

Do Not Enter: Off Limits to Students

by dracontia

The best way to get a child to do something is to tell them not to do it. Albus and Scorpius are living proof. Fortunately, God—or one of his agents—looks out for fools and children. And foolish children...

Episode 1, The Al & Scorp Show

Chapter 1 of 1

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(First in a continuing series about Albus Severus and Scorpius.)

Disclaimer: I own none of these characters and haven't anything remotely like permission to use them. Amuse yourself (as I do) at your own risk.

Damn. What idiot put up that 'Do Not Enter' sign?

It's like smearing this place in catnip for students.

The door to the Shrieking Shack creaked open.

"We made it!" The boy speaking practically hugged a bag of chocolate frogs to his chest in triumph. He was a little fellow, looking rather more like a stray second year than a thirteen-year-old who was perfectly entitled to go out on a Hogsmeade weekend.

"Was there any doubt, Al?" The second boy, just as slight in build, but as fair as his companion was dark, made a good imitation of a swagger as he pushed through the door. Several bottles of butterbeer were hanging precariously from the circle of his fist, and he glanced around the room in search of a place to set them down.

"I know it's an effort, but do try to stop being a git, Scorp."

'Scorp' responded by punching Al lightly on the shoulder and almost dropping the bottles. Al took one before it could hit the floor and passed the bag of frogs. "You're thinking of your brother, who is the actual git, for telling us that there was 'something' here that scares everyone away."

"Ha. Some days, no amount of effort will stop James from being a git." Al stared oddly at the butterbeer bottle he'd just opened. He could've sworn that it had made a snorting sound as the cap came off. "And I think there **is** something here. At least, I thought I felt a weird cold sensation as we were walking up. It stopped short, though, when I looked up at the house."

"Of course. Your dad was having us on when he said that story about this place being haunted was just a cover." Scorp's gray eyes were full of laughter, at odds with the seriousness of his tone. "Gee, Al... could you possibly have felt cold, oh, I dunno, because it's October?"

Al shot Scorpius a dry glare with no real bite to it and kicked at a dusty sofa, wondering if it was fit to sit on. "Scorpius, were you born annoying or do you take potions and practice?"

They jostled each other playfully while still managing to scoff Chocolate Frogs. It went well enough, until Scorpius spilled almost half of Al's butterbeer, to which Al responded by shoving a chocolate frog down the back of Scorpius' shirt.

"EEEEH! Al, you arse!"

Laughing hysterically, Al managed to keep pace with his friend's mad gyrations long enough to help him pull his shirt from his trousers and release the wayward confection. Giggling and shoving each other, full of dust and chocolate smudges, they looked even younger.

Eventually Al decided that he'd reached his limits of sugar saturation. "C'mon, let's explore the house."

"Okay. But you need to stop talking like that...my father won't let you come over if he thinks I'm picking up common vocabulary from you."

"This from the guy who just said, 'dunno'..."

"Prat."

"Takes one to know one."

Their good-natured bickering continued all the way up the rickety stairs and through their exploration of the handful of rooms there. The cold intensified, if anything, in the upper part of the house. Al had the uncomfortable idea that every crack in the walls was staring at them disapprovingly.

"What's in that one?"

"Just a seriously ranky bed. Phew! Smells worse than your Quidditch gear after practice. How about on your side?"

"This one's as empty as your skull."

"You're a regular comedian, you are."

Additional doors led to disappointingly empty rooms. Finally, they came to one which wouldn't budge. This one they naturally assumed to be hiding something worth looking at.

"You need to learn some unlocking spells," Scorpius insisted.

"Learn them yourself," Al said crossly. In point of fact, they were both pants at that sort of thing. It was a particularly sore spot for Al, who grew up with what he privately thought of as 'Your Aunt Hermione' stories.

"Who locks doors in an empty house, anyway?"

Al kicked lightly at the bottom of the door, inspecting it for weaknesses. "This wood is pretty sorry."

Scorpius' eyes lit dangerously. "I bet one good blast would do it in. I saw Father casting *Reducto* once..."

"Uh... you might not want to try that, Scorp."

"What are you on about?"

"Look through this crack."

"Oh."

"Yeah."

"That's... a long way down without a broom."

"Doesn't seem so stupid to have the door locked anymore, does it?"

"Shut up."

"Let's go back downstairs. It's FREEZING up here!" They clattered back down and contemplated the sofa.

"Get rid of the dust, Al."

"Scorpius, you look like you were dragged backwards through a disused Floo connection. I don't think a little more dust will matter." So saying, he sat on the piece of furniture in question.

"You were saying?" Scorpius coughed in the resulting dust cloud.

"Oh, sit down, wanker."

Scorpius did so, only to jump up onto the back of the sofa with something very much like a shriek. "WHAT WAS THAT?"

"What?" Al pulled his feet up, wand drawn.

"*Incendio!*" Scorpius definitely shrieked that time. A ball of flame jerked madly across the room, setting fire to dusty rugs as it went.

"You idiot! You're going to burn the place down...for a spider!"

"It was a HUGE spider!"

"*REDUCTO!*" Al yelled frantically. Then they both screamed as fiery glop exploded everywhere.

"What's the spell that makes water?" Scorpius dumped the dregs of a butterbeer on the nearest flames, cursing when it seemed to have little effect.

"I forgot!" Al stomped on a burning patch of rug before dashing to the next one, all the while eyeing the flames that were licking alarmingly at the ripped wallpaper.

"God, you could piss on it and get a better result," Scorpius said, futilely emulating Al's efforts. He looked rather as if he were desperate enough to try it.

"You could spit on it and get a better result," Al retorted anxiously, still stomping.

Suddenly, the room was filled with a blast of icy wind. It seemed to almost gather the stray flames into a pile and crush them, leaving the room swirling with soot. It eventually subsided with something oddly like a huff of irritation.

They edged together in the middle of the room, leaning on each other shakily and contemplating the scorched floor.

"Well... it... sorta looks better than that creepy stain did."

"Good thing that cold wind blew it out, instead of making it worse."

"I don't think that was wind... I'm telling you, there's a ghost here."

"And I told you, your dad was probably right. There aren't any ghosts here."

"Not 'ghosts'...just one," Al muttered, but didn't force the issue.

At some point, they remembered to put their wands away. Al glanced out one of the holes in a pane of crazed and filthy glass.

"It's getting late."

Scorpius almost visibly brightened at Al's words. "Then we'd better go back. This time, let's use the tunnel I saw on the map. I don't fancy walking outdoors in this cold. I'm already shivering."

This, too, Albus diplomatically declined to take issue with. He wasn't keen on fighting the icy air all the way back to the castle. And if Scorpius was still more shaken than he was willing to let on, that was fine, too.

They located the hidden door with the help of Al's map of Hogwarts, Hogsmeade, and Selected Portions of the Forbidden Forest. It remained one of the most useful Christmas presents ever from Uncle George (and that was saying something, considering that Uncle George was rather infamous for giving gifts that young boys deemed imminently practical.)

Albus peered through the trap door one last time before following his friend. "G'night, Ghost," he whispered. "Thanks."

They held hands during the long walk back, the warmth comforting against the darkness of the tunnel. It was a habit neither of them was entirely conscious of; somehow, one always sought the other's hand when they were confronted with darkness, or cold, or the lonely unknown. It came naturally to two children who were so adored and protected that their parents never allowed them out in public without one hand securely anchored to a loving family member.

The map indicated that adults were wandering the grounds. They paused in the deceptively quiet arch of roots under the Whomping Willow, hoping the coast would be clear soon. Neither of them fancied answering questions about how they knew the secret of stilling the tree...or what they were doing under it in the first place.

"Your Uncle George is cool. Weird, but cool."

"Yeah."

They waited and watched the map, thinking of Uncle George and his habit of leaving sentences unfinished.

"I guess it would be hard..."

"Losing someone you're that close to?"

"Yeah."

The boys involuntarily squeezed each other's hands a bit more tightly before letting go.

"All clear."

"Good, I'm starved. Think there'll be ham and chicken pie for dinner?"

"Utterly helpless," he muttered. "They may as well send them to school while they're still in nappies."

A pair of eyes, black as in life in an otherwise silver face, peered piercingly at the two boys as they finally trotted off across the grounds together. Their owner pinched the bridge of his incorporeal though not insubstantial nose in exasperation once the lads were out of sight, a little postern door closing behind them and shutting them into the relative safety of Hogwarts castle.

"Goodnight and good riddance... insufferable little dunderheads."

FIN

Although I owe very nearly every fic to my wonderful beta, Tempest of Dreams, this one is specially dedicated to her. Since it would be tacky to ask her to beta her own prezzie, peppermint kindly stepped in to achieve order amidst the punctuational and verbal chaos.