

The Importance of Listening

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This was originally written for the SeverusFest on LJ. Many thanks to Dragoon811 for her wonderful beta services. I hope everyone enjoys.

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The Importance of Listening

Severus lay against his wife, his hand resting on her hip as he pressed against her. He closed his eyes, but for some strange reason, he could not fall asleep. Instead, his thoughts were racing, and with a groan, he tried to clear his mind.

"Severus?" Hermione said sleepily, turning over to look at him. "What is it?"

"I can't sleep," Severus grumbled.

Hermione smiled and pressed a kiss to his large nose. "Yes, I can see that, but why not?"

"I'm not sure," Severus replied honestly. "I think I'll go check on the cats." He sat up and slid out of the bed and into his slippers. Winter was harsh in the dungeons at Hogwarts. The stone floor grew cold and hard, chilling any flesh that came into contact with it.

"I'll come with you," Hermione said, sitting up as well, sensing that something was on his mind.

"No," Severus said quickly. He kissed her. "Don't be absurd. You need your rest. You're teaching a class of idiot Gryffindors first thing in the morning."

Hermione smiled and lay back down, pulling the blankets up to her shoulders with a yawn. "If you're sure."

"I am," he reassured her.

Severus quietly walked to their sitting room, relieved to find both Crookshanks and his own idiot cat, aptly named Pus-for-Brains - or as Hermione called him, Puss, curled against each other on the sofa. He took a moment to look around, trying to shake his feeling of uneasiness. The clock above the mantle was ticking quietly, the fire occasionally crackling. Nothing sounded out of place.

He stepped closer to the fireplace, his gaze raking over the other items on the mantle. Severus smiled softly as he looked at his and Hermione's wedding portrait. He had hated the blasted thing at first, but Hermione had been insistent that they place it in plain sight. He had agreed, unable to deny her anything. When she had put up a fight about displaying their Order of Merlins, he had quickly consented, knowing that she would be persistent. They also rested above the fireplace, always in plain sight. Her

words rang in his ear: *So you never forget how wonderful and good you really are, Severus*

Knowing that everything was in order, Severus headed back towards his own bed where his wife was likely already back asleep.

Severus slipped into the bed, spooning against Hermione's warm form. His hand reached over her, cupping her breast, his thumb brushing against her nipple. He buried his nose into her hair, breathing in a scent that was purely Hermione. Hermione made a happy sound of contentment, snuggling back against him. Severus smiled, pressing a kiss to the shoulder left bare by her nightgown. During this moment of tranquility, realisation slammed into him.

He wanted a child.

The moment the thought appeared, he couldn't push it from his mind. He wanted a baby with Hermione. He wanted tiny fingers to hold and to be called Daddy. He wanted to see his wife swollen with his child.

Severus frowned. Would Hermione even want a child? They had briefly discussed it in passing, but never enough for a formal yes or no to be established.

Such questions plagued his mind until sleep claimed him.

The familiar aroma of coffee brewing filled his nostrils as he entered the small kitchenette that the castle had provided them when their room had enlarged.

Severus approached Hermione from behind, wrapping his arms around her waist and nuzzling her neck lovingly as she cut up some apples for them to have for breakfast along with the toast that was cooking. He kissed the tender spot beneath her ear that he knew always made her weak in the knees.

"Good morning, Severus," Hermione moaned, tilting her head to the side in encouragement. He noticed that she wisely moved the knife away from her distracted fingers. "How did you sleep?"

"Awful," he replied with a snort, his hands smoothing over her curvaceous hips. He wondered what motherhood would do to her body. Would her breasts swell? Would she be more sensitive during sex? His cock stirred at the thought.

Hermione turned around and faced him. "What had you up all night, Severus?"

As she looked at him, brown eyes full of concern and love, Severus was reminded that he was the luckiest wizard alive to have her by his side.

"I was thinking," he said slowly, between drugging kisses.

"Severus?" Hermione pressed, gasping into his ear as he found her pulse with his teeth. His hand reached up, brushing tendrils of hair away from her neck before placing open-mouthed kisses down it. She moaned as he ground his erection into her hip.

"Do you think, perhaps, that we could have a child?" he asked, his voice low and seductive.

Hermione flushed becomingly. "Severus... What on earth brought that on?"

"I have been thinking, that's all." He gently cupped her cheek, his eyes heated as he stared into hers. His pulse pounded as he let her think. "Do you think we could try?"

"Severus," Hermione paused, biting her lower lip. He loved the way her teeth sank into the kiss-swollen flesh. "There's no point in trying, love."

Severus stepped back, feeling cold inside. His face hardened, and he turned with a swirl of robes, ardour cooled. "Very well."

He left without another word, ignoring his irate wife's shout to 'get back here, you bloody idiot' even as he slammed their chamber door.

He stayed as far away as he could, avoiding Hermione until his anger at having been rejected had subsided. He would simply have to convince her, that's all. And he knew just the way to bring her around to at least thinking about it.

Severus slid into bed next to his wife, his hand gently tracing the curve of her hip. He scooted closer to her, pressing a kiss to her neck. Hermione let out a small moan, turning her head so she could kiss him properly. He took it as an apology.

He groaned into the kiss, enjoying the sweet taste of Hermione. Kissing Hermione was like sunshine or coming home after a long day. She was his happiness, his everything. There was nothing he wouldn't do for her.

He slowly dipped his hand lower, sliding it beneath the elastic of her knickers, uncaring that they were her loosest and rattiest pair. Immediately, Hermione's small hand grasped his wrist and pulled his hand out. "Not tonight," she murmured. "Too tired, Severus."

Severus pulled away, a frown on his face. "I love you," he said, meaning to take away the sting of how he had walked out and avoided her all day.

"I know you do," Hermione said, smiling at him. She kissed him gently once more before rolling over.

Severus lay staring at the ceiling for a long while before drifting off to a restless sleep filled with babies, nappies, and bottles.

"Do you have a moment, Professor Snape?"

Hermione turned from the chalkboard she was erasing by hand, smiling warmly when she saw him. "Severus! I wasn't expecting to see you until dinner."

"I know you have an opening between classes, so I thought I would... come... and visit." He approached her, taking her into his arms and kissing her gently. Hermione melted into his embrace, and Severus took the opportunity to move his lips to her neck.

"Severus," she moaned, pushing him away. "There could be students."

"Sod the students," he growled. The door slammed shut with a flick of his hand. "Now, where were we?" He pulled her closer, groaning when she placed her hands on his chest to stop him.

"Severus, this isn't like you," Hermione said, looking him in the eye. He hated that suspicious gleam. She knew him too well.

"I'm trying to be spontaneous, wife." Severus narrowed his eyes at her. "You've got plenty of time in your schedule for a quickie."

"We will not be shagging in my classroom!" Hermione gasped, scandalised. "Severus, what is going on? You've been acting strangely since the other night."

"I want a child, Hermione," Severus said quietly. "I want to experience the joys of pregnancy. I want to change nappies and watch you breastfeed." He frowned. "I want to try for a baby."

"So you've been trying to seduce me every chance you get to impregnate me?" Hermione questioned, shaking her head at him with a smile. "Severus, I've already told

you: there's no point in us trying."

Severus stepped away from her, hands clenching reflexively at his sides. "I don't understand how you can be so negative." He could feel the frustration building. "Would you not at least consider it?"

"Severus, you moron, let me explain," Hermione snapped, taking a step towards him with her hand outreached for his arm.

"No, I don't want to hear it. Not right now." He turned and stormed his way back to his office, his heart breaking with every step.

"Hermione's mad at you," Minerva said as she entered the staff room. She glared at Severus.

Severus frowned at Minerva. "I suggest you keep yourself out of our marital affairs."

"It's hard not to when she glowered all through dinner," Minerva countered. "She's picked up far too many of your tendencies, Severus."

Moments later, Hermione slammed the door open and stormed in, her face flushed. "Why weren't you at dinner?" she demanded. Her hair crackled with static.

"I'll just leave you two to it," Minerva said, exiting the staff room hastily.

"I didn't feel much like eating," Severus replied steadily, focusing on the papers he was grading and refusing to meet her gaze.

"So you sat here and sulked instead?" Hermione let out a huff of frustration. "You never let me explain, Severus!" She began to pace back and forth, twisting her hands nervously.

"You said no!" Severus angrily retorted, slamming his grading down. "Without so much as a conversation! And here I thought that we were...what did you say at our wedding? Partners?" He sneered down the impressive length of his nose at her.

"It's hard to have a conversation if your partner keeps walking away," Hermione said flatly. She stopped, closing her eyes and taking a few calming breaths. "Severus, you haven't been listening. I... I just didn't know how to tell you. It's just all a little overwhelming."

Severus had the decency to look abashed. Hermione was right. He didn't allow the conversation to ever happen as he had stormed away each time. Per usual, his anger and frustration had gotten the best of him. "Forgive me," he said quietly, looking into her large, brown eyes. "I shouldn't have let myself get so upset."

Hermione sighed tiredly as she took a spot next to him on the sofa. "Severus, what have I been telling you?"

"No," he snapped irritably, unsure of where she was going with her rather asinine question.

"No, that's not what I said," Hermione corrected him gently, looking rather unsure herself. "What I said was there was no use in us trying."

"I don't follow, Hermione."

She flushed. "Severus, there's no point in us trying because I'm already pregnant. I'm sorry I wasn't more clear, but I wasn't certain how you'd take the news, and then you've been so tetchy..."

Severus felt the air escape his lungs, his chest squeezing. "You're...? You mean...?" He opened and closed his mouth a few times, trying to formulate speech. All he could think was 'I'm going to be a father'. "Oh, gods, Hermione, I'm so sorry for the way I acted." He reached over, cupping her face in his calloused hands. "Please, forgive me."

"Just promise me that you'll listen better, and actually have a discussion with me when you're upset. It doesn't work out well for either of us if we don't communicate properly," Hermione lectured him. She moved closer, pressing a kiss to his forehead. "We're having a *baby*, Severus."

Severus felt as if he were going to burst at any moment. "Hermione, I love you." He lowered his lips to hers, kissing her ardently. "I love you so much."

"And I love you, Severus," Hermione replied tenderly. "Now, why don't we head to bed early? I'm absolutely knackered."

"Of course," Severus said, standing. He gathered Hermione into his arms, cradling her bridal style as he stepped into the fireplace. "Snapes' rooms!" he shouted, flooing them away.

"Severus!" Hermione protested when they arrived in their chambers. "I am more than capable of walking, put me down this instance!"

He smirked. "I think not, wife. No extra exertions on you."

"Walking doesn't exert me, Severus, not yet at least." Hermione smiled warmly at him as he placed her on their bed. "I do think a nice foot rub is in order, however..."

"Whatever my witch commands," Severus said, his hands already taking off her shoes. He spent the rest of the evening worshipping his wife, once more thanking the gods for his second chance at life.