromosome. "But it wouldn't be appropriate," she protested meekly. How and when had she lost control of the situation?

"You insisted that I treated you as a colleague for these lessons. I'm just complying with your wishes."

Severus looked too smug. Surely he didn't expect her to kiss him? That was it! He didn't expect her to, but if she did, she'd regain the upper hand. "You're right, Professor." And without warning, she leaned in and put her lips on his. Lightly first, with no pressure. Then, a series of light touches all over his mouth. Then she drew back and observed his face. He was transfixed, paralysed, stunned. She congratulated herself and carried on before he reacted.

"That first stage can be more passionate, but not necessarily. Next you gently nudge your partner's mouth open with your tongue."

She reapplied her lips to Severus's and tried to coax his mouth open with her tongue. He gripped her shoulders and pushed her away. "Stop poking into my lips, for Heaven's sake! You're acting as if you were trying to give me a body piercing!"

Offended, Hermione crossed her arms in front of her chest and glowered at him. "You asked for it," she said childishly.

"Certainly not. Let me show you how it should be done." Without further ado, he grabbed her face and brought it to his. He kissed her mouth delicately in spite of his still drunken state, taking his time, building the kiss as carefully as he would brew a dangerous potion. Progressively, Hermione shut her eyes and let herself be engulfed by the sensations. Then Severus nibbled at her lower lip and thus created a little gap between her lips. The tip of his tongue slipped into the interval, and she opened her mouth fully. Then he drew back, but not before he noticed she still had the flavour of Suze on her tongue.

She didn't like his smugness at all, especially since she'd enjoyed his attentions so much. In fact, she realised she'd enjoyed those French lessons too much. "I think you don't need my help to learn French anymore! Tomorrow, I'll tell Professor Dumbledore that the lessons are finished."

Severus ignored her last statement when he replied, "Certainly you don't consider this to be a French kiss? It was only the premise."

"You certainly don't consider needing my help," she retorted as she braced her arms against the bench to stand up.

Severus resumed his earlier relaxed position, propped against the Ravenclaw table behind him. "I'm all ears, Miss Granger. Please, carry on your lecture."

Still miffed, Hermione resumed in a sullen tone, her posture stiff. "When your partner's mouth is open, you slide your tongue into their mouth and you reach for your partner's tongue with your own. There, you can stroke it," Hermione blushed slightly while saying so, "play with it, and coax it to follow your tongue into your own mouth. You can also stroke the teeth, gums and inside cheeks of your partner, but really, French kissing is more about the dance of the tongues together. Oh, I nearly forgot; sucking your partner's tongue is all right too. And don't forget to swallow your saliva," she added as an afterthought. By the time she'd finished her talk, Hermione was as red as a tomato. *Quite edible*, Severus's mind suggested.

Silence ensued. Embarrassed silence for Hermione; amused silence for Severus.

"I'm waiting, Miss Granger."

She shook her head. "It's not possible."

"Why? You covered the theory rather well. Now is time for the practical." Severus caught her arm before she could scoot sideways on the bench. She froze and refused to meet his eyes. Severus sighed and cupped her chin roughly to lift her head towards his. He felt her trembling slightly. "Don't be afraid," he murmured, and as he was putting his hands on each side of her face, he brought his lips to hers. He didn't hurry; he brushed his lips against hers, touched her flesh with small kisses, traced the oblong opening with his tongue and nipped her lower lip between his teeth. It was like foreplay, he reflected; he was preparing her to receive him. When she yielded to his sensual assault, he slipped his tongue into her mouth. His hands slid behind her head and down her back. They both adjusted their position...no need to get a crick in the neck during the proceedings; it would never pass for a work accident...to get more comfortable.

Severus was surprised to feel her tongue advance to greet his. The tips of their tongues got acquainted and shared the lingering flavour of alcohol, but quickly, he needed more. He hadn't even realised he had closed his eyes. He caressed Hermione's tongue sensually with his, entangling both their organs in a dance as elaborate as a quadrille but which sent his senses reeling like the hottest tango.

Then, she retaliated.

She pushed his tongue back and invaded his mouth with hers. Her hands gripped handfuls of his hair, and she resumed the dance with more aggressiveness. Severus let her get away with it at first. After a while, he puckered his lips and sucked her tongue greedily, like a newborn latching on her mother's breast. Unexpectedly, she moaned. This was getting out of hand. If they didn't stop very, very soon, Severus couldn't guarantee he wouldn't shag her on the floor of the Great Hall, his skeleton be damned; and if her reactions were any indication, there wouldn't be any lack of consent on her part. Reluctantly, he pried her hands open and pushed her away.

"Miss Granger, we must stop!"

Dear gods, she had such a glazed look on her face, which turned fast into disappointment.

"I suppose you're right," she said weakly. She so wanted to protest, yet she couldn't. They should never have done... kissed... She wanted to do it again. She glanced at her professor and saw his skin was flushed. It was a colour she'd never seen on him, and it suited him. It suited him too much. She turned her eyes away for fear of kissing him, devouring him... Oh dear, she desired him. Physically. Carnally. Sexually.

"This lesson is over. I'll clean my office myself and will have the magazines sent back to you," he said as matter-of-factly as he could, steering Hermione from her lustful daydream.

"Sir..." Hermione hesitated, but didn't want any misunderstanding between them. "Are you sure... you still need the lessons?" *Will we be able to keep our hands to ourselves if we're alone?* was left unsaid.

Severus gulped. "I don't think so. Not until you finish school." Which was only a month away. "The testing of applicants to the International Board of Potions Masters takes place every three years in September. I'll probably spend the summer in France to perfect my knowledge of the language."

"Oh." She sounded despondent.

"Double rooms are less expensive than single rooms in hotels, you know," he continued casually, looking straight in front of him.

Hermione's head swivelled. "Do you have someone to share the cost?" she asked a bit hesitantly.

"It depends if the person I have in mind agrees to it or not." He was still not looking at her.

"Do I know that person?"

"Yes."

"Yes."

"Be ready on June 30th. We leave at noon." He stood abruptly and left the Great Hall in long strides, though his gait was a bit unsteady. It took three days for Hermione to get rid of her silly grin.