

Just One Word

by noodle

Severus has given Hermione a single clue as to what he wants for his birthday. Can Hermione figure it out?

One-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N's

This all started because a certain wizard's birthday was coming up. Originally, it was written purely for entertainment and amusement. A seismic "Squeee" prompted me to post it in celebration of "Sevday".

Thank you, TeaOli, for the Squeee and a beta-clean.

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To say that Hermione Granger was utterly flummoxed would be the best way to describe her current plight. For nearly two weeks, she had racked her brains, referred to a great many dictionaries, ransacked her library, raided every other library within Apparating distance, and read an entire thesaurus.

"No sodding luck," she grumbled, taking a mouthful of tea and grimacing because it had gone stone cold. She glanced at the calendar. Two days to go until Severus' birthday. One-and-a-half, actually, to find the answer...

"Let's see," she said to herself, "I asked him what he would like for his birthday, and he said 'Just one word'." She got up and frowned despairingly. "What *word* is it? I'm pretty sure it's not Rumble-bloody-stiltskin. Is it really a word? 'I love you' is three words – and he knows that already. No, the 'word' must be a clue for a *thing*: and I can't work out what it is!"

The ninth day of January dawned peacefully enough – which did not reflect Hermione's emotional state at all. Close to tears, and not wanting to get out of bed and begin a special day with a failed mission, she watched her wizard return from the bathroom.

Clothed only in an aura of secretive mystery, he reinstated himself by her side.

Hermione wondered how he could turn such a simple act as getting into bed into one of predatory grace – with a tantalising touch of danger. And yet, there was something trying to hide behind his carefully neutral expression: something at odds with the easy confidence he usually displayed in her presence.

Easy confidence – and considerable pride in his physical prowess Hermione could not help thinking. *Entirely justifiable, too.*

With love, reassurance, and encouragement, Severus had, in a sense, discovered himself. Without the need for repression, his raw instincts had stirred, woken, and

merged with his habit for meticulous attention to detail – and he had never looked back. Neither had she.

He quirked an eyebrow as he looked at her. Expectation, trepidation, desire, hope, and *anxiety* showed openly in his steady gaze.

Hermione's soul ached. "Severus, I'm so sorry... I couldn't find out what—"

Saying nothing, he silenced her with a soft, almost boyishly shy, kiss.

With one hand, he groped under his pillow, the accelerated beat of his heart visible at the pulse-points in his neck. Drawing a breath, he handed her a small box covered in black velvet.

For a moment, Hermione was completely thrown. "But *I'm* supposed to give *you*—"

He placed a finger on her lips. "Just one word, Hermione," he whispered.

Oh... Is this what I think it is? Hermione's heart leapt as she held the small, velvet box in her hand. Wild ecstasy engulfed her as she opened it. Not only had Severus granted her dearest wish, she also knew which word he wanted to hear. *This* was what he wanted for his birthday!

"Just one word, then, Severus," she said, prompting him to place the ring on the third finger of her left hand. She did not need to hear him ask the question; it was there in his eyes, and there was only one answer she would give: "Yes!"