

Blackmail

by chivalric

Easter Sunday comes up windy and cold. Still, there is no lack of bunnies, and a high chance of Easter Eggs for Severus Snape.

One-shot Story

Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's Note: This is the sequel to 'More Christmas Cookies' and 'Hopping Chocolate Frogs', taking up events about two months after Valentine's Day. I wrote the story for CharmedForce and FruGal, as they both required Easter Bunnies in their last reviews. Well, my dears, that happens if you toss ideas at me I use them.

And many, many thanks to the same CharmedForce for beta reading!

It wasn't the most pleasant Easter Sunday in the history of Easter Sundays, as it was too cold, too cloudy, and far too windy. At least it wasn't raining yet; there was even the faint promise of sun for the afternoon.

But it was still early morning, and the wind rattled the window panes. Luckily, inside the small house at Spinner's End it was pleasantly warm and peaceful. No noise, no students, no annoying friends, only a purring cat sleeping at the end of the bed.

It was sheer happiness in the eyes of Hermione Granger. And as an extra bonus, she had woken up about half an hour ago in the arms of her former Potions master, Severus Snape, only to find him staring at her passionately.

"Good morning," he had growled, his hand whispering over her sleep-warm skin.

Now, that was always a very good start to any day of the week. Hermione could never resist those black eyes, and the mock humour quirking his thin lips unfailingly caused her stomach to feel as if it were filled with a billion butterflies. His hands were irresistible, especially when stroking her so possessively obviously, she hadn't resisted when he had started kissing her.

Yes, she mused now, afterwards. *I positively adore waking up with the man I forced to eat a Christmas Cookie some four months ago.*

Lazily, Hermione stretched and pushed the blanket to the end of the bed, carefully avoiding annoying Crookshanks. It was nice and warm in the small bedroom under the roof, and from the bathroom, she could hear the running water and a bit of humming as well. They had just made love, long and slow and very satisfying. Hermione smiled any moment now, Severus would start whistling a soft, joyful tune.

Ah, there it was. He was happy what more did she want?

For a brief moment she considered joining him in the shower, then decided against it; although she could surely do with a second helping, she had other things to do.

Hermione leapt out of bed, got dressed hastily, made the bed, stroked Crookshanks until he purred and rushed out of the room downstairs into the kitchen before Severus was out of the bathroom.

"Beloved, have you seen my wand?" Severus's voice was more than concerned a wizard always, under any circumstances, knew where his wand was. He could find the thing blind, he could summon it when mute, and he could get to it through ice and storm.

Therefore, it was highly understandable that the Potions master was nothing less than close to a panic: he had stepped out of the shower into a completely empty, wand-less bedroom. Getting dressed and storming downstairs had been a matter of seconds.

There he stood, towering over her, demanding, scary, with a terrible scowl.

"Hmmm?" Hermione murmured and looked up at him from behind the newspaper. Her big brown eyes were far too innocent to be true. "Your wand? Oh, yes. It's in the garden."

Severus, being dressed not in his usual black but in soft grey trousers and a lighter grey jumper, sat slowly on a chair at the kitchen table and stared disbelieving at the witch who had moved into his house a few weeks ago. The witch who insisted that he come home from Hogwarts at least every other night so they could have dinner together, or talk, or go for a walk. The witch who slept closely snuggled up to him whenever possible, who was willing to wake up with him and endured his sour moods, his snappy remarks, his silence, and even his sarcasm.

And the witch who now smiled at him so sweetly that Severus knew that it would really become a very bad, bad Sunday. "You took my wand... and buried it in the garden?" he asked, just to make sure he didn't misunderstand her. Briefly, he wondered for the hundredth time why on earth he allowed her to stay in his house and his bed. And in his heart.

Ah, yes. Because he loved her.

Bugger.

Indignantly, Hermione put her cup down and looked at him. "I didn't *bury* it," she clarified. "I put it into an Easter Egg and hid the Easter Egg in the garden. You will have to search for it. It's Easter Sunday; you are supposed to hide eggs for your loved ones so they can have fun looking for them. That is precisely what I did making sure that you have some fun. Of course I knew you'd need a certain persuasion. I suppose finding your wand is motivation enough?"

Snape clenched his fists so his hands would stop trembling. He, looking for Easter Eggs? "This is a game for children," he bit out through gritted teeth. "I am not a child. Give me back my wand!"

She lightly replied, "Just go and find it, love. And by the way it is wrapped in a spell that prevents you from Accio-ing it, with you being so skilled in wandless magic. Just in case you thought of cheating." She didn't smile, but grinned largely as she picked up the newspaper again and continued to read.

After a while, Snape's jaws closed with a small plop, and he went out into the garden. He didn't have a choice really.

The ground was wet, even muddy in places. Snape's trousers, clean only a minute ago, got dirty in no time. On top of it, the wind had picked up a pace and was blowing its cold breath down the Potions master's neck. It was highly uncomfortable, especially because he shouldn't be out here at all but inside, in the kitchen, having breakfast. Instead, he was looking he growled at the sheer ridiculousness of the thought for *Easter Eggs!*

And his wand, of course. And he so much hated to be on all fours in his own backyard to find something that had belonged to him since he was eleven years old. But naturally, he was extremely fond of his wand; every wizard and every witch was, and so Severus Snape ignored the wind and the mud in order to find it.

She's stolen my wand, his mind thundered, somewhat dumbstruck at the thought and whilst crawling under a bush in the hope it might be there *She has taken it and hidden it in the garden. She's mad. I'm mad, tolerating it. She's stolen MY WAND!* His wand, which he had managed not to lose whatever the circumstances be it Potter and Black mistreating him, Dumbledore annoying him into the most dangerous tasks, the Dark Lord requiring service or, if in the right mood, torturing him; he had kept it even when the damn children were blowing up their cauldrons in classes.

His wand, which always stayed inches away from his fingers, was now hidden in an egg.

Impossible. But then, maybe it would be in that mouse hole over there? No. Damn.

A witch, a mere *girl* really, came and took his wand from him whilst he had been in the bathroom! "No more showers," Snape hissed and crawled along, then dug his hands deep into a pile of grass, hoping to finally find his damn wand. He had been out here for at least half an hour already, and his fingers were freezing. "No more sleep. And just in case no food." Good point food had always been a bad idea with this woman. Actually, if only he had quit food around Christmas, he certainly wouldn't be in this impossible, embarrassing situation right now.

Hmmm. But possibly he wouldn't have had the most incredible sex life ever since... ever... at all, actually. Had he even had a sex life before Hermione?

Come to think of it no. No sex life, which had been bearable, but no love in his life, either. There had been nothing but lonely bitterness, and this fact had been crushing him slowly but surely.

Hermione, *his* Hermione, had ended it, had ended the lonely nights and days, had banished the demons that had whispered into his ear that he would die unloved. She had danced into his life, had claimed him as hers, and had broken his walls with a smile. And a cookie.

He loved her beyond measure. And he would break her neck as soon as he had found his damn ~~bloody~~ wand!

Sitting back on his heels, Snape wiped a loose strand of hair out of his face. He had been cursing constantly since he had got out in the garden ~~How can I curse and grin like a madman at the same time?~~ he wondered, taking a deep breath to steady his shaky nerves. *It can't be possibly because I enjoy this nonsense? Certainly not!*

But then, he had never searched for Easter Eggs before, not even when he was a child. Doing so now, as an adult, might be ridiculous, but still...

Silently, a fluffy, brown rabbit the size of a tennis ball hopped along, sniffed at the man dressed in black and covered in grass and mud, twitched its long ears and placed an egg in front of the man's left knee. Then it hopped along without a backward glance.

Snape just stared, mouth agape, not believing his eyes. There were no rabbits in his garden. Pixies, yes. A ghost or two, and a smaller dragon. But a rabbit? An egg-delivering rabbit? No way. No blasted way!

But there hopped the bunny, there was the egg looking innocent and painted in a bright red. It had stripes, too, the egg. For some reason, it reminded Snape of a beard-swinging monkey.

Suddenly, he could feel his lips twitch and laughter rumble in his chest. The situation was most absurd he, Hogwarts' famous, forbidding, dangerous, nasty Potions master,

had been forced to search eggs by a witch half his age! How dare she!

Grinning widely, Snape took the egg and stored it into a bag he had wisely brought outside, knowing that, if his love was determined to do something, she would do it properly there would be loads of eggs for him to find. And possibly loads of bunnies delivering the eggs as well.

Ah, well. What the heck. If she wanted him to search Easter Eggs, so be it.

He fished a leather throng out of his trouser pocket and bound his hair back so he would have a better view. He had a certain feeling that some eggs might not be easy to find.

And right he was. That infernal little witch had hidden Easter Eggs absolutely everywhere, and by the time Snape's bag was full, he had seen about ten different bunnies as well. Some had been tiny, some had been as big as normal sized rabbits, and a few had carried baskets on their backs. All had left an egg. One had bitten Snape. And none had delivered his wand.

Around lunch time, Snape gave up. His stomach was demanding food, he had enough eggs for a lifetime, and he was soaked from head to toes as it had, naturally, started to rain. He also had decided to strangle Hermione before breaking her neck if she dared to continue this little joke.

Picking up the bag, Snape stormed inside only to find his love comfortably sitting in front of the fireplace, enjoying a mug of hot cocoa. She looked innocent. Still.

"Goodness, Severus, you've been out there for hours! If I had known that it means this much to you, searching for Easter Eggs, I would have hidden some more," she said and could barely suppress a giggle at his sight. "Although it seems that the weather could have been a bit better, by the looks of you. You will need another shower. And fresh clothes."

Snape dropped the bag and growled, "No egg I have found and fought for! is big enough to contain a wand. And there were bunnies out there. One bit my finger when I tried to get the egg it was holding!"

Hermione's hand flew to her mouth, covering it, trying to hold back the bubbles of laughter threatening to flee her. Instantly, her eyes filled with tears as well happily, they ran down her flushed cheeks, disturbed only by her shaking shoulders. Soft snorts indicated that she was highly amused. "You... got bitten... by the Easter Bunny?" she finally managed, staring disbelieving at the man standing dripping on the rug and holding out his still bleeding finger.

He snatched his hand back and managed to keep his patience, but barely. "Not *the* Easter Bunny," he growled. "*One* Easter Bunny. There are about a million of them out there. They were chasing me." Gracefully, Snape wiped his sleeve over his face and thus spread rain and dirt over the last few clean parts on cheeks and forehead. "I have suffered enough for one day. So. Where is my wand?"

Gingerly, Hermione waggled her fingers and picked the long, black wand out of thin air, placing it right in front of Severus.

"Not in the garden, not in an Easter Egg. You were lying," he observed, not surprised at all. But he stored his wand away with haste so the still-grinning witch couldn't hide it again. "Tell me, beloved why did you make me crawl through the mud?"

"Do I need a reason?" she replied and summoned a second mug of hot cocoa for Severus. It was topped with a generous helping of whipped cream. "Maybe I just thought it would give you some... benefit to chase eggs. And rabbits."

Severus wrapped his cold, dirty fingers round the mug and took a deep sip. The sweetness soothed him, but only a bit. There was something going on behind Hermione's beautiful façade, and he was immensely curious about what this something might be. Of course it was out of question to just ask she wouldn't tell him, and he wouldn't sink so low as to actually reveal his curiosity. Therefore, he looked at her sternly one last time, cast a silent charm to dry his clothes, picked up the newspaper and began to read.

Just a little while later he heard her placing something on the table. And again. It sounded as if she was laying out a deck of cards, a silly assumption in itself as she didn't play cards.

Another minute and he heard her snorting with suppressed laughter again. *What is it this time?* he mused and lowered the paper. *More bunnies? More eggs? More mischief?*

Hmm, no. Just a few pictures.

Obviously taken in his garden.

Showing Easter Eggs and grass; even a bunny now and then.

And him. On his knees. Searching behind trees and in the grass for eggs. Bright and colourful eggs. Here, he was stretching as high as possible to get one out of a bird's nest. There, the bird was attacking him. And in this one, he was eye to eye with a fluffy brown bunny, looking at it with such rage like the bunny was nothing less than a Death Eater.

One picture showed him with an egg in each hand. Behind him, seated in a neat half circle, were eleven little bunnies. They seemed to grin widely. One was just taking a hop to place another egg between Snape's ankles.

The newspaper sunk forgotten to the floor. Snape, master of self-control, was pale like freshly fallen snow, and when he saw the picture in which a bunny was biting his outstretched finger, he started to tremble uncontrollably. If anyone ever saw as much as one of those photographs, his reputation of being bad, nasty, ruthless, cruel and dangerous would be ruined forever.

The respect, now shown to him automatically? Gone.

The peace and quietness in his classrooms? Gone.

The fear he was able to cause by a mere look? Past.

They would laugh his students, his colleagues, his few friends, strangers on the street, everyone would just laugh.

Snape slowly lifted his head and stared at the devil, the dragon, the monster disguised as a relatively harmless looking young woman. "What do you want from me?" he whispered and gulped heavily. "What do you want for destroying those pictures? I will pay any price you name!"

Contentedly, Hermione settled back in her chair and fondly picked up one of the pictures she had made earlier on. Severus had been far too busy with bunnies and eggs to take in his surroundings, and she had, of course, borrowed Harry's Invisibility Cloak, thus being able to get as close to the dark wizard as possible.

Smiling, she let her eyes wander over the photography. Severus was sitting in the grass, leaning against one of the ancient trees, legs stretched out in front of him and eyes closed. On his lap sat a rabbit. He was stroking it absently, an exhausted smile on his lips. It was utterly cute, that picture. It would be his downfall, were ever a student to lay hands on this proof that the feared Potions master was truly, really and entirely human.

"I won't sell them to you," Hermione said earnestly. "For no price in the world. Actually, there is absolutely no legal way for you to get those pictures. By all means, I could

give them to the *Daily Prophet*, and you could do nothing about it."

Snape considered either murdering her or immigrating to a quiet little cell at Azkaban, but then felt too close to fainting to do anything else but just wait for her to deliver the killing stroke. He was certain she wouldn't need too long at least, she was too impatient to play seek and hide for too long.

Carefully collecting the pictures and putting them together, Hermione continued, "Well, maybe there is one *legal* way... For example, if you were related to me, you could just order me to hand the pictures over..."

Snape narrowed his eyes. "What are you talking about, witch? Only a husband could order his..."

Click.

With sparse, precise movements, Snape picked up the newspaper from the floor, folded it, and placed it on the kitchen table. Then, as if having an afterthought, he put his hands on top of it, folded as well. His voice was nearly pleasant when he asked, "Are you proposing to me?"

She looked thunderstruck. "No! Of course not I am merely blackmailing you into proposing to me. That is quite a difference, wouldn't you agree?"

"You want me to marry you?"

Hermione closed her eyes for a moment, thought it through once more, and nodded. "And don't even think about asking me why I took extreme measures you wouldn't have even been able to confess to being in love with me if it hadn't been for a certain Christmas Cookie. If I had waited for you to propose on your own free will, we would have been old and grey and a lot closer to our graves than we are now."

Snape's lips curved into a thin smile. "I haven't asked you yet. What makes you so sure that *you* want to marry me?"

She tipped her head and considered his question. "The way you look at me when you say that you love me?" she mused. "The way you kiss me good night? The way you just hold me close sometime?"

Well, she certainly had a few points there.

Snape couldn't remain seated any longer. With a swift move, he was on his legs and round the table, grabbing that impossible witch by the shoulders and snatching her off the chair. "Do you know what happens to little witches who dare to threaten me?" he growled into her ear.

His voice gave her goose bumps all over her body. "As far as I remember, you either make them kiss other people, or you torture them until they scream," she murmured back. "I would prefer the latter, though."

Snape chuckled and picked her up. "Scream you shall then, little witch."

Already on the way upstairs, back to the bedroom, he heard her asking, "So, will you marry me, Severus?"

"Of course I will," he replied sternly and pressed her a little closer to his body. "In the end, you will have things your way anyway, so it makes sense to give in to you as early as possible to prevent further catastrophes."

She stirred a bit in his grip. "Just say you will marry me because you love me and not because I forced you to propose and I'm satisfied," she said airily, but Severus could easily hear the earnest subnote and smiled. Did she really fear he didn't want to marry her?

"First, you blackmail me, then you want me to say I don't mind?" he mocked. "Fine. I love you. More than anything and anyone. You know that. And those infernal pictures have nearly nothing to do with my... hmmm... *decision* to marry you. Nor the fact that even I, having survived twenty years of double crossing the Dark Lord, can't stand thinking of what you would have done next to make me comply."

He felt her sighing with relief when she heard the smile in his voice and the truth in his words he wanted her to be his wife. Good. Better than good. Perfect.

Then, putting her arms round his neck, she gently placed small kisses along his jaw line. "I was certain the bunnies would do the trick. But just in case you would have been too stubborn... there's Harry's birthday, the Yule ball at Hogwarts, there's Halloween..."

"Good gods," Severus Snape breathed in horror and was more than glad that asking Hermione for her hand had been on his agenda anyway. Sometime in the future. When he would have found the guts to do so.

I'm to be a married man, Severus Snape thought with a wide smile whilst dropping his future wife on their bed. *Certainly nothing I would have ever expected. Most certainly a wonderful prospect.*

All in all, this Easter Sunday hadn't turned out all that bad, not even if he took the bitten finger into count.

Warning: If any of my readers find it necessary to suggest another sequel, I will blackmail her into beta-reading the requested story. Ask CharmedForce: this is precisely what I have done to her!

Oh, and here is a link CharmedForce found for you. You will find bunnies there *g*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pazFYRHSL2M>