

Prompt: Hartmann & Cooking

Notes: from a timeline in which Hartmann went to Gessner University and the MC didn't.

Male Hartmann

"I don't actually," Hartmann says, hovering in the kitchen doorway with hands in his pockets, looking as though he'd like to run. "I haven't really been in here much. We usually go to the restaurant or to halls or something."

You can tell. The student kitchen is clean, and tidy, and has clearly seen very little use except for the occasional snack. But investigating in the pantry yields a crate of eggs nestling in straw, sugar, and fresh bread.

"I don't want to go to a café this early in the morning," you say firmly; after all, you're still in your slippers and dressing-gown, and there's something cosy and inviting about the idea of eating together in Hartmann's room. This is your first time visiting him at Gessner; you may as well enjoy it, even if it involves you doing the lion's share of the cooking.

Hartmann acquiesces. He comes to stand beside you, watching, as you briskly light the stove and heat the iron pan. "How do you know how to do this?"

"It really isn't complicated. I was underfoot in the kitchen a lot," you say. The memory brings a wistful smile to your face. *That* kitchen's long gone, now. Your parents lost it along with everything else. It's been long enough that you don't think of it all the time anymore, but sometimes it comes up at the most unexpected moments.

Warmth, then, of Hartmann's hand on your shoulder. You lean back briefly, savouring the feeling, before drizzling oil into the pan. It spits, and Hartmann jumps back.

"When did you get so jumpy?" you say, pointing him to a spatula.

He wrinkles his nose, stiffening in that familiar haughty way that means he feels self-conscious. "I didn't. I'm not. It's just—I don't know what I'm doing."

Beneath your guidance, he cooks three eggs and scrambles them. With a nervous glance in your direction, he sprinkles salt and pepper on the savoury-smelling mixture while you cut the thick, crusty bread and toast it. You carefully cut slivers of butter, thin enough that it can melt easily and drip through the toast. Perfect.

Somewhere down the corridor, other students are stirring. Hartmann looks up jealously as though concerned that his hallmates might steal your breakfast, then arranges the eggs and toast carefully on willow-patterned plates.

Together, you troop back to his little room. Your stomach's gnawing with hunger now from the delicious smell. In the frost-laced quadrangle and gardens below, a few students have emerged; the autumn sky is bright blue. The pair of you sit at the small, heavy oak table and eat, and Hartmann sighs happily.

"I don't know how you do it," he says.

"Do what?"

"Teach me things while not making me feel stupid."

You nudge his foot under the table. He looks down at his plate with a bashful little smile, a faint flush across his cheekbones.

"I'd learn from you any day of the week," he says, and you know he's right.

Female Hartmann

"I don't actually," Hartmann says, hovering in the kitchen doorway with hands in his pockets, looking as though she'd like to run. "I haven't really been in here much. We usually go to the restaurant or to halls or something."

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Hartmann acquiesces. She comes to stand beside you, watching, as you briskly light the stove and heat the iron pan. "How do you know how to do this?"

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Beneath your guidance, she cooks three eggs and scrambles them. With a nervous glance in your direction, she sprinkles salt and pepper on the savoury-smelling mixture while you cut the thick, crusty bread and toast it. You carefully cut slivers of butter, thin enough that it can melt easily and drip through the toast. Perfect.

Somewhere down the corridor, other students are stirring. Hartmann looks up jealously as though concerned that her hallmates might steal your breakfast, then arranges the eggs and toast carefully on willow-patterned plates.

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Nonbinary Hartmann

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Hartmann acquiesces. They come to stand beside you, watching, as you briskly light the stove and heat the iron pan. "How do you know how to do this?"

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"When did you get so jumpy?" you say, pointing them to a spatula.

They wrinkle their nose, stiffening in that familiar haughty way that means they feel self-conscious. "I didn't. I'm not. It's just—I don't know what I'm doing."

Beneath your guidance, they cook three eggs and scrambles them. With a nervous glance in your direction, they sprinkle salt and pepper on the savoury-smelling mixture while you cut the thick, crusty bread and toast it. You carefully cut slivers of butter, thin enough that it can melt easily and drip through the toast. Perfect.

Somewhere down the corridor, other students are stirring. Hartmann looks up jealously as though concerned that their hallmates might steal your breakfast, then arranges the eggs and toast carefully on willow-patterned plates.

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