

The Best We Did

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One-shot Story

Chapter 1 of 1

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This is not mine. No money was made. Thanks to x and y who looked this through several times over.

The Best We Did

It is Michael's bedtime. He is tucked in with his stuffed centaur. His mummy has read him a story. It is his favorite time.

"Good night, darling," Mummy says.

"G'night." Michael always thinks that Mummy smells nice. He wishes Father could tuck him in too, but that only happens on special nights. On special nights, Father tucks him in and says, "Sleep well, Alexander." Father never calls him Michael the way Mummy does, but Michael doesn't mind; that's just Father's way.

Michael snuggles down to sleep. Maybe some day Father and Mummy will tuck him in together. He'd like that.

Hermione and Ginny are sharing tea in Hermione's study.

"What did you say?" Ginny is watching her friend carefully.

"That he's not getting Michael," Hermione replies.

"And Snape didn't take that well, I imagine."

"No."

"What did he say?"

"Oh, just the usual arguments: that I entrapped him, and since I made my bed, I had to sleep in it. This time he added that the courts would side with him over me." Hermione shrugs and sips her tea.

"So, you are going through with it?"

"Yes. Once the Wizengamot officially rescinds the law we're free of each other. But I get to keep my son."

The door to the bar slams.

"You are not going to believe what that bitch said this time!" He is in a rage, as usual.

"Drink?" Rosmerta asks.

"No, I come here for the ambience," Professor Snape sneers.

"Here," she shoves the shot glass at him. "Do you want to talk about it?" Because that's what Rosmerta does with all the other customers.

He glares.

Before the night is over, she will know. Five years before, when Fudge enacted the Law, and the professor found himself trapped by Miss Granger, Rosmerta learned more about him than Lily Evans ever had.

"The Wizengamot rescinded the Marriage Law, Severus," Hermione tells him over breakfast.

Severus grunts and sips his tea.

"So, I am to assume that you will be petitioning for divorce?" he asks.

"Is that what you'd like?"

"That depends." Severus looks at his wife of five years. The promise of the eighteen-year-old girl is fulfilled in the twenty-three-year-old woman. But there was never trust, and Severus will now be free.

And he will keep Alexander. His son is the only good to come from his five-year entrapment. He will take Alexander, leave Hogwarts, and they will finally be free.

"No! Alexander is mine!" Severus rages at his wife.

"*Michael* is not going anywhere, Severus." Hermione is maddeningly calm as she sits on her bed, watching her husband pace in front of her. It is Wednesday night, and Severus has just completed his conjugal chore.

"His name is Alexander."

"Michael."

"I decided when he was born that he should be Alexander."

"I was in no condition to disagree."

"And that is my fault?"

"Severus, I'm not having this argument with you again. Michael is three years old, and he needs his mum."

"You will not take my son," Severus snarls.

Hermione is thankful for silencing charms. Her arguments with Severus tend to be loud. She is spitefully glad it is not only she who yells.

Michael is still sleeping, undisturbed by his parents' unrest. Hermione smooths his blanket and tucks him in. No force is going to take him away from her. She carried him beneath her heart for nine months, she bore him in a welter of pain and blood, and he is hers.

Severus never wanted to marry her, she knows that now; but he did give her the means to bear her most precious achievement: her son.

In Diagon Alley, there stands a little boy. His hair is ebony, but it frizzes out from his head in unmanageable curls. He is eleven years old and knows exactly where he is going. His mum has put him in charge of purchasing his books for school. He does not see the tall man exiting Flourish and Blotts.

"I'm so sorry, sir," gasps Michael, picking himself up from the pavement.

"It is no matter, boy. Are you uninjured?" the tall man asks.

Michael notices that the man is pale, and his hair is dark, like his. Black eyes meet brown.

"Thank you for your help, sir; those Potter girls can be a handful sometimes." Michael grins wryly at his rescuer.

"It was nothing. They can be, as you said, a bit of a handful. They are like their father: finding trouble was in his nature," replies his companion.

"You know Uncle Harry?" Michael loves his Uncle Harry, but he thinks that his daughters are overwhelming.

"I did, lad, many years ago. His daughters remind me of him." Michael giggles; it is funny to think that Uncle Harry was ever like Molly and Lily.

"Mum and I are getting ice-cream. Would you like to join us?"

Hermione is running late, but Arthur needed to query the reports. She hopes that Michael has already settled himself into Florean's with his treat.

She rushes in and stops short as she sees two dark heads. One is bent over a banana split, the other over a cup of tea. Michael looks up and sees her first.

"Mum!" Michael's crooked smile greets her. His companion turns. Hermione sees his face quickly school itself to indifference. Eight years and she can still read him better than anyone. She steels herself, drawing a breath.

"Hello, Severus," she says. "This is a surprise."

"I may have been . . . hasty at our last meeting." Severus watches the woman carefully.

"Hasty is a start." Hermione smiles into her tea. Alexander makes inroads into his banana split with the enthusiasm of an eleven year old.

"He's a fine boy," Severus starts again.

"He has your coloring and your teeth."

"Will you . . ."

"Yes, when he's old enough. Dad is giving me a discount."

"I ensured that you would lack for nothing."

"I know. Dad is doing it because Michael's his grandson. He also has your intellect."

Severus is pleased. "He doesn't know."

"No. He asks, but he is patient." Hermione looks away.

"Will you have dinner with me?" Severus asks.

Hermione is startled. Seeing him is a blow to her gut; being asked out is simply odd.

"Why?"

"I'd like to hear about . . . Michael." Severus refuses to raise his eyes from the pavement. Michael has found the Weasley boys: Hugo is showing off his new wand. "He was the best thing that we did. I'd like to hear about the man he's becoming."

"You remembered his name."

"As I said before, I may have been hasty in some of the things I have said."

"Then yes, I will have dinner with you."

It is Michael's bedtime, and he is tucked in with his favorite stuffed centaur. He has read a story to Mr Severus, and Mummy kisses him good night. It is his favorite time.

"G'night, Mummy. G'night, Mr Sev'rus." Michael is very sleepy. Mr Severus pats his shoulder awkwardly.

"Good night, lad," Mr Severus says. He always pauses before he says "lad". Michael means to ask why, but he falls asleep before he can remember.

Michael knows that there will always be Mummy. But he is also glad that Mr Severus sometimes tucks him in. He likes that.

This is a response to Potter Place Challenge Prompt #110 : What happens when the Marriage Law is rescinded? What will the consequences be? What will life be like for Severus/Hermione?