

“They’re not supposed to know,” Remus said quietly. “I should’ve ordered my books by owl post.”

“Can’t be that big a secret,” Severus replied. “O.W.L. results are public record, same as N.E.W.T.s.”

Remus didn’t appear much relieved, but he didn’t pursue it, and they walked together in silence. Once they’d arrived at what had become their regular spot in Muggle London, Severus concentrated on distracting Remus as thoroughly as possible from whatever he feared from those dunderheads.



Friday, September 24, 1976

Severus shook his head at the first years in the corner who’d just broken his concentration with their idiotic game of Exploding Snap. They’d learn soon enough not to waste their time on such things. He turned his attention back to the letter he was writing.

... not as good so far. With the N.E.W.T.s two years out, some of my better customers are not as inclined to seek help. Some of the smarter ones, such as Rosier and Wilkes, obviously want to stay on top of things, but as they are the smarter ones, they require less time. I should, however, have enough by the first Hogsmeade Saturday, which was announced to be October 30 ...

He wished he felt a bit less like a soldier in some black and white film writing to his lover back home. His father watched those, apparently for the express purpose of going on about how those were real men, nothing like namby-pamby wizards, as if firing bullets from a gun were so very different than curses from a wand. No, Severus didn’t much fancy the idea of being like those men at all.



Saturday, September 25, 1976

“Watch it, mate!” Bartleby elbowed him in the ribs. “You’re about to dunk your letter in your porridge.”

Severus crumpled the bit of parchment in his fist. He’d already memorized the main parts anyway.

“Finally heard back from Lily. Why didn’t you tell me? How could you turn on her like that?”

And, of course, there was also the implied question that Remus would never ask.

“So when are you going to turn on me?”

Lily was never going to forgive him. She’d made that perfectly clear. But Remus ... Remus had to be able to

see that he’d never meant to say such a thing, that he’d never meant it. He had to understand.

Severus pushed back his chair and stood.

“Where’re you going? You haven’t even eaten,” Reynolds said.

“Got homework to do.” Severus fled the Great Hall. Rather than the library, he went to Ravenclaw Tower and up to his room, where he flattened out the parchment and read it several more times before even trying to frame a reply.



Sunday, October 17, 1976

It had been almost a bloody month since that last letter. Nearly a week since the last one Severus had sent, the one telling Remus about the next Hogsmeade weekend.

Not that it mattered. There was plenty else for him to do. Rosier and his lot were having some sort of a do at the Three Broomsticks and had invited him, for one.

Still, Severus was immensely relieved when, after the first wave of owls had delivered their assorted letters and issues of the *Daily Prophet*, a smallish, familiar owl alighted in front of him, proffering a scroll of parchment. He gave it a whole rasher of bacon, which was probably a bit much, but the owl didn’t seem to mind, simply taking the thing with it.

It wasn’t much, but it said all it needed to.

“I’ll be there.”



Saturday, October 30, 1976

Remus was waiting inside the room at the inn when Severus arrived, seated at the edge of the bed, head bowed. When he looked up, his eyes looked empty.

An icy pit of lead formed in Severus’ stomach. This wasn’t going to be the carefree afternoon he’d anticipated for the past two weeks.

Then Remus launched himself at him, fists in his robes, mouth pressed firmly against his, tongue tracing the seam of his lips, begging to be let in.

Severus let himself be pulled towards the bed, ignoring the twinge as his leg bumped the table beside it. Words didn’t matter. Only this. At least they still had this.



Saturday, March 5, 1977

Severus told himself it was just because of the full moon, even though that had never been a problem during the day leading up to it before. Remus should have been fine

until tonight. He was just worried about getting back by moonrise, even though they never stayed as late as all that.

He very pointedly did not think about how much more sparse Remus' letters had become since October. That was nothing to do with why he wasn't coming to Hogsmeade today.

And anyway, it was a chance to take Rosier up on his recurring invitation and see what that lot wanted with him.

"There you are! Pull up a chair," Mulciber said. "What'll you have?"

"Gillywater." Butterbeer was far too cloying, and he had no intention of addling his wits with anything stronger.

"So, I imagine you're wondering why we've invited you here," Rosier said.

Severus nodded warily as he looked about the group, largely composed of Slytherins, including Black's younger brother.

"You've helped quite a few of us out," Rosier continued, "and not out of some typical Ravenclaw nonsense about the noble pursuit of learning."

Severus didn't say anything. He wasn't exactly rich enough for that sentiment, but he wasn't about to admit as much.

"You realize your work has value," Rosier said. "So do we. We also value mutually beneficial arrangements such as many of us have with you already, and we'd like to see about the possibility of other such arrangements."

"Not always to do with school," Wilkes added.

Severus took in the faces around the table as he sipped his Gillywater. Several came from very influential families, including Black, who'd made it very clear he had no use for his Gryffindor brother.

"What did you have in mind?" he asked.



Tuesday, April 12, 1977

Severus closed his Potions text and stared at *Experimental Potions Theory*, which was lying open next to it. Belby had some intriguing ideas, particularly in the realm of managing irreversible curse damage by means of potions, but Severus was finding it difficult to focus on how that could be used in his essay.

Instead, he pulled out and reread the letter that had arrived at breakfast. Remus wasn't coming to Hogsmeade next week either. He hadn't even bothered to give a real reason why, though Severus had his suspicions.

Did he expect me to pine away after him and Lily and not make any other friends? He never minded when I was just taking their money.

Right. It was high time he stopped chasing after Remus like a jealous lover and simply moved on with his life. That included not mooning over him instead of doing his homework.

Severus reopened his text and picked his quill back up, steadfastly ignoring the pang in his chest as he did. He needed to finish this quickly. He didn't want it hanging over his head when he met with Rosier's bunch after dinner. At least they still had some use for him.



Tuesday, June 20, 1978

Four days. It had been only four days since Severus' last Leaving Feast. It felt as though he'd stepped into another entire life during those few days.

Father had made it clear he didn't want Severus "muckin' about the place with that fairy-boy magic" under his roof. If Mother had still been alive, Severus wasn't sure she'd have said anything. Father had worn her down too far over the years.

Just as well. Can't be seen living in a Muggle place like that now in any case.

With Rosier's help, he'd got a two-year apprenticeship with Arsenius Jigger that had started yesterday and included a flat above the apothecary in Diagon Alley.

And now this.

He looked at the manor house overlooking the graveyard into which Rosier's Portkey had dropped him. The full moon hung over it, casting an eerie silvery light over manor and gravestones alike. Severus told himself that was the reason for the strange twinge its appearance caused.

Squaring his shoulders, he trudged up the hill and used his wand to tap out the sequence he'd been taught. The door swung open revealing a room full of cloaked and masked figures. He felt naked and exposed by comparison. He reminded himself that he already knew several of the faces behind the masks, that they wanted him here, had invited him. He didn't belong here yet, but he would.

"Come in," said the one unmasked man, a striking brunet whose slitted eyes looked barely human. Power radiated from him, and there was no question in Severus' mind that this was the Dark Lord at last. "Come and be tested, and we shall see whether you are fit to join us."

Severus walked forward and knelt when he was precisely one yard from the man, as he'd been told to do. He kept

his breaths even, carefully thinking only of his eagerness to join the Death Eaters' ranks and his new apprenticeship, tucking away anything inappropriate that might see him leaving this meeting in a box rather than a mask.

"Look at me," the Dark Lord commanded.

As their eyes met, Severus felt the instant his mind was laid bare. He was walking alone into Hogsmeade, meeting with Rosier and the others in the Three Broomsticks, being tripped on the Hogwarts Express by Black, writing his apprenticeship application with Rosier making suggestions over his shoulder, studying alone in the Ravenclaw Common Room, tutoring Mulciber in Potions, dueling Black and Potter until Rosier intervened, hanging by his ankles and then dropped on his head, collaborating with Avery and the other Black on a new hex, testing it on Black's brother, entering this room and assuring himself of his place in it. Abruptly, it all stopped.

"I see you are indeed eager. And you have successfully completed the tasks I sent you through my faithful servants."

That gave him a start. He'd recognized the challenges for what they were, an opportunity to prove himself, but he'd no idea they'd come from the Dark Lord himself. Still, he didn't speak.

"Do you truly wish to join us?"

"Yes."

"Will you work tirelessly towards a return to the glorious traditions that have become so weak in recent years?"

"I will."

"Will you obey my commands without question?"

"I will."

"Give me your arm."

Severus drew up his sleeve and presented his left arm.

"Do you willingly accept my Mark, that I may summon you at need and your brethren may know you as one of their own?"

"I do."

The tip of the Dark Lord's wand pressed into his forearm, and a searing pain shot through it. He gritted his teeth so he wouldn't cry out, willing the tears stinging the backs of his eyes to dry.

The pain did not precisely end so much as subside to a dull ache as the Dark Lord removed his wand, leaving behind the infamous skull and snake.

"Welcome to your new family."

Someone tugged at Severus' elbow and handed him a cloak and mask, and a sense of satisfaction spread through him like Firewhisky licking through his veins.

"Thank you, master."



Monday, March 31, 1980

Severus held himself completely still until the echoes of his crack of Apparition faded. When he was certain that he hadn't been noticed, he allowed himself a steadying breath. As much sense as there was to the Dark Lord's plan, he was not looking forward to facing Dumbledore. There was, he suspected, every likelihood that this supposed interview was a trap.

There was no sentimentality about his choice of Apparition point. Coming to this spot first simply made sense, as it was one of the places in Hogsmeade that was most familiar to him. He touched the large stone and glanced up at the full moon. With a scowl, he yanked his hand back to his side and squashed the nascent question of where a certain werewolf might be tonight.

He made his way through the stand of trees and approached the Hog's Head, going to the front entryway for the first time. The odor of goats was as bad as he'd remembered, if not worse.

He took a seat in a corner that gave him the widest possible view of his surroundings and ordered a Gillywater to satisfy the innkeeper.

"Headmaster said t'tell you he'd be down in a few minutes," the grizzled old man said. "You're not his only interview tonight."

Severus acknowledged that with a nod as he accepted the glass and took a sip from the least filthy bit of it he could find.

After several long minutes, he began to grow impatient. Yes, he could wait for hours if he were required to do so, but that had not been his expectation this evening. Besides that, he had to admit a certain curiosity as to who else was being interviewed and whether they were after the same position.

The innkeeper had taken himself off to the kitchen just a bit ago, so Severus rose and took the stairs quietly, hoping to find out something useful.

It was easy enough to find the room being used, as a strange, gravelly voice was emanating from it. His eyes widened as he heard what it was saying.

"... vanquish the Dark Lord approaches ... born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies ..."

“What’re you doing up here?” A large hand gripped his shoulder and spun him around. “Get your arse back downstairs and wait your turn!”

The gravelly voice had continued, but Severus hadn’t been able to hear the rest of what it said. There was silence and then a click.

The door to the room had opened. Dumbledore was standing there, and behind him was a very oddly dressed witch, whose glittery necklaces and oversized glasses gave her a distinctly insect-like appearance, and yet she was looking at Severus like something she’d found on the underside of her shoe. Fighting the urge to panic and bolt, Severus kept his mind carefully blank of everything save the startling woman and his own determination to succeed at his interview as Dumbledore regarded him carefully.

“I do not believe we will have our interview, Mr. Snape,” the headmaster said. “I have found it quite difficult for some years to find personnel who are able to maintain the Defense Against the Dark Arts position, and I do not think that eavesdropping, much less being caught at it, bodes well for someone wishing to attempt it.”

Severus pressed his lips together tightly but was careful to show no more than the ordinary frustration one might feel at being denied a position.

Does he not realize what I heard?

He was afraid any dignity that such a performance might have salvaged, however, was undercut by the burly innkeeper still hanging onto him.

“Off with you then,” the smelly old man said, dragging him down the stairs and pitching him out the front door so that he barely kept his feet. “To think this is the thanks I get. Ungrateful sod.”

Straightening and smoothing out his robes, Severus simply walked back towards the train station. Once well out of the way, he could Apparate back to the Dark Lord’s manor to report. He hoped that the prophetic warning he’d heard, though incomplete, might spare him the worst of his Lord’s temper for failing to complete his assigned mission.



Thursday, April 16, 1981

Severus Conjured a table and set his steaming cauldron atop it. He didn’t bother to look out over the group of faces before him. Didn’t want to know if he recognized any of them save Greyback. Wouldn’t care if this experimental potion killed the lot, save that his master would be sorely displeased to lose the army of biddable monsters he craved.

He ladled out goblets full to each of them as he’d done yesterday and would do again for the next three days.

“So it is you,” a familiar voice said.

He looked up from the cauldron at the brown-haired man in tattered robes, framed in the silver of the mask around Severus’ eyes.

“They’ll kill her, you know.”

“On your way,” Severus barked, returning his eyes to his cauldron and ladling potion into another goblet.

It didn’t matter whether the chill running down his spine was to do with the brown-haired man or what he’d said. It didn’t.



Tuesday, August 4, 1981

Severus’ nerves sang with terror as he scanned the small clearing in the darkness, pacing around the large stone in its center, scenting the air and listening carefully for any sounds out of place. He’d taken every precaution not to be followed, but he had every bit as much reason to fear the one expecting to meet him here as those who might have dogged his movements.

Reasonably certain he was unobserved, he shifted back to human form, his eyes taking a moment to adjust to their much poorer night vision.

A loud crack and a flash of light, and his wand shot out of his hand. Severus dropped to his knees behind the stone, but not before he saw that it was Dumbledore. That wasn’t particularly reassuring.

“Don’t kill me!” he called out, thinking, *at least not until you hear what I have to say.*

“I do not plan to.” Dumbledore glared down at Severus as he straightened and stood. “What message did Lord Voldemort send with you?”

Severus suppressed a wince at the pain that lanced through his forearm at the name. “I’m here on my own account.”

Dumbledore said nothing.

“Lupin’s made it clear that you know Lily and her family are targeted.”

“Something, I believe, for which they have you to thank.”

White hot fury roiled through Severus’ veins. “I didn’t even know she’d got married, much less that she was pregnant! I would never have—”

“But it would be fine for anyone else’s child to be murdered?”

"I don't know who it is that has been informing the Dark Lord of your attempts to protect them," Severus pressed on. "The only name I've heard is 'Wormtail,' which is obviously some sort of code."

"And what is it you expect me to do with this information?" Dumbledore demanded.

"Protect them!" Severus retorted. "Please."

That last word hung in the air for a moment.

"Was there anything else?"

"Greyback suspects there is an informant in his pack." Severus drew a steadying breath. "When he finds out who it is, he will tear Lupin apart."

"Then I should think it would be very important he not find out." Dumbledore tilted his head. "I confess to some surprise that he has not already."

"Lupin's face is an open book!" Severus slammed his hands down on the stone between them. "It's nothing short of a miracle he's lasted this long. Please, pull him out."

"I do not believe that would be wise," Dumbledore replied. "Not only would that mark him definitively as the spy, we would lack sorely for the information he has been able to provide."

Severus swallowed hard. "You could find a way. You always do."

"You have made two demands so far. I wonder what you think to offer in return?"

"Information. I have access to far more than Lupin, including the precise formulations that have been used on the werewolves and my theories as to why none have worked." He straightened and balled his hands at his sides.

"Theories?"

Severus didn't reply. Dumbledore wasn't getting another scrap until he promised to keep them both safe.

"Very well." Dumbledore's eyes gleamed. "In return, I believe you might help me out of a slight difficulty. Professor Slughorn has indicated that he would like to retire, leaving me without a Potions master."

Severus' heart leapt. The Dark Lord would be pleased that he'd finally secured a position at Hogwarts, albeit not the one he'd had in mind, and such would provide the perfect opportunity to convey information to Dumbledore.

Until the Dark Lord catches me and tortures me to death.

But Remus would be safe. Remus and Lily.

Severus nodded, hardly daring to believe it.

"Splendid. I'll expect you at two o'clock on the nineteenth to review the Potions curriculum so that you may begin planning your lessons." Dumbledore turned as if to go, then turned back. "If any information you give me proves to be deliberately inaccurate, Severus, I will have no choice but to ask Mr. Lupin to resume his duties."

"That will not prove necessary," Severus replied through gritted teeth.

"See that it does not." This time Dumbledore did turn on his heel, Apparating away with a barely audible crack.



Saturday, October 31, 1981

Severus ran as fast as his four legs would carry him down the lane and past the tiny church.

An explosion shook the night, but he didn't break his stride.

Too late. Too late.

He ran into the ruined building as soon as it flickered into view, unwilling to accept what its sudden visibility must mean. The baby's screams gave him hope as he'd bounded up the stairs, past Potter's corpse.

Lily lay in a tangle of limbs in front of the cot. There was no mistaking this for peaceful sleep. He whined at her to wake up anyway. She remained motionless.

The baby calmed at the sight of him. Severus wondered irrelevantly if the child thought he was a magical plushy.

As for himself, he wasn't sure what he thought of the child. He was Lily's. She'd obviously died saving him. Severus was too numb to work out what he felt about the infant's survival, though instinct bade him check that the child was unhurt. The cot itself appeared undamaged, and the babe appeared healthy enough, though he bore a strange, lightning-like scar.

The opposite wall had blown out, all debris following it out onto the ground. Severus shuddered as he realized the Dark Lord was probably lying out there amongst the rubble. Vulnerable.

With a growl he took a running leap over the remains of the wall and onto the still form half-buried in stone and plaster. Ignoring the smell of death already emanating from the body and the twinge from his leg as he landed, he clamped his jaws around the throat and tore, gagging on the acrid taste.

A hissing sound off to one side made him whip his head around, stopping him from further pointless mutilation, but it was only a small snake such as one might find in any garden, if somewhat out of season. Severus turned back to the corpse below him, blood oozing from the gaping wound he'd created.

Disgusted, he stepped away and shifted into his human form. He gagged and spat out as much blood as he could. He quickly sent a message by Patronus to Dumbledore and shifted back. The coppery taste was still present, but somehow it did not bother him as much.

The baby began to cry again, but he couldn't bring himself to go back up there. Couldn't bear to see Lily's body again. The child would be safe in its cot. He found a spot that afforded him a measure of cover and a reasonable view of both cottage and road, then settled in to watch and wait.

Severus wasn't sure it was precisely easier to sit vigil here in this form. He still felt as though he'd been hit with an Entrail-Expelling Curse. If anything, the grief for the loss of his first real friend was even more physical as a fox than it had been as a human. But complicated emotions such as guilt and resentment that had begun to threaten during the time he'd shifted back seemed beyond him now, a state he welcomed.

No return message came. Instead, Black arrived on his ridiculous flying motorcycle and tore through the house. Severus heard him screaming as if from very far away.

Sometime later, Black looked through the gaping hole in the cottage. Severus stayed utterly still, but he needn't have bothered. Black was only looking for the same thing he had.

Moments later, Black left the cottage, babe in arms, just as Hagrid, of all people arrived. They argued, though the only information they let drop that Severus deemed important was that Dumbledore had sent Hagrid—begging the question how Black had known to come—and that Black was the boy's godfather.

Both men left shortly thereafter, Black on foot and Hagrid on the motorcycle.

Severus remained where he was. There was nothing else to be done, after all. It was over. All of it.



Sunday, November 1, 1981

He was still sitting in the same spot, staring at the house and the rubble behind it, when the sun rose. The Dark Lord still hadn't moved, for all that Severus had half expected him to.

All that talk of immortality. Just more of his lies.

There had been a flurry of activity a few hours ago. Word must have got out, and the wizards in the neighborhood had all come by to peer at the wreckage, though none had actually ventured onto the grounds. They'd all taken themselves off by now, though he was sure more would arrive later. Now the Muggles were beginning to stir in their homes, but none had ventured out yet, which made the disheveled man walking past the small church all the more obvious.

Remus.

There was no mistaking him, even before he drew close enough for Severus to catch his scent. He stopped in front of the cottage and stared at it for a long minute before cutting across the grass straight towards Severus.

Too empty of anything but pain to care, he simply watched the man approach and made no move to get out of the way when Remus drew his wand. If anything, he was disappointed that all he did was cast the spell to cancel Severus' Animagus transformation. He couldn't even be arsed to get up from the now-ridiculous position, so ill-suited to his human body.

"Tell me you didn't know," Remus demanded, tears streaming down his face, wand still trained on Severus. "Or tell me you tried to stop it. Tell me something!"

"Of course I tried to stop it!" Severus felt tears prick at his own eyes, pressure building up in his chest as all those more complicated emotions began to assert themselves. "Still gone. Dead."

He gave in at last, his body wracked with sobs. It had all been for nothing. His pleas to the Dark Lord, insinuating he wanted Lily for himself. His espionage for Dumbledore. All for nothing.

He stiffened when he felt Remus kneel pull him up and then drag him through the sickening swirl of Side-Along Apparition. But he didn't bother to take in his new surroundings, sagging into the arms that held him as his knees gave way.

"I had to know," Remus was murmuring against his hair, his own breath coming in shuddering gasps. "I couldn't hate you. But if you'd been ... I don't have to hate you."

"You should," he croaked.

"I can't." Remus lowered them both to the ground ... no, floor. He even took care to keep Severus' leg from banging against anything on the way down.

Severus thought he smelled goats. Looking around, he realized where they were.

“Dumbledore said to bring you here and wait.”

Severus couldn't imagine what there was to wait for, but he didn't argue. He was out of arguments. Out of tears. Instead, he said, “I could never hate you either.” After a minute, he added, “I tried.”

“So did I.” Remus scrubbed his hands over his face.

Silence.

“Do you think we could have done anything differently?” Remus asked. “Changed anything?”

“I tried,” Severus repeated. “It didn't matter.”

“It matters that you tried,” Remus said. “At least, it matters to me.”

Staring at Remus, Severus realized he had managed at least one thing. Whatever else he'd been up to, Remus had been pulled from Greyback's pack. Severus might not have kept Lily alive, but he had done that.

“It matters to me,” Remus repeated.

Firefly124's Bio

When she isn't reading or writing fanfiction in any number of fandoms, firefly124 can often be found bellydancing, crocheting, or in some other creative pursuit, as the Muse beckons.

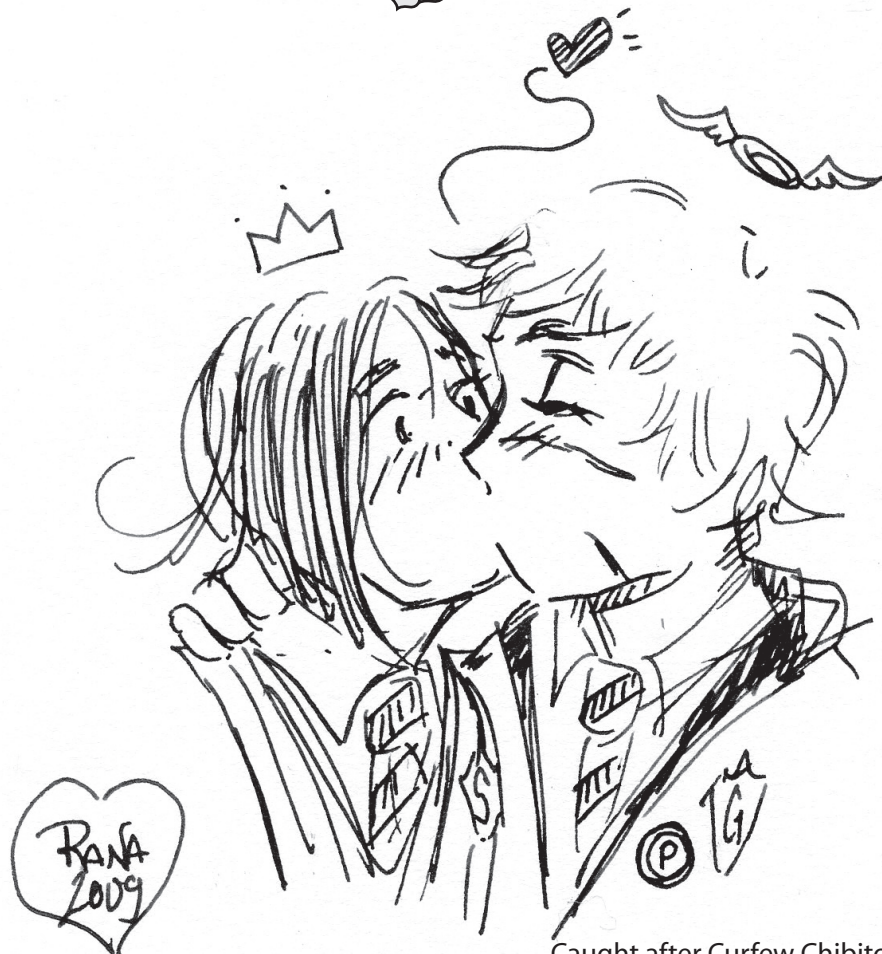
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Xterm's Bio

Xterm is primarily a lurker, who, on occasion, can be talked into taking the boys out and playing with them a bit. The fandom she participates in the most is Harry Potter, with ninety percent of the time as a crewmember of the 'Ship Snupin. It's easiest to get a hold of her at LJ (surprisingly *wink* with her user name, xterm).

Her gallery at LJ

<http://pics.livejournal.com/xterm/gallery/0000q68f> usually has her most recent work.



Caught after Curfew Chibitoaster/Littleblackbow

Information

Rated PG.

Summary: "Revenge is a dish best served cold," Lucius Malfoy once told his friend Severus. He's about to find out just how true that statement is.

Author Note: Thanks to Book7BrokeMyBrain for the fast beta, and Skitty Kat for the art.
salaams to them both

Best Served Cold

by Ellid
Art by Skitty_kat

The Daily Prophet

June 29th 2001

Special Edition

Vol. XXX

SCANDAL IN HOGSMEADE

HOGWARTS HEADMASTER IN LOVE NEST WITH WIDOWED WEREWOLF!!!!

HOGSMEADE -In a shocking development, Hogwarts Headmaster Severus Snape is alleged to be living in an intimate relationship with notorious werewolf Remus Lupin in a "love den" outside of Hogsmeade. Mr. Lupin, whose wife,

Nymphadora Tonks-Lupin, died heroically at the Battle of Hogwarts, moved to Hogsmeade last year with his young son, Theodore, allegedly to work on his memoirs

[three paragraphs deleted]

When asked for comment on this story, Headmaster Snape threatened to turn this reporter into a newt. Mr. Lupin was allegedly in wolf form and unavailable for comment, although this reporter noted that the full moon was three days ago....

Excerpt from letter to Remus Lupin from Andromeda Tonks, 1 July 2001:

...I knew you weren't good for my Dora! She's barely cold in her grave, and don't you tell me it's been two years and it's time for you to move on! She gave you a son! You should find him a *mother*, not SNAPE!!!!

You should be ashamed of yourself! I will never allow....

Excerpt from transcript of the Hogwarts Board of Governors' meeting, 26 July 2001.

MR. PICKINGILL: Do you deny that you are engaged in an illicit relationship with this werewolf?

HEADMASTER SNAPE: I deny that I am in an illicit relationship.

MR. PICKINGILL: Two men -

HEADMASTER SNAPE: Homosexuality was decriminalized nearly forty years ago. There is nothing in my contract forbidding it.

MADAME PUCEY: We have received many letters of protest. You are setting a poor example for the children.

HEADMASTER SNAPE: How so? Am I to deny myself all companionship?

MADAME PUCEY: That is not what we are saying. We are saying that living in an intimate relationship is not setting a good example for the students.

HEADMASTER SNAPE: Please note that under current law, I am unable to marry Mr. Lupin. Were that not the case, be assured that he would be living here at the castle as my spouse, not on the outskirts of town in his own establishment, and the question of an illicit relationship would not be at issue.

MR. PICKINGILL: This is outrageous! Two men - disgusting -

HEADMASTER SNAPE: It is no one's business but ours.

MR. MALFOY: Severus, Severus. I told you that this would rebound on you when you first confided in me about your feelings for this - individual. Surely you could see that there would be consequences?

HEADMASTER SNAPE: There are consequences only because someone informed the Governors and the press. Lupin and I have been involved since shortly after the War. No harm was done to the children or the school until we were outed by the press.

MADAME PUCEY: Madame Lupin -

HEADMASTER SNAPE: Tonks-Lupin. Accuracy would be appreciated.



MADAME PUCEY: - sacrificed herself so that her husband would live. One could say that this dishonours her memory.

MR. MALFOY: I must agree, Severus. My niece was never a conventional witch, but even she would have objected to being replaced by a man.

HEADMASTER SNAPE: You haven't the slightest idea what Nymphadora thought or wanted, Lucius.

MR. MALFOY: This is not about me, Severus. This is about you.

HEADMASTER SNAPE: It is about prejudice. Did we learn nothing from the War?

MR. PICKINGILL: Lucius! You said he'd go quietly!

HEADMASTER SNAPE: I beg your pardon?

MR. MALFOY: We'll discuss this later, George.

MADAME PUCEY: I'm with George, Lucius. You told us Snape would resign when his secret was -

HEADMASTER SNAPE: What? What?

MR. MALFOY: I never said that, Adelia. You must be mistaken.

MADAME PUCEY: Secretary! I demand that you read back the minutes.

HEADMASTER SNAPE: You let them write this down? Lucius, you're slipping.

MISS BAXTER-COHN: According to the minutes of the Executive Session, Mr. Malfoy stated that Headmaster Snape was, quote, living as Lupin's catamite -

HEADMASTER SNAPE: Not true. I usually top.

MR. PICKINGILL: Top? What does that mean?

MISS BAXTER-COHN: - and ashamed of it.

HEADMASTER SNAPE: Again, not true. We attended the Muggle Pride March last July. We left Teddy with his grandmother so we could go clubbing afterwards. The sole reason we have not lived together openly is because of that ridiculous morals clause in my contract.

MR. MALFOY: We don't need the details, Severus.

HEADMASTER SNAPE: No one seemed to mind when Albus and Elphias Doge were buggering each other's brains out behind Greenhouse 6.

MR. PICKINGILL: What? What?

MR. MALFOY: He's raving, George. Ignore him.

MISS BAXTER-COHN: Mr. Malfoy further stated that he was confident that the Headmaster would resign if his living arrangements became public. He then suggested several possible replacements -

MR. MALFOY: Mere speculation, I never -

HEADMASTER SNAPE: Shut it, Lucius. This is fascinating.

MISS BAXTER-COHN: - who would be more malleable and less intent on introducing reform to the house system and the curriculum.

MR. MALFOY: That is a distortion of my - Severus. Stop staring at me like that. You aren't -

HEADMASTER SNAPE: You really should have studied Occlumency when you had the chance, Lucius.

MR. MALFOY: Bugger.

Excerpt from Decision on Expedited Custody Petition of Andromeda Black Tonks against R.J. Lupin for custody of Theodore Remus Lupin, a minor child, dated 22 August, 2001.

...as social mores have changed since the Petitioner was a child, we find her objection to Mr. Lupin's custody of his child puzzling. Although we must agree that the minor child would ideally be raised by his mother and his father, the heroic death of Petitioner's daughter has made this, of course, impossible. The minor child's father is alive and clearly loves his son, and investigation has shown no evidence that he has been harmed by his father's relationship with another man.

We therefore find that it is in the best interest of the child that he remain with his father and deny the Petitioner's claim, with prejudice.

Marchbanks, W.

Excerpt from letter to the Board of Governors, dated 27 August 2001.

...Accordingly, I hereby grant the wishes of Mr. Malfoy, Madame Pucey, and the allegedly cunning Mr. Pickingill, not to mention the worthy readers of the newspapers, and resign my position, effective immediately. I have already removed my possessions, including potions ingredients and all intellectual property such as my class notes, syllabi, and research, from the school. Good luck to Slughorn or whichever incompetent fool you pick to replace me....

Letter from Remus Lupin and Severus Snape to Minerva McGonagall, Hermione Granger, Ronald Weasley, Harry Potter, Filius Flitwick, Rubeus Hagrid, etc., etc.

10 November 2001

Dear Friends:

This is not an easy letter to write. After due consideration, however, we do not believe that we have a choice.

Over the past six months we have come to realize that the Wizarding World has learned nothing about prejudice from the Dark Lord's Voldemort's reign of terror. We have been forced from our jobs, Remus nearly lost custody of his son, and our house has been repeatedly vandalized. The life that we fought for has been made unbearable thanks to the vindictive 'outing' we received in the newspapers in June.

We have thought long and hard about this, and our decision is irrevocable: we are leaving the Wizarding World. We have obtained employment and housing under Muggle identities in an undisclosed location. Do not attempt to find us or talk us out of this, as our minds are made up....

SIX YEARS LATER

Paid advertisement on or about 16 August, 2007, on the "Davina Tyson Show" on the WWN. Print versions, accompanied by appropriate graphics, appear in every Wizarding publication except the Quibbler.

DO YOU WANT TO SAVE MONEY?

We've all been tempted:

-There's a sale at Marks & Spencer. You'll have to alter the cut, but the price is so good it's worth it.

-Milk at the petrol station is cheaper than Madam Jenner's. What's the harm in buying a gallon or two?

-You've had a long, hard day at the Ministry and you don't feel like cooking. It's easy to pick up a meal at the pub or McDougall's, and your wife will be so happy!

DON'T BUY MUGGLE!

Face it. We've all bought from Muggle businesses without thinking about it. Most of us live near Muggles. Some of us are related to Muggles. It's so easy to buy Muggle without thinking about all the money we're wasting when we buy from Muggle stores, or the damage we're doing to Wizard-owned businesses and families by letting our hard-earned galleons flow into Muggle coffers.

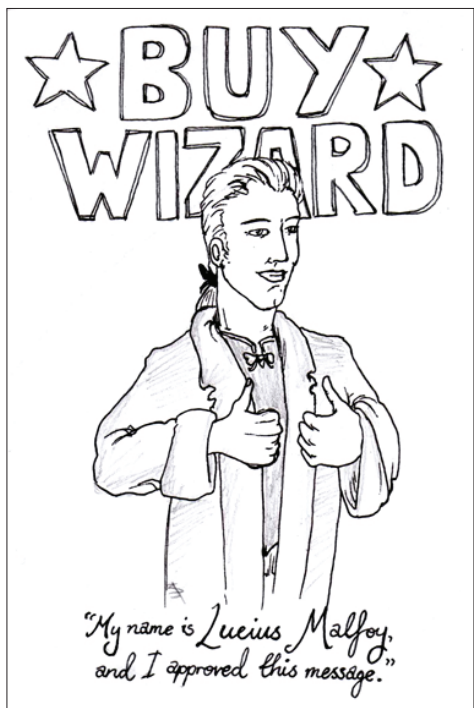
Our free booklet, "How to Save Money by Buying Wizard," will show you how easy it is to save money and support your community by buying exclusively from Wizard-owned businesses. Every sickle you spend in Diagon Alley or Hogsmeade supports your friends and neighbours, not Muggles who care only about profit. Merely send five knuts by owl-post to:

*"How to Save Money"
c/o The Traditionalist Coalition
Diagon Alley, London*

SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY! BUY WIZARD! IT'S TIME WE TOOK CARE OF OUR OWN!

Paid for by Malfoy for Wizengamot, G. Goyle Sr., recording secretary.

LUCIUS MALFOY: My name is Lucius Malfoy, and I approved this message.



"Gregory! Do you have the results of the latest poll?" Lucius Malfoy flicked his cloak off his shoulders and watched as it floated to the rack behind his desk. "Millicent has informed me that the pamphlets are almost sold out so it should be reflected in the numbers."

"That it is, sir." Gregory Goyle, Sr., lumbered in, a long sheet of paper trailing from his hand. "You're up three points over Madam Granger-Weasley since the Buy Wizard campaign hit the WWN. Rita Skeeter's pen portrait of the Weasleys' marriage didn't help - a lot of people don't approve of her keeping her name, even hyphenated.

"We're also seeing good results from the push polls expressing concern about her youth, especially among women. She might be a war hero, but a lot of the ladies think she should be starting a family instead of standing for the Wizengamot."

Lucius removed his gloves. They were dyed to match his top boots, which in turn matched his cloak and cane. Dressing well was so important. "Excellent point. The next pamphlet should be about how it's the patriotic duty of our women to repopulate our world after the late unpleasantness. My son's wife should be posed with a baby on the cover."

Goyle looked puzzled. "But sir, Madam Astoria hasn't had a baby yet. Everyone knows that."

“That problem should be solved in the near future,” said Lucius between his teeth. If Snape hadn’t illegally removed all his notes and workbooks when he decamped from Hogwarts, he would already be a grandfather twice over. Slughorn promised results, but so far Astoria had remained distressingly childless. “Pose her anyway. The back cover should show Granger -”

“Granger-Weasley, sir.”

“ - in Muggle clothes looking at an empty crib. The artist can alter the faces enough that she won’t dare sue.” Lucius picked up his morning mail from his blotter and automatically began tossing them into piles: correspondence to be answered personally; correspondence to be answered with a form letter and a signed photograph; bills to be forwarded to his accountant; campaign expenses to be given to his banker; the *Prophet* and its lovely, lovely poll showing him leading that too-clever girl; *Modern Magery* and its pen portrait of him as the stern but loving patriarch; Witch Weekly’s gushing look at “Luscious Lucius at home”....

One large, bulging envelope puzzled him. It was likely a gift from one of his female admirers, of whom there seemed to be quite a few. Narcissa had been somewhat miffed when the first packages arrived, and even less pleased by the gushing letters, but he’d soon set her straight. “Consider them votes, darling,” he’d said, and, as usual, Narcissa had sighed and agreed.

“Gregory? Do we have any contributors in Porthmadog?”

“Porthmadog? I don’t think so, sir. There aren’t any registered Wizards living there. Blaenau Ffestiniog, maybe.” Goyle drew his wand and cast a diagnostic spell on the package. “Seems harmless enough. It might be one of us who went underground after the War - late unpleasantness.”

Lucius frowned. For all its size, the package was too light to be a gift, the wrong color to be the weekly package of clippings from his service. It crackled slightly as he reclaimed it from Goyle and summoned an ivory-handled letter opener. Was it yet another letter requesting a private meeting? Or something else?

A bell rang over the door. Gregory muttered an indelicate word. “Sorry, sir. That’s the press signal. Someone from the *Prophet*, most likely. Should I give them a sample booklet?”

“Yes, yes.” Lucius made a shooining gesture. “Whatever they want. Offer Granger - “

“Granger-Weasley, sir.”

“Whatever. Make a public offer to send her a free copy, and one for her parents.” Lucius smiled in the way that had always made Draco snap to. “They’re Muggle dentists, you know.”

“That I do, sir,” said Goyle. He exited, muttering, as the bell rang again.

Lucius smiled to himself at the sound of voices from the reception area. Gregory had his limits, Merlin knew, but the day he couldn’t deal effectively with the press was the day Lucius retired to Malfoy Manor to breed albino house elves. It was a shame his son could barely cast a decent *Incendio*, but at least Draco had been able to keep Gregory Jr. in work at that wretched but profitable establishment. Draco himself had grumbled at stooping so low when Lucius turned the place over to him, but when Lucius had pointed out how much money had gone to legal fees, Dark Mark removal, and Narcissa’s winter wardrobe, he had seen the -

The envelope upended itself without warning, spilling out several clippings, photographs, and a single sheet of that pseudo-parchment paper Muggles used when they wanted to play at calligraphy. Some of the clippings were yellow from age, others the greyish-white of fresh newsprint. One or two were grainy photocopies. Not one of the photographs moved.

It was clearly a joke of some sort, or perhaps yet another protest against his “bigotry” for advocating for purebloods against the creeping influence of Muggles and Muggleborns on British Wizardry. Lucius snorted and was about to bin the lot when the parchment fluttered to shoulder level and a voice he had not heard in six years filled the room.

Hello, Lucius. I see that you’re doing well.

It had to be a joke. Severus had left the Wizarding World, lock, stock, and werewolf, not to mention the werewolf’s multi-coloured offspring. No one, not even Potter and his in-laws, had received so much as a Christmas card or request for money from either of them. What was going on?

You're surprised to hear from me, I daresay. The voice chuckled softly. *I simply wished to convey my congratulations on your political success.*

Lucius smiled thinly. Of course it was Severus. The spiky handwriting on the Muggle paper was unmistakable. "As well you should. Unlike you, I've always had an eye to my future. Even with the Dark Lord gone, I –"

Remus, Teddy, and I have established ourselves in the Muggle world. Except for brewing Wolfsbane for Remus once a month, I haven't used my wand in years. Oddly enough, I haven't missed it. You might consider trying it once in a while. Intellectual rigor and all that.

"Severus, Severus." Lucius shook his head at the imitation parchment. "I thought you knew me better than that, and you the clever one. Clearly you've inhaled a bit too much aconite, unless it's lack of sleep from tending Lupin's sprog."

I'm sure you've better things to do than listen to me natter on about my life. Enclosed please find a few items that might be of interest to you. You and Draco haven't exactly covered your tracks very well, have you?

Severus had never talked like that unless he had something unusually subtle in mind. Lucius leaned forward with a slight frown, elegant nails clicking against his favourite paperweight as he drummed his fingers. What the –

Please give my regards to Narcissa and Draco – or does he prefer David these days? Odd, that he chose a Welsh nom-de-guerre for his business endeavours in the Muggle World..

Severus laughed as a wolf howled somewhere in the background and a young child's voice asked Papa for another slice of orange. It was not a pretty laugh.

Oh, one more thing. You might want to share this with your campaign manager. Gregory never did think very quickly on his feet.

'Bye-bye,' as my stepson would put it. I'm sure the peacocks will still speak to you no matter what.

"Peacocks? What the devil are you talking about?" Lucius snatched up the parchment and shook it as if it might turn into Severus himself. "I'll win the election, you traitorous *Half-Blood*, and then I'll send the Aurors after you and that bloody wolf!"

One of the clippings fluttered up to eye level. Another voice, this one young and high-pitched, spoke.

Dear Mr. Malfoy, Daddy and Papa said I should tell you to read this one first. It's all about me and how your restaurant gave me tummy-ache! That wasn't very nice, you know. I was so sick that my hair wouldn't change colour for a week, and I kept throwing up all over Papa's workroom so he was very cross even though it wasn't my fault that there were mealy worms in my Kiddie Fun Meal.

Kiddie Fun Meal? Lucius jammed his pince-nez into place, hands shaking slightly. Surely Severus and his "family" hadn't found –

Another voice, husky enough that it had to be Lupin, interrupted the child. Darling, you need to mind your manners. You don't want Mr. Malfoy's solicitors to send Daddy and Papa a nasty note, do you?

-No, Papa! I'm sorry.

-It's all right, darling. Now, say good-bye to Mr. Malfoy. There's a good boy!

I'm sorry I was rude, Mr. Malfoy. I hope you win your election. Your friend, Teddy Lupin.

The clipping unfurled itself, the headline seeming to vibrate as Lucius began to read:

McDOUGALL'S MADE MY LITTLE BOY SICK!

DOVETON -Stephen Snape and Richard Lupin had no idea why their son, Teddy, kept having tummy trouble. A sturdy lad, he had been perfectly healthy all his life, with never more than the sprained ankle he got playing football.

It wasn't until half his team found small caterpillars in the French fries and hamburgers they bought at the local McDougall's fast food restaurant that they knew what was making poor Teddy and his little friends ill after games -

Lucius gaped in horror. Doveton? Why hadn't Draco mentioned that Snape and Lupin lived nearby? "That wasn't us, it was our supplier!"

Another clipping rose, this one about a protest against "factory farming," whatever that was, to be held at selected McDougall's restaurants throughout Britain. Two of the protesters, Stephen and Richard, seemed to be spouting off about how they'd been radicalised by their own experiences with bigotry and a nasty custody fight between Richard and his former mother-in-law over his son. The accompanying photograph showed two men who could only be Severus and Lupin, both in Muggle formalwear, with the caption "Stephen Snape and Richard Lupin at their civil union. The fathers are contemplating legal action against the McDougall's that served tainted food to their son and his -"

"Damn, blast, and bugger!" Lucius slammed the clipping down hard enough to make his inkwell jump. "Go howl at the moon, you unnatural beast!"

A third clipping all but thrust itself up his nose:

BOYCOTT AGAINST BIGOTRY!

Sir Ivor McKellswood, actor and gay rights activist, spoke in support of a boycott against the Doveton McDougall's. Allegations of homophobia have arisen against the owner, Lucius Malcolm, and his son David. David, manager of the restaurant at the centre of the controversy, is alleged to have called local men Stephan Snape and Richard Lupin 'a couple of f-----g poofsters' and threatened them with a stick during the monthly cleaning of the fryalator.

"Their food is dreadful, Americanised slop," said Sir Ivor, one of Britain's leading Shakespearean actors. "It's good to see British fathers care so deeply about their child. We're getting fatter and less healthy every day, and restaurants like this are the reason. We need to stand up for healthy food and British business!"

Teddy Lupin, son of Mr. Lupin by his first marriage, led a procession of schoolchildren dressed as vegetables outside the restaurant whilst Mr. Malcolm and his staff watched -



Lucius swore violently and tore the whole lot to shreds. Draco had sworn there were no wizards for miles around Doveton! What was wrong with him? Whether they used their wands or not, Snape and Lupin were powerful enough that Draco should have sensed them immediately!

“Sir?” Gregory, looking exceedingly nervous, poked his head into the room. “Miss Skeeter from the *Prophet* wants to see you.”

“Tell her I’m in a meeting!” Lucius threw his pince-nez onto the blotter and turned toward the fireplace. “I have to see Draco immediately!”

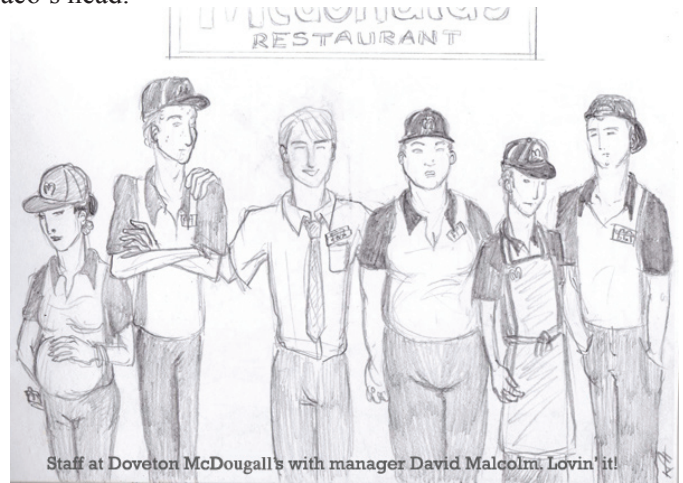
“But sir – “ Gregory hesitantly advanced into the room, a magazine in his meaty hands. “She wants a comment on this article in the *Quibbler*! There’s this picture of Master Draco in a Muggle restaurant and – ”

Lucius froze. A publicity photo of Draco in full manager’s uniform, complete with logo tie, standing outside the Doveton McDougall’s smiled up at him from the cover of the latest *Quibbler*. **EXPOSED! MALFOY OWNERSHIP OF MUGGLE BUSINESS!** pulsed red and black above Draco’s head.

“Has this hit the newsstands?”

Gregory nodded, clearly miserable. “The *Prophet* is set to run it in the afternoon edition. It was the lead story on the WWN nine o’clock report this morning.” He shrank as much as a big man could. “Miss Skeeter says that this package of clippings about tainted food at your business showed up in her post box last week. There’s this picture of Master Draco cleaning some equipment and threatening a little boy, even.”

Lucius sank back into his chair. He had enjoyed a leisurely breakfast at home, and now every bite of eggs Benedict, fried potatoes, and fresh melon was threatening to come right back up. “How much is in the emergency fund?”



“About six hundred galleons, sir, all in unmarked coin.” Gregory rubbed his hands together. “I can send out the lads to buy up all the papers before – “

“No, no. The home edition will already have been delivered.” Lucius had faced many troubles over the years, from Narcissa finding out about the dancer in Prague to a year in Azkaban. He had lied his way out of most of them, the family involvement with the Dark Lord being the great exception. This, though -

“Please Owl – telephone my son. Tell him I need to see him immediately.” After he finished flaying his worthless heir alive for letting himself be photographed waving his wand in public, he’d start planning a plausible denial. Had Hermione Granger ever been in Doveton? And did she eat at McDougall’s?

This baseless attack is clearly a desperate attempt by my opponent to -

Gregory’s assistant burst in, waving a Howler about as if it might explode at any second. “Mr. Malfoy! Sir! The Board of Governors has called an emergency meeting! Someone sent them pictures of your son at a Muggle restaurant and Pickingill wants an explanation!”

“What?”

The Howler opened and Narcissa’s voice cut through the assistant’s wailing. “LUCIUS MALFOY! HOW DARE YOU CORRUPT MY SON? THE NOBLE AND ANCIENT HOUSE OF BLACK IS RUINED! A **MUGGLE RESTAURANT**? HAVE YOU LOST YOUR - ”

“*Incendio!*” cried Lucius. The Howler disappeared in a puff of foul-smelling black smoke. Severus had sent this trash to Narcissa? The Board of Governors? “Gregory, summon my campaign staff. We need to strategize. We’ll need the press liaison, my speechwriter – ”

“What about Miss Skeeter?”

“Tell her I have no comment at this time, and then pull her financial report. Surely she needs money, those Quick-Quotes Quills cost a small fortune!” Lucius made a shooing motion toward the door. “Get everyone here in fifteen minutes, no excuses, no exceptions. That includes my worthless son!”

“What about Madam Narcissa?” Gregory was all but cringing as he backed toward the door. “She’s terribly upset.”
“I’ll deal with her later. Do as I say!” Lucius pointed his cane at the door. “Now, Gregory!”
“Yes, Mr. Malfoy! Right away!”

Lucius waited until the door was shut to pick up a quill. His owls had been bred to find those who did not wish to be found. Even if Severus and his pets were under Fidelius he wouldn’t be able to ignore this note, and then -

Angry, Lucius? The Muggle parchment, curiously intact, rose from the fireplace. *I know that feeling. You and your friends got me sacked and nearly cost Lupin his son. ‘Angry’ doesn’t begin to describe my feelings.*

Lucius shook his fist at the parchment. “Damn you, Severus! You don’t even live in the Wizarding World anymore! It’s none of your business!”

By now you’re probably strategizing your next move, that is if Narcissa hasn’t nailed your scrotum to the wall. Severus laughed his nastiest laugh. *Don’t bother. Full documentation of your involvement in all those Muggle businesses was sent to the Minister, every Wizarding magazine, the Board of Governors, your political allies, and of course your wife and daughter-in-law. I was most surprised by the Asda stock. I would have thought Harrod’s was more your style, or at least Marks & Sparks.*

All of them? Lucius, unable to speak, clutched at a lock of his hair. He was ruined, *ruined!* Draco and Astoria would be blackballed, his grandchildren (if any) would have to attend Durmstrang, the Malfoy name would be a laughing-stock....

That Narcissa might really nail his scrotum to the wall was a distinct possibility.

You once told me that revenge was a dish best served cold, Lucius. Severus sounded positively smug, damn him to every level of every hell. *Thank you for the advice. You were absolutely right.*

Good luck, Lucius. You’ll need it.

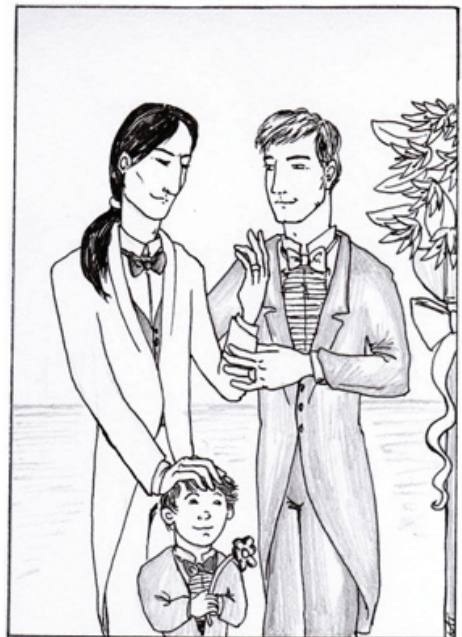
The fireplace flared green. Lucius whirled to see a tall, elegant blonde woman emerge. He managed to smile as his wife brushed soot from her shoulder.

“Narcissa? Darling, what a surprise! I wasn’t expecting you until lunch! Here, allow me - ”

“Don’t even bother,” said Narcissa in a voice that could have frozen boiling lead. She flicked a finger in his direction, and his wand sailed into her hand. “Lucius, we need to talk.”

Lucius could only nod as she perched herself on the edge of his desk and leaned forward until he could see the faintest trace of the family madness in her eyes.

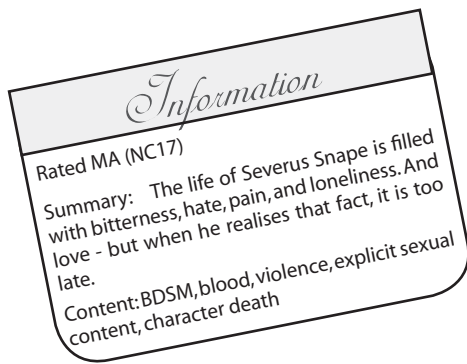
“About this packet I received from Severus this morning - ”



ellid's bio

Ellid has had a long and varied career in fandom that began when she saw her first episode of Star Trek in 1973 and immediately paired Mr. Spock with a Mary Sue. Highlights including being on the concom for Notjustanothercon in Massachusetts, a panelist for Worldcon in 1989 and Lumos in 2006, and being the only person in Harry Potter fandom to win an art award for a quilt. She became interested in Harry Potter fandom in 2003 when a friend tipped her off to McKay's Wicked Game series. Her own fics soon followed, and by 2005 she was hard at work on a long series of connected fics centering on Snape, Lupin, and their adopted son.

She lives in Massachusetts with three cats, one named Malfoy, and studies old textiles and quilting. Her favorite writers include Rex Stout, Dorothy Sayers, Lois McMaster Bujold, Dorothy Dunnett, JRR Tolkien, and J.D. Robb. She has read a huge amount of classic literature, both English and American, plus so much history that she routinely wins at Trivial Pursuit and Jeopardy! Other interests include medieval re-enactment, Nazi Germany, choral music, art, and political history, not to mention an unhealthy tendency to break into Tom Lehrer songs for no discernible reason. She hopes to write profic someday unless Malfoy-the-cat succeeds in killing in her sleep.



Broken

by Chivalric

It is half past four in the morning; I am neither awake nor asleep, and I dream, fantasise about the werewolf again.

Not that this happens often. Most times, I am too tired to dream. Equally often, I don't get any sleep at all, just doze every now and then between my tasks: spying on the Dark Lord, running errands for Albus, trying to save bloody Potter's life, and sorry attempts at teaching those insolent, annoying brats who refuse to understand that this life is not a game, but a death trap.

If I find the time to sleep, and if I dream, it is usually of torture, pain, and death. Dark dreams. I prefer to stay awake, or take the opportunity for a light slumber. Anything to avoid the horrors of the night.

Still, occasionally, I need to sleep simply to survive the next day. My body forces me, so I do, hoping I wake up in the morning and not in the middle of the night, in the darkness, screaming. No one hears me inside the thick walls. I don't want anyone with me. I don't want to share what ruins me.

Rarely, I sleep peacefully, drifting through the night undisturbed, and sometimes my mind decides to wander onto happier paths than the Dark Lord's latest kill. And if that happens — truly, far too rarely — it wanders towards the werewolf, Merlin knows why. I don't even like the man.

Right now, with my eyes closed and only one flickering candle burning low on my bedside-table, I imagine him looking at me with that crooked, half-sad, half-lazy smile on his full lips, and I wonder how it would feel to smile back at him for a change. No scowl; no sarcastic remark. Just a smile.

Would he turn his head away in disgust?

My cock stirs as it always does when I dream about the wolf. My cock, which refuses service most times I put my hand to myself, twitches because I know that behind the soft, gentle surface, the beast lingers. I saw it when I was a boy; it nearly cost my life.

I wish he had finished me when he'd had the chance.

I turn onto my back. My hand, more awake than my brain, sneaks underneath the bedcovers, seeking out my member, stroking it roughly into full hardness.

If it only were that easy when I am fully awake.

Useless, wishful thinking. I'm hard now, I want to come now, and Merlin, it has been such a long time.

Through the darkness of my bedroom, the ghost of the werewolf's voice drifts towards me, telling me meaningless nonsense about his students — for some reason, he insists on talking to me, and now, in my bedchamber, the memory of it is all I need to moan with desire.

I fist myself, fast and mercilessly, fearing my erection might subside before I can jerk off. Happens more often than not, and I am determined not to let it happen again.

To keep at least some control over my body and my mind, I force my thoughts away from the wolf and towards a scene I witnessed a few weeks back when I was in Muggle London. Two men in a dark alley behind a bar, one pressed against the wall, the other deep inside him, grunting and groaning. Live porn — I watched until they had finished, and surely, that image should be much more arousing than the memory of how the light plays on the wolf's greying hair.

My cock, though, is of a different opinion: it withers at the image of the two strangers, and I swear filthily. I am more awake now; I am sweating, and there is a lump of fear sitting in my dry, aching throat. I need this release; I need to come, and hell, why had I dreamed of the werewolf in the first place? Why had I been kissing him in this sodding, useless dream of mine, kissing him deeply, feeling his heartbeat speed up under my exploring hands, why had I dreamed about his hard, strong hands forcing me down onto my knees?

My cock twitches and hardens again.

Careful now. Gentle. *Don't mess it up again.* I think of the wolf's unique fragrance: a mixture of chocolate and soap, grass and wildfire and always that hint of tobacco although he doesn't smoke.

I moan again, raw and deep, and yes! I think when my cock grows in my fist, big and hard, and I begin wanking myself, slow at the beginning and faster very soon afterwards. I rake my free hand across my chest, rip open my pyjama top, and cruelly twist one of my nipples between thumb and index finger. It forces a yelp out of me, as does my next move, which leaves five deep, angry red scratches all across my ribcage. Pain shoots through me: it's the one feeling that proves I'm still alive and not forgotten, drowned in an ocean of madness. Pain and the promise of a climax; pain and pleasure, entwined forever in my twisted mind.

Precum wets my fingers, and my hand tightens around my cock, shooting more pain up my spine, quickly followed and maybe even led by a rush of harsh, burning lust. My back arches in anticipation of my climax, my balls tighten, and I dig my fingers deep into the soft wood of the bed's headboard, imagining how the werewolf would pin me down with his weight, move atop me, inside me.

I yell when I come, my seed soiling the bedcovers and the sheets underneath me. For a few blissful moments, I forget everything: the Dark Lord as well as Albus, Potter as well as classes and even the sound Nagini makes when she devours one of her victims. I forget my tasks and my sorrows and the constant fear that accompanies me day and night, and I sob with relief, enjoying the small gift my dream has given me.

I do not admit to myself whose name I had called out when I'd spilled, I do not even admit I had called out coherent syllables at all. *It was just a wordless scream of lust.* I vanish the mess with a *Scourgify*.

I turn to my side, pull up my knees, and shiver, for once not from cold, but from loneliness.



For a heartbeat, I don't know where I am or what happened.

Light increases my headache, I hear voices, and I realise I am staring into brown eyes, wide and shocked.

Your eyes.

My own eyes narrow as I remember that I am in the Headquarters, down in the kitchen, with Molly and Arthur around, Weasley and the Granger girl doing the washing up, and Potter sitting on a chair opposite mine.

You are here, too, and you are pale like death up to your unruly, greying hair.

What happened? I wonder, frowning, shooting you one of my coldest glares.

"Now then, Remus, did you have any luck?" Potter asks, annoyance lacing each of his words. I look at the boy and feel the familiar hate. He resembles his father so very much that it makes me choke.

You shake your head and take a step back. "None." Your clear your throat; a faint red creeps into your cheeks. "Severus is far too good an Occlumens for me," you add, turn on your heels, and leave the kitchen.

Realisation hits me hard when I see you run away from me, and I nearly gasp when my stomach twists and turns into a hot, aching knot.

Legilimency: the art of delving into someone else's mind, thus being able to see his thoughts, read his memories, turn this someone inside out as long as one liked.

Occlumency: the art of hindering a Legilimens from cracking one's walls, of pushing inside one's brain and rummaging through private memories like a careless, cruel child.

I am an excellent Occlumens, have to be, or I would have died long ago, being a spy on Dumbledore's orders. The Dark Lord is a skilled Legilimens, but over the years, I have become the best Occlumens alive, so he would have no chance of seeing anything I didn't want him to see. Occasionally, I allow my master to find an embarrassing memory or a painful one, for that matter, so he would continue to believe he has me completely under his control.

When Potter needed to learn those special arts, I was the obvious choice for teaching him, and although I tried to talk Albus out of his plan, he insisted that I show the boy how both parts work. At first, I refused; later on, I became accustomed to his awkward attempts to break inside my mind. As assumed, he was no match for me. Nowadays, I even raise my wand when he can see, when there are witnesses, and break into *his* mind just to prove my point: there's no way he will ever stand a chance against the Dark Lord if my master ever gets hold of him.

Tonight, the fact that again I saw into his mind as easily as I would open a window made the boy furious; mainly, I suppose, because I chose to look at his emotions for the Weasley girl. Tears of humiliation ran over Potter's cheeks, and that must be the reason why you got up, stepping between me and the boy. "Let me try," you said, flashing me your easy smile.

With cold disgust in my eyes, I nodded, and you raised your wand — I remember it now. Of course I didn't expect anything to happen, so I barely raised my own wand.

But then you were inside my head, you looked around, and you saw everything.

At that memory, I frown again, because that's just not possible. How could you break through my wards, cut through my defences like a hot knife cuts through butter? How was it possible that you saw into my mind? How could I have allowed you to find the one memory I never wanted to share with anyone, especially not with you: that I had dreamed of you, that I had fantasised about you being in bed with me, that I had masturbated with your image before my inner eye?

I stare at the door through which you've just escaped. *No wonder you looked sick.* Only a few moments have passed since you have unravelled my secret, since you have left the kitchen. It feels like hours, like an eternity, really, and I snort in disgust and get up myself. I need to get out of here, out of this too warm, too small room, packed with too many people and too much noise. Their words, meaningless and spoken without care, pierce my head, and I practically flee the kitchen, flee upstairs where I have a room — I would have preferred to go back to Hogwarts, but that is not an option anymore. Too dangerous, Albus argued, and unfortunately, he is right. Apart from the Order members, no one knows that I am double spying — or triple spying, if you looked at it correctly — and during the summer break, I reside at Grimmauld place.

I quietly close the door behind me; had I slammed it shut, as I wanted to, I would have broken the hinges. I am angry, and I am scared. If you tell Albus what you saw in my mind, Albus will question me, and if Albus decides he wants answers, I will need to give him answers. Admitting that I lust after you would be highly embarrassing.

I have no intention of telling anyone about my private fantasies, not even the Headmaster — I'd rather quit working for him and change to the dark side for good. After all, I've been in the Dark Lord's service for nearly twenty years now; maybe it's time to prove that I'm darker inside than Dumbledore, the old fool, would like to believe.

Pacing, up and down my room, from wall to wall. The furniture in here is sparse: a bed, small and hard, a table, a chair, and a few bookshelves. No couch; not even a wardrobe.

I wonder what you will do, and the prospect, any prospect, brings the sweat out on my face. For a small moment I try to convince myself that you haven't seen anything, that I must have imagined your intrusion into my mind, but it doesn't work; you have been there, you have seen my memories, you have *been* me, long enough to know exactly what I have been dreaming and wishing and longing for that night a few months back.

"Shit," I say to the darkness and seriously consider killing you simply to shut you up.

The knock on the door rips me out of my thoughts. "Yes?" I snap, the sound of the single word indicating clearly that I did not want to be disturbed.

"Open up." Your voice, and for once, it isn't friendly, not gentle, not caring. You demand me to open my own bloody door, and the steely subnote in those few words sends shivers down my spine.

No surprise there.

Gritting my teeth, I open and allow you to step inside. "What do you want?" I ask you the moment the lock falls closed. "Make it quick; I have no time for whatever nonsense you want to tell me."

Your eyes are burning with something I cannot identify at first; then I realise it's anger, deep, hot fury. "You want me to *fuck* you?" you hiss incredulously. "How dare you think about me that way. How dare you dream about me!"

I can smell you: the shampoo you've used, the garlic on your hands from helping Molly to prepare the salad. Earth on your shoes; candy on your lips.

I cannot resist temptation. It's been a long time since I dreamed about you, it's been a lot longer since I last sought out company, and so I take a step and brush my lips over yours.

I feel your shock; you become rigid, and I feel a smile, thin and cold, curve my lips — what else had you expected? Hadn't you just read my mind?

Before you can react, I retreat. Taking a step back, I narrow my eyes at you, see your burning cheeks, and I hate you, hate you so deeply for what you made me do simply by coming into my rooms. "Fuck off," I hiss. "Don't ever dare bother me again."

You're fast; I never saw your fist coming, but I feel it, feel you hitting me, hitting me hard. You take me by surprise and knock me to the floor, and a moment later, you kick me.

I groan; I nearly vomit. Pain shoots through my body, and then you pull me up and hit me again. My lip cracks; blood runs down my chin. On all fours I'm on the floor, the tips of my hair touches the planks, and I have trouble forcing air into my lungs.

In addition, I become hard.

No surprise there, either.

I groan once more, but not because of the pain or because your hand is gripping my neck hard enough for me to fear you'll break it. I groan because I'm turned on; I groan because I want more.

"You want me to fuck you, Severus?" you rasp into my ear; your breath is hot on my skin, and I close my eyes lest you see the desire burning in them. Yes, I want you to fuck me; yes, I want you to take me, and yes, oh yes, I want you to lose control more than anything else. There is no way this is going to happen otherwise — if you don't lose control, you will just leave my rooms in disgust.

Instead of leaving, your grip tightens, and you drag me forward, towards the bed. Face down, you press me into the mattress; your knee is in my back, holding me down, and I hear the soft, promising whisper of leather against fabric: you're taking your belt out of your trousers.

I cannot help myself: I whimper with desire, with longing. My cock is hard as it hasn't been in ages, and my clothes, just trousers and a shirt, seem suddenly too heavy for my body. I want to shed them, or rather, I want you to rip them off me and take me, fuck me, make me come so I can forget the now and here, the real life, for at least as long as it takes me to spill my seed.

"I cannot believe you showed me this memory," you growl. Your hands hold mine down above my head — *you think I did it deliberately?* — and I kneel before my bed like a crying child with my face pressed into the bedcover. You put a lot of weight in holding me down — my wrists protest, my ribs hurt from your kick, and still, I don't want it any other way.

Leather touches the floor; your belt is in your hand and I know what you will do, why you took it out in the first place.

Then you release my wrists, and I feel a rush of blinding disappointment wash through me at you taking a step back, away from the bed, away from me.

I push myself up and, still kneeling, and look at you over my shoulder.

You appear stunned, ashamed, and scared. The belt hangs forgotten in your half-limp fingers, your eyes are wide in your pale face, and you look at the leather belt as if it were a poisonous snake. You're clearly shocked at what you were about to do to me.

Shaking, you wipe your lips with the back of your hand, and maybe, it would have ended here hadn't my eyes dropped lower, hadn't I seen what you aren't aware of yet.

My arrogance, quieted for a few moments by your unexpected actions, takes over again. "Not in control of the beast?" I ask, and see with satisfaction that you become ashen at my words. "Not in control of your emotions, *wolf?*" A drop of blood runs down my chin. I don't bother to wipe it off.

You frown. "I'm not... I can't... This is not what I want," you finally bite out. "Gentle, maybe. But not like this."

I raise an eyebrow. "Of course you want it gentle. If you wanted it the brutal way, you'd be hard." My voice is sarcastic; my gaze drops to your groin where your erection is evident, pressing large and hard against your trousers. "Well. Apparently, you are not up to it, wolf. You're too soft, and far too tame."

No man likes to be called tame, no matter how gentle he is, and you are the most gentle, friendly man I know. But inside you is the beast, and sometimes, the beast needs to be unleashed.

You growl and your grip tightens around the belt's buckle. You take a breath, and for a split second I wonder why I chose you, why I trust you not to cause permanent damage, why I know that you are, despite your rage, not the monster you appear to be to the ones who don't know you.

Fast like a striking snake, you slam your fist onto my chin. My head snaps back, I taste blood, and I fall back onto the bed — again, I hadn't anticipated your actions, and somewhere in the back of my head I am surprised at this. Am I not always able to foresee how others act and react? This seems not valid where you are concerned.

You lose control just like that, and you don't use your fists to hurt me: you whip the belt across my back, again and again, not saying a word, but with a steady, tantalising rhythm that takes my breath away.

My shirt rips open; the belt cracks the skin on my back. I yell out of surprise; I yell because it hurts. I yell because of the lust each slap causes, wonderful, strong, mind-claiming lust that pushes my every-day-horrors away and make me harder than I've considered possible.

I dig my hands into the bed sheets, fearing you might stop before you've finished what you've started and because I need something to hold on to, something to keep me on my knees so I don't slip towards the ground. Dimly, I wonder if my wards are up or if the noise goes beyond my room, telling the others that something is amiss, forcing them to interfere.

I don't want anyone to interfere. I want you to go on, and surely you do, you whip me hard, you're shredding my shirt, and now you drag my trousers down and whip my arse and my thighs until blood runs down my legs. I can hear you pant, gasp, swear under your breath, you're not yourself anymore and I know you will regret each single moment in an hour or so.

Right now, you enjoy it, maybe even more than I do.

Suddenly, you stop, and I hope, beg that you do the right thing, and yes, you bend over and grab my wrists

once more with an iron hard grip. With the belt you bind my hands behind my back, immobilising me, and finally, after an eternity of dreaming and longing and far too few guilty wanks in the small hours of the morning, I hear you drop your trousers and I smell your arousal and then you're atop of me and I feel your cock, slick with precum and blood, at my entrance.

You don't take me slowly; you thrust inside me with brutal force, ram your cock into me with one long, hard push that makes me yell again. Burning pain; blinding lust. You bury yourself inside me up to the hilt, you move fast, fuck me hard and deep, and it is perfect. Your hands land on my arse and pull my buttocks apart and I cannot think anymore, just feel you fucking me and I let you and perhaps we both yell with lust, frustration, hate and desire.

I feel you dig your teeth into my neck; you draw blood. I cannot hold it back anymore — the pain subsides and the lust takes over, and I come, spilling in long, violent spasms, experiencing the best orgasm I've ever had in my sodding, lousy, worthless life.

You pump inside me a few more times before you come yourself, your hands digging deep into my flesh and your forehead resting between my shoulder blades. I feel you shudder, I hear you take a shaky breath, and then you withdraw your still half erect cock. You slump to the floor, gasping, too exhausted to speak.

I cannot move; my back hurts like hell, my arms are still bound, and my pushed down trousers restrain me from getting my legs underneath me. It seems like an eternity before you get up and haul me onto my bed, before you take back your belt, before you cover my body with a blanket. I don't mind, and I don't care: I am in sync with the world and with myself. I hear my heartbeat and sense my blood rushing through my veins, singing of satisfaction and triumph.

I take a brief look at you; you just stuff the suspiciously red belt into the back pocket of your trousers. "Wipe the blood off your mouth before you go," I say, and close my eyes again. "I assume you would prefer no one saw you with dripping fangs."

I nearly smile when you pale at my words.

You leave me behind, bleeding and beaten, you close the door silently, and I know you won't come back, not voluntarily. You are disgusted at the fact that you've let the beast out, that you allowed the wolf to rule your mind.

You leave me behind, and I know you will try with all your might to forget what has happened whereas I, for a

change, will sleep peacefully tonight, deep and dreamless.

I'm sated.

I'm alive.



The next few days, I make sure to move carefully. My back burns — my arse does, too — both from the slashes as well as your forceful intrusion. It does not matter. I have salves for both problems, and in another little while, I will be healed, the pain as well as the lust becoming nothing but a memory. Only the scars will remain.

I am as cold and nasty as I always have been towards you, I treat you as if you were non-existent, and I do so for your own sake. I don't want to break you, not yet.

Occasionally, when you don't know it, I look at you, drink in your posture, your voice, the way your neck is exposed when you bend over a book or an essay. Sometimes, I see you watching me, and I see you shiver.

It does not matter. If I decide that I want you, I will just come and take what's mine.

My master is growing more and more crazy, more and more brutal the longer it takes him to win this useless war — as if there really were a difference between a pureblood and a Mudblood, as if it would matter who lives and who dies. I cannot even remember how many have been killed, Muggles and wizards and witches and even some of my own former students, stupid brats that they are, trying to fight instead of run. Under the skin is just flesh and blood and bone; in death, we all look the same, but this monster of epic measures just doesn't understand this most simple truth. He wants the world cleaned of all human beings, of everything that is alive, immortal himself, unable to die, unable to understand how useless and stupid his attempts are.

Breathing, eating, talking — this life that resembles death more than anything else makes me sick, and I try to pull away from it, try to bring some distance between me and everyone, everything else to keep functioning, to remain able to bring this bastard down for good.

It works for a while, but it comes at a price, and the price is my sanity. Not that I would have much left of it; sometimes, I truly believe I've gone as mad as the Dark Lord. I'm incredibly careless with my health, I don't give a damn about my students; I provoke my masters — both of them — hoping they will finally end my misery by killing me.

In order not to lose my mind completely, instead of dying, I begin longing for a spark of real life; I begin longing for the wolf in you again.

Silently, I open my door; silently, I wander down the corridor, wearing nothing but an old pair of linen trousers and an even older shirt. Barefoot, with the clothes hanging loosely on my too-thin frame, I knock on your door, not entirely sure it is a good idea but knowing that it is the only idea that might bring me back to my senses. I wonder if you are at home; I wonder if I will be able to tighten my grip on you.

The door opens a crack. You peek out as if you were frightened of me and I know I have to make you angry fast, or you will slam the door shut in my face. So I scowl at you and ask with my lowest, meanest voice if you've had lovely dreams recently and if those dreams make you wake up hard.

You pale. Through the curtain of my hair I see you hold your breath and ball your fists. I have to steady myself against the doorframe, or I will force entry to your rooms.

I don't need to. With a nod, you let me inside. The sound of door closing behind the two of us is like a promise.

You stand near the wall, and I quickly take a look at your room. Although it's as sparsely decorated as my own, it's cosy, the books piled high on your desk, and there's a couch, big and soft and cushioned invitingly.

You stand with your hands dug deep into your pockets and I realise I cannot let you know why I need you. I will not tell you about my nightmares, I will not talk about the immense pressure I'm under, and I definitely won't spell out aloud how twisted I really am, that I need to be brought to my knees before I can forget this so-called life long enough to find some peace. When pain rules my mind, nothing else can bother me. When wounds are cast, I do not see my mad master's eyes anymore. In the end, I just hope I will get what I need: peace of mind for a little while.

You stare at me. "Why are you here?" you ask, pretending to be angry, but I can hear the catch in your voice.

I remain silent.

"Look, I'm sorry for what happened last time." You sound nervous. "I lost control. This... thing... took me by surprise. It won't happen again."

My arms had been crossed over my chest; I let them drop to my sides. "I want you to do it again," I say quietly, nearly inaudible. My voice is soft, tender even — universes away from my usual snarl.

You gasp. "What? You can't be serious! I will never, ever touch you again, I won't... I *can't* do that again. How the hell can you ask that of me?"

You sound outraged at my request, hurt that I assume you to be so weak as to give in to your deeply-buried need to hunt and — eventually — to devour your catch.

And you sound turned-on.

I knew it. From the moment you beckoned me inside your rooms, I knew you wanted me, wanted me badly enough to accept my conditions. I sense that the power you soon might have over me makes you drunk, and I know you are like a fish on the hook, unable to escape, unable to break free again. To someone else, it might look as if I am submissive, but ultimately, I am the one in charge.

I wonder if you know that, too.

"I won't do it. Leave, Severus." Hard words, spoken with determination.

I first drop my gaze, and then I lower my head. Earlier on, before I came to you, I took a shower, scrubbed my skin and my teeth and my hair and now the black strands fall over my face, long and midnight-black, obscuring the smile that plays on my lips. If I decide that I want you, I will make you take me, and now, I do want you.

Slowly, I sink to my knees. I bend my neck, and with a small shake of my head, I have my hair part, feel it brush along my cheeks and know you can see the pale bruise of the bite mark, left there the last time we met in private, left there by your teeth not too long ago.

I hear you gulp; involuntarily, you take a step towards me.

Closing my eyes, I bend my elbows, bring my arms behind me, and cross my wrists at the small of my back; my fists ball as if I were bound. It costs me more than I care to admit, giving myself over, relying on you, trusting you not to kill me for my insolence and past sins, despite the hate you surely harbour for me.

"Please," I whisper, and you are lost.

Another step, and another, until I feel the heat your body emits. You are close; you look down at me, and I am sure your heartbeat speeds up at the sight not because you think I am good-looking or a good fuck or because you — *Merlin, what a ridiculous assumption* — like me, but because you want to beat me. You have the power to do so, you know you want to dominate me, you know you want the wolf to rule. I must look like prey, and that thought makes me moan in anticipation of what will

follow. Already the world outside slips away. I belong to you for the time being. I am not in control, I have no decisions to make.

Your orders, unlike others, will bring lust, not just pain. Your orders, unlike others, will not crush me, but set me free.

My knees hurt, but I do not try to get up. As long as I am in your rooms, your will rules, not mine. I long to have the load of responsibility taken off me, if only for an indescribably small amount of time.

"Get up." Your voice is harsh.

I do as you order, and I don't raise my eyes. My hands are still crossed behind my back, and although they are not bound, they feel bound to me. I moan, soft and quiet.

"Take your clothes off."

Hesitantly, I do as you order. I shed my shirt; I let my trousers drop to the floor, step out of them, and stand in front of you with my head hanging low and my breath coming in dry gulps. I feel heat flush my cheeks; I do not like being naked, and you know it.

You walk around me, your eyes fixed on my body. I can feel your gaze as if you were touching me. I sense your surprise at how I look underneath my armour, my robes — beyond pale and with limbs too long, bones too fragile, hips as narrow as a teenage boy's. I'm too thin, sinewy, at best, emaciated even in some ways, due to mal-nourishment, lack of sleep, and a constant onslaught of nearly unbearable tasks for more than two decades.

My embarrassment deepens with each passing moment. This is a different sort of pain, but it hurts nevertheless. Your gaze will leave scars as surely as your belt has; but then, how will I remember when I am back in my own bed, accompanied by nothing but emptiness? Scars are proof that I haven't dreamed it; scars are necessary to help me remember that I didn't imagine you touching me.

You step closer; I can feel your breath on my naked skin when you look at my back and the telltale signs your belt has left.

Blood rushes out of my face and into my cock; I harden fast.

"Look at me," you order, and I fight with myself — I don't want to look at you, but right now, I am in your hands. I have offered myself to you, I have granted you the right to order me to do whatever you want, and so I raise my eyes, show you my face. I am cruel, but occasionally, I can be fair. Maybe you'll decide after one glance into my

black soul that this is not what you want. If this is the case, at least I have given you the choice.

Moments pass, and you don't even blink. It seems as if my soul doesn't scare you enough to run from me whilst you still have the chance: instead of running, your breath catches in your throat and you try to kiss me.

I turn my head away, and your anger flares up like a bushfire — I have offended you by refusing your kiss. With a swift move, you kick my legs off from under me, and I hit the floor, hard.

I groan — this is what I wanted to happen.

You hear it.

You wear shoes, and I feel the hard sole on my neck; you press me down to the ground as if you were about to crush a beetle under your heel, and I can nearly feel the power flooding your mind, drowning any coherent thought. You will lose control again, and the thought makes my cock bob and my arse clench in anticipation and I cannot suppress the strangled cry emerging from my throat.

You don't order anymore, you dig your hand in my hair and rip me up and smash me against the wall. You are behind me, and a moment later your arm locks around my throat, strangling me, making it exquisitely clear who is top and who is not.

Your grip tightens, and I lose my ability to think. Lack of air lets small stars explode in front of my eyes, and if you hadn't held me upright, I would have crumpled to a boneless heap on the floor. My mind, what is left of it, focuses on my burning lungs and on my cock, crushed against the wall, and is that me, whimpering for more?

You release the pressure, just a bit so I don't suffocate, and your hand slips between my buttocks, your fingers seek the hole, circle it, stroke it. I press my arse against your hand, and instantly, it is gone. Instead, you touch my cock, squeeze it, hard enough to force tears out of my eyes. You stroke me, lazily, and then you brush your thumb over my cockhead.

This is better than I have imagined in my wildest dreams.

Suddenly, your fingers are back on my entrance, and they are slick. When you have summoned a lubricant I cannot recall, but without warning, you push inside me, two fingers at once whilst your arm is still restraining my breathing. With each slow push, you loosen your grip, then you hold, and tighten your muscles until I cannot breathe anymore, and this makes me even harder, and you push a bit deeper, bring me to the brink, but before

I can come, you allow me to get some air in my abused lungs and retreat again, and I whimper, and my face is sweaty and wet because this is true torture — perfect, delicate, expertly performed torment.

Who would have thought you are capable of this?

You are not losing control; instead, you play me as artfully as a musician plays his instrument, dominating me, pushing me into obedience just like I wanted you to do. I am half mad with desire already when your fingers push just a little deeper and begin stroking along an especially soft, sweet spot inside me I hadn't even known was there. I yelp; I freeze. I push back; I impale myself on your fingers, and I hear your soft, triumphant chuckle: your arm around my throat and your fingers up my arse strip me off my rationality, take away my sarcasm, my intelligence, everything that I am outside of your room.

My body moves of its own accord. My hips buck, I frantically try to bring myself off and swiftly, you slam your elbow hard against my temple. I grunt with pain; I sway. More stars explode before my eyes, and this time, not because of lack of air.

"Don't move!"

Your words are my order. Although I so very much need to come, I still my movements. I cannot feel you anymore — you have stepped away from me, and the thought of you leaving me like this, pressed against the wall, my cock dripping precome, my arse slack for your cock, strangles me. Harshly, I gasp for air, my body is shivering and burning beyond my control. My legs tremble in despair; I lean my forehead against the wall, praying that my poor attempt not to move is good enough for you.

A spell binds my hands, wrists, and forearms to the wall, another one is like a clamp around my waist: now I couldn't even move if you'd allow me to, and the sensation of being so completely at your mercy forces me to beg. "Please fuck me," I hear myself rasp. "Please, fuck me, please fuck me, please, please fuck me!"

"You want my cock up your arse?" Your voice is silky in my ear, like sweet poison. It drops right into my soul.

"Yes!"

"Why?" you ask, moving closer. You are naked, I can feel your skin against my back and then I feel your cock sliding along my backside. You are hard, and I wish I could turn so I could see how large you really are before you take me.

"Tell me why!" Slowly, you press the tip of your cock at my entrance; I know you won't continue before I find an answer for you.

"I... need this." I bite out the words. "You can make me forget."

You don't ask what I wish to forget; my answer seems sufficient for you.

Slowly, you enter me, even slower, you begin to fuck me, as I have asked, begged you to do, and it feels so good I have to dig my teeth into my upper arm to keep myself from screaming out my lust.

I come long before you, but you don't care. Instead of retreating once my lust is stilled, you use me for your own desire, your hair brushing along my shoulders with each of your thrusts. You are lost in your own world, and I can do nothing but stand there with spread legs and my buttocks spread even wider by your hands, my seed trickling down my groin, serving as your fuck toy.

I am yours, entirely yours, and this simple fact along with your deep thrusts makes me hard again. When you loosen the binding around my hips, when your hand finds my cock, your grip surprisingly gentle, I moan with delight — I hadn't expected a second climax, I hadn't considered the possibility that this double sensation of getting fucked and wanked would be so utterly delicious. I certainly hadn't expected you to take care of me beyond your own needs.

You press yourself against me with your full weight, and I feel your cock push even deeper inside me than before. I hear, but don't understand, the words you rasp into my ear when you come, and then I come, too, for the second time tonight, spilling over your stroking fist.



When my senses drift back inside me, I find myself lying on your living room floor, released from the spells that had held me bound to the wall. Your arm is my pillow, your embrace is my blanket, and I can feel soft kisses getting gently trailed down my neck.

I tell myself that this is unimportant, that I just allow you to pretend a bit of tenderness would make you less the beast. I try to persuade myself that this here, the moments after the last bit of afterglow have vanished, is important for you, but not for me.

How wrong I am.

Your heart is beating strongly against my back; you are warm, sated, and sleepy. I can only assume that you would like to stay like this for a little while longer, that you enjoy, even need the peace after the battle as much as you enjoy and need the battle itself, and so I do not move.

Cradled in your arms, I become aware for the first time of the possibility that this might turn into something a bit more complicated than a mere sexual necessity.



I would like to pretend that from then on, we set up a routine, but frankly, nothing we do fits to that description. Whenever I knock on your door — and I have to restrain myself from not doing so on a nightly basis — and whenever you decide to open, what happens inside your rooms is far too strange to be described as routine. Each time is different; each time, I cannot believe afterwards that I allow you to do to me whatever you like, to live out whatever fantasy you might have. I am like an addict chasing after yet another high, and you are my drug, my sweet release.

Sometimes, you refuse to open; sometimes, I sense your urge to break out of this. When that happens, I wonder if my hook is really as deeply dug in your flesh as I hope it is, and I turn and go back to my own rooms until a few days later, my need gets the better of me and I come back — and you, luckily, thankfully, open your door again. I believe that you open up simply because you get hard whenever I as much as look at you across the room, dropping my wards and allowing you to look behind the mask I wear all the time, unless I am with you, a willing prisoner in your realms.

Towards the end of the summer, I begin to suspect that there is more between you and me than I care to admit, and I wonder what I should do about it. Of course I could stop knocking on your door; of course I could find someone else to give me what I need. There are enough people out there who are experts in inflicting pain; I've used their services before.

On the other hand, our arrangement is convenient and allows me to keep up my other tasks without anyone getting suspicious. We've never talked about it — we do not talk at all — but I assume you know I am a double spy, being in Dumbledore's service. Or at least you hope I am — I cannot see you taking care of me if you really thought I'd be a true follower of the Dark Lord.

Why do I think about that now? I have enough other things to do; I cannot afford wasting time with idle wishes. There's a question at hand: should I keep you or should I drop you? Keeping you might become dangerous if you decide you want more than the occasional fuck; in this case, I would have to Obliviate you, and that is always a tricky thing to do when there are so many memories to be erased. I might do permanent damage to your brain, which could result in someone having a deeper look into your private thoughts. They might even find out about me, and that, of course, is unacceptable.

Better to keep things as they are. Better to keep you.

I stretch; my shoulders ache from hours of potions brewing. I haven't seen you in two weeks as I've been running errands for the Dark Lord.

I realise that I need to relax, and that you are the one man who can make me forget the entire world.

Frowning, I have to admit that I need to at least hear your voice, maybe catch a glimpse of your face. Whatever there is between us, it has grown stronger, and it scares me, in ways.

I finish the potion I've invented, write down the formula, and force myself to take a shower before I go and knock on your door. Anything to calm me down a bit — apparently, the prospect of seeing you after such a long time makes me nervous.

You open up immediately, you practically pull me inside, and I see you have awaited me: more candles than usual are burning, a sweet, fresh fragrance lingers in the air, and you do not waste any time by asking me what I want. Immediately, you grab me by the shoulders and push me into the middle of your room.

I do not resist you. I never do.

Silently, with a knowing, crooked smile on your face, you stand in front of me, and I wonder what you have in mind for tonight. My cock is getting hard; it never takes long when I am near you.

You pull something out of your back pocket. It fits into your hand and before I can wonder what it might be, you open your hand and a black, silken band falls out. You dangle it in front of my eyes; you smile. "Put it on," you say — order — and of course, I do what you want.

The blindfold is cool on my face. Made of silk and magic, it practically becomes part of me once it touches my skin. No way I can take it off without your allowance; no way to see through it as long as I wear it. There is only blackness, and there are the small sounds you make when you move.

I can hear you breathe, so you must be near me. I expect you to order me to get undressed — it's been a while since you had me strip in front of you, and the memory of your command voice makes my throat dry with longing.

Minutes tick by, and you don't say a word. I want to shift. I want to push my trousers down, I want you to take me — nothing happens. I do know you are still there, but you could have fallen asleep by now so quiet you are.

When you talk, you do so right into my ear, and I nearly jump. I hadn't heard you getting that close. "Will you do what I tell you to do?" you murmur, and I nod. Of course I will. I always do.

"Then cross your arms behind your back and leave them there until I tell you otherwise. Do not speak; do not move. Understood?"

I nod. Yes. And I cross my wrists at the small of my back like I have done before, offering myself to you once again.

When your fingers open the first button of my shirt, instinct tells me to push you away — this game has rules, and one rule is that you have to force me, that you have to make me surrender with brutality, embarrassment, and harshness. You undressing me as gently as a lover would do is neither. But the rules have changed in the past weeks. Now, only one rule is valid: your will and your word. If you want this game to be played more gently, so be it.

I hear my clothes drop to the ground and the buckle of my belt hit the wooden floor; the sound makes me shiver. Will you whip me again, will you draw blood, or will you leave me standing here forever, naked, without granting me release?

I do not know how long I have to wait before you continue, but when you do, you touch me with warm, silken fingers.

I become rigid. I do not want to be touched, not like that, not tenderly, but you have ordered me to stand still, and I have to obey.

Your fingertips circle my navel and wander over my ribcage. They stroke my nipples, and a moment later, your tongue, rough and wet, rasps over them.

Wrong, this is wrong! Tenderness does nothing for me, I want to tell you, but you have forbidden me to speak, and so I remain silent.

And my nipples harden, and my cock does, too.

How strange.

You touch me, caress me; you step around me, and your fingers follow the scars on my back, the ones you have left, and that brings the first moan to my lips.

You never go anywhere near my cock or my arse, and finally, I realise that this is still torture, sweet, tender torture, and that you are not only an expert, but that you know better what I need than I do myself.

Slowly, my resistance against your touch first withers, then dies. Now I want you to touch me; I want your gentleness, and half expect that you can read my mind and do just the opposite.

You don't. "Behind you is the bed. Take one step back and sit down."

Surprising, how hard it is to move when blindfolded — hesitantly, I stagger backwards. When I am seated, you step right in front of me and you say, "Open the belt of my trousers and take my cock out. Suck me. Taste me. Make me hard."

My mouth drops open. You have never allowed me to touch you before — you have always been behind me. Of course I obey, as I will finally get the chance to feel your cock, to measure it, to find out if it is really as big as it feels when you fuck me.

You taste sweet and wild at the same time, and it doesn't take me long to get you hard. Actually, your cock is already half stiff when I take it out; my lips and tongue and my fingertips do the rest. Your hands are holding my head tightly, level with your groin, but you don't force me and you don't move — you let me do as I like, for the first time ever, and strangely enough, I enjoy it.

You are large; you are hard, and I want to make you come, want to swallow your seed. I want to see you sated. The thought is arousing enough to make me whine in the back of my throat.

Of course this is not what you have in mind. "Lay on the bed," you order hoarsely and withdraw from my mouth — could it be that you were closer to your climax than you care to admit?

Your bed is soft, the sheets warmed by a spell. It feels odd not to lay on the ground or to be pressed and taken against the wall — a bed won't leave scratches, a mattress won't cause bruises.

I feel you getting into bed; I feel your hand on my skin, slipping lower, and finally, you touch my cock. I sigh deep and contentedly.

"Grab hold of the bedposts with both hands and don't dare let go. Understood?"

Of course I do. Instead of ropes or cuffs or spells, you use your words to bind me.

"And now draw your knees up and spread your legs. Spread them wide; I want to see you before I touch you, and want to taste you before I fuck you."

I blush at that, but the harsh groan is mine, too — I am embarrassed as well as aroused. Your wishes in combination with your commanding voice turns me on beyond reason, and lying on your bed, smelling your fragrance on the pillows under my head, with legs spread wide and you lazily playing with my balls drives me crazy. "Fuck me!" I want to yell, but I don't — I must not talk, I must not let go of the bedposts, and therefore, I don't.

Kisses on the insides of my legs; kisses on my lower abdomen. Your tongue, circling my navel; your tongue, licking my cock, my buttocks, my hole, your tongue, hard and eager, pushing inside me and I cannot believe

how wonderful it feels. I would have come hadn't you stopped at the last possible moment.

I sob, just like that, sob as if you had beaten me senseless.

"Do you want more?" you ask, out of breath, and I nod. Of course I nod — how could I not want more, how could I want you to stop now?

Metal, cold and surprising, touches me. You place something on my chest, you rub it across my throat and over my lips and along the blindfold that covers my eyes. "That's a cock ring," you say as casually as if you were talking about the weather. "You will wear it — it's designed to prolong your orgasm. Actually, it will hinder you from spilling until I take it off. Do you want to see it?"

I cannot even nod, but you understand nevertheless and take off my blindfold. Momentarily, the candlelight is too bright, but then my eyes adjust and I see the ring you hold in your hands and which will go around my member in another moment. In addition, I can finally see your cock, and when you run your hand along your fully hard length, all I can do is lick my lips, trying not to show how much I want, need you inside me.

You laugh softly, quite obviously not offended by my visible desire. The ring in your hand seems to call out for me and swiftly, you slide it over my cock down to the base, where you tighten it with a spell.

I gasp. The combination of leather and metal on my burning skin feels strange, marvellous, and it shows once more the dominance you have over me — you will be even able to control when exactly I will come. It has happened so very fast, and now you order me to watch whilst you settle between my legs. One hand strokes my cock, swollen, pulsating, and standing upright like a flagpole. The fingers of your other hand first dip into a lubricant and then you spread the creamy substance over your cock. The sight alone would have made me spill hadn't my ring prevented it.

Subtle pain; exquisite torture.

Your hands move: one along your length, the other one between my legs. You slip two creamy fingers inside me; slowly, you move, and of course you find my pleasure spot with dreamlike security. I am so very close to my climax, but I cannot come, I cannot find release because of the ring, and you just go on until I writhe underneath you like a fish on dry land, my teeth clenched, groaning hoarsely every time you spread my hole a bit wider. Maybe I go mad; maybe you can see it in my face when it is too much, because eventually, you remove your fingers and let me feel the tip of your cock.

"Watch me take you." Your voice is just a whisper, and I watch, obeying your order and my own need to see our bodies joined. I see you enter me, I see the need in your face and then I feel you inside me. Greedily, I meet your thrusts. Very soon, you hit the centre of my lust and I cannot remain quiet again. I howl, unable to articulate words, and anyway, you have forbidden me to speak.

You fuck me for an eternity, far longer than usual. Sweat is dripping off of your face and onto my chest, and I believe, truly believe you will never stop moving, you will never allow me to come and then, suddenly, totally unexpectedly, something snaps, somehow, something deep inside me breaks and I let go of the bedposts and pull you into a tight embrace. Briefly, I sense your surprise, but I know that this is how you want it — intense, close, without force, I know it as surely as I know your name. You never wanted to hurt me; I even believe you never understood why I needed the pain along with the pleasure.

I don't need pain anymore to feel alive; I don't need scars to believe this is real. I only need you.

There are no rules anymore, and this is no game any longer. There is no 'you' and 'I', only a very strong 'us', and therefore, I follow my instincts and wrap my legs around your waist, I move with you, and when I dig my fingers into your back, when my mouth finds yours, when I kiss you for the first time and you kiss me back I feel your joy at my actions and see the hope flaring up in your eyes that this might change into something that benefits us both, not only me.

You smile. "Severus," I hear you whisper, and then you deepen the kiss and thrust hard inside me and finally, you vanish my cock ring. I rasp your name, over and over again and come in long, shuddering spasms like a man in a fit whilst you hold me close, hold me safe. We are one, and I take you along with me, over the edge, into oblivion.



I wake up in your arms because the Mark calls for me. The Dark Lord wants to see me, and I have to obey him.

I would have rather stayed with you.

As quietly as possible I slip out of bed, leaving you behind, fast asleep. I dress, I force the smile off my face, and I refuse to brush my lips over yours not only because it might wake you, but because I need to put some distance between you and me. I must face my mad master with the usual coldness in my heart; if I kiss you, if I as much as allow my eyes linger on your sleeping body for one more moment, I won't be able to do so.

Something has changed, but I am not yet sure what it is.

The Dark Lord awaits me in Malfoy's mansion, and he is furious: once more, Potter has escaped from one of his traps, once more his plan hasn't worked out. As there is no one else he can blame, he decides to blame me, simply because he can't accept the fact that it is the boy's destiny to best him.

It is nearly boring to see how predictable the Dark Lord has become. He plots; he fails; he strikes out.

Tonight, I am in the centre of his wrath, which is nothing new, but hasn't happened in a while. Usually, he prefers to torture his lesser followers, believing that I am too precious to be hurt. Tonight, though, he is too furious to think about my value. He wants to bring me to my knees, and surely, before long, I am on all fours before him.

I welcome the Cruciatus like an old friend. I can handle the pain, and I mainly yell to please my master. The torture won't last long; the Dark Lord is not a man who wastes his strengths in useless tasks, and torturing me is useless: he knows he won't find any proof I helped the boy escape.

"*Legilimens!*"

Apparently, my master is more angry than I have foreseen. It is the first time that he combines the Cruciatus Curse with Legilimency on me, and I find the result most disturbing. The pain rips through me and makes it hard, nearly impossible to concentrate, to obscure his attempts to read my mind.

His mind in mine feels icy and slimy. Like rotten maggots, his searching thoughts creep through my memories, and involuntarily, I shudder — this is bad, very bad, and when he tightens his mental grip on me, when he strengthens his Cruciatus Curse and breaks a few ribs by doing so, a rush of fear washes through me, strong enough to make me plead for mercy.

The Dark Lords finds the memories I present him: memories of Lily, of crimes I've committed in his name, of my loyalty to him. He finds my hate for Potter, and he doesn't find anything else.

I spit out some blood and hope this will be over in another few moments; I have no idea how long I can stand this.

The curse rips me apart. My own screams sound loud in my ears, and when I feel my master's thoughts strengthen, I know someone else casts the Cruciatus so the Dark Lord can fully focus on his task to unravel all my secrets. Why he thinks I have more to hide than I care to admit I

do not know, but it is obvious that today, his intention is to break me in order to find out what I hide from him.

Unbidden, the memory of your sleeping face drifts through my mind and suddenly, from out of nowhere, I know what has changed between you and me. Cold dread rushes through me; icy fear captures my heart. I push you as far away as possible, bury the memories of you and me in the back of my head. The Dark Lord hasn't seen you. But it was close, and I try to flee, try to escape from my master's wrath and his probing thoughts because if I don't, my game will be over.

How blind I have been. I should have known; I should have been aware of the possibility of falling in love.

I'm still on all fours and the cracked ribs make it hard to breathe but thinking is surprisingly easy given the circumstances. Right now, I still manage to feed my master with useless memories. In another few minutes, though, if he decides to continue, I won't.

I'm surrounded by my fellow Death Eaters; through the darkness I can see their robes swirling up the dust. I can only assume that someone has vocalised his mistrust in me, and that the Dark Lord, mad with anger because of his failure to capture Potter, has decided to put a bit more effort into torturing me.

I don't care. What I do care about, though, is you. Why did I not see that each time I came to your rooms I allowed you to see a part of me no one else had ever seen before? Why did I not understand that each time I begged you to take me, you broke through my defences, took away my armour, one layer after the other, until nothing but my fragile heart was left?

Why had I not foreseen that in falling in love with you I have put you as well as myself in grave danger?

Only moments ago, I was thinking of you, remembering waking up in your arms after a night of dreamless, sweet sleep. Now, with my master's thoughts in my mind, I have to deal with the consequences: there are many memories of you and me, too many, actually, to hide them all. In another few minutes, I won't be able to withstand the combination of Legilimency and the Cruciatus Curse. He will find you, and he will understand what you mean to me — that you mean everything to me — and you will be lost. Weakened or not, close to his downfall or not, the Dark Lord will come and take you, he will torture you, and he will kill you.

Unacceptable.

I make a decision, quick and cold-hearted. This has to end now and here — I cannot keep two secrets at once, not secrets as big as mine. I must protect you as well as

Dumbledore's plan to bring down the Dark Lord; I must hide my love for you as well as my true loyalties, or you and the cause are both doomed to death and failure.

I even see the irony. Had you only been my method to get rid of the tension that built up after years and years of neglecting my needs, had you indeed been nothing but the fish on my hook, my master would have understood, and wouldn't have touched you, as he would have seen you as the tool that keeps me functioning.

But you aren't a tool, never have been no matter how much I had tried to believe you were. And my master does not understand love, can neither accept nor tolerate it.

On a low, subconscious level I am glad I don't have time to rip out my love for you, which I would have surely done had there been more time.

The Dark Lord dives deeper into my mind, and for the first time ever, he finds memories I didn't want him to see: memories of my failures, memories of tears shed at Lily's grave, memories of talks with Albus. Nothing too grave; nothing that would give me away.

Yet. Because now, he knows I do have something to hide, and he doubles his efforts to break me.

I must admit, I didn't expect to die on Malfoy's dining room floor, surrounded by Death Eaters.

I cannot direct his thoughts any longer; I cannot hide my memories any more. My attempts to hide my memories become obvious: I have no other choice but to bring up my wards, to throw him out of my head. It is the only way to keep my secrets; it is the only way to keep you safe. He didn't know I can block him out; he doesn't know yet that he won't be able to break through my wards again, not with all his power.

I sense his disbelief and his shock. The Cruciatus Curse stops; silence all around me. All that can be heard are my attempts to get some air in my lungs. My eyesight is

obscured by blood running into my eyes, I stink of sweat and pain, and the Dark Lord knows I am a traitor.

I know what will happen now. Briefly, I regret that I cannot say goodbye to you.

"You betrayed me, Severus?" the Dark Lord asks, disbelieving, calculating.

Excited.

"Of course, my Lord." I cough and have to wrap my arms around me for being able to speak, but manage to put a mocking tone into my voice. Even I don't crave to suffer longer than absolutely necessary, and mocking the Dark Lord is a certain way to make him kill me fast.

Stupid, really. As much as I have wanted to die not that long ago, I would now prefer to survive this sodding war. On the other hand, taking my precious secrets with me is not the worst choice I have ever made.

Only you can break through the walls I have built around me; only you did so, repeatedly. Only you have ever touched my heart. Only you hold my soul in your hands.

From far away, I hear my master cast another Cruciatus; apparently, he already injured me more profoundly than expected.

More curses: my fellow Death Eaters join my former master. My bones break; I feel my skin ripping off my frame, and I cannot stop screaming. I consider it appropriate that some of the spells that hit me I have invented myself.

My lungs fail to service; my heart stutters, stops, takes another hesitant beat, and stops again. I am sprawled over the floor, covered with my blood, and I hear my fellow Death Eaters laugh at the sight.

I smile; in another few heartbeats, I will die with your name on my lips.

Remus.

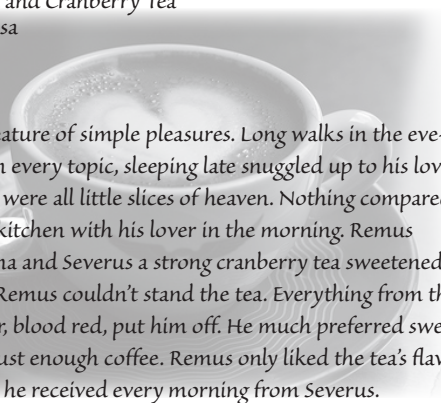
Title: *Of Mocha and Cranberry Tea*

Author: *azurerosa*

Rating: *pg*

Prompt: *mocha*

Remus was a creature of simple pleasures. Long walks in the evenings, debates on every topic, sleeping late snuggled up to his lover on the weekend were all little slices of heaven. Nothing compared to sitting in the kitchen with his lover in the morning. Remus always had mocha and Severus a strong cranberry tea sweetened by fresh honey. Remus couldn't stand the tea. Everything from the taste to the color, blood red, put him off. He much preferred sweet chocolate with just enough coffee. Remus only liked the tea's flavor in the bitter kiss he received every morning from Severus.



chivalric's Bio

I was born and raised in South Germany; I live at the lake of Constance with one son, one dog, and several cats. In October 2007, I stumbled into fandom and found a home. At first, I only wrote HG/SS; meanwhile, I have a real big thing for slash in general and Snape/Lupin specifically.

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