

Crumbs for Severus

by Lariope

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Chapter 1 of 1

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There had been only brief moments of humanity: the unnatural stretching of wings as they parted and spread, bleeding into fingertips, shoulders. He would never be able to accurately describe what it felt like to absorb the beak, to feel his gullet lengthen. He did not do it often.

The raven was safety; it was freedom; it was flight, at long last, from the war and all the trappings of his role therein. He wore his feathers like robes of shining, rippling silk, and when he slept, head tucked beneath wing, he dreamed simple dreams--long expanses of blue, the sharp crack of a seed against cartilage, the calming warmth of absorbed sunlight.

He should leave, he knew; make for warmer climes, perhaps, or simply a place so remote that he could shed this form permanently. Hunger gnawed at the edges of his mind--hunger for something beyond the subsistence of seeds--a steak, something thick and yielding, something he could chew and remind himself what it had felt like to be a man.

But he could not leave, and instead, he beat his wings against the air, feeling the mysterious lift and pull of the wind, until he landed on the back balcony of a studio flat in Hogsmeade, where he would stretch and sort his feathers, standing in a window box of ragged petunias.

It was an odd place, an almost lonely place, despite the cheerful bobbing of the flower heads, but Snape was drawn there by something so fundamental that he could not name it--something that made him think of migration, long flights across the oceans, ancestral homes.

Soon she would open the window and set upon the sill a simple piece of white china that held her morning crumpet. She ate absentmindedly, paying little mind to the bright black eyes fixed upon her, for they were as companionable and common as the sunlight. So bird and girl would breakfast together; she on the muffin and he on the crumbs she gently scraped into the window box as an offering. Her eyes roamed endlessly over the streets of Hogsmeade as if she could never stop searching, though he did not know what she sought.

Sometimes she cried; sometimes she stood beside the window and rhythmically combed her long, curly hair, leaving a tidy ball of strands from which he could build a nest. Sometimes she simply stood and stared for hours, over the building tops, at the rickety remains of the Shrieking Shack. She always moved slowly, so as not to startle him, and he stood beside her silently, ruffling his feathers occasionally as if to remind her of his presence, accepting her gifts.

The day would come when she would cease her vigil, when she would dine alone in the kitchen or with a human companion. In time, the veil of grief would lift from her eyes like a thin, transparent lid, and she would leave him. Then, perhaps. But until then, he would wait.

My first drabble, written on the plane home from Portus, from a quote by OpalJade: "Crumbs for Severus."