

The Petulant Poetess

by chivalric

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One-shot story

Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's Note: This is for notsosaintly and Southern_Witch_69, who run this site. And it is for each and every lovely, marvellous, wonderful admin at The Petulant Poetess. The work they put into each posted story (especially mine ;-)) is tremendous. Without them, my life would be less bright because no one would be able to read the stuff I write. What shall I say thanks, hugs, and kisses to all of you!

And as no author must ever forget her beta: My hug of the day goes to Angel Mischa. Thanks for once more correcting my missing commas, my failing gerunds, and my awkwardly shaped German sentences!

Hermione Granger was a bookbinder who, unsurprisingly, couldn't get enough of the written word, even in her sparse spare time. She dealt with books not really day and night, but a good part of her week and sometimes even at the weekends, when someone sent an owl telling her about a wild volume, a mad chapter, or an aggressive short story. Then she would set everything aside, including her husband, and would go to solve the case, to rescue the book, to tame the words.

She loved her job; she was extremely good; she was wanted. Whenever a library had a problem, they called on her first. Wizards and witches all over the world trusted her to come, see, and succeed. All her life she'd been devoted to books, and it hadn't changed a bit since she had left Hogwarts five years ago.

But although she was more or less covered with books from head to toe, it still wasn't enough. She craved for more; she craved for stories no one had ever read.

Then, one day, an elderly lady in Rome had pressed a parchment into her hand, had mumbled a few unintelligible words, and had pushed her out of the door. It had sounded like "Take it, read it, burn it," but Hermione could have been mistaken there.

Nevertheless, Hermione went home, rummaged through her bag, found the parchment, and read it.

It was a little story about a little witch who drank too much punch, and it was so funny Hermione laughed out loud, causing her husband to miss a counter-stir, which resulted in the destruction of the potion and thus, curly blond hair on her husband's head for one evening.

Immediately, Hermione thought of ways to get the story published and stumbled over an old issue of *Witch Weekly*, the only magazine that at least now and then printed something else but recipes and interviews with important members of the Ministry. Therefore a most logical step from her point of view she set off to persuade the editor into printing that story as well.

He did. Grumbling and moaning, but he did. And he hired Hermione Granger so she could find him more potentially worthy stuff, as she got round quite a bit and his readers would really enjoy the newest tips and tricks on how to cook polenta.

Grumbling, Hermione had accepted, keeping in mind that, if she gave Stewart the editor enough recipes he would print another *other* stories as well.

She brought him the desired recipes; she found him interview partners. He loved her; she hated him. Because, the more stories she received (triggered by the word the old Italian lady had spread that the bushy-haired witch managed to get things published), the less open David Stewart was for them. Rarely, he would print a story Hermione recommended. Mostly, he dumped them. Always, it was a fight, and usually, Hermione lost it.

She hated to lose. And yes, she absolutely despised the man. But *Witch Weekly* was the only magazine out there. Hermione's authors had no other hope but her. It was either get printed there or get printed nowhere, and therefore, she stayed with Stewart.

In the rest of her now dramatically reduced free time, Hermione read the stories that got owled to her, erased, reshaped, recommended, added and removed what was necessary to get the written words of those unknown authors in shape, owled the result back to them, got a reworked version, read it again and had to file it away because David Stewart, being as dull as a brush, didn't recognize a seller when it jumped right at his lap.

Pity. Real pity.

There were always the yet unknown stories waiting for Hermione when she came home. They piled high up on the table in her workroom under the roof. They called for her when she was away. They whispered at her when she was asleep. Sometimes, she woke in the middle of the night, feeling the urge to get up and finish a chapter or to look out if an owl had arrived with news from one of her favourite authors. She made comments; she added suggestions; she told an author that the story needed to be reworked; often, she didn't do more than suggest minor changes; rarely, she told the author that the story should be buried quietly in the back garden.

Her husband every now and then found his wife fast asleep at her desk, her arms embracing the parchments with all the stories no one apart from her would ever read.

Because Stewart, the dumbass, didn't like new stories. He liked recipes and interviews and big photos of nice children. He didn't like words. He didn't like the fact that there were witches out there who spent their time thinking about plots, wrote them down, posted them, and hoped he would print their rubbish. He knew of course that it bothered Hermione not to get her authors printed, but that really didn't bother him. Once or twice a year he became soft and followed her recommendations to keep her quiet. In the meantime, she did the corrections on the real articles. Which was all he wanted.

The days when Stewart refused to print one of her authors' stories were the days when Hermione was furious, angry, blazing with rage and impossible to be calmed. Those were the occasions when Hermione hated that damn editor who only printed everything Gilderoy Lockhart had written, no matter how ridiculously mad the man was.

"Lockhart's a seller," the editor would say, a young man with a lot of belly and not a single hair on his egg-shaped head. "Whereas your stories might be funny, or lovely, or even good but they are written by no-names, and I can't print them in my magazine."

"Why not?" Hermione would insist. "We could make them a name. We could make someone out there famous, and more: we could print a story our readers would love!"

"Nah," David Stewart would say whilst sadly shaking his head. "Bring me a new recipe to make pumpkin juice, or a way to loose a stone in less than a week, or a spell even a Squib could master, and we have a deal. Dump the stories; they're worthless."

And Hermione would go home, slam the door shut behind her, storm into her workroom to edit the latest chapter of "Groom of the Teenage Bride" only to having it filed away on her shelves until she found an editor who actually would have some brains in his skull. "Worthless," she then muttered under her breath. "The only one worthless out there is you, Stewart!"

The situation, to speak frankly, drove her mad. Gilderoy Lockhart, honestly! The man was still in the lunatic wing at St. Mungo's, but that idiot Stewart insisted in printing everything he came up with, no matter how stupid it was!

Just the other day, Stewart had given her a piece of parchment, telling her to polish it up a bit.

Hermione had taken it home, of course, hoping it might be at least worth a look. After dinner her husband had cooked, she had vanished into her workroom and had opened the scroll, curious to find who the author was and what the content of the parchment would be.

Only a moment later, she began to scream.

Severus Snape had run up the stairs with long strides to find out what had made his wife sound like a banshee. Gently, he had wrapped his arms round her shivering body; carefully he had wiped the tears of anger from her cheeks; with mild, soft words, he had led her out of the workroom and downstairs again into the living room. "What is it?" he now asked. "What's so awful?"

"Umbridge," Hermione answered, her voice still unsteady. "I am supposed to correct a story by Dolores Umbridge... featuring... a lost kitten!"

Her husband got up and poured her a large firewhiskey. His wife hated Umbridge, as every student did who had known the woman as Hogwarts' headmistress. But even more, Hermione hated stories about fluffy little furballs going lost in the big bad world only to be found by the nicest witch who had ever lived on earth. A lovely witch wearing pink robes.

No wonder she had screamed, Severus Snape thought and kissed his wife. Then he told her to lie down on the couch. Her head came to rest on his thigh, and she was sobbing about all the wonderful stories out there no one would print.

"I will quit," she stammered, kneading her husband's knee.

"You cannot quit; you cannot abandon the authors," her husband insisted, stroking her hair. "They need you; they love you; without you, there is no chance that they will ever get printed."

"I know," she wailed. "If only that imbecile Stewart would at least consider not to print Umbridge's rubbish and take that lovely one-shot I showed you last week. The one about that blond wizard who had a crush for his crooked-nosed, black-haired friend."

Soothingly, her husband said, "Stewart takes your advice, at least now and then."

"Not often enough!" she snapped and wiped her tears off. "You see, Severus, I love to read those stories. I put a lot of effort into them, I know I help those authors out there tremendously by pointing out mistakes and inconsistencies, but what do I get? Nothing! Stewart preferred to print an outdated article by Rita Skeeter the other week. Skeeter! He dumped he dumped! the last paragraph of "My Husband's Expecting" for it. The last paragraph! Now, his readers will never know if they have a boy or a girl and if the child's hair is as horrible as its father's! He mistreats those authors! He mistreats *me*! I hate him. I will kill him!"

With a swift move, Severus took the wand out of his wife's hand in order to prevent her from killing him instead of Stewart. She was a bit tipsy. No surprise after her third firewhisky.

Hermione flung herself at her husband's strong, powerful chest, hugged him tightly and moaned, "And what he has done with Miss Lariopé's story! He took it... and then... shortened it... crossed out half of it... AND changed the end! Changed it! She now marries the redhead, can you imagine that? She gets divorced and marries that dunderhead! Without asking the author! He has butchered that story, butchered it... but..."

That was the moment when exhaustion and a bit too much alcohol took over and caused Hermione falling asleep in her husband's caring arms. He took her upstairs into their bedroom, tucked her in, and wondered when she would finally see the most obvious way out of her dilemma.

Things escalated three weeks later, after Hermione had been away in Venice and Stewart had considered it a good idea to print an article about amateur writers, discarding them as weird, untalented, sorry prats who didn't know that there were much better things to do than writing stories no one was interested in reading.

Those so-called-authors should tend to their families instead, their work, their study, he had written. They should leave the art of writing to the professionals such as Gilderoy Lockhart, Dolores Umbridge, and Rita Skeeter, who really know what they are doing with pen and parchment!

Severus Snape had hidden that issue of *Witch Weekly* from his wife until she had had a shower, dinner, and a big mug of hot chocolate topped with whipped cream and chilli flakes. He even waited until they were both in bed, he surrounded by Potion books and she by parchments of various length.

"Look at that!" she beamed and handed him a tiny scroll, the text a poem, apparently written in neat handwriting. "It's from a German author, and isn't it cute?"

Severus took the parchment and read. Now and then, his lips twitched. Here and there, he raised an eyebrow.

"Oh, help, oh, disaster, it's the Potions master?" he quoted and looked at his wife, who grinned widely at him.

"I know, it's a bit cheeky she must have met you some time in the past. But isn't it lovely?"

"Hmmm," he growled, pretending to be offended. But Hermione could see the twinkle in his eyes.

"Well, it doesn't matter," she sighed, took the parchment from his hands, and tossed it to the floor. "Stewart wouldn't print it if I blackmailed him. So, no harm done. No one will ever read it apart from you and me."

That was the moment Severus fished for the newest issue under his pillow. Without a word, he held the magazine out to her. On the cover page, there was an overly large picture of the editor, right next to the headline *Worthless crap by nameless scribblers*.

Truly, it was amazing how loud his wife could get when really, really furious. And she hadn't even read the article yet. In wise premonition, Severus strengthened the Silencing Charm around their bedroom so she could go on screaming without disturbing the neighbours.

An hour and a lot of screaming, swearing, pacing, shred-the-magazine-to-pieces action, foot-stomping, and some more screaming later, she finally calmed down enough to get back to bed. Searching out her favourite position cradled in her husband's arm, her head leaning on his shoulder she murmured worriedly, "I wish there was a way to pay him back, that idiot. I wish I could show him that his opinion about those authors is crap. I wish... I wish..."

"Yes?" Severus said carefully, stroking with his warm hand along her back. He could feel her relax and knew it would only take another moment, not more than a second...

"You know, love, I really think I should edit my own magazine!" Hermione said, and her husband exhaled the breath he'd been holding. "What?" she asked when she heard him chuckle.

"It was about time that you reached this conclusion, my dear," he said, kissing her cheek. "I am quite surprised that you didn't come up with this obviously very brilliant idea earlier."

She wriggled herself out of his embrace, staring at him accusingly. "You... you already thought about this?"

Hermione was sitting a foot away from him and his chest, which was intolerable; so Severus pulled his wife closer again. He could feel her tremble, out of excitement, out of fury, and maybe because he was circling her belly-button with his fingertips. A second kiss followed the first one, and Severus added, "I knew you wouldn't be able to work for this imbecile much longer he truly is worse than Potter, to say the least. Your own magazine is a logical step. I am glad that you figured it out finally."

Leaning into his touch, she murmured, "I could print whatever I want and I already have heaps of readers my authors. They will be eager to read this magazine, and some of the readers will pick up writing, and I could ask Ginny to help editing the incoming stories, and we will become famous, and we will crush Stewart and his Weak Witch under our heels..."

"Hmmm," said Severus, opened her pyjama top, and placed a feathery kiss on the top of her breast. "Can we plan your success tomorrow, beloved?"

"Hmmm," said his wife and wrapped her arms round her husband's lean body.

The following week, Hermione Granger told David Stewart that she wouldn't work for him ever again. She told him as well that she was about to issue her own magazine, called *The Petulant Poetess*, and that most of his readers had already subscribed with her. She grinned at him menacingly when he started to call her names; she just crossed her arms over her chest when he looked close to exploding; and she turned on her heel when he began to beg. "You're nothing without me!" he screamed after her, but she just said over her shoulder, "No, Stewart, *you* are nothing without *me*!"

Naturally, the *Poetess* became a huge success. And each editor who worked for it was highly treasured, not only by Hermione Granger, but mostly by the authors, as the editors took the most personal care of each single story that was submitted. They treated their authors like friends and what more an author could wish for?

A/N: I sort of refer to several stories here, and as I consider them simply brilliant, here are the authors and the correct titles:

1. Rilla: It Has to Be the Punch
2. Dreamy_Dragon: Those Tangled Webs We Weave (and no, it's not a One-shot)
3. bluestocking79: What to Expect When Your Husband's Expecting
3. Lariope: Second Life
4. SamusAran: Bride of the Potions Professor

And a little bit of self-pimpage: The poem Severus quotes from is called "Strolling Through the Woods."