

Snape Rules!

Von YasaiNoVampaia

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Trouble-free Digs

Title: Snape Rules!

Part: 1. Trouble-free Digs

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A/N: I haven't read the books nor saw I one whole film, so please forgive me for the many mistakes I definitely will make.

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It was everything he'd ever dreamed of, everything he'd ever longed for, besides maybe pinching James Potter's girlfriend/wife Lily Evans, of course. Not that he had liked her in the first place, far from it, but it would have definitely been fun seeing the Golden Gryffindor Boy bawling over his lost love - Ha!

'Ha, indeed!' The tiny little voice in Severus Snape's head drawled. 'As if that would've ever happened!'

The Potions Master sneered at no one in particular as he made his way towards the Great Hall, frightening a poor bunch of first year Hufflepuffs. Menacingly billowing robes rushed over the floor occupying something that looked like an overgrown bat snapping at every unfortunate creature which came in a range nearer than 1.5 meters. Snape was undeniably having a good day, even though he hadn't taken any points from Gryffindor yet; then it would have been a fabulous day. But as the little word 'yet' implied, the day was still young and there were plenty of opportunities.

As always, when Snape made his appearance in the Great Hall everyone went stock-silent. Some bets were still running where he'd learned his dramatic entrance - as an actor of Shakespeare plays perhaps? Then again, maybe not, as Shakespeare was known to have been a muggle.

In any case, Snape couldn't care less what people thought of him. With his trademark scowl plastered firmly on his face he stalked over to the teacher's table where almost everyone of the staff was already seated - short of only one Albus Dumbledore.

The corners of Severus' mouth threatened to turn upwards into a superior smirk, but he contained himself just in time as he reached his destination and stood behind his usual place. Beside him was the empty stool of the headmaster and the next occupied was Minerva McGonagall's.

The Transfigurations Teacher was frowning slightly at the Potions Master; almost as if wanting to question what his unusual behaviour meant and why he was too late. It seemed she also wanted to know where the headmaster was and why she couldn't eat yet. Snape was quite good at reading one's facial expressions, so it was a rather easy task to read even Minerva McGonagall's.

Turning towards the students' tables, the Potions Master roared an impatient "SILENCE!!" It was quite unnecessary, due to the fact that everyone had fallen silent

even before Snape shattered 2/3 of the pumpkin juice-filled glasses. Satisfied that the students' undivided attention rested upon himself, Snape cleared his throat importantly and fought against the grin that wanted to graze his thin lips.

"Severus!" McGonagall snapped impatiently at her colleague. "Come to the point already."

"Yeah!" Remus cried approvingly. "We're starving here!"

Stifling a chuckle, Snape shook his head. "Why, impatient, aren't we? I was just getting to the point ..." Oh, wonderful day once in a lifetime! "I was just about to announce that the Headmaster will be absent for about a month. He left Hogwarts due to a very serious-

"What does Sirius have to do with it?" Ron chipped in, shouting through the whole hall before Harry or, better yet, Hermione could stop him.

"Twenty points from Gryffindor for this incredibly unimaginative pun." Snape growled towards the redhead, letting his words be accompanied by one of his more frightening glares which he reserved for the gibberish ranting, young, forlorn, faking, incredible naughty, dull, overall rebellious students. Or in short: Gryffindors.

"But I didn't ha-" The rest of Ron's protest was muffled due to Hermione and Harry's combined hands covering the hot blooded boy's mouth.

"And twenty points from Gryffindor for interrupting me - twice!" Ah yes, now it was truly a fabulous day. 40 points in less than four seconds. That had to be a new record.

"Ron! Behave!" Hermione hissed into her friend's ear. Forty points were definitely enough for one breakfast, and she was grateful that Snape hadn't taken more points for something as ridiculous as 'trying to suffocate Mr. Weasley'. Yeah, as if he would care anyway. If it had been 'trying to suffocate Mr. Potter', he would have probably GIVEN points Gryffindor for once, who knew?

Minerva shot an angry glare towards Severus for taking mostly undeserved points from her house, but decided against scolding him. She wanted to know where the headmaster was, and, most of all, why he hadn't informed her himself, considering their new, more intimate, relationship.

"As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted by some immature individual" Snape began anew, sending a scathing glare towards Ron, who turned different shades of angry reds but didn't say anything more. "Headmaster Dumbledore left Hogwarts to attend an immensely important meeting and won't return until next month. As to who the headmaster had the most confidence in, enough to transfer the responsibility of running Hogwarts for the aforementioned time, I have to say that he chose, after considering every aspect worth considering, very wisely. To cut it short: I am in charge of the position until our beloved headmaster returns to us."

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Next time: Snape begins his reign of angst and terror *haha* and we find out where Dumbledore went.

The Meeting of Importance

2. The Meeting of Importance

"WHAT?!" McGonagall cried, utterly shocked at the revelation, and rose from her seat. "You are in charge of the position of the Headmaster? But I'm the Deputy Headmistress and Albus would never-" At last coming to a halt in her ranting, McGonagall managed to draw in a calming breath; she wasn't going to risk a heart attack. She tried to sort her spiralling thoughts. She wasn't someone who lost control too quickly or too easily, uh, often, anyway. Casting a quick glance around the teacher's table, she realized that every staff member seemed completely shocked; Flitwick sat stunned while his mouth worked furiously, producing no sound at all. Luckily, he composed himself just in time to avoid falling from his seat.

"My, Minerva ..." Snape chuckled at the lack of restraint. As he went on to explain, the entire hall listened, dumb-founded. Everybody knew that Dumbledore would never declare Snape as his representative, the headmaster was aware of what would happen if he did so. "Do you question the headmaster's confidence in my abilities?" McGonagall was tempted to morph into her animagus form so she could scratch that smug grin from Snape's face, but instead she only clenched her hands into tight fists and answered evenly. "What is this 'immensely important meeting' you are referring to? Albus never once mentioned it before, if I recall correctly. And the headmaster is not someone to make quick decisions, or am I mistaken in my judgement of a person I have known for many years?"

"Calm down, Minerva." Remus said evenly, trying to cool off them all a bit. "There's got to be a logical explanation why Albus left so abruptly, right? And Severus here is surely going to explain everything to us, isn't he?" With that said, the werewolf frowned slightly at the Potions Master. Even though he didn't want to get things out of control in the middle of the Great Hall, where all students were still seated, he couldn't quite get rid of the little nagging voice in the back of his head which screeched something like 'Are you nuts?! Snape running a school? You are aware of what little Snivellus is capable of doing with all those innocent and ignorant guinea pigs running around oblivious to the upcoming horror, aren't you?!' While his mind retorted that he was being unreasonable, that Snape wasn't named 'Snivellus', and that aforesaid Potions Master had matured enough to know what he was allowed to do and what not. He wasn't a little kid, after all, was he?

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"What are they saying?" Ron asked, leaning over to Hermione and effectively blocking her view to the teacher's table. "They're too quiet to-"

"Ron!" The girl chided and pushed her friend gently to the side, enough for her to see Remus Lupin. "I'm not able to tell with you in my line of view." Narrowing her brows, she concentrated on reading Remus' words from his lips. It had been rather an accident that she had come across a book about lip-reading - after being through 10 Tips to Tame Unruly Hair, Distilling - The Sparkling Hobby, Mystery of Philatelists, Erich von Däniken's The Gods were Astronauts and Stained Glass for Autodidacts -, but after she'd opened it, she became rather engrossed. Now and then this special ability came in quite handy. "He's only calming down Professor McGonagall ..." She trailed off, not quite sure why every single teacher was now seemingly contemplating something silently.

"What is it, 'Mione?" Harry inquired hesitantly after his friend had stayed mute for more than thirty seconds. A cool shiver of inexplicable premonition ran down his spine despite his heavy robes, which should keep him cosy and warm. This wasn't a good sign - not at all.

"I'm not sure, but ... Professor Snape ..."

"What about the greasy git?" Ron prodded after Hermione fell silent again. Blocking Hermione's obligatory slap, he raised his brows questioningly.

"Don't call him a greasy git, Ron!" The girl scolded more urgently. "You wouldn't want to be called a 'freckled weasel', now would you?"

"I can't see why you defend that grea- 'Snape'!" Ron scoffed, looking quite insulted. "After all, he took 40 points from Gryffindor, and if I remember correctly, you are also in this house. You should show a bit more Hufflepuff loyalty."

"You should've known better than to interrupt him, especially in the morning!" Hermione hissed and tried to determine if any new information had been traded amongst the teachers. She wasn't about to dignify Ron's retort with an answer; he should know where her loyalties lay, in any case.

"Yeah" Ron remarked approvingly, though his face remained unsettlingly neutral. "We all know how he acts before he's had his cup of yin-yang tea, don't we? But after his tea, his karma is in equilibrium and he acts like the reincarnation of Gwandi, hexing fresh rose blossoms wherever he walks, playing on his golden harp, soothing frightened Hufflepuffs, giving every student he encounters sweet cherry flavoured lollipops, smiling and laughing, singing and dancing ..." He trailed off and his mien showed nothing more than one smile he imagined Snape to wear.

While Harry fought against the urge to crack up laughing, Hermione merely shook her head and sighed. "It's 'Ghandi', not 'Gwandi', Ron."

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"Headmaster Dumbledore received a letter, which he had been looking forward to receiving for months. The Swiss CGAOS association kindly accepted his application and that was the reason of the headmaster's rather rushed departure." Snape explained evenly, speaking loud enough for the whole hall to hear. "In four weeks he will be back, but for the time being I'm the interim headmaster. Enjoy your meal." Saying nothing more, Snape sat down, seemingly oblivious to the incredulous stares he received from McGonagall and most students from Gryffindor, Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff. The majority of the Slytherins were smirking smugly - the rest hadn't listened to what was going on.

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"Guten Tag und herzlich Willkommen zum diesjährigen Treffen der CGAOS. Mein Name ist Beatus Toriani." After a short introduction, Toriani went straight to business. "Für unsere neuen Mitglieder haben wir einen Folder zusammengestellt, der sie über die bisherigen Erkenntnisse informiert.

Schokolade. Wofür ist sie gut? Warum schmeckt sie so fantastisch? Und wie viele Geschmacksrichtungen gibt es wirklich? Speziell für dieses Zusammenkommen der CGAOS haben wir von den größten Confiserie-Konzernen exklusive Testportionen der neuesten süßen Kreationen erhalten. Da hätten wir erst mal Kirsch-Minze mit einem Tröpfchen Sauerlikör verfeinert, außerdem Bananencreme mit edlem Marzipan und noch viele andere leckere Spezialitäten mit einem Kakao-Mindestanteil von 60% ..." While Toriani went on explaining what kind of new chocolates they were having to test, the occupants gathered around a large table, where different specialities were mounted and ready to be devoured.

'I'm in heaven' Dumbledore mused, savouring the taste of a piece of chocolate with peanut and caramel flavour. 'I don't understand one single word, but this has to be heaven ...'

A New Hobby

3. A New Hobby

Rumours spread quickly - not only through the grapevine. Rumours about Snape being even more vicious, vile and viperous - which had to mean something, mind you.

During a secret staff meeting, excluding only one Severus Snape, it was decided against mutiny - although it had only been a slim majority. McGonagall had been uncharacteristically furious, but given the facts that her new lover had left with no word nor kiss and that this lover had conferred his duties on Snape and not herself, it was intelligible.

Within only four days, there seemed to be a whole new routine at the Wizardry School.

First and second year Hufflepuffs, Ravenclaws and Gryffindors weren't allowed to walk through the halls of Hogwarts in groups smaller than five (it was said that if Snape 'attacked', four had to distract him and the last had to call for help, but there were no living evidences to confirm if this worked in emergencies).

The students shied away from drinking pumpkin juice due to a series of mysterious happenings during breakfast and dinner in the past few days. Mysterious happenings such as unnatural hair-growing, abnormal growth of particular body parts and interesting changes of hair and nose colourings. And if you considered that the Weasley twins graduated Hogwarts a year ago, it wasn't a task too difficult to figure out what was going on - though no student had the gall to point a finger on it, and no teacher had proof.

But even though pumpkin juice was off-limits, they had to eat and drink. Eventually - and that was the point Snape counted on.

"Just look on the bright side." Hermione reasoned quietly, pouring herself a glass of water. "Dumbledore will be back soon enough."

"Where did he go anyway?" Ron interrupted her.

"Snape mentioned only this organization, uh, CAGUS ..." Harry's voice petered out.

"He said 'CGAOS'." Hermione said, frowning a bit, not at all happy that she'd been interrupted.

"What could that possibly mean? CGAOS ..." Harry mused. As hard as he thought about it, but couldn't come up with anything.

"Maybe it's an abbreviation for 'Chocolate, Gums and other Sweets'." Ron chipped in, grinning widely at his quick response.

"Maybe not." Hermione retorted dryly. 'Why should an organization have such a silly name?'

"But it is just like him, isn't it?" Ron shuffled the rest of the potatoes into his mouth and swallowed quickly. "After all, everybody knows Dumbledore's a molac."

"A what?" Harry asked, slightly confused.

"Yes, Ron, enlighten us." Hermione agreed. "What is a 'molac'."

"Molac, you know, a 'more or less anonymous chocoholic'."

Harry snorted while trying to disguise his laughing and Hermione once again scolded Ron for his immature behaviour.

"Yeah, Mom." The redhead whispered under his breath as his friend had finished her lecture. Maybe he should consider stopping with his funny nonsense, the only thing he got from it was a pair burning ears. "In twenty minutes we'll have double potions

..." He groaned loudly, burying his fingers in his hair, as his eye caught the time.

"The first time since Dumbledore left Hogwarts." Harry pointed out solemnly.

"That's true. We'd better hurry, we don't want to be late." Hermione hastily gulped down her water and put a book, which had lain on the table, back into her bag.

Harry and Ron regarded her with half amused expressions. "Twenty minutes, Mione. No need to exaggerate."

"But maybe Hermione's right. What if Snape makes his threat true?" Ron asked, looking worried. "You know, the one where he said he'd use the ones who are coming too late to his class as guinea pigs ..." He shuddered involuntary at this thought. "Or what if he moved up his lesson? Better get going ..."

Harry sighed, defeated, and got to his feet. "You know, I always thought that Snape should get himself a hobby ..."

"A hobby?" Hermione echoed as they made their way towards the dungeons.

"Yeah, something he likes or so."

"Potions." Ron supposed.

"Potions are his life, not his hobby." Harry countered. "Something that he likes - besides potions ..." He trailed off, thinking of something that the greasy git of a Potions Master could be fond of. It was a dreadful consideration.

"Torturing students?" Ron threw in.

"RON!" Hermione hissed.

"What? It's true."

Hermione merely rolled her eyes.

"It wouldn't be a good idea to propose to Snape that he should torture students as a new hobby, would it?" Harry asked, smirking slightly.

"Merlin, no!" Ron gasped.

"Do you suggest that we find a hobby for Professor Snape, Harry?" Hermione queried.

"That's a nice idea."

"No, that's not nice." Ron retorted automatically. "It's selfish-"

"That'd be Slytherin!"

"It's a brave idea then. I mean, we have to think like Snape to know what he likes, don't we? This will be truly challenging!"

"Okay, what could he possibly like?" Harry asked out loud again, furrowing his brows in a thoughtful manner.

As the three Gryffindors passed through countless corridors, there seemed to play the melody of Jeopardy, indicating that they were pondering hard on this question.

"Argh! I give up," Ron growled after two minutes headache, "I can't even begin to think like our old morose Potions Master!"

"That's it!" Hermione announced suddenly, as if her friend had just activated the proverbial bulb, now shining brightly above her head, startling both boys - her outburst, not the bulb.

"We give up?" Ron asked despairingly. No such luck.

"No." Hermione said, rolling her eyes impatiently. "The 'old morose Potions Master', which isn't a nice thing to say, by the way, was the trigger."

"The trigger for what?" Harry asked, while Ron growled a low "Spit it out!"

"I had to think what a person had to lack to be called 'morose', while the word 'old' is definitely disputable, I mean he isn't even-"

"Hermione? Come to the point! I don't understand where you're heading ..."

While Ron couldn't follow the girl, Harry could and stared, mouth agape, at her. "No! Are you suggesting ...?"

"Why not? It would be the perfect solution."

"But it's cruel! Who would-"

"Hey!" Ron cut into the conversation. "What are you talking about?"

"A girlfriend" Hermione replied.

"W-what?!"

Sighing, Hermione repeated her suggestion. "He is lonely, everybody can see that. Maybe he needs just a push into the right direction."

'Yeah' Ron agreed mutely, smirking. 'Into the direction of the next cliff-side.'

"If that's really, what he 'needs'," Harry began, shuddering slightly, "then who? I mean, who would want to become ... Snape's g-girlfriend? McGonagall is too old for him ..."

"Thanks for the mental picture, mate." Ron complained, shaking his head fiercely.

"... besides, they don't really like each other," Harry went on, as if he hadn't been interrupted. "Come to think of it, Snape doesn't like one single person of the staff - female or not."

"Are you implying that Snape ...?" Hermione asked, considering this new information.

"Yeah, that's it!" Ron threw in. "He is gay. Problem solved."

"That wouldn't solve our problem, and no, I don't think he's gay." Harry rubbed his chin thoughtful. "Who would be suitable?"

After another two minutes silent pondering, Ron's eyes glistened evilly. "I have the perfect girlfriend for him."

"Who?" Hermione asked, curious, while Harry merely lifted his brows.

"You!"

"Huh?"

"Not 'huh'. You, Mione!" Ron said, smirking slightly. "You were the one who suggested to find him a girlfriend, now you have to face the consequences!"

"No! I'd never-"

"Hey, Ron, I think that's a fabulous idea!"

"Thanks, mate."

"That's not funny." Hermione huffed and glared at the two boys exasperated. "Back to the point. Who would be the most likely candidate?"

"Do you know the proverb 'teasing means loving'?"

"Doesn't that imply that Snape loves everybody at Hogwarts?" Ron remarked dryly.

"What about 'opposites attract'?"

"That's a good one, Harry. Who is the exact opposite of Snape?"

"Tonks." Ron snorted. "He's tall, she's small. He's all black, she's brightly coloured. He's always gloomy, she's nice. He's always the same, she changes every so often. He's utterly meticulous, she's utterly clumsy. They'd complete each other perfectly." He laughed loudly, his voice echoing in the vast corridor. "Um ..." He prodded as nobody laughed with him. "That was a joke. You didn't take it seriously, did you?" At the end his voice was near panicking. "No! You can't do that to her! She was always nice to us!"

"Ron, calm down. It's not as if we were going to marry her off to the devil in the flesh." Harry shook his head.

"How do you know for sure?"

You-Will-Know-The-Topic-If-You-Read-The-Chapter

4. You-Will-Know-The-Topic-If-You-Read-The-Chapter

Pitch black and ice cold was the veil concealing the sinisterly chuckling figure - as every little child - muggle or not - knew, 'pitch black', 'ice cold' and 'sinisterly chuckling' were attributes of evil creatures, like Severus Snape for example. But Snape wasn't really 'evil' in the common sense, he'd merely come off the straight and narrow.

This, though, no one could possibly see at the first sight, when looking at the scene in the chilly dungeons where the Potions Master brewed one treacherous concoction or another. It didn't help either that these concoctions' intended purpose was none other than to be tested on unaware students to see if they were dangerous or not.

Now, one could say that was a waste of resources; and that'd be absolutely true. However, after Voldemort's second - and hopefully last - downfall (caused by none other than that insufferable Boy-Who-Wouldn't-Even-Die-If-He-Tried-VERY-Hard-Without-A-Wand-Under-A-Permanent-Body-Binding-Spell-And-Without-His-Glasses ... he'd probably just lose his balance, causing Voldemort to trip over him and impale himself on his own wand), Snape was, well, 'bored' for lack of a better word. Of course, he'd never admit it; even under some kind of exotic tickling torture.

Thanks to Dumbledore for making his irresponsible decision while obviously on a sugar high, but maybe it was just his joyful anticipation, who knew? If one thought about it, it was quite a miracle Dumbledore still had all of his teeth, considering how often he plopped some sweet or another into his mouth - and that for more than 150 years.

Snape sighed and continued his rhythmic stirring.

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"Puh" Hermione sighed, plopping down on the couch in the Gryffindor Common Room beside Ron and Harry. "I didn't think it'd be that easy ..."

"I still don't approve ..." Ron groused faintly.

"Do you think Lupin suspects anything?" Harry queried, deliberately ignoring his friend's complaint.

"No, I only told him what we talked about." Stretching her legs, Hermione leaned back into the cushions, making herself more comfortable.

"She is our friend ..."

"OK. So he thinks we just want to get a bit more practical training in DADA." Harry nodded, approvingly. It had been a bit of work to convince him, but finally he'd admitted that maybe Tonks would be a good influence for Snape. Well, they couldn't force anything, but they could set the ball rolling, couldn't they?

"Yeah. And who'd be better than an auror, who knows exactly what you have to expect?" Hermione grinned slyly.

"Friends don't do things like that. They don't stab you in the back, you know ..."

"OK," Hermione growled exasperated. "Stop it, Ron! No need to get overly emotional."

"But maybe I don't want to play Armour! Ever thought about that?"

"Ron," Harry interjected quietly, smiling slightly, making his friend turn his direction.

"Magic Knight Rayearth is something entirely different, you know? But come to think of it ..." He scrutinized Ron from head to toes. "You'd make an excellent Amor. I

always pictured him as a redhead."

That didn't have any calming effects at all. "But I don't want to be an Armour - or an Amor! And least of all for SNAPE! Do I have to pronounce it for you? You know I hate him and I thought you hated that greasy, slimy-" He didn't get to finish his tirade as Hermione's delicate hand whooshed through the air and connected with his cheek in a rather embarrassing way. The loud bang echoed strangely in the fortunately empty room, as Ron stared wide-eyed and with one hand on his burning cheek at his friend, who seemed equally shocked of this sudden display of physical violence. "Ow."

Harry watched, never intruding the safety distance.

"I'm so sorry, Ron, I really am! I don't know what came over me ... But let me assure you that hurt me more than you!" Hermione all but babbled, wringing her hands nervously, casting quick glances at the rapidly swelling cheek half hidden behind Ron's rubbing fingers.

"Oh yeah!" The redhead replied sarcastically. "I'll have difficulty speaking, but it hurt you more than me!"

"No, seriously. Here, look, my hand's all red and it tingles unpleasantly ..." Hermione's voice petered out, as she held her hand out to the boys to have them see for themselves.

"Oh, if that's the case ..." Ron looked pseudo apologetic. "I'm terribly sorry my stubbles irritated your tender skin."

Harry laughed out loud, slapping his friend's back amicably. "You have no stubbles, Baby-face!"

"Thanks for reminding me." Ron grumbled, inaudibly.

"I'm sorry, Ron." Hermione repeated, then cast a quick spell to treat the swelling. "But I told you often enough not to insult professors - especially Snape!"

"Yeah, yeah..." The redhead mumbled, finally. "Even if I don't agree with everything, I can appreciate the distraction Tonks may cause. Maybe Snape won't be that ferocious ..."

"Let's just hope he never finds out we were the ones who set everything up." Harry said, relieved that his two friends hadn't strangled each other due to Hermione's clip round the ears.

"Yeah." Ron approved. "Or else he would hex us into oblivion and back."

"Or he could force us to test new potions to see if they are dangerous ... which he does anyway, so what's the point in there ...?"

"Or he could make us wear Slytherin robes."

"Or he could gut us and use our intestines for some dark potions."

Hermione watched the two boys, fascinated, while they tried to come up with the creepiest possibilities of Snape's punishment for them. "Or he could declare the whole library a restricted area." She chipped in.

Harry and Ron stopped mid-discussion at the outburst of their female friend. "What a nightmare."

"Definitely the worst scenario."

"I know you two don't care enough for your studying," Hermione huffed. "If it weren't for me, you two wouldn't even know where the library is! Not that you'd know WHAT a library is in the first place-"

"Alright," Harry tried to calm his friend, while he turned the conversation back to its former topic. "Weren't we talking about ..." At this point he trailed off, as the portrait hole swung open and a few first and second year Gryffindors strolled in, making themselves comfortable near the fire. He didn't want to waste any time by searching

for another empty room, and they couldn't go to neither the boys nor the girls dorms. "We can't talk ..." He whispered towards his friends, then added louder, "yes, 'Mione, I've finished my transfiguration assignment," as he received a few suspicious glances from the other inhabitants due to his whispering. "Sna- um, You-Know-Who," Harry began anew due to the gasps he heard. "You-Know-He-Only-Wears-Black will never come to You-Know-Where if we don't have an excellent You-Know-What, you know why."

While Ron looked puzzled beyond anything, Hermione nodded thoughtfully, while trying to come up with a plan to coax Snape to a place to have an informal meeting with Tonks. It shouldn't be too special to awake suspicions on both sides, nor should it be too plain. "You-Know-They-Aren't-Really-Golden could ask You-Know-He-Doesn't-Bite to arrange a You-Know-What-Kind-Of-Lesson to let You-Know-That's-Not-Her-Natural-Hair-Colour show how to defend against No-One-Knows-How-Dodgy-The-Stuff-Truly-Is brewed and of course supervised by Who-Would-Have-Guessed-He's-One-Of-The-Good-Ones."

"Great idea, You-Wouldn't-Even-Know-I-Love-You-If-I-Said-So!" Harry smiled at Hermione and then turned to Ron. "After that is set ... Come on, I-Know-You-Didn't-Even-Get-Half-The-Information-But-I'll-Just-Pretend-You-Did, let's play some Wizardry Chess, shall we?"

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Utterly concentrated, Tonks poured the mixture into the mug on her desk, steadying her slightly trembling arm with her other hand. She was nearly done as a loud banging, followed immediately by another bang - indicating that the one who'd knocked on her door, didn't want to wait, so he'd just threw it open. With a cry of surprise she spilled her tea over her just finished report. Groaning, she looked up, causing her lime green pig-tails to wiggle, and came to meet a vision of red - the only one she didn't like to meet.

"Wotcher, Percy" She greeted, forcing a smile. "What can I do for you?"

"That ... werewolf - I still can't comprehend why Minister Fudge let Dumbledore hire this Lupin again. He is a danger for all the students and not only for them. But just because Dumbledore says he trusts him, we have to do the same. As well as this ..."

Tonks was halfway through her second cup of tea, which she enjoyed by tuning out Percy's tirade, as he finally came to a halt. "So, what can I do for you?" She asked again, trusting that Weasley hadn't said anything of importance til now.

"Lupin asked for you to help him with a few lessons DADA with his seventh years. Minister Fudge decided it'd be a good opportunity to see how the werewolf is doing ..." Again, Percy babbled about how dangerous werewolves were in general, and this one in particular. "You'll stay for two weeks at Hogwarts and you have to report everything out of place immediately."

Tonks smiled - genuine this time - and thought about what Percy would do with some kind of information, indicating in the least that Dumbledore hasn't absolutely everything under control.

Uncanny Encounter

A/N: Little A/U. Snape wasn't at the Order meetings. No-one knew who was the spy. Therefore Snape and Tonks don't know each other.

5. Uncanny Encounter

"100 potion vials on the desk

100 vials of potion

If one happens to break - Merlin, dear!

99 potions vials are left now to test ..."

Snape frowned slightly. Two hours and he couldn't even come up with a decent rhyme? Poor. Oh so poor.

Life was boring if one hadn't to fear for one's life anymore. Snape didn't have any more potions to test and he almost wished that those Weasley pranksters were still at Hogwarts to make life a bit more thrilling. The last potion the Potions Master had tested on the students and staff was a relation potion. He'd put the gaseous potion into the old air pipes where that basilisk had resided years ago. Snape discovered fairly quickly that it wasn't the best idea he'd ever had. Every person's hair which was in some kind related to another of the school changed into the same colour, darker if the relation was parent and child, lighter if the relation was of siblings and even lighter if they were cousins or farer related.

Definitely, there had to have been something wrong with the ingredients - as Severus Snape never muffed a potion. How could he have possibly fathered half of the Hogwarts students currently attending the school (his colour was black, of course)? No way! Even if he had been interested (which wasn't the case) in all those mothers, it would have been technically absolutely impossible. No amount of Pepper-Up could have helped him. Pepper-UP ... what an embarrassing pun.

Anyway, it was time for dinner. And after a last reassuring glance into his magical mirror - which confirmed that he looked absolutely smashing (the mirror wasn't drowned in Veritaserum, mind you) - he swooped out of the dungeons.

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"Okay ... I'm positively lost." Tonks mumbled, almost tripping over her own feet. "I knew I had to take the left gangway ... Trust Lupin to allocate those chambers to me ... Oops!" Having lost her concentration as she'd trailed off, Tonks' levitation charm wore off and her trunk crashed to the ground. "Ugh!" Letting herself down to sit on her bum, Tonks started to re-collect her belongings that had fallen out of her opened trunk.

She never saw it coming.

"Whoa!" Severus cried as he tripped over Tonks' lazily outstretched leg, sending him hurling to the ground. "Ouch! What the hell was that? Damn! This is going to leave bruises ... Always so damn dark in the dungeons' hallways ..." He cursed and managed to get into a sitting position, facing away from Tonks, who was currently rubbing her leg.

"Oops ..." She murmured and shuffled to her feet. "Ehm, Mister? I'm terribly sorry. I'm such a klutz sometimes, you know ..." She pushed her trunk to the side and rounded the wizard still on the ground. "A bit shadowy, isn't it. Oh well. Lumos!"

Severus froze. Letting his black hair curtain his expression, his eyes moved slowly upwards, meeting two brightly coloured orbs. Spiky, intense purple hair made him

wonder what kind of family tree she probably had. But considering her robes she hadn't participated in his little test, for she was neither student nor staff at Hogwarts. "A 'klutz' as you so lovely put it, is most likely an understatement." Severus drawled and rose with as much dignity as possible to his feet.

Tonks' breath caught. 'Oh my' She thought, watching with growing eyes as the wizard grew centimetre for centimetre. 'What a voice ... I-I ... have a vision.'

"And as for your inappropriate presence at MY dungeons, you are without a doubt capable of explaining your intrusion?" Severus spat venomously, glaring at the witch, who dared to look at him in what couldn't be described anything but innocent. Oh yes, innocent! Lurking around in the hallways and attacking oblivious, helpless Potion Masters! What did Hogwarts become if one couldn't walk around the hallways without taking extra time to ensure that there wasn't one klutz who could possibly be one's downfall? It was never heard of!

"I-I ... well, you know ... I was just ..." Tonks stuttered, flashing Snape a nervous smile.

"I do not have time for this silly nonsense." Severus growled, grabbing her arm. "If you aren't able to form one coherent sentence, I'm going to see you to the gates."

"Oh, hehe ... That won't be necessary." Tonks made no attempt to retrieve her arm. Actually, through the thick layers of cloth the wizard's hand send comfortable jolts of warmth towards her core. "My name is Tonks. I'm auror and I'm going to assist Professor Lupin in DADA for the next weeks ..." She trailed off and almost shyly extended her other hand - which Severus pointedly chose to ignore.

"Lupin ... How dare he ...? I wasn't informed ..." He growled, looking somewhere behind Tonks. "For what reason am I interim headmaster, if I don't know what's going on ...?!"

"Huh?" Tonks gasped. "Interim headmaster? Where is Albus? I mean, sure, I haven't seen him yet, but I thought-

"Obviously not. Otherwise you wouldn't be roaming the dungeons hallways!"

"Okay. Who are you?"

Severus frowned, letting finally go of Tonks' arm and took half a step backwards.

"Severus Snape. Hogwarts' Potions Master."

"Nice to meet you."

"The feeling is not mutual."

-

A/N: Short, stupid and Tonks having a crush on Snape at the first sight? There got to have been something wrong with that breakfast ...

First Lesson

6. First Lesson

"Nice to meet you."

"The feeling is not mutual."

Tonks was only a bit taken aback by that statement. 'Grumpy one, aren't you? Just you wait, Severus, just you wait. I'm gonna getcha ...' - "Remus said that my chambers are next to the former DADA classroom in the dungeons. Would you show me the way?" She asked, opting on just ignoring his rudeness.

"What made you think I was going to let you stay, Ms. Tonks? There is no way I'm going to let my authority being undermined. You are leaving Hogwarts. Now." Snape snarled, pointing towards her luggage. "Take your trunk and follow me."

"I don't think so."

"W-what?" He stuttered slightly. How dare this little klutz deny him?

"Minister Fudge assigned me with this mission. I have to report everything directly to him ... I'm not sure you'd want me to tell him that Dumbledore left without a word and conferred his position on you." Tonks said, looking rather smug, even though she lacked the height in comparison to Snape.

"I'm not going to let myself be blackmailed!"

"Oh, no, no!" She hastily assured. "I wasn't going to blackmail anyone! It's just I can't leave Hogwarts without Fudge knowing. How should I explain my early departure? You'll just have to live with it."

Snape ground his teeth angrily. "Very well."

"Oh, don't look that way!" Tonks snorted, punching Snape in the arm. "It makes you look like two hundred years!"

This only caused his brows to crease even more. "Who said I'm not already more than three hundred? I'm a pureblood, after all, how would you know?"

"Touché!" Tonks laughed, while Snape merely quirked one eyebrow. Had he said anything funny? He didn't think so. "The next DADA class is this afternoon, isn't it? Oh, if you didn't know I was coming ... ehm, you do know that you're supposed to be also in the class?" At the murderous look on his face, Tonks took a cautiously step backwards. "I guess not."

~+#+#+~

It hadn't been an easy task to bring Snape to comply. Why should he help Lupin of all people? It was ridiculous, really. Lupin was so shy and tried so hard to avoid confrontations, but what did it help him? If Snape had to learn he should be in the DADA classes for the next two weeks on his own accord, Lupin sure had more to endure than if he had told him in the first place. Oh yes. Snape would see to it. He did help with the defence against dark potions, after all, didn't he?

This same afternoon, the DADA classroom saw three more or less qualified teachers. While Hermione, Harry and Ron congratulated themselves for their fabulous plan, Remus began to do paperwork.

"Well, I am Tonks and going to show you how to defend yourself against dodgy potions stuff. I guess that's it, shall we begin?"

Snape smirked evilly. At first there was going to be a practical demonstration. He'd already picked out the trickiest of his potions. This would be fun ...

"As you all are able to see ..." Snape drawled, pointing one sharp finger towards

Tonks, who struggled to breathe. She was cocooned in a web of slimy but also firm threads, which were steadily drawing closer to her body, strangling her slowly. "... this is not the right way to touch a potion you are not familiar with."

"Snape? Would you please do something? Tonks ... well, she looks a bit blue around the nose ..." Remus murmured worriedly towards the Potions Master. But not only the werewolf was worried, every student started to express their concern.

Snape sighed but pulled a small package out of one of his many hidden pockets in his robes. He plopped one 'sky-wave' into Tonks' mouth. She chewed the bubblegum and then her ribcage extended as she could breathe again. The threads of dried potion ripped, falling to the ground. "Wow ..." She said in awe, making a bubble and letting it burst with a loud 'bang'. "This was rather interesting ... What else do you have for us, Severus?"

"It's 'Snape' for you!" The Potions Master hissed.

"Sorry, Se- Snape" Tonks giggled sheepishly.

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"What do you guys think?" Hermione asked, plopping down onto the sofa.

"There were sure tensions between the two of them" Harry said, thinking of how Snape seemingly tried to kill Tonks at least twice in one DADA lesson. "Definitely tensions ..."

Ron nodded in mute agreement.

"I suppose we have to help a little bit more." Hermione scratched her chin. "But how?"

"We could beat him with his own weapon." Two pair of eyes turned towards Ron, who raised his brows. "What?"

"That wouldn't be fair."

"That wouldn't be ethical."

"That wouldn't be easy."

Love-tinted Air

7. Love-tinted Air

Tonks pushed through to the Owlery, limping slightly and rubbing her arm, which would be shimmering green and blue with bruises by the time of the next day. It had been a long way, and she'd had various more or less minor accidents. Hogwarts was indeed a dangerous place - at least for someone as Nymphadora Tonks, who gave the meaning of the word 'klutz' a whole new dimension. Shrugging the ample morning incidents off - and wincing while doing so -, Tonks chose an owl which would deliver her first report to the Ministry of Magic. Of course, she hadn't said anything about Albus Dumbledore not being at Hogwarts.

After she had tied the small parchment to the leg of the owl and let it fly, Tonks sat down in front of the mirror and sighed. Then she pulled out her rose-coloured glasses and put them on, watching as the plain brown owl morphed into a beautiful specimen of the crooked-nosed bat species.

"Amazing" She sighed, temporarily lost in her daydream, featuring herself and one well-known Potions Master. After her drooling had halfway subsided, Tonks decided that she would write Severus a letter. A love letter from a secret admirer, to be precise. She got some parchment, a quill and the ink, and then set to work.

"Dearest Darling ... no, he wouldn't even read the third word ... Hey there, Potions Master and My Commander ... nah, maybe not ... Good-day Gorgeous ... I guess I'll have to spell the letter to be fire-proved."

"Ah ..." Tonks scrunched her eyes and leaned forward, searching for the perfect words for her Poetic Prince. "Ah-" The quill feather tickled her nose and before Tonks could finish her second sentence, she sneezed. "Achoo!" Glaring disgusted at the piece of parchment before her, she quickly disposed of it. "Yuck. Well, new round, new luck."

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Severus Snape never knew that he was staring in Nymphadora Tonks' private production, and he was glad for it. He had enough to do with his new headmaster duties. No-one told him that he had to help Fudge chose the colour of his socks! That was utterly ridiculous. 'Utterly ridiculous, indeed' Snape thought, smirking. 'I guess after this green-orange stripped stockings debacle, he will refrain from asking me for my opinion.'

But Fudge wasn't the only one. It seemed as though the headmaster had some sort of an insider "Ask Dumbledore" social service. People asked the silliest questions, expecting answers to their petty problems. Who was he? Some kind of twisted Dr. Sommer?!

Snape sighed frustrated and began to response to the various letters, advising frustrated mothers to take their children from Hogwarts (if they were in Gryffindor), telling the Weasleys to not reproduce any further and giving ludicrous tips in general. There were also a few early applications for the position of the DADA position for the upcoming year. With an evil glint in his eyes, Severus made paper-planes and let them sail into the roaring fireplace. Satisfied, he observed how the parchment crumbled to ashes.

Snape didn't recognize the eerie calmness as something out of order. He wasn't prepared for the attack. "Ah!" He yelped, as Fawkes assaulted him, pulling roughly at his hair. Not for the first time, Severus was glad that his black locks were so greasy,

for the phoenix didn't get a firm grasp and slipped with his beak. "Silly bird!" But Fawkes wouldn't have any of it and went on attacking the Potions Master like a bomber. His sharp beak left a few nasty cuts on Severus' hands, but those would heal. 'Even if I have to strangle the blasted bird to wring the tears out of him!' He thought darkly.

Fawkes trilled a war-song and flew majestically through the air. It was now his duty to protect the headmaster's office from this dark figure. He knew too well how his master acted when sweets were involved. But this went too far. The greasy (Fawkes tried to spit out the remaining bits of Snape's hair) pseudo-human couldn't just burn important letters!

"Petrificus Totalus" Severus said lazily, pointing his wand at the still circulating bird. Hitting it straight in the chest feathers, Fawkes' eyes almost bulged out unbelievably. Damn that mortal!

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"Ouch!" Hermione growled. "That's the third time, Ron. If you step on my foot just once more, I swear you'll regret it!"

"That's not fair, Mione! Harry stepped on your foot twice! I did it the first time!" Ron retorted.

"He!" Harry interjected. "And who kicked me in the ribs at least ten times?"

"Not me!" Hermione and Ron said in unison.

"Then it have to have been me ..." Harry rolled his eyes, and the group went on. Hidden underneath the Invisibility Cloak, they made their way towards the dungeons. Hermione clutched the list of ingredients tightly, as the three of them broke into Snape's office the second time. But this time it was for his own good. They had to use every detecting spell they knew, for the Potions Master's office seemed now even safer than Fort Knox. Not that Snape hadn't always been the paranoid one, but after they had first broken into his office, it had gotten worse. After snatching the needed ingredients and Harry's little chat with the snake which was the official Potions Keeper, they went to retreat. Hermione managed to cast a simple sleeping charm onto the unsuspecting snake, after all, it would have made Snape suspicious if his loyal snake would let someone to his potions if he was unharmed. And as there was only Harry Potter who was a Parseltongue, it would have been an easy guess.

Only when they were safe in the Common Room, huddled together in an not occupied corner, did they dare to breathe again. They got everything they needed. And soon they would be able to brew their little love potion.

A Letter From Someone

A/N: Thanks to ash vault rose garden for giving me this one idea I used.

8. A Letter From Someone

Hermione pushed the door of the girls' bathroom open and made sure that nobody was inside. She ushered Ron and Harry inside as she had decided the coast was clear. Not even Myrtle seemed to be there at the moment.

"Okay, let's better hurry" Ron urged, feeling a bit edgy at being in the girls' room again. They set up the cauldron beside the sink, it hang a few decimetres in the air and Hermione put a piece of parchment beneath. Muttering a few words, Hermione morphed the parchment into a Muggle thing, Ron could tell.

"So. We have to work together for this potion" Hermione said, putting the components into the right order. "I will add the ingredients, Ron, you will stir as often as I tell you, and Harry, you have to cast these charm after every sixth stir. Understand?" The girl handed Harry a small piece of paper. "After we are ready with the brewing, we'll have to activate the potion. I'll give you the words of the charm we need to chant ... afterwards." Before Hermione could activate the Muggle device, or Ron could ask what it was, there could be heard a faint moaning.

"Oh no, Myrtle" Harry groaned. "I don't want to deal with her right now. Why can't we just-"

"-flush her down?" Ron suggested, looking miserable.

"You have a sick fantasy." Hermione shook her head and walked towards the stall the noise was coming from, intent on convincing the ghost to let them in peace for the next hour. Pushing the door carefully open, she let out a high-pitched scream. "Myrtle what are you doing ... with Peeves?!"

"And you say I have a sick fantasy."

Hermione ignored Ron's comment. "Myrtle?!"

"What?" The female ghost whined indignantly. "This is one of the few advantages of being a ghost. Leave us alone!" She turned around in Peeves lap who was giggling madly. This definitely had made his day.

"Okay ... I just wanted to ask you not to ... well ... we wanted to brew something and ..."

"Does it look like we're going to leave this stall anytime soon?" Peeves asked.

Hermione grimaced and backed away slowly. She hadn't wanted to know that much. Ron looked disgusted and Harry was clearly amused by her expression.

"This gives her name a whole new meaning" Harry marked and Hermione flinched, Moaning Myrtle, followed closely by an "Eww".

"Gross." Ron shuddered. "Let's get this over with as soon as possible. I'd like to put a memory charm on me to forget this unimportant tid-bit of information."

"Agreed" Hermione said and pushed a button on the Muggle device.

Suddenly, fire erupted out of nowhere, and Ron jumped back. "W-what's this? Muggle Magic?"

"No" Hermione said flatly. "A simple camping grill."

"Ingenious" Harry said in awe. "I would have never thought of that."

"Oh well" The girl answered, blushing slightly. "As we all need our wands for the charms and the potion is very sensitive, so I asked my Mum to send me our camping grill ..."

"Whatever" Ron cut her off. "Let's just begin."

And so they began. In the background, Myrtle's moaning could be heard, but not by them. After two minutes the teenagers had put pieces of paper into their ears and Hermione showed Ron how often he had to stir with her fingers. After the potion was ready and enough cooled off, Hermione swallowed dryly, pulled the paper out of her ears and handed Ron and Harry a parchment with a charm on it. She waited till they had gotten rid of the paper in their ears too; thankfully the moaning had subsided.

"So ... well" Hermione murmured, blushing again. "Uh, the charm is to be chanted by three witches or wizards. The book said we had to put the surnames of the two people we wanted to enchant into the text ... We have to imagine the two of them, so that there is no mistaking, maybe Snape's father is still alive or something and the two have the same surname, understood? Um, we have to chant it three times and ... okay, just start, shall we?"

Ron didn't look too happy. "You know, first Snape and McGonagall, then Myrtle and Peeves, but this ... is definitely my least favourite mental picture, thank you very much!"

Harry laughed and pointed towards his parchment. "This sounds vaguely familiar."

Hermione's cheeks burned an intense red, as she nodded. "I thought so, too."

"What do the Muggles say?" Ron said, frowning in concentration, trying to recall the saying his father had once taught him. "Ah. I'll send you the bill of the psychiatrist. I'm not looking forward to these nightmares ... Merlin, I'm going to be a Dreamless Sleep addictive! I'm never going to be capable of nearing a bed without panic attacks again! I'm just-"

"Very nice, oh drama queen."

"Shut up, Harry."

Harry shrugged and they agreed mutely to just chant the charm and forget about it. Deep breaths were taken, minds were being cleared, wands were pointed at the cauldron in the middle of the three of them.

"Snape and Tonks

Sitting in a tree

S-N-O-G-G-I-N-G ..."

Three nerve-racking minutes later, they were finished and let out a joint sigh of relief.

"Ready?"

"Ready."

"What now?"

"We have to give it to Snape."

"Do you think it did work properly?"

"Well, the proof of the potion is in the drinking."

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Severus sighed and leaned back in the headmaster's armchair. The ringing in his ears gradually subsided; there had been definitely too many howlers. Didn't they appreciate his help? Obviously not. Not that Snape cared, but Dumbledore would be disappointed that he couldn't trust his Potions Master in every aspect. Snape would right this. Oh joy. Casting a quick glance at the still petrified Fawkes, Severus smirked slightly. At least the blasted bird wouldn't be able to tell his master what he had done. The phoenix mentally furrowed his brows. 'Or so you think, mortal' He mused, as he read Severus' thoughts. 'Or so you think.'

Snape's short moment of peace was shattered; as was the window glass as the tiny owl smashed against and through it. Landing in a heap on the floor, the grey owl

hooted confused and shook its head. Then it hopped closer to Severus and flew up to the desk. The Potions Master sighed (at least it wasn't another howler) and fixed the window. "Why didn't you use the other window?" Severus asked with a raised brow. "The open one ..." If Snape hadn't known otherwise, he would have sworn that the owl had looked sheepishly at that comment. Shaking his head, he freed the parchment from the bird's leg, causing the owl to nearly lose its balance as it had thrust the foot out. "Clumsy one, aren't you?" Tonks had found her familiar. After the owl had eaten a few treats out of Fawkes' cage, it flew as fast as it could, this time taking the open window. The owl didn't want to stay any longer than necessary in the man's presence for fear of ending like the phoenix.

Snape then closed the second window and went to read the later. Taking it out of the envelope, he grimaced and opted to only touch the parchment with his index fingers and thumbs; the paper was pink. Who dared sending the black loving Potions Master a pink letter?! Of all colours! Severus' expression changed drastically as he opened the letter; it became even more sour. After the second word of reading he tried to burn the letter, which didn't work due to Tonks' good work at charms. After the eighth word he tried to rip it in pieces, after the 18th he tried to push it into a mini volcano which he had just conjured and after the 27th he tried to cut it in pieces with Muggle scissors, resulting that he cut his own fingers. Nothing worked. "Damn!" Snape cursed, fearing that the letter was so good charmed, that if he left the office, it would follow him around magically. The fear was justified, mind you.

Snape's face alternately was white as chalk and red as tomato purée as he re-read the letter.

"Servus Severus!

I know you don't know me, but I know everything about you I need to know. You know, I think I used too many 'know's in here already. ;) Sorry 'bout that.

Sigh, oh I wish I could hear your alluring voice right now, lulling me into a web of laziness, I never intend to wake up again. I imagine your black eyes looking at me, burning with a passion, and I shudder inside, longing for you. I can't wait to feel your arms wrapped around me, holding me safe. Rest assured, that you won't have to wait much longer either.

Yours Forever,
Secret Admirer ^.~"

Snape's fingers twitched spasmodically, his mouth slightly open, horror plain evident in his eyes. "Sweet Merlin. Why me?"

~+###+~

Nymphadora Tonks lay on her bed in her cool chamber at Hogwarts, pulling blossoms out of silk flowers. "He loves me, he loves me more, he loves me, he loves me even more, he loves me ..." It was plain to see that she was very confident.

Awakening of the Dread

9. Awakening of the Dread

The scowl always plastered on his face and a scathing remark on the tip of his tongue. Severus Snape was the epitome of self-confidence. How else would he dare to run around like he was doing? His hair was so greasy that it would lead you to believe that the water in his shower somehow did a bend around his head. It was unsure if a toothbrush had ever seen Snape's mouth from the inside. And braces would have been a good idea, too, three or four decades ago.

This overly confident Potions Master was now reduced to a mere bundle of nerves. Adrenaline pumped through his veins, as he continued to munch on a piece of tasteless toast. Nervous eyes darted from one side to the other. The enemy could be everywhere. Some 5th year Ravenclaw shot glances towards the Teachers' Table, making Snape uneasy. Several other students - of both genders! - looked towards him during breakfast, too. His feeling of nauseous intensified. Oh Merlin, this was so sick! A shudder worked its way through his body. It was utterly disgusting! Alone the thought of the bunch of dunderheads was enough to freeze every possible spark to death! Everyone was better than-

Snape was paralysed, the hand which held the goblin with seemingly unblemished pumpkin juice froze in mid-air, as his eyes reached the Gryffindor Table. Dawning horror raised its ugly head and whispered words of mockery into his ear: 'Who would have thought that you were so popular?'

Severus groaned quietly and put the goblin back. Suddenly, he wasn't so thirsty anymore. At least, pumpkin juice wouldn't do no longer. What he now needed was a good (and with 'good' he didn't mean the quality but the quantity) bottle of fire-whiskey, preferringly instantly.

Three pairs of eyes watched closely as their Potions Master quickly left the Great Hall. There went their first try, four more vials to go.

"Hm," Hermione muttered. "He didn't drink it."

"Did you see his look?" Harry asked in a hushed whisper, as to not draw any attention to them. "As if he had just seen a ghost ..."

"Or if Dumbledore had just forbidden him to wear black robes," Ron added thoughtfully.

"Or if Voldemort had just returned, made-up like a drag-queen ... nothing too different from his last outfit, then."

"Or if Gryffindor just won the House Cup with five points more than Slytherin ... again."

"Or if some 'Gryffindor dunderhead' had just declared his undying love for him," Harry said at last, cracking up laughing at the sheer idea of it.

"That's nothing to make fun of," Ron muttered, shuddering visibly. "We were making jokes, okay, but that was highly uncalled for."

Harry hung his head in shame. "Sorry."

~+#+#+~

Severus Snape quickly jumped backwards into the concealing shadows, as a small group of talking and tittering 5th and 6th years made their way through the hallways. His hackles rose, as he made out parts of their conversation.

"Did you see him today?" one girl whispered, then erupted into giggles again.

"Merlin," the next girl moaned, exaggerating. "How could one possibly oversee him?"

"Mm," a third girl added between giggling fits. "All this dark and mysterious is making me feel dizzy ..."

Snape waited till the girls were well out of sight, then he dared emerging from his sheltering darkness. Staying well by the wall, the Potions Master walked briskly towards his dungeons, trying hard to not look like a fleeing deer, afraid of what wicked creature might lurk behind the next corner. Wicked creatures, teenagers going through puberty ... Where was the bloody difference?

Severus felt pursued. The feeling only intensified when added to his normal paranoia. Every time he encountered some students, staff members or even ghosts during his stride, he heard them whispering and trading information. He wasn't stupid; he couldn't have survived Voldemort's reign if it was otherwise. He just knew they were talking about him. Making remarks, pointing at him while his back was towards them ... Snape just had to figure out, who of this whole bunch of hormone-driven blockheads was his secret admirer. Severus tried to control his breathing again. Secret admirer. The phrase alone let his heart beat faster; and this was not due to the fact that he felt flattered.

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Nymphadora Tonks hobbled towards her small secluded bathroom, peeling the silk blossoms off her skin on the way. She had slept in because the night before she had overdone it a bit. Too many flowers, too many blossoms; it looked as though there had been a marriage the other day.

Tonks grinned into the mirror (then grimaced and pulled a red blossom out of her ear) as she recalled that every flower had predicted her good luck. Normally, Tonks wasn't a woman who believed in such things as Divination, but in this case she was willing to make an exception. Everywhere Nymphadora spotted positive signs, and even

Trelawney had foreseen that Tonks' mystery man (of course, Tonks hadn't told her WHO this man was) was indeed 'dying to get to know her'.

Thirsty, Nymphy?

10. Thirsty, Nymphy?

Snape's arm reached for the glass of water on the table, three pairs of eyes watching him intently, burning on his skin. Abruptly, he looked up. Nobody seemed to observe him. Odd. He then turned around to Tonks who had shrunk half a meter, looking distinctly disturbed.

"Severus-" she snapped in a children's voice.

"It's Snape!"

"- you said this would be a counter-potion to the Squeaky Potion!"

"I lied," he deadpanned. "Sue me."

One body transformation and one Wick Blue later, Tonks was back to her normal, brightly coloured self. "Thanks for this instructive demonstration, Severus!"

"Snape!" he snapped, then reached again for the water, and once again the feeling of being watched stopped him. He put his attention back to Tonks, who struggled still with her clothing.

"Professor Snape, Sir?" Harry asked suddenly, causing Snape's head to snap in his direction. "Why don't you drink some water? You seem so, uh, thirsty ..."

"Why, pray tell, should this be of any concern for you, Potter? Or don't I want to know?" the Potions Master snarled.

"I'm, uh, just curious ..." Harry said, carefully.

"Mark my words, Potter," Severus said, coolly. "Curiosity killed the cat."

"It was an accident!" Curiosity cried, breaking into tears. "How often do I have to repeat it?"

Snape lifted one brow. "Whatever."

Tonks made her way to the cupboard to write down the calculation of how long the Squeaky Potion worked. Unfortunately, her clumsy self broke through her layers, as she neared an almost undetectable uneven patch on the floor, tripping and flying halfway through the air. Stopping herself on the teacher's table, where Snape sat, watching untouched, Tonks broke the glass.

"Tonks!" Snape snarled, drawing his wand quickly and drying his wetted papers.

"Oops," Tonks said, sheepishly. "Let me help you!" She went to pick up the disordered papers, tearing some in pieces.

"Enough!" Snape growled, ripping the pages out of her hands, brushing her hands with his own while doing so.

"OK," Tonks whispered, slightly out of breath due to the physical contact. One step after the other. First their hands brushed while he ripped papers roughly out of her grasp, and sooner than you thought, he would rock their second child into sleep ... Fantasies were something so beautiful.

The bell rang, indicating that the lesson was over, and the students left the classroom; all apart from three exceptions.

"Professor?" Harry asked, hesitantly stepping forward, a glass of water in his slightly trembling hand. "Uh, I thought that after your water broke ... that came out wrong ... here," he handed the glass to Snape, "if you're still thirsty."

"How very touching," Snape drawled. "I'll never die from dehydration with you around, will I?"

"Don't be so grumpy," Tonks chastised. "That was very nice of Harry, Severus!"

"SNAPE!" he growled towards Tonks, before redirecting his gaze in the direction of Harry, schooling his features into an expressionless mask. "Yes, very ... nice ... of you and oh so very convenient, Potter." Snape poured the potion-tinted water over his hands, freeing them from Tonks' scent.

Harry took the glass back, looking satisfyingly confused, and then the three last students left, leaving Snape and Tonks alone in the DADA classroom.

"So," Tonks said, sitting down on the desk next to Snape, crossing her legs slowly. "What will we be doing the next time, Sev?"

"For Merlin's sake!" Snape growled, being not in the least distracted by the witch in front of him. "Use at least my full name!"

"So I have your permission to use your given name then?" She didn't give him time to respond. "Thanks, Severus!"

"Argh! That's Snape! Shall I spell it for you?!"

"That won't be necessary, Sev," Tonks giggled.

"SNAPE!!"

"But Severus is such a pretty name," Tonks said, frowning, not noticing the violent twitch of Snape at hearing both his name and the word 'pretty' in one sentence. "And Sev is a nice nickname."

"Alright," Severus said, quietly. "If you must insist on calling me 'Sev', I'll refer to you as ..." He searched for the perfect embarrassing name, then his eyes lit up evilly. "... Nymphy!" Ha! She would see not to-

"Nymphy?" Tonks gushed, excited, confusing Snape. "How sweet!"

Snape's eyes grew wide with horror. "Sweet? That was not my intention at all!"

Fruit Salad

Ab hier gehen alle beta-reading credits an Persephone Lupin, my favourite English professor ever

A/N: Ron's not on the Quidditch Team.

11. Fruit Salad

"Three out of five are already lost," Hermione spluttered. "If it goes on at this rate, we won't have a single vial by tomorrow!" The boys had to walk fast to keep up with her brisk pace.

"Does he have to actually drink the potion?" Ron asked, a bit out of breath; he wasn't the one on the Quidditch Team. He wondered briefly where Hermione's stamina came from, then concluded that all her eye-exercise in the library was more efficient than he'd thought. "Wouldn't it be enough when it comes in contact with his skin?"

"No!" Hermione snapped, impatiently. "Don't you ever listen to what I say?"

"In general or somewhen lately?"

"Ron!"

"Yes ...?"

"Come off it again, Ron," Harry intervened finally. "We all fight on the same side ... so to speak."

"So it was me again?" Ron demanded, his ears already turning bright red. "I only asked a single bloody question and she," he shot a dirty sideways glance towards Hermione, "acts as if I'm a total idiot!"

"A 'silly git' would be more accurate," Hermione said, crossing her arms over her chest defiantly, daring the redhead to say something with a glare, which she had obviously practised in front of a mirror.

"W-what?!" Ron stammered.

"That was uncalled for, Herm-"

"Oh come off, Ron, really. If you'd listen to me you'd know that the potion has to be taken orally to allow it to work properly. But you didn't - as always - did you?"

"I'm sure Ron listened to everything," Harry tried to negotiate. He didn't like the way things were going; like he had to do all the work by himself in a few minutes. "Would you please listen to ME now? Both of you ... thanks." Harry shoved his glasses back up

his nose and took a calming breath. It was true, this saying, having some particular friends was enough to replace your enemies, kept you on your toes - if it weren't so damn tiring. "Could we, by any chance, return to our main topic? Snape, Love Potion, two more tries? Your petty bickering tends to be a tad distracting, you know? Can we leave it aside, if only for now?"

Hermione sighed and dropped her arms to her sides. "You're right," she said softly, blushing at her own childish behaviour.

"I know I'm right," Ron grinned. "And you started it."

"W-what?" It was Hermione's turn to stutter. "I just- you are impossible!"

"Just teasing! Ha! You should have seen your face ... All speechless and-"

"Ron," said Harry, shaking his head, exasperated.

"All right," Ron growled, pulling a face. "Anyways, I only asked because if the potion worked through the skin, we'd be already finished ..." He shot a mischievous glance towards his friend. "Really, Harry, you wasted two vials in less than one hour ..."

"I what? It could have worked! The plan was good! How should I have guessed that Snape would wash his hands with the 'water'? I'm no Seer ..."

Hermione snorted. "Obviously. You shouldn't have quitted Divination, then, huh?"

"Yeah," agreed Ron. "Trelawney would have had a field day. She wouldn't have Seen Snape pour the potion away but that he'd choke on it, or that he'd die a very painful death due to the blisters which surely would devour his skin very slowly ..."

"Ha. Ha."

##

Severus eyed the door to escape longingly. The last teachers had left the staff room many minutes ago (though it seemed to him more like hours); he wished he had as well. Then he wouldn't be stuck with Nymphadora Tonks, who wasn't a 'real' teacher technically. Snape had to chose from two pains. Being alone with the crazy witch sitting opposite him or facing the unknown in Hogwarts' Hallways where the evil love letter writer could lurk everywhere. It was a difficult choice, but one had to do what one had to.

The meeting had been pure horror. Everyone had had so many UNIMPORTANT questions for the Interims Headmaster ("Are two weeks detention enough for a fire setting?", "Don't you favour your Slytherins too much, even more now?", "Should we repeal the school uniform compulsory?") that Snape had wondered how there had been a time that he'd been actually pleased that HE was the Interims Headmaster for the time being. Sometimes he pitied Dumbledore. Years of being Voldemort's little Potions Master, of enduring all the pain and humiliation hadn't been half as nerve-

wracking. Poor Albus. Maybe that was the reason why he needed all that sugar? To keep him going. Poor Albus, indeed.

Severus sighed and returned his attention to Tonks, who'd had by far the most questions and topics to discuss. Her violent green hair was enough to keep him conscious and not let him doze off entirely.

"Uh, I have one more question," Nymphadora said, fidgeting in her seat, "but I'm not sure if it belongs here ..."

"If it's the last, shoot straight away," Severus sneered slightly.

"Okay ... if you've got brown hair," Tonks ignored the raised eyebrows of the opposite sitting wizard and went hastily on, "you're a brunette, right? And if you've got blond hair, you'd be a blonde. But I've got currently lime hair. Does that mean I'm a lemon?"

Severus was silent for a very long time as he pondered this question, then he answered, and it was with no scorn whatsoever. "Yes."

No Sleeping Beauties

12. No Sleeping Beauties

Nymphadora lay awake in her bed, staring through dark blue lashes up at the deep purple canopy which was draped over her four-poster bed. Dark blue lashes, matching both the current colour of her hair and her mood. She felt a bit depressed due to the slow progress her advances were making, but she wouldn't let go just now. Nothing short of death of age (or maybe a clumsy accident) would hold her back, in fact. Severus Snape was definitely not her limit. He couldn't possibly resist her charming self, her brightly coloured personality; try as he might.

"Oh, and try he will," Tonks grinned, her mood already notably better. Severus could be the best dueller of the entire Wizarding World, but he didn't stand a chance against Tonks' seduction skills. Her chosen target would be better off not resisting; but if he would struggle, it'd mean more fun for Tonks.

The ceiling of the dungeons hung fairly low in comparison to the earth and higher level classrooms Tonks had been in. It had been intimidating and not little oppressive, but somehow Nymphadora had changed her mind these last days. The ceiling didn't cause her to choke anymore, it seemed more like it was complete and safe in its own closed way. Leaving the practical side (which said that the low ceiling meant less air in the room to be heated in the underground chambers) out of account, the witch concluded that her room was almost comfy; in a twisted, medieval, Severus Snape kind of way.

Which led her to the point why the Potions Master was so exciting in the first place.

His softly alluring voice had been the very first thing Nymphadora had noticed about Severus; and because she as a Metamorphmagus could change everything but her voice as she pleased, she liked this feature the most. Her train of thought may seem a bit twisted, but for her it was perfectly logic. She could play around with eye and hair colourings, the form of her nose, even alternating her age was possible; but her voice would always give her away; it was the most unique thing about her. And that was the reason why the voice of her future partner played such a big role. Not as big a role as Snape's nose, but with that unique voice Tonks was willing to overlook this crooked flaw.

Tonks felt her eyes droop after a few minutes of silence. Curling into a tight ball, she buried herself deeper under the thick blankets, thinking that it could be a tad warmer down there. She sighed and moved one hand under her head.

She didn't really mind the coolness too much, if only her blankets kept her warm, and even if she did mind, it was not important. She was kind of a masochist, after all.

Becoming an Auror of free will, taking up DADA lessons with teenage kids, falling for the infamous Potions Master.

And what was the cold air of the dungeons compared to Snape's behaviour towards her?

##

The Gryffindor Common Room was deserted, short only of Hogwarts' three most famous - though, maybe not most popular - students; Harry, Ron and Hermione. Huddled closely together by the quietly crackling fire, they spoke in hushed whispers. The dancing flames threw ghostly shadows over their faces, making it appear as though they were planning something sinister.

Poisoning a Professor with an illegal Love Potion to let him fall for one fellow teacher may be considered sinister from some point of view, though, but not from Harry, Ron or Hermione's.

Snape would see the good (though mainly selfish) intention they had, once he was securely head over heels for Tonks. Then again, maybe not, because the Potions Master's attention should be fixed upon his lover once the potion had been administered and he wouldn't waste a second thought on why they spiked his drink.

That'd be too good to be true, yes definitely, too good ...

"We have only two more vials. We MUST NOT fail," said Hermione urgently. "The next tries have to work! Any suggestions?"

"It wouldn't work to simply smuggle the potion into his morning tea, would it?" Ron asked.

"No," said Harry. "This would be too easy. Maybe he could smell that the drinks were spiked the last times we tried that-"

"No wonder with that conk," Ron muttered.

"Anyways," said Hermione impatiently. "I agree with you, Harry, we have to make it less obvious. Snape could have realised that there was something wrong; he isn't the Potions Master for nothing, you know ... Though, I wonder why he didn't say anything, give detentions ...?"

"Are you now complaining that you're NOT in trouble?" Ron asked incredulously. Hermione was sometimes more of a mystery to him than magic was to Muggles. How could her brain work that way - and get those marks to boot? "D'you reckon you need to see Pomfrey? I sure think so!"

"I didn't say I wanted troubles," Hermione said angrily, her brown eyes flashing dangerously - and if the buzzing of her frizzy hair was any indication, she was under electricity. "I can surely live without any point deduction or detention - unlike others!"

"Would it be too much asked if we could start again tomorrow?" Harry asked gloomily.

"Why don't we just sleep over it, let our minds try to work it out? And as tomorrow is Saturday, we'll have plenty of time after breakfast - and after our homework," he added hastily at Hermione's piercing glare, "to come up with an unfailing plan. All right?"

Hermione nodded curtly. "You're right. We can't start with Plan B before Monday in any case."

"Yeah," agreed Ron, casting a quick glance at his watch. "It's past twelve already and I'm tired. Even the chair here looks comfortable enough to sleep in now." He yawned and stood up, slowly stretching his aching muscles. "G'night," he muttered towards Hermione, still a bit upset. "Coming, Harry?"

Only a few minutes later, all three of them were safely in their beds, slumbering away and most likely dreaming of a time when their Plan B would succeed, dreaming of a time when Snape would fall in love and leave them alone, dreaming ... of a better time.

Plan B

Dedication: To Persephone Lupin, without whom this chapter wouldn't have been readable (auch wenn's long-syllabic und nicht syllabled heißt; wie bin ich auf das Wort gekommen und wie kommt's dass ich exakt das Wort eine Woche danach tatsächlich irgendwo les'?).

13. Plan B

"Due to the fact that Plan A, which was solely based on Action, failed," Hermione said briskly; she was way too active so early in the morning, "we're going to develop Plan B, which stands for using our Brain first. All right ..." She flipped over the first page of the flip chart. "I am, obviously, the brain of our operation. Ron, you're going to work out the strategy of how it's going to happen, since that's your strong point. And you, Harry, you're going to deliver the final blow." Only the green/black piebald uniform was missing to make Hermione a parade officer. Her expression was grim, her body language was foreboding and her wand served as a pointing stick and was dug roughly into the pages to emphasize her point. "Any questions so far?" She didn't give Harry or Ron, who were, thanks to the ungodly hour on this Saturday, still half in dreamland, any time to process the information nor to answer. "No? Good. To the next point, then: The Plan." Hermione flipped the next page back and revealed lots of very long-syllabic words, and as neither Harry nor Ron's brain was able to wrap their mind around those complicated words, Hermione took pity on them and read the text aloud (with a funny look on her face) and even simplified it a bit. Suddenly, everything seemed surprisingly easy.

"So, all we really have to do is make sure that Snape catches a cold, and when he gets a pepper-up potion from Pomfrey, that it's spiked," Ron said. "Sounds way too simple to me. It might even work."

"Oh, it sure will work," Hermione gushed excitedly. "With a runny nose-" she didn't seem to notice the disgusted looks on the boys' faces, "- he won't be able to smell anything! The plan is flawless! He won't know what hit him until he celebrates his honeymoon with Tonks!"

"Again, a very superfluous mental image," Ron complained. "And when did we go from 'just a diversion from Snape's usual temper' to 'let them celebrate their honeymoon', anyway?"

"Oh, Ron," Hermione chided in a very condescending manner, making sure he felt like a three year old in the body of a teenager. "They're perfect for each other, and it would be a shame to let them separate again. Don't you agree, Harry?"

How could Harry disagree?

"Thanks for the back-up, mate," Ron said sarcastically. "Wouldn't know what I'd do without you ... Oh, and Mione? I've found a flaw in your 'flawless plan', which is, by the

way, quite obvious. It's beyond me how you could oversee that!"

"What?" she shrieked. "That's impossible! I've worked everything out! There's no flaw!"

"Mione?" Harry interrupted. "When exactly did you work everything out? I mean, only yesterday evening we discussed and now you've already all done and worked out?"

"I did it yesterday, well, today, actually," she waved her hand dismissively, not noticing the two gasps and ignoring the "Didn't you sleep?!" from Ron. "There. Is. No. Flaw," she stated again, daring Ron to call her a liar.

And he did, somehow. "And how do we make sure that Snape's not going to use one vial of his personal supply, eh? You know how much the git - ouch! - hates the Infirmary, don't you? He'd never go willingly if he could brew the potion by himself. And I also don't think that he'll like to run around the school with a red and runny nose ... People will think he looks like Randolph the reindeer!" Ron and Harry laughed. Ron at the mental picture and Harry more because of Ron's blunder (which Hermione wasn't willing to correct; he might learn something).

"You are so simple-minded," Hermione tutted with an annoying twinkle in her eyes. "Nothing easier than that. In fact, it's already taken care of."

"What? When? Never mind, I guess you had a busy night, right?" Harry shook his head and Ron murmured, "Insomnia, more like."

"Let's just say, someone owed me a favour ..." Hermione said mysteriously. "One hand washes the other, so-to-speak ..."

"Stop speaking in riddles!"

Hermione shot Ron a nasty glare but relented. "Peeves destroyed all the supplies for the pepper-up potion and a few more, as well as Snape's personal potions and every pepper-up vial in the Infirmary but one - thankfully, nobody else is sick -, in exchange for my silence on the matter of his romantic relationship with Myrtle."

"You black-mailed him!" Harry gasped, awed. "Brilliant!"

"Yeah," Ron agreed reluctantly. "Peeves' image as ruthless poltergeist is at stake. Nobody would take him seriously anymore if it became common knowledge that he'd gone soft."

"Hm," Hermione said, a small smile on her lips. "Young love ... And that's exactly what we're trying to accomplish. Ron, if you'd please start working out a strategy on how to put the plan into action? We've got two days before the Apothecary in Hogsmeade gets new supplies ..."

"How- Never mind."

##

Meanwhile, a certain Metamorphmagus worked on polishing up her own plan to get beneath the robes of Severus Snape. It may seem a Sisyphus task, what with all the buttons and so, but Tonks was willing to try everything in her might.

Drowning in Ice Water

A/N: "Dancing Queen" in dedication to Minx and her "Unexpected Performances"

14. Drowning in Ice Water

Some what around 8 o'clock on that Saturday (many, many hours after Hermione had woken them), Ron finally registered that he had to work out The Plan. He couldn't quite tell how it came that he had to do the strategy (his foggy mind refused to tell) but he suspected that Hermione had something to do with it. Damn her and her powers of persuasion. Now, in broad daylight, Ron couldn't go back on his word. Damn Gryffindor credo. He drowned his consternation (carelessly) in pumpkin juice, but didn't realize that he'd grown whiskers until Harry pointed it out at lunch.

Ron spent the morning at the least likely place for him: no, not Myrtle's bathroom, but the Library. The countless shelves and tons of books were intimidating, and Ron was always a bit lost without Hermione's guidance.

The redhead snatched a few books ("Clearvoyance for Beginners - I spy with my Inner Eye", "Brewing Potions in Sleep" and "Charming Charms - How to leave the best first impression") just for pretence, and settled down at a small table in the back. Armed with a fresh scroll of parchment and a sharp quill, Ron was ready - well, as ready as one could get to plan one's Potions master's sudden cold.

Nymphadora Tonks held the small bright red envelope in her hand, took a quick sniff, and then sprayed a bit more of her favourite perfume ("Palpable Passions") onto it. Putting the letter onto the already towering stack of similar envelopes, Tonks sighed contentedly. Despite the fact that her right hand ached due to endless writing, she felt better than ever before. Nobody could resist this onslaught of love letters. And even if the postage for all the mail owls ruined her, Tonks was determined; and she'd die poor but happy.

After four hours of weighing every option, Ron (now without his whiskers; though Hermione said they looked cute) had come up with the ultimate Plan. Ron was proud of himself (and said so at every opportunity); Hermione was grateful and relieved; Harry ... was neither. He wasn't too happy with his part (and said so at every opportunity), but Hermione wouldn't let him out of his promise. There was nothing he could do (and he'd do anything, mind you). How could Ron be so cruel? Okay, it had been Harry's idea, but that didn't justify Ron's personal little revenge expedition.

"Harry, you're exaggerating," Hermione said calmly. "We don't hate you and Fortuna hasn't left you." She'd never been with him in the first place. "This is just your part in the operation, and I suggest you start with the necessary preparations."

"Nooooo," Hairy wailed. "Please, don't make me do this! Anything- everything else! Merlin, I swear I'll do whatever you want; just don't make me do this!" He'd long ago broken out in a cold sweat.

"No," Hermione growled lowly, and Ron smirked. "If you want this to work out, you'll have to do your part, understood?"

"He's going to be sooo mad at me!"

"What's new there?" Ron asked. "He already hates you and us alike."

"Should this have any soothing effect?" Harry asked sarcastically. "Yes, I'm already feeling tremendously better."

"Don't worry so much," Hermione said, giving Harry one of her looks. "Snape won't remember anything after you Obliviated him. There shouldn't be any problems."

"Come on! Why can't I first Oblivate him? It'd be so much easier if he were bewildered from the charm while I ..."

"Harry," Hermione said sharply. "Pull yourself together, man!" the boys' eyes widened at Hermione's vulgar speech, "We don't know what kind of effect the Obliviation Charm has on one's immune system. We can't risk anything here! And now stop whining and take a cold bath!"

Harry nodded in defeat and headed to the bathroom. Icy shivers ran up and down his spine in silent dread of the next encounter with the Potions master.

Said Potions master currently drowned in a mountain of multi-coloured love letters. It was his idea of Hell on Earth; shortly followed by being forced to sing "Dancing Queen" with Lucius Malfoy in duet.

As the thick cloud of perfume finally cleared a bit, Severus coughed and tried to fill his lungs with much needed oxygen. Then he choked, as one of the letters suddenly leapt into the air, did a kind of dance and started to sing its message.

"Sweets for my sweet, sugar for my honey ..."

God; how he hated Muggle music.

Harry's teeth still chattered with cold as he reminisced his bath earlier - then, he sneezed. There was no one around to tell him, "Bless you!" but he didn't blame his friends. He wouldn't be there either, if he had the chance.

'No,' he thought resolutely and sneezed twice. 'I won't get into that again. I am the boy who defeated Voldemort ... nothing can stop me!' The funny thing was, he really believed it.

The hallways were cold and clammy, and Harry hurriedly made his way to the lowest ground of the dungeons. It was spooky, and Harry was forcefully reminded of Count Dracula's bloody Crypt. He shuddered (then sneezed some more) and inched closer to the cobra's den. The closer he got, the more doubts bothered Harry. What if he

couldn't ... do it on command? What if his mind was willing but his body was not? Wouldn't that be embarrassing? Or what if he couldn't find Snape?

Harry heard faint footsteps. Well, that problem should be solved. The boy sniffed the air and did a double-take. Snape drew nearer, his prominent robe billowing forebodingly, and a persistent odour wafting around him. Merlin, Snape reeked as if he'd fallen head-first into a cauldron full of perfume! Were teachers really that underpaid that Snape had to start a second career as perfume brewer? Or was this all a really weird coincidence? Or-

"Potter!" snarled Snape, the scowl which accompanied this word already plastered firmly on his face. "What are you doing down in the dungeons? This close to curfew, no less?"

"I, uh ..." Merlin, what if Snape already had a girlfriend - however unlikely that may be - who had bathed Snape for the first time in unknown years? She might have overdone it a bit but it should always be the thought that counted. Harry had to blow off the whole thing immediately in that case. His conscience wouldn't allow him to interfere in Snape's possibly already established relationship. Bye-bye to their utopian fantasies. If Snape was still this cranky when being already together with someone, playing matchmaker wouldn't have changed anything, in any case. "I was just-" Harry struggled for words, looking for the nearest staircase, as the perfume stench slowly became too much. He knew it was a fight he couldn't win.

"With this swiftness you will not make it back to your dorm on time, Potter," Snape said, eyes glistening maliciously. A bit of Potter-stalling (Potter-baiting included) promised a few nice points off Gryffindor. Harry supposed that was - besides the newly acquired bathing in perfume - Snape's favourite leisure time activity.

"Achoo!" Harry knew he had won against Voldemort. That didn't mean he was invincible, though. Against his natural bodily functions, even the Boy-Who-Lived was powerless. The itch was gone. The horror, however, hadn't even begun.

"POTTER!" roared Snape, spittle flying in various directions.

Harry gulped, nervously fingering for his wand. This was exactly what he'd been dreading. Ingenious plan, indeed. Sneeze on Snape and spread your germs. The germs were spread and Harry couldn't help wondering whether Ron and Hermione cared if he didn't make it to the final step of Plan B. His part was over, after all.

"Just let me-" Harry started, pulling his wand free.

"Don't you dare move!" snarled Snape ferociously. "200 points off Gryffindor for this insolence and detention with Filch till Christmas!"

"- Oblivate you," Harry finished quickly and hexed the Potions master. Harry frowned. Now what? Snape was gaga from the charm, his slight sniffles already in his system (Harry had still to thank Hermione for her tip with the highly contagious medical test bills - after he took his freezing bath). The added bonus of not having to attend his

detentions left Harry grinning. The memory of the 200 point deduction let that grin freeze in place. However should he explain that?

"Well, Professor," Harry said hesitantly, fearing the spell hadn't worked correctly and could bring Snape back to his mind too soon. Thinking quickly, he went on, "Your girlfriend-"

"No girlfriend," Snape muttered.

Harry blinked. He hadn't known the Obliviation Spell worked as a kind of Truth Spell, as well. He quickly considered asking Snape about the overuse of perfume, but decided against it. No need to know what kind of kinks the old bat was into. Now, Harry could at least follow the plan. "You just realized you're coming down with a cold. You are heading to the Infirmary to get your potion, because Peeves destroyed your store."

As if on cue, Snape sneezed - but had at least the decency to hold a hand in front of his beaky nose. Harry really didn't want to know what would have happened otherwise.

In Sickness and in Health

15. In Sickness and in Health

The light was dimmed, the curtains drawn, and with the exception of Harry and Hermione, the seventh year boys' dorm was empty on this Sunday morning. Harry's heartbeat was quick and his breathing shallow, as he lay on his bed, Hermione leaning over him.

"Blow!" the girl ordered, holding a handkerchief under Harry's nose.

"I'm not a child anymore," he whined. "I can do that on my own."

"Sure," Hermione said, putting the tissue in Harry's hand. "Go on."

Harry's hand sagged down as if it weighed a ton.

"That's it. Now go on and blow!" She held the handkerchief back under his nose.

"I'm feeling not so well," Harry mewled piteously. "And it's all your fault." He blew his nose like a good boy, causing Hermione to flinch in ill-concealed disgust. "I've got the nastiest cold ever, and nowhere a Pepper-up Potion in sight. Am I such a tiny minor consideration that you took me not into account in your Plan B?" he sobbed, red-rimmed eyes glazed over in fever.

Hermione stroked back a lock of sweaty hair and smiled sadly. "I'm sorry, Harry. I should have kept a vial to myself for that case. You'll be better soon, I promise. I'll get you some hot milk with honey from Dobby, okay?"

"Eww," protested Harry weakly, closing his eyes. "Hate that taste." In a matter of seconds, he was asleep.

Sighing, Hermione stood up from the bed, smoothing out the covers over the prone figure of the Boy-Who-Slept. Feeling extraordinarily bold, she even kissed his forehead and wished him, "Sweet dreams."

She was already out of the dorm, when Harry snuggled deeper into his blanket, smiling in his dreams.

Severus Snape, on the other hand, was far from smiling. He hadn't one single reason to do so; even less than normally. Snape felt miserable. His eyes were tearing, his skin flushed unhealthily, his nose would be running, were it not for the two handkerchiefs that he had shoved up his nostrils. He supposed he looked exactly how he felt; like hell.

The only advantage of this situation was that he didn't have to smell how his chamber reeked of the perfumed L-Letters (as he called them in dread).

Snape looked at the vial of Pepper-Up Potion in disgust, but knowing he would have to either swallow the concoction or teach his bunch of dunderheads in this condition helped to reconsider gravely.

The Potions master poured the potion in his mouth (vowing to himself never to drink any other person's brew again, even if his life depended on it) and swallowed bravely, his taste buds thankfully numb. Snape tried to rub the headache out of his temples, and when the smoke shot out of his ears, he didn't realise it was the wrong colour.

"How is he?" Ron asked.

"Cranky. Highly emotional." Hermione plopped down next to the redhead and groaned softly.

"I don't get it. How can the guy fight against Dark Lords and Death Eaters, but confronted with a simple cold, he's such a baby ..."

"I suppose that has something to do with his childhood-"

"Doesn't it always?"

"-with his childhood," Hermione repeated, crossly at being interrupted. "There wasn't anyone who'd mollycoddle him when he was sick. And now he's taking advantage of it. I don't really mind. He deserves it, doesn't he?"

"As long as I don't have to touch his used tissues ..."

"Git."

"A loveable one, I hope."

Hermione only smiled.

"I can't wait till tomorrow," Ron crowed in excitement. "I really would've liked to see the greasy pra- professor with a cold. Ha!" He sighed. "Doesn't matter now."

"We couldn't have let him stay sick, Ron," Hermione said. "Somehow, Snape would have found a way to get a Pepper-Up Potion, and our spiked one would have been for naught. No; it's better that way. Besides, Tonks wouldn't have been really thrilled-"

"Yeah. Imagine a sick Snape courting her," Ron laughed. "Would he bring her flowers or a breathing mask?"

Hermione quirked a small smile. "Wouldn't that be romantic? If he cared more for her health than his own?"

"Yyyyes." Ron shot her a funny look. "Whatever you say, dear."

Tonks' inner Snape Radar trilled, alerting her that her darling was either in mortal danger, injured, ill or sulking (which all happened fairly equally). Thinking quickly and deciding even quicker, the Metamorphmagus left her room and took off in search for her heart piece.

As Harry was dreaming about dancing tissues, Ron and Hermione arguing about the difference between romantic material and sappy crap, Tonks searching for her Darling in Distress, and Snape being oblivious to everything around him, Crookshanks decided to play a round hide and seek with himself.

No one heard the cat banging against the desk leg in Hermione's room (which squished the cat's nose even more), and no one witnessed the following crash as the glass vial fell to the ground, shattering to pieces and coating the ground with wetness.

-

A/N: The clock which shows when Snape is sulking is from poy-sin.

Skin on Skin

16. Skin on Skin

"Oh noooo," wailed Hermione, as she surveyed the damage Crookshanks had caused. A small puddle of liquid pooled on the floor, her desk was dripping, tufts of orange fur swirled in the air, and a generous amount of glass shards lay sprawled across half of the room. "That was the last vial with the Love Potion ..." While the girl was still half in shock, a soft noise could be heard.

Hermione looked for the source, and then her features turned grim as she caught sight of the leisurely chilling, contentedly purring cat.

"Oh Crookshanks," she sang, crooking her index finger in a luring manner. "Come here, kitty-kitty ..."

She might have been able to overlook the fact that her cat wanted to eat her friend's rat (hell, the blasted animal had been a traitor after all!), but if it ruined her fruits of hard labour, Hermione saw red.

"Meow!"

Deep down in the heart of the dungeons, Severus Snape saw red as well, in form of dots dancing in front of his eyes. He was feeling dizzy and drained of all his energy, as if some parasite would leech him out thoroughly. His joints ached with every movement, and all Severus wanted to do was lie down and sleep for a whole week; but that wouldn't do. He had responsibilities to look after more important than his health, and there were also those dreaded dunderheads he was supposed to teach to consider. And to top it all off, the potion hadn't taken effect yet, and there was a thrumming that didn't seem to originate in his head but somewhere outside ... and it was getting louder by the second.

"Sev? Severus?" sounded a muffled voice through the thick door, which could only belong to one person. "I know that you're in there! Open up already!"

"Oh no," whimpered Severus in dread. "Merlin, have mercy with me!"

"Sev? It's me, Tonks! You know, Nymphy?" she added helpfully.

"I created a monster ..." If he had had the strength, Severus would have shoved his cupboard in front of the door to block the entrance; if his mind had worked properly, he would have realised he could use his wand. So, all he could do was wait and quiver in cold fear (and from the shivers).

"Step back from the door, Sev!" Tonks shouted, and Severus winced at the determined tone. "I'm coming in!"

And she did, indeed. Severus could only watch helplessly as his solid oak door shook, creaked and smashed down, whirling puffs of dust into the air. Light poured into his chambers, and for only a moment, Severus was blinded by the intensity, and then a silhouette emerged from the background, stepping over the threshold.

"Oh my God!" gasped Ron. "What happened to your cat, Mione?"

"There ... there was an accident," stuttered the girl, unable to meet her friend's eye. She stroked the writhing cat, trying to console it.

"An accident including a razor, an electro shocker and a flame-thrower?" asked Ron wide-eyed. "At least, it looks as though ... I mean, I don't like the animal, but even I can't say it's that daft and clumsy."

"Maybe he got a bit confused after she licked a few drops of the potion," Hermione hissed, causing Crookshanks to flinch and try to escape once more. 'Oh no, you don't,' she thought, gripping the cat's neck tightly.

"What potion?" asked Ron slowly. Hermione only shot him a look. "No ..."

"Yes." Hermione sighed. "But it shouldn't matter, anyways. Snape already took his dose, and the next time he sees Tonks, he will be hopelessly in love. Tonks' reaction will depend upon Snape's, and then we're free." The girl turned an empty vial thoughtfully in her hand. "I liked the vial, though, it was one of my favourites," she said wistfully in memory of the broken glass.

"You've got enough of them," Ron said, pointing to the one she was holding.

"Hmm," Hermione murmured absently, smoothing her thumb over the label saying 'Snape/Tonks Love Potion #4'. Then she squinted her eyes, trying to decipher the tiny printed words on the edge. A quick glance at her watch later, Hermione had blanched.

"I believe we've got a problem, Ron."

It was like an epiphany, and if Severus would have been at this particular island, back in 1990, he would have noticed the analogies between how Tonks acted and how Hagrid had acted then.

"Sorry 'bout that," Tonks said and coughed, the fallen door creaking under her feet. Dust particles burned in her eyes - didn't Filch ever sweep the dungeons? - and they started to prickle with tears. "Sev? Where are you? I know you're not feeling well. Please, don't hide from me ..."

Severus would have like to scream at Tonks to leave immediately, but he knew his voice sounded horrible, and he didn't want to appear ridiculous.

"Sev, where- Ah! There you are!" Tonks suddenly exclaimed, and the Potions master flinched, trying to sink further into the armchair, however pathetic it might appear.

The Metamorphmagus rushed towards her darling, arms wide.

"No!" Severus croaked hoarsely. "Don't you dare-" His objection was lost, as Tonks abruptly pulled his head to her, burying his face in her small but soft bosom.

"Don't try to speak," she cooed, threading her fingers through his sweaty hair. "I'm here and I'm not going to leave you ..."

Severus knew he had to take the threat seriously. Whoever was desperate enough for company to blast his door, could be desperate enough to want to actually stay with him in this dark time. Even if he couldn't think of someone beside Albus who'd want to help him ... or his dreaded 'secret admirer'. Merlin, he hoped those two weren't the same!

Severus shuddered at the mere (oh so disturbing) thought, and an instant later, he felt Tonks' arms tightening around him, giving him a certain sense of security and shelter. He tried to struggle out of the embrace, wanted to flee from the bodily contact which was far too close, too personal; but his limbs were weak, and Tonks' warmth felt so good, as if the small witch was at the same time sucking out and feeding his strength. And Severus felt himself falling, slipping away from his conscious mind into dreamless oblivion.

Bye, Bye, Bye

17. Bye, Bye, Bye

Severus woke to a peculiar feeling. Apart from the cramp in his back (and his neck and legs and shoulders-), he felt warm and even - dare he think - content. There was no logical source of heat, as there was no tell-tale crackling of fire, and Severus' slow mind needed a few minutes to process the incoming information surplus.

He was still sitting in his armchair like he had been last night, and when his gradually coming to senses didn't deceive him, there was a warm body snuggled close to him. Arms wrapped around his midriff, long legs sprawled across his lap and a cheek nuzzled into his neck, spiky, cruelly coloured hair tickling him.

Severus raised his head slightly, glaring down his nose at the daring of the intruder, as he remembered last night's occurrences. One quick glance towards his entrance confirmed that it hadn't been a dream; the young woman holding him was also a dead give-away.

Tonks really was someone; Severus shook his head, unsure whether he should feel annoyed or faintly amused by her stubbornness. Like a whirlwind she had barged into his life, a track of devastation trailing behind her, and Severus didn't even know why she seemed to want to stick with him. Shouldn't she be grateful he was ill, like anyone else? Severus shook his head again, then frowned slightly, realising that the thrumming was over, the potion had finally taken effect, and he even could breathe freely - despite the constricting space of Tonks' death grip. Had she watched over him the whole night? If he didn't know better, Severus would say he felt his heart clench at the thought. Why would she want to do that? Severus couldn't think of a single reason.

Tonks' weight against him was getting uncomfortable, and the Potions master breathed in slowly to stay calm, though, he didn't know why.

That was when he smelled it, some sweet, heady scent flowing through his nostrils, somehow familiar, but Severus couldn't pinpoint why. Tonks tilted her head, the movement causing her bright purple hair to flash in the dim light flowing in from the high windows. Severus' eyes narrowed, while he added two and two together and got his answer.

Tonks practically reeked of the perfume his secret admirer had used to soak his messages in; they had to be one and the same person - nobody else would wear such a fragrance on their own accord.

He pondered the tantalizing opportunity of shoving Tonks unceremoniously from his lap, but decided against it. Tonks might interpret the physical contact initiated by him (well, he had to touch her when he wanted to shove her off) totally differently, thus catapulting Severus into even deeper trouble. Living alone in the dungeons, no one

near enough to hear his cries for help, did have its disadvantages, after all.

"Nnn," Tonks half-yawned, half-groaned, flexing her muscles. "G'morning."

"Get out. Immediately." The tone didn't tolerate arguments, and Tonks glanced up, smiling.

"Not much of a morning person, are we?" she asked, oblivious to the growing threat to her life.

"Out! Before I forget myself!"

"Oh!" gasped the now greenhead. "I thought you only had a cold! Did you fall and bang your head?" Seconds later, Severus' face was again buried in Tonks' bosom, and he felt nimble fingers frisk the back of his head, clearly searching for a tell-tale bump.

"Enough," came his muffled protest.

"Let me just-"

"I said enough!" snapped Severus, shoving Tonks from him, and she overbalanced, plopping down to the floor.

Severus stretched his arms roughly, angry because of Tonks' actions and due to the inexplicable feeling of guilt because of his actions. He only wanted to be left in peace; was that too much?

Tonks looked up at him, her eyes round and hurt, pressing her bloodied, broken arm to her chest- no, he didn't need any more reason to feel guilty without Tonks being seriously harmed, which she wasn't.

"I just wanted to make sure you were alright," she whispered, eyes alight with unshed tears. "I'm sorry if I was a bother ... I'll go." Averting her gaze, Tonks clumsily gathered her robes and got to her feet. She turned around and practically fled, her hair changing colours in her distress.

Severus already had the "Wait!" on the tip of his tongue, though he couldn't, no, wouldn't say it out loud. Not when he finally got what he longed for: peace and quiet. He also longed for a repaired door and some new humanoid repelling charms, but the Potions master would be happy with as much as he got.

'Odd,' Severus thought then. He wasn't feeling particularly happy.

Previous day, late evening.

"What do you mean, the best before date of the potion is overstepped?" Ron asked.

Hermione didn't answer, while she paced the floor in front of the fire, the tonguing flames behind her making her look like some ancient goddess of vengeance.

Crookshanks surreptitiously crept away, tail between his legs.

"We should have used the fifth vial, the fourth was useless ..." the girl murmured, her mind working frantically to come up with an alternate plan.

"Alas, there's no fifth vial anymore," Ron said.

"How true," Hermione muttered, then fake-yawned hugely, inching after Crookshanks, who had sought refuge in the girls' dorm. "I'm very tired. I guess I'll go to bed. Tomorrow is early enough to try and come up with a solution."

Ron nodded, rising. "Night, Mione."

"Yeah," the girl answered absent-mindedly, walking briskly to her room.

Ron frowned, shrugged and went to sleep.

Moments later the common room was empty; no potential witness present anymore.

"Meow!"

High on Emotion

18. High on Emotion

Nymphadora Tonks was a resolute woman, and when she set her mind, she was hardly to be swayed. She had not thought she could be mistaken in her judgment, but one Severus Snape proved her wrong. After she had - literally - landed on the hard ground of reality, she saw the world (and her sadly inexistent love life) from a different angle.

Tonks sniffled. Why couldn't Severus like her as well? Was she really that repulsive? It was so unjust. She had fallen in love at first insult, but Severus didn't even give her a chance.

Tonks balled her hands into fists. She would show him just what he was going to miss.

With that, Tonks took off to the Infirmary to pay Harry, who had come down with a cold, too, (as Hermione and Ron, whom she had happened to meet in the hallways, had told her) a visit.

"Poor boy ..."

Severus Snape was fairly high on emotion this Monday morning. He could take points off Gryffindor for being too late - twice. Granger and Weasley were all it took for Severus to feel better after his wake-up horror. Now, all that he needed to die a happy wizard was Harry Potter daring to show up even later than his two faithful sidekicks, or better yet: back talking him when he told the boy to try and keep his (admittedly much needed) beauty sleep hours in check. Gryffindor points would be in the negative sooner than the brat could think that his Potions master was being unfair.

Severus cackled evilly, causing Hermione to take an uneasy step backwards. Ron took her arm and dragged her to their seats, mumbling something about Snape being more than a bit weird and that he didn't want to be anywhere near him when he finally fell off the rocker. Hermione nodded numbly; that made sense. That had put a paid to their prospect of Snape being in love.

"Where is our favourite celebrity?" Snape asked then, eyeing them coolly. "Doesn't he feel up to a - conveniently shortened - Potions lesson?"

"If you mean Harry, sir," said Hermione, trying to keep the growl out of her voice, "he's ill. Ron and I saw him to the Infirmary. That's why we-" she wanted to weave in the reason for their tardiness, but Snape cut her off smoothly.

"Yes, that's why you cost your House twenty points. Didn't dear Potter find the way to the Hospital Wing by himself? Odd, considering how often he has ended up with Pomfrey, isn't it? He must feel almost second home there. Or was he too sick? Must have been the fame then that had finally gotten to his head, eh?" Snape smirked

smugly and let the snickering of the Slytherins push his sore ego. There you go. He was the least pleasant being on Earth, after all, and no other being would want to fall in love with him.

Snape raised one brow haughtily at Ron, daring him to argue back, but this time Hermione was quicker. She covered the redhead's mouth with her hands and prevented any further deduction of House points - at least, deductions that were Ron's fault.

Before Snape went back to his desk, he sneered and drawled, "And twenty additional points from Gryffindor for this open fondling in my Potions class. Please, for all our sakes, do try and keep your hands to yourself, Miss Granger." Hermione blushed beet red and jerked both her hands to her sides. "Good girl."

Meanwhile, Harry was ripped from his (previously) undisturbed slumber by a sudden crash, a girlish shriek and then some hurried apologies. Call it his newly awakened Divination skills, he just knew at once that Tonks was paying him a visit.

Cracking open one bleary eye, he was greeted to a familiar sight: brightly coloured Tonks in the middle of broken junks (Harry couldn't even tell what the Metamorphmagus had smashed earlier), trying to explain her mishap to someone - in this case, Madam Pomfrey.

"Can't you be a little quieter?" the Matron hissed. "You'll surely wake up poor Harry if you can't keep your clumsy hands to yourself."

"I didn't mean-"

"Too late!" Pomfrey snapped, throwing a glance at the prone boy. "He's already awake! Are you happy now?" She put her hands on her hips and gave an indignant huff.

"I'm sorry," Tonks said, sounding precariously close to tears. "I just wanted-"

"It's all right, Madam Pomfrey," said Harry, pushing himself awkwardly into a sitting position. "I wasn't asleep." He smiled at Tonks' grateful look.

Pomfrey scowled. "Very well," she said, eyeing the both of them suspiciously. "You've got five minutes. Harry needs to rest a lot. After that blasted poltergeist destroyed nearly my whole stack of Potions, we'll have to resort to the Muggle way of healing. And sleep is, which should be widely known, the best medicine." With a grim expression firmly plastered on her face, Pomfrey turned on her heel and headed to her office, carelessly flicking her wand to vanish the shards.

"Isn't laughing the best medicine?" asked Harry to lighten the mood a bit. "Not that Pomfrey would know ..." his voice petered out, as he realized that Tonks wasn't even listening. She had a lost look on her face and her jaw shivered faintly. Harry hoped she wouldn't start crying - he didn't know if he wouldn't join her in her tears now that his Girlfriend Plan was not going to become reality.

"What's up?" he asked, sniffing.

"Nothing," Tonks said quickly. "Nothing at all. How are you?" She handed the boy a tissue, which he took gratefully.

"I'm just a bit dizzy and-" Harry stopped as he couldn't hear his own voice amidst Tonks' sudden sobs.

"I'm sorry," she wailed. "I'm so sorry I woke you with my clumsy-" she hiccupped.

"It's alright," said Harry uneasily.

"No, it's not. Poppy is right ... I'm a clumsy klutz ... I can't even go five minutes without causing chaos ... No wonder he doesn't like-" And here Tonks broke down completely, falling to her knees beside Harry's bed and burying her face in the crisp sheets. Her shoulders shook, her orange pigtails bobbing.

Harry was momentarily at a loss of what to do. One instant he was peacefully slumbering away, and the next he saw himself confronted with a wailing bundle of distress. Cautiously, the boy reached out with his hand and laid it upon Tonks' head, feeling her tense shortly before relaxing under the gentle touch.

"I-I don't want to moan and heap all my problems on you, Harry," the small witch sobbed. "You've got enough already with ..."

"School?" prompted Harry as Tonks fell silent. "No Voldemort anymore, remember?"

Tonks snickered dryly. "I actually forgot. How embarrassing; not that that's a surprise ..."

"Hey," Harry tried to console his crying friend. "You can tell me, you know. What's up? I mean, never before has it bothered you that you're a bit clumsy - which suits you, really."

"But he- he doesn't ..." Tonks drew a shuddering breath. "The first time he saw me he said I was a clumsy klutz ... and I did nothing to improve that image ..."

"He?" asked Harry tentatively, sensing trouble in paradise. "Who is he? Maybe I can help you."

"I can't tell you," Tonks sniffed. "You hate him. Then you'll hate me, too. But I'm a clumsy klutz, so it shouldn't really matter, because everybody hates me already ..."

"That's not true," objected Harry. "You've got loads of friends. And you could have everyone you want," he added, having read that line somewhere.

"But not the one I want!"

'Isn't it always?' Harry thought. "Who is it you want, then? I'm sure I don't hate him."

Tonks stilled, sniffled some more, and then turned her head to gaze up at Harry with shining eyes. "He's ..."

"He is ...?" prodded Harry, a faint curling in his stomach. And as Tonks' eyes flinched, Harry suddenly knew (thanks to his astounding Divination skills). Of course; Harry hated him; the mysterious man dared to call Tonks a 'clumsy klutz' at first sight ... It all made sense. Harry was taken with pity.

"It's Snape, isn't it?" he asked gently. "He's the one you want."

"How-?" Tonks was confused, sitting back on her haunches because her knees started to hurt. "How did you know?"

"Must have been my Inner Trelawney," the boy joked - more or less successfully.

"Great. Now I'm not only a clumsy klutz, but transparent to boot!" Tonks broke down again, wailing for all she was worth. She fleetingly wondered where her resolve to show Severus what he missed had fled to when she couldn't even keep her face in front of Harry, but she quickly chalked it up to emotional stress. Waking up in the arms of a man and now nearly crying in another one's needed some adjustment, after all.

"Don't talk that way about yourself. And you're not transparent, Tonks, I just happen to know you," Harry said soothingly. "And if Snape knew you as well as I do, he would want to be with you, I'm sure."

"But he doesn't want me," wailed Tonks.

Harry didn't know how to answer. "There are a lot of men who-"

"I don't want anyone else," Tonks said as quietly as she could. "Don't you understand, Harry?" She locked gazes with the boy, trying to transmit the meaning of her words with looks alone. "I love him."

'Oh no,' thought Harry weakly.

Similar thoughts shot through Severus Snape's head as he staggered backwards. He ignored the confused looks he received from the students, blocked out the whispered questions whether Neville Longbottom's potion had been wronger than ever judged by his strange reaction.

It was his seventh year Potions class, Gryffindor and Slytherin - how could it be any different? Neville Longbottom, epitome of clumsiness (leaving even someone like Tonks worlds behind), hadn't finished one single potion in his life right all by himself. And seeing how Granger had been told to work together with Parkinson for this lesson, it came as no surprise that the boy had muffed it once again.

There existed a wide range of Truth Serums (the most famous one being Veritaserum), and a seventh year Potions class should be able to brew something more sophisticated than the simplest of them all. Longbottom had not been able to. He had been able, however, to brew something else instead - a potion which showed another kind of truth altogether.

"Ten points," began Snape, clenching his shaking fists, and Neville winced in dread of the impending point deduction, "to Gryffindor."

"But that's unfair!" cried Ron, before his brain could wrap itself around the information fully. He grinned nervously as Snape swept his dark gaze in his direction, lifting one brow. "Ten points to Gryffindor?" he repeated, voicing the surprise of all present students.

"It will be ten points from Gryffindor if you don't shut your mouth instantly, Mr. Weasley."

"Yes, sir," Ron said numbly.

Neville was still catatonic.

Snape swept towards the blackboard, his robe billowing. As he rushed past Neville, the boy fell stiffly from his seat, landing with a hard smack.

"Neville!" cried Hermione, rushing to his side like the helpful Gryffindor she was. She grabbed his collar and shook him, but he wouldn't wake. Must have been too much of a shock for his heart.

"Professor," Hermione said quickly. "May I bring Neville to the Infirmary? I already finished my-"

"I'll take Mr. Longbottom down," Snape interrupted the girl, surprising her into speechlessness, which was, which is widely known, something very, very rare. "I trust no one will try and kill their fellow students while I'm gone? Finish your potions and bottle up a sample for me."

Snape conjured a stretcher, levitated the apparently petrified boy upon it, and then he left the classroom, letting the stretcher float in front of him.

Severus' breath quickened as he neared the Hospital Wing. His mind reeling, he wasn't sure whether his brain had processed what he had seen correctly. He was the most unpleasant being on Earth, that much was death sure, therefore he hadn't ever believed that someone could actually fall in love with him - and such a beautiful young witch no less! How could Tonks have the desire to love him? Yes, she may be clumsy (and he even regretted calling her a klutz), but she wasn't blind!

Or was she ...? It would surely explain her perpetual accidents.

Severus shoved these thoughts aside. No, Tonks was perfectly fine, he'd even felt a

twinge of something this very morning as he woke in her arms. Nobody before had ever gone out of his or her way to ensure his well-being - except for Dumbledore, but he didn't count, as the old Headmaster cared for all people.

Waking in another's personal space had been quite a shock for the surly Potions master. However, he had been able to enjoy Tonks' warmth, too, as well as her mere soothing presence ... and her smell.

The fragrance she wore was all it took for Severus' little bubble to burst. He'd immediately drawn the connection between Tonks and his secret admirer. He'd been angry at the discovery. How dare she terrorize him with her bloody love letters? Severus hadn't had a single serene moment ever since. He didn't take making fun of him very well.

It wasn't after he'd seen the scene unfolding before his very eyes through Neville's Truth Serum concoction that he realised what Tonks' true feelings were. He hadn't been able to stop thinking of her, and though he wasn't sure why it was exactly this truth he saw, Severus could not have been more grateful. And if it weren't for his principles (and for the fact that he already broke them once that day by giving Longbottom ten points), he'd award Potter some points as well for being there for his ...

He wasn't sure what it meant. Did it mean anything at all; the rapid beating of his heart, the sweating of his palms, the fluttering of his nerves? He wished he could write a short question to the "Ask Dumbledore" social service - the old meddler surely would know what to do in every given situation.

Tonks smiled sadly, tucking the comforter tightly around Harry's sleeping form. Even after Voldemort's downfall, the boy took way too much upon himself - not that he had much of a choice when Tonks practically assaulted him. She just couldn't help herself. With his glazed-over eyes and his reddened nose, the boy had reminded her so much of Severus that it all just spilled out of her. Now Harry knew, but it didn't really matter since he could keep a secret.

A door creaked open, and Tonks turned around, expecting to see Madam Pomfrey. However, it wasn't the door leading to the Matron's office swinging open, but the one leading to the hallway. And it wasn't Pomfrey who entered the Infirmary but Tonks' sole reason of pain and sorrow - and her generally pitiful state.

She knew (somewhere, deep inside of her presently spongy brain) she had to breathe in order to draw essential oxygen from the air to survive, but Tonks found she couldn't as dark eyes sought out hers. There was no secret message transmitting - at least, Tonks didn't think so -; their gazes only stayed locked for a few moments, however, when the eye contact broke, Tonks could tell Severus' eyes had not spoken of anger and revulsion like in the morning, but of something else entirely.

Finally, Tonks saw the stretcher floating in mid-air carrying Neville Longbottom. She hadn't even noticed the boy earlier because of Severus' incredible aura - she must have been temporarily blind for everything but him.

Severus levitated the prone figure onto the nearest bed and then went straight for Pomfrey's office. Mere seconds later, the Matron emerged in full professional mode.

"You are still here?" she asked sharply as she took in the sight of Tonks, who flinched at the harsh words. Speaking of being unwanted ...

"Severus? You go as well," Pomfrey said briskly, making impatient shooping motions. "I need peace and quiet in order to get some work done, so out with you."

Tonks blinked and saw the door closing in on her face. When had she left the room? Sighing, she turned to leave, only to be caught off-guard by Severus' very close presence - she could almost feel his warm breath on her ... well, her forehead; she was quite small, after all.

Severus opened his mouth, and for one insane instance, Tonks thought he was going to kiss her - or scream at her for blocking his way, which was nonsense, anyhow, since Tonks was standing with her back to the door leading back to the Infirmary.

"I need to talk to you," Severus said, then added after a moment's hesitation, "in private."

To say Tonks was surprised would have been an understatement. Severus wanted, no, he needed to talk to her; and in private no less? Tonks felt as if she could join Neville in his near-catatonic state. Was she dreaming? But no; judging by Severus' expression she wasn't.

"Well?" he asked impatiently.

Tonks felt a flare of temper rising in her chest. She was seriously tempted to huff in his ... well, his chest, and brush him off just like that. However, she loved him and she had the very unhealthy wish to soak up all the attention he was willing to give her.

"Alright," she found herself saying, before Severus already swept away, clearly expecting her to follow. Frowning, she went after him, needing to jog to keep up with his brisk pace.

"Don't you have a class to teach right now?" she gasped as they arrived at a door which Tonks knew led to Severus' personal chambers, even if it wasn't the exact same door as this morning. She didn't really need to ask why he had a new door.

"They're going to survive one lesson without my supervision," the Potions master muttered, swishing his wand to deactivate the anti-intruder wards. "At least, I don't hope so."

The lock clicked and the door swung open, revealing a room Tonks was already faintly acquainted with. When she'd stormed in last night, she'd only had eyes for her ill darling, but now she could take in the chamber in its entire Spartan beauty. A comfy armchair (of which she had fond memories), two wide-stretched shelves filled to the

rim with books and pickled potions ingredients, and a merrily crackling fire. On the far side of the room was another door which probably led to the bedroom.

Not waiting to be invited, Tonks took a cautious step forward. "Okay, spit it out, Snape. What do you want?" she asked neutrally, wrapping her arms around her midriff as, despite the warm fire, a chill raced down her spine. Maybe it had not been such a good idea to talk to Severus alone, after all.

"Snape?" he repeated with a slight frown as if the word was totally new to him; maybe it was, coming out of Tonks' mouth.

"That's your name, remember?" Tonks closed her eyes briefly. "That's pointless. I don't even know what I'm doing here, you don't seem very intend on disclosing this information anytime soon and now you're complaining because I called you by the name you wanted to be called. It'd be better if I just-" She shook her head, averting her gaze, and made to leave again, when suddenly fingers clamped down on her upper arm. Tonks lifted her eyes once more, and Severus flushed faintly, letting go with a jerk.

"Would you stay and listen? It won't take more than five minutes. After that, you're free to go," Severus asked with slightly pleading eyes. "You may want to sit down," he added and indicated the armchair.

Tonks sighed in surrender and plopped down, raising her brows expectantly - frowning again as she saw Severus gulp dryly.

The dark-haired man paced the floor, many seconds ticking by, and Tonks was on the verge of pointing out that he had only two minutes left, when Severus took a deep breath and spoke. "I'm sorry."

A very long pause ensued after that, and it was very considerate of him to let Tonks digest these two words.

"I shouldn't have kicked you out that way after ... well ..."

"I see," Tonks said. "But it's not important anymore."

"It's just ..." Severus searched for words, rubbing his temples, "I didn't understand. The letters you wrote," (Tonks flushed,) "and as I realised it was you I just ... I mean, there aren't that many who care whatever happens to me ... I was blinded with anger as I realised you wrote those messages ... I thought you were ..." He cut himself off and made an angry noise - whether it was directed at himself or at Tonks, she didn't know. The man altogether became more confusing by the second. What was he babbling about exactly? Tonks was about to voice her question, as Severus went on explaining.

"I thought it all had been a joke - simple as that."

Tonks gasped softly, taken by surprise by the confession. How could he-? She would never even-! "Other people's feelings are nothing to make fun of!" she said fiercely,

unable to understand how someone could even consider such a thing. When Severus smiled crookedly, she felt her heart break.

"How can you say you love me when you don't even know me?" he asked softly.

"What? When have I-" Tonks' expression changed as horror dawned. "Did you hear me talking to Harry?" she whispered. 'Great. Just great! Now he thinks I'm whiny,' she wailed silently.

"It was more of an accident, seeing as how Longbottom was the cause ... but that's beside the point. Answer me," he said before adding a, "please."

"Uh," Tonks said just to stall for time. "You ask why I love you? That's a difficult question ... It just happened. Remember the first time we met?" Severus nodded, rubbing his elbow where the faint bruise was still visible. "I was intrigued by you and I was immediately taken with your voice. It just developed from there. Kind of fast, I know, but it did. And now, well, you know ..."

"And what if I don't know?"

"Well, then it wouldn't matter anyway, since it doesn't change anything, right? I may have feelings for you, but as those feelings are not reciprocated ..." She searched Severus' face for any indication. She had feelings for him, but why would he need to talk to her when he didn't feel something for her in return? Severus blushed, and Tonks grinned triumphantly. Two times in a row! Wow.

"I-" He cut himself off before he could start to stutter. "Swear by the grave of your mother that you are serious about this whole ... affair."

Tonks heard the desperate need in his voice. How long must he have longed for his solitude to end?

'No longer,' vowed the witch silently, leaning forward in her seat and fixing Severus with a sombre gaze. "I can't," she said (Severus looked surprised, miserable and angry at the same time,) "my mother is still alive."

"Oh," Severus said, relief trying to battle its way onto his face.

"I'm willing, though," Tonks continued with a smile, "to swear by the lives of my future kids."

Three weeks, Dumbledore's return and ample clandestine meetings later, former morose Severus Snape was as happy as he could get. He'd brewed a life-stock Pepper-up Potions for his (and Tonks') personal usage, he'd slyly managed to award Potter and Co. a few points (by not deducting as many as before) and he lived a peaceful life with one Nymphadora Tonks in the Hogwart's dungeons.

Smiling as far as the corners of his mouth would go up, Severus pushed open the door to their chambers. He froze in place instantly as deafening music and his lover's voice

nearly blasted him backwards.

Tonks was jumping around like a kangaroo with coordination problems (Severus supposed she thought she was dancing,) some kind of mini Engorgio Charm device was in one hand, and she was singing quite horribly.

"Well, here we go again! Living in a world that others cannot share! Yeah, here we go again! We are moving from a spark to a flame! I am hiiigh-"

"Don't you say," Severus muttered, closing the door.

"-on emotion! Hiiigh again! Your love will find the way!" she finished with a flourish, plopping down in the armchair she had grown so fond of. Her eyes twinkled as she surveyed Severus, her cheeks flushed from exertion. She pointed her wand at her throat and muttered a "Reducio" to return the volume of her voice to normal. "How was your day, honey?" Tonks asked, putting the microphone beside her.

'It's going downhill,' Severus thought, because whenever she asked that particular question, she wanted something he was not willing to grant.

"Fine," he said slowly, and while Tonks was high on emotion, he was on high alert.

"That's nice!"

"Why are you asking?" Severus was still suspicious; out of old habit.

"Just because. I don't need a reason to be interested in your health, do I?"

"I guess not."

Tonks sighed dreamily, leant back and closed her eyes. "Sev?"

The flash of revulsion at the still somehow hated nickname faded after 0.271828 seconds, which was a new record. "Yes?"

"Do you remember the first time we met?"

"How could I forget?" Severus asked back, though there was no bite in his words. "It was just a few corridors down ..."

"Hmm," made Tonks and smiled in remembrance. "You stumbled over my leg." She snickered, and Severus felt a pang of annoyance which dissipated again as Tonks looked up at him with a loving smile. "You fell over me that day and I couldn't stop wishing that you would fall for me ..."

There was a pause in which Severus contemplated how to put his feelings. He ended up saying just what came to mind first.

"Some wishes do come true."

-End-

A/N: Hermione will probably end up with Ron, Harry will be down for a while, but then he'll find love as well. McGonagall subjects Dumbledore to a strict diet - no more sweets. Peeves moves in with Myrtle (Peeves wants kids and suggests to kill some of the younger students, but Myrtle isn't into the parents thing). Lupin wins in the lottery, quits his job and moves to Quebec. He donates most of the money, but keeps enough to allow him to live without worry for the next day. Tonks takes over DADA for good, moving in Severus' (now magically enlarged) chambers. Snape and Tonks won't find out that three Gryffindors were to blame for their union.

-That's all, folks!-