

A Prince Family Recipe

by Jenwryn

Hermione is invited to Christmas Dinner by Severus... For the 'Eggnog Challenge' at grangersnape100 (4x100).

Part One

Chapter 1 of 5

Hermione is invited to Christmas Dinner by Severus... For the 'Eggnog Challenge' at grangersnape100 (4x100).

"This is very important, Miss Granger. It's been handed down from generation to generation in my family. You *will* keep the details to yourself."

His apprentice's throat constricted at the intense expression in his eyes, and she nodded quickly. Then a flash of exultation bubbled in her. A Prince family potion! Finally something worth making!

With a stern look, he passed her the aged parchment.

She read it.

Twice.

"Um – Professor – this makes eggnog."

"Astute as always, Miss Granger. It is Christmas, is it not?" And he turned and strode towards the door, robes billowing black behind him.

Eggnog! Really! Of all the demeaning~

The familiar sound of him clearing his throat made her glance up in surprise. She realised he'd paused at the door. "Was there something else, sir?" she snapped crossly. "Maybe I could whip up some pudding too?"

His mouth opened automatically to dock points from Gryffindor, but then he remembered those days were over. She wasn't his student. The thought made a change shift across his face. Hmm. He crossed his arms over his chest and drawled, "If you really want. But it's the eggnog I'm interested in. That... and what you'll wear."

"What I'll – *what?*"

He leant casually against the doorway. "There's not much point in eggnog – even the Snape family's special breed – if you have to drink it alone, is there, Miss Granger?"

She opened her mouth – shut it again – licked her bottom lip – and finally managed, "You're asking me to drink it with you?"

"I'm asking you to Christmas Dinner."

"Oh."

"Oh' indeed. Well, what's your answer?"

Christmas Dinner. Eggnog. Severus Snape. *Really?*

"Okay."

"Please, Miss Granger, don't be too enthusiastic."

She smiled at him. "I mean I'd love to."

"Well. That's that organized."

She asked after the hour and he told her.

She held the parchment awkwardly in her hands and thought about his earlier comment. "What – what should I wear?" she inquired tentatively.

"How should I know, Hermione? Whatever you usually wear when a wizard invites you to dinner."

She felt her heart flutter stupidly at her name on his lips.

"Hmm," he muttered gruffly, surveying the reaction on her face. "Just don't forget the eggnog."

"Well, *obviously!*"

Severus Snape let a small smile spin its way onto his face at her words, and then he left her to her work...

Part Two

Chapter 2 of 5

Hermione has arrived for dinner with Severus, doubtful about the clothes she chose to wear...

Hermione stood at the door, tray balanced carefully in her hands. She glanced down at herself for the umpteenth time. Not that she needed to anymore. She'd held herself hostage in the mirror for so many hours that afternoon that she knew her image by heart.

It was the dress that bothered her.

Her mother had bought it for her when they'd been together in London last, smiling mischievously while Hermione had shifted her potions supplies from one arm to another and looked doubtful.

The dress was probably too much.

"Gryffindor guts," she muttered briskly – then knocked and entered.

Oh, damn. The dress *was* too much.

His face, as he glanced up from where he sat in a chair by his fireplace – his face, as he put his book aside gently and rose to his feet in silence. Oh, Merlin's godmother, she'd never seen his eyes so dark.

She should have stuck to a set of robes. She hadn't wanted that kind of reaction.

Had she?

"I see you managed to remember the eggnog," he observed dryly when he'd regained his composure and came to take the tray.

"Of course," she said, and passed it into his hands.

He stood there.

Oh, this is *preposterous!* She smiled brightly. "It's a bit much, I know, but there're so few opportunities around here to dress up and Christmas is a good excuse for a little indulgence."

"My sentiment entirely," he murmured then, with a quirk of his lips, added, "It's surprisingly...*green*."

She rolled her eyes. "Blame my mother. She was devastated when I explained that I couldn't wear green at school. Inter-house politics..."

He raised his brows. "You remain a Gryffindor."

"I'm a Gryffindor having dinner with the Slytherin Head of House, Professor. I think I can wear green."

"Severus," he said, and placed the tray on the table. "I'm not being professed all evening with you dressed like that."

She blushed.

He inspected the drink and she watched like a First Year waiting for grades. He poured eggnog into two goblets with opaque snakes curled up the stems. Hermione had never seen eggnog in such fine vessels. Back home it mostly ended up in mugs because Auntie Martha made it – *abominably* – so they drank it after Granddad Granger's port – and by then no-one cared how their drinks *looked*.

Clearly, this would be a very different Christmas...

A/N: The line about being 'held hostage in the mirror' comes from the song "Barcelona" by Jewel ("loving someone else is always so much easier / but I hold myself hostage in the mirror").

Part Three

Chapter 3 of 5

Severus evaluates the eggnog that Hermione made and then... they drink it...

He drank. The movement of the liquid had spiced the air with rum and nutmeg. He licked his upper lip. The chamber had fallen oddly silent. Hermione could hear the fire pop and murmur to itself. Then the crisp little *clink* of the crystal goblet being set back down onto the silver tray.

She raised her gaze from his mouth to his eyes and waited for the evaluation.

"Fifty points to Gryffindor," he murmured and passed her the second goblet.

She smiled warmly. "If only that worked."

"I'm rather glad it doesn't," he admitted, then raised his cup. "To Christmas?"

She wasn't sure what it was but, somewhere inside her a shift had occurred. Maybe long ago, but only now did she sense it. Maybe it was the eggnog – maybe it was the warm glow of the firelight and the expectant silence – maybe it was his look when she'd entered the room – or maybe it was simply the sight of Severus Snape suggesting a toast to Christmas.

She raised her own glass.

No, a toast to Christmas was too – too Auntie Martha and Granddad Granger. It reminded her too much of microwave-safe mugs and cheap port.

She moved her glass towards his.

"To embracing the unknown," she offered up with a curious ghosted half-smile.

Dark eyes blinked as Severus looked at the witch seated opposite him as if he were seeing her for the first time. A dozen snide responses rose automatically to his tongue, but he paused to analyse them, then let them drop. There was something about her tonight that seemed to have stolen his sense. He wasn't sure he liked it.

He suspected he'd already left it too late to realise that.

"To embracing the unknown," he agreed slowly.

Their goblets chimed together.

They drank.

They sat and they drank and they talked.

Most of all they talked.

Talked, and all the words in the world seemed to find their way into that chamber amongst the milk and the rum and the crackling fire; they wound their way into a web of sinuous ideas stretched between them.

It wasn't that they hadn't talked before. Of course they had. How often they'd spoken... But there's the exchange of syllables in a logical progression – and then there's communication.

Beyond that, there's the poetry of two minds dancing.

They didn't even notice when the house-elf appeared.

Part Four

Chapter 4 of 5

A slight interval to the evening, from the POV of a Hogwarts' Kitchen house-elf...

The house-elf gazed wide-eyed from the Potions master to his apprentice and wrung her hands in consternation. Oh, Minty knew how angry Professor could get, did Minty, and now he looked so *happy* and if Minty were to be disturbing him... On the other hand, Professor had asked for dinner, yes, to be punctual when he called, but that time was past. She'd kept it hot but – oh, what to do, what to do?

"Professor?" she squeaked in a timorous voice. "Your dinner is waiting, Professor Snape, sir, and Minty is wondering, sir, if sir would like it brought now?"

Wizard and witch fell silent and Minty was pretty sure she could feel the floor moving away beneath her. They was going to be angry, oh Minty knew it, she ~~new~~ knew it. "It – it's in the kitchen, sir," she added with a wobble and a curtsy, hoping it might help.

Then the wizard did something completely unexpected. He leant back in his chair and stretched slowly, the movement of his empty goblet in his hand spilling prisms of rainbow gold across the witch's face as it caught the fire's flames. And he turned his face to Minty and... *he was smiling*.

"Of course," he replied lightly. "Bring it straight up."

Minty nodded repeatedly but remained standing mutely, rooted to the spot.

The Professor narrowed his eyes slightly and cleared his throat. "Well? Is there something the matter?"

The house-elf shook herself rapidly. "No, sir, no, sir, is just—" she paused and glanced at Miss Hermione, who had twinkles in her eyes. "Minty is just overjoyed, sir, overjoyed, to see sir happy." And then with an unusually loud *pop!* she disappeared.

Severus was dumbfounded. "Well, of all the inexplicable things..."

Hermione frowned. "I think we made her cry."

Minty stood in the kitchen, great big dolloping tears dropping off her chin. The other house-elves clustered around her in a noisy little crowd, all trying to offer her comfort and find out the cause of her distress at the same time. "Professor—" she managed in between sobs and snuffles and blowing her nose loudly on a napkin. "Professor Snape—"

"Professor Snape being mean to Minty again?" demanded Dobby loudly. "And Harry Potter's friend Miss Hermione isn't saying anything in Minty's defense?"

"Oh *no!*" wailed Minty. "She be making him *glad-looking!*" The house-elf hiccupped loudly, grabbed their dinner, and vanished again.

Part Five

Chapter 5 of 5

Finally, Severus and Hermione get their dinner... (4x100)

The rich perfumes of Christmas dinner surrounded them.

It hadn't taken long to decide they would rather eat where they sat than move to the cold formality of the dining table. They'd placed the trays that Minty had brought them before the fireplace, and with their plates rested on their knees and the silver cutlery gleaming in the light, Hermione couldn't help but feel like she was back at a Gryffindor feast.

She said as much, and he laughed that deep laugh she'd discovered with the eggnog. Except that she'd made it herself, she'd have started to question its ingredients...

"Does it make me a snob?" she asked and chased the remaining peas in gravy around her plate and onto a fork.

He glanced at her and raised his brows, amused. "What, that an intelligent witch like you got bored with Weasley's limited thought patterns? Hardly."

She tried to appear disapproving but only succeeded in spilling the peas. They landed in the folds of her dress, and she sighed and rolled her eyes. "Now see what you've made me do."

He set aside his empty plate and then removed hers from her lap before muttering dryly, "Quick with the blame, aren't you?"

He took her skirt in his fingers, directed his wand at the fallen food and murmured, *Evanesco*."

"I could have done that."

He nodded. "I know, but sometimes you should let people help." He didn't move back, just put his wand to one side and sat there, the silken stuff of her dress playing absently through his slender fingers.

She laughed and observed tartly, "Well, that's the pot calling the kettle black, Severus."

He raised his darkly hooded eyes to hers. "What if I said... a wizard likes to feel he can do something for a witch he finds appealing?"

Hermione leant towards him and tasted his breath against her skin, warm and savoury from the roast. "Are you drunk, Severus Snape?"

"It takes more than a little eggnog to get me drunk, Hermione."

"Good," she whispered, "else I'd have to pretend I didn't just hear that."

He reached up, slid his hands amongst her hair – and kissed her. The firelight swayed over them hotly when he pulled back, watching her watching him with those clear, brown eyes of hers.

"You said you weren't drunk," she managed, her insides trembling.

"I'm not. But that doesn't mean I'm not intoxicated..."

The End

Thank you so much to all the beautiful reviewers!