

Divorce

by chivalric

Winner for the Anything Goes Challenge's One Shot Category! The marriage law turned out to be a disaster, and now couples are getting divorced as soon as possible. Severus Snape and Hermione Granger are looking forward to it – they only have to come to an agreement about their possessions, which isn't an easy thing.

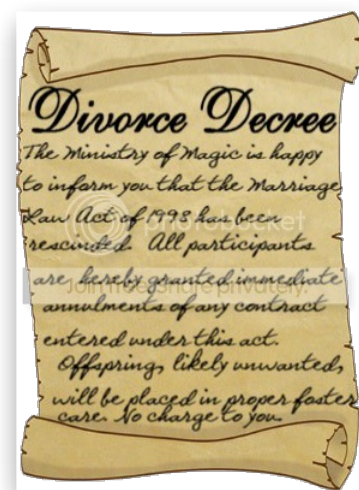
One-shot Story

Chapter 1 of 1

Winner for the Anything Goes Challenge's One Shot Category! The marriage law turned out to be a disaster, and now couples are getting divorced as soon as possible. Severus Snape and Hermione Granger are looking forward to it – they only have to come to an agreement about their possessions, which isn't an easy thing.

A/N: Many thanks to my wonderful betas, Dreamy_Dragon, Sampdoria, and kickthemoon. They pointed out the little inconsistencies in the story; I owe each of them a big box of chocolate frogs!

In addition, I want to thank Gryffkat for her effort turning this into an MP3. It is currently not online, but anyone interested is welcome to get in contact and I'll mail it asap.



"We are getting a divorce."

Severus Snape looked up from his newspaper and pierced his wife with cold, black eyes. "Are we?" he asked, sounding slightly bored. "I can't remember agreeing to that."

Hermione shot him a look. "You didn't agree to marry me either," she replied. "Still, we were forced to share a bed, this house, and our lives. Luckily, the Marriage Law has been rescinded, and therefore, each forced marriage is declared illegal."

"As usual, you talk too much," Snape scolded, all teacher that he was. "I know all of this, as that bloody law has been announced illegal three years ago. What I don't know is when they will finally manage to come round and do their long-due duty."

Hermione was unimpressed by his careless, casual cruelty. "We will get the papers in... ah, yes, in a few minutes." Slight triumph rang in her voice. Deliberately slow, she let the parchment she'd been reading sail to the ground. Then she poured herself another cup of tea and leaned back in her chair, waiting for Snape's reaction and eyeing him surreptitiously.

We've been married for five years, and he's still as cold as ice, she thought, feeling a little bit sick and therefore deciding not to eat the third piece of cake. *He's rude, he's unfair, his sarcastic remarks drive me crazy. And why on earth did they choose us to get married in the first place?*

Well, she knew why. Because the Ministry had decided that Ron was not a sufficient partner for her. She was intelligent; he was a Quidditch player. She loved books; he loved his broom. She read all day; he could spend twenty-four hours in a pub without thinking it a waste of time. The Ministry had taken one look, had laughed heartily at Ron's proposal to marry the brightest witch available in their world, and had paired her with Snape.

Fearsome, greasy, nasty Snape. The great bat of the dungeons. True, he was a war hero. Decorated with the Order of Merlin, Second Class. Hogwarts' Headmaster for four and a half years. The very man who had made her Potions lessons a nightmare.

And her husband.

Hmmm. Ex-husband, that was, as soon as the Ministry employee had carried out their divorce.

Thoughtfully, Hermione Granger ripped her eyes off Snape's bony frame. The letter she had received this morning, telling her that a Ministry employee would arrive within the hour and handing over their divorce papers meant nothing more than that she would be free again. She could live her own life, make her own decisions. She would not have to sleep with Severus in one bed ever again; she would not have to wake up next to him. She would never have to listen to his thoughtless remarks about her age, the way she dressed, or her worthless friends. And no more sex, either.

The man who was hiding behind the newspaper wouldn't be a part of her life any longer.

A thin smile played on her lips. Then the doorbell rang.

Hermione didn't move. After a little while, and after the doorbell had rung twice more, Snape dropped his paper in a quite annoyed manner. "Will you open it, witch, or do I have to do everything myself in this house?"

For a moment, Hermione considered hexing him. But then, she would be rid of him in a few minutes anyway. Hexing him could wait. So she went and opened the door instead.

A young man shifted uneasily from one foot to the other. He was slightly podgy, slightly bald although obviously not much older than twenty years old, and he chewed his lower lip out of sheer nervousness. "Mrs Snape," he began, but Hermione interrupted him angrily.

"Granger," she snapped. "I kept my maiden name. I saw no reason to take the name of the man I was forced to marry. You are here to divorce us?"

He nodded.

"Get inside so we can finish this farce. Kitchen. Second door on the left."

Surprisingly, the kitchen in the Snape and Granger household was a big, warm, and friendly place. From the horrible stories he had heard, and from his own experience with Snape when he had been a student at Hogwarts, the young man from the Ministry expected a dark and smoky hellhole. He swallowed. Time for business. "Good day, sir, my name is Cameron Carlyle," he said. "I am here... erm... to divorce you. Please."

Snape looked him up and down. Carlyle felt like a toad about to be chopped into pieces for a particularly nasty potion. "Get on with it then," the Potions master snapped. "I don't have all morning. The marriage ceremony lasted ten minutes; far too long in my opinion. I assume a divorce will take half the time."

"All you need to do is sign the papers," Carlyle said shyly. "And you need to come to an agreement about your possessions: house, furniture, money. That sort of stuff."

Hermione crossed her arms over her chest. She was now twenty-five years old, had grown another inch since she had left school, and her hair was as ridiculously bushy as it always had been. She was not as pale as Snape, but still far away from having a tan. Carlyle knew she was responsible for the Camelot University Library and therefore not out in the sun very often. She had gained some weight, but was not fat. Not yet.

At the moment, a stern expression dominated her face. Under different circumstances being married to another man, for example, and with a stone less around her hips, and without the stains on her blouse she would have been beautiful. As it was, she was just a dowdy woman the wrong side of her twenties.

Staring at her husband, the temperature sunk a few notches. "I take the books," she stated icily. "All of them apart from the two or three dealing with Dark Magic. Money will be shared equally."

"Agreed. I take the house. It's mine anyway," Snape hissed. "Plus everything that is in the kitchen. You can't cook. You even burn water. It would be a waste if you took the pots and pans."

Narrowing her eyes, she repeated, "Fine. Then the content of the garden shed is for me. You are lousy at gardening. You kill everything you touch."

Snape sighed and nodded. "I should have killed you a long time ago. You are impertinent. You eat far too much chocolate. You are insulting, unbearable, and still an insufferable know-it-all. And you are not as thin anymore. I mean, look at you a hippo is slender compared to you!"

Hermione stabbed her index finger at him. "Cold. Snake-like. Emotionless. You don't know what love means, you don't have feelings, and when you open your mouth, all that comes out is venom. Being rid of you will be like living in paradise!"

Snape crumpled his newspaper into a small ball and threw it at his wife. He missed her, though.

Carlyle gulped and tried to look anywhere else but at the fighting couple. This was nastier than he had thought. They were the last two people of those who had been forced into marriage not yet divorced. Each and every other couple had almost immediately taken the opportunity to get rid of their partners as soon as possible. Only these two were left. *Why, oh, why do I have to do this?* Carlyle thought in desperation. *My boss should have done it. I'm new at the Ministry, and they will certainly kill each other within the next minutes!*

How they had managed to live with each other for five long years was a riddle to the young man. They were like cat and dog... like fire and water... like... like two people who truly hated each other.

Shuddering, Carlyle ducked his head in case they drew wands and began shouting curses at each other.

"Cara is mine," Snape sneered, the already mentioned venom dripping from his words.

"In your dreams. She stays with me. She loves me!" Hermione objected heatedly.

Snape cast a thin, humourless smile. "I bought her."

"I chose her!"

"You won't get her! Only over my dead body!" Casually, Snape leaned back and drank from his tea, spitting it out a moment later. Apparently, he wasn't fond of cold tea.

Carlyle raised his hand. It seemed the most natural gesture in the presence of his former Potions master. Although the man didn't wear robes, Carlyle expected to get detention any moment now. "Who's Cara?" he whispered. "We have no records of offspring..."

Snape drew his wand and aimed it at his wife. She just laughed, clearly completely unimpressed at him threatening her.

Carlyle, on the other hand, was most impressed and very scared on top of it. He moved back until he felt the kitchen door at his back. A few more steps, and he would be out of this house, outside and safe...

"You won't get her!" Snape whispered, his wand not wavering.

"Nor will you!" Hermione replied, daggers jumping from her eyes right into her husband's chest. "She would die in your care, she would howl after me, she'd get sick because she'd miss me so much..."

Snape took a step. "You would overfeed her. You would never go for hour-long walks. Without me, she'd get ill in no time!"

"Excuse me? Please? Mr Snape, Mrs Granger?" Carlyle piped up. "Could you tell me..."

The garden door creaked on its hinges, and Cameron Carlyle jumped at the sound. For a moment, he saw monsters intruding into the kitchen, dragons and ghouls...

Slowly, the door was pushed open by a greying snout. A middle-sized dog padded in, leaving dirty paw prints on the tiles. It shook, and yawning hugely, it sort of fell over, precisely in the middle between witch and wizard. Its tail just touched Snape's slippers; the floppy ears brushed Hermione's naked toes.

Three pairs of eyes stared at the animal.

"Hi, sweetie," Hermione said with a smile.

Snape bent down and gently patted the dog's bottom. "Did you catch some pixies?" he asked fondly.

Carlyle continued to stare. "A... dog? You are arguing about who gets the dog?" he asked weakly. "On such a day, when you are finally getting divorced you have nothing else to think about but... a dog?"

Indignantly, both Snape and Hermione said, "She's been with us from the first day of this so-called marriage. We just want the best for her. Any problems with that?"

Carlyle found it quite unpleasant to be the centre of their attention. He definitely preferred them shouting at each other rather than combining forces and shouting at him. "Um, sorry, I didn't want to be insensitive," he stammered and waggled the divorce papers in front of their eyes. "If you would sign these papers now, please?"

Silence. The couple stared at him as if he were an exceptionally ugly, smelly beetle.

Carlyle laughed nervously. Maybe, if he changed the subject... "Maybe you can each take the dog for two weeks every month," he said, trying to make a joke. It didn't work both Snape and Granger frowned at the idea as if he had suggested slaughtering the damn beast. He laughed nervously. "At least you don't have children you need to worry about," he offered, hoping it would cheer them up. "I mean, in such a case the Ministry would take care of them anyway, so..."

"What?" Hermione snapped and stepped next to her husband, who had jumped up from his chair. The dog Cara lifted her head and bared big, shiny, nasty-looking teeth.

Snape now aimed his wand at the young man. Hermione drew hers from her sleeve and nearly poked Carlyle's eye out with its tip. "Explain yourself," she ordered.

"Short sentences. Clear words. Otherwise, you will end up as dog food," Snape added.

Carlyle held out the papers like a shield and seriously considered a career change. "Children... conceived in a forced marriage... they are automatically put into Ministry custody... foster parents will be chosen... It has worked fine so far... assuming that both biological parents hate them too much for being allowed to keep the right of custody..."

"Why don't we know about that?" Snape demanded to know.

Slowly, Carlyle slid down the kitchen door until he sat on the floor. "We the Ministry, that is didn't make it public. We feared angry reactions. But... this is how it works." For the first time in his life, Cameron Carlyle knew how a deer felt shortly before it was shot.

Snape placed one arm around his wife's waist and gently put his hand on her slightly rounded belly. Her free hand landed on top of his only a heartbeat later. Together, fingers entwined, they looked more fearsome than anything Carlyle had ever seen, including pictures of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named *and* including his own mother-in-law when she was in a bad mood.

"Our children will stay exactly where they are," Snape hissed. "With us. In our house. As soon as they are born, that is."

Wide-eyed, Carlyle's eyes shot from the woman's face to the hands on her belly and up to the dark wizard's narrowed eyes. Back to the hands, protecting the belly.

He made a quick and correct conclusion. "My records... concerning offspring... are out of date?" he whispered.

Hermione raised her chin. "I'm pregnant with twins. You as much as look at my babies and you will wish that you'd never been born." Moving closer to her husband, she summoned the parchment, ripped it to pieces, and threw it at the young, terrified man on her kitchen floor. "Now get out. No one will divorce us. Not now, not ever. Understood?"

"But the law!" Carlyle breathed and shuffled backwards, leaving the kitchen on his bottom.

"Sod the law," Snape stated. "The law forced us into marriage. We didn't like it, but came to terms quickly. We won't allow anyone to rule our lives again. Nor to take our children away from us. Are we clear?"

Carlyle made it towards the front door. The divorce papers were cast all over the place. "But you... fight! You hate each other, I just saw it!"

Hermione burned the papers to ashes with a quick flick of her wand. "You are mistaken. Mr Carlyle. I was massively glad I didn't have to marry Ron," she explained in an almost friendly voice. "Severus wouldn't have been my choice, but I learned more or less in our wedding night that living with him has its advantages. Decent conversation, for once. Damn good food. No hassle if I want to read until four in the morning."

"Perfect sex life," Snape added, pushing his front door open with one foot. "Snarky remarks that make me laugh. Someone who can cope with my black moods. Someone who has an idea how to decorate a house properly."

"And Cara," Carlyle wheezed, crawling out of the house and to the front lawn on all fours. "And the twins. I understand. I'm off. And won't come back. Ever." He Disappeared in a hurry. His glasses and one of his shoes stayed behind.

Snape hooked one cold finger in his wife's collar, pulling her up for a kiss. Wrapping her arms round his neck, she responded hungrily. A moment later, she sneaked her hands under his shirt. "We should go back to bed," she murmured. "That was funny, but exhausting as well. I need a massage. I need to calm down. And you are just the man I want for company."

"Greedy witch," Snape grumbled. Then he crushed the glasses under his heel. "One would think they had learned by now. Every year the same trouble with one of those Ministry imbeciles. I must admit, I'm getting sick of their constant attempts to divorce us."

"They're idiots," Hermione soothed him. "Don't think about him any longer. But... Severus? Am I really looking like a hippo?"

"You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen in my life," the Potions master murmured in her ear as he picked up his wife and carried her upstairs.

Shaking and sweating, swearing and outraged, Cameron Carlyle arrived back at the Ministry. Slamming the door shut behind him, he considered warding it, but discarded the thought as too cowardly.

"Any luck?" Gemma asked from behind her desk. "Did you divorce them?"

Carlyle went to the cabinet and poured himself a large Firewhiskey. "No. At first I thought it would be an easy job, as they so obviously disliked each other. But then they started a word-fight... and then the dog came in... and in the end, they united against me... and *then* I said that thing about children, and they went mad. I ran. I'm very sorry, but I ran away as fast as I could."

Gemma laughed. "You aren't the first. No one has yet managed to hand over the papers. Why do you think that they are the only couple still married? They don't want to get a divorce. Apparently, they love each other deeply. They just put up the show to scare the new employees. Snape and Granger simply want to be left in peace, and this way they get granted a considerable amount of time without further visits from the Ministry."

Carlyle downed a second whiskey. "I thought they would kill each other!"

"Show," Gemma explained. "All show. When I tried to hand them the papers last year, they began jangling about the dog, and I suggested putting the damn cur into an animal shelter. I was glad I got out of there alive. Luckily, they don't have children, or we really would be in trouble."

"She's pregnant. With twins," Carlyle whispered.

Gemma paled at that revelation. "Good Merlin," she breathed. "Children? For those two? It has been dangerous to go there so far; from now on, it will be a suicide mission!"

"I won't go back there!" Carlyle screamed.

Gemma placed a soothing arm round his shoulders. "You don't have to. Next month, a new girl will begin her apprenticeship at the Ministry. From what I've heard she's horrible a Miss Parkinson. Slytherin, and a real bitch by hearsay. In a year or so, the boss will tell her to hand over the divorce papers. He always does it this way the new ones learn not to do it again, and he fulfils his duty in trying to serve the law. If we are lucky, they'll kill her. And you certainly won't have to see Snape and Granger ever again. Promise!"

"Good," Carlyle sighed from the bottom of his heart and went to hide under his desk for a while.

I used the following prompt, taking a few liberties. I apologise for that.

110. Post MLC. Yes, there was a Marriage Law but it proved to be a disaster. SS/HG married to save Hermione's life/the war effort/whatever. Snape is Snape. He has been hateful, surly, sarcastic, and not a good husband. He has been resentful. Has he been cruel? Up to you. They've stayed married for five years and now the war is over and the marriage law has been rescinded.

What happens now that it's (almost) too late and Snape realizes that Hermione is going to leave him, but he also realizes that he wants her to stay? Has he grown accustomed to sex and doesn't want to lose a handy and safe partner? (And how was their sex life, by the way? Perfunctory, or the one good thing about their marriage?) Did she make life easier for him and he's resentful that he'll have to find a house elf to take up the slack? Or does he actually love her?

And what about Hermione? Is she relieved to finally get to be out on her own? Is there someone else waiting in the wings for her? Did she love him but doesn't any more? Or does she still love him, and if so, can she trust him with her heart? And--what about their child if there is one? Angst or humor or both. I like it either way. I also like happy endings.