

Waking Up

by Amethyst

After the final battle, Severus Snape hears a voice that pulls him from his comatose state.

Prologue

Chapter 1 of 1

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He had not known how long he had lain there, unseeing, only aware of what he could hear and smell; he couldn't even move. Every once in awhile he picked out words such as snakebite, comma, recovery, and miracle, but what he was most aware of was her voice. He knew that voice but could not place it. She read to him daily, some he recognized as being from books he had read before, some he did not, nor did he try to wrap his mind around that which was not familiar. Oh, but her voice was familiar. She smelled nice too, clean and sweet, but not flowery. No she smelled of lightly of Shea, and cocoa, with just a bit of vanilla. Sweet but not overpowering; clean is what she smelled.

There was almost always a hint of sadness in her voice when she talked of things that he was unfamiliar with. He recognized the words victory, hero, and sorry. He tried to make his mind understand, but he wasn't sure why she was sorry. Something about her made him realize that the Light won and the Dark defeated. But why was she sorry about that? Surely, she would not have been there had it been the opposite. He did not know who she was, but he knew that he had known her somehow.

Gradually, he felt more aware of what he heard. He picked up singing, and a bit of arguing. He heard her.

"You will not put that in his room!" her voice bossily told some unknown individual. He knew he had heard that tone before, but not directed at him. His mind rapidly tried to form a picture of whom she'd used that tone with, but he could not.

"He would not stand for it if he were awake; there's no reason to have it in here, anyway. He can't see it, and he wouldn't enjoy it anyway," she defiantly told whomever was trying to decorate his room with some unknown object.

"But, miss, it's just Poinsettia; they've been ordered for all the long-term care wards," the unknown entity pointlessly argued.

"Well, I doubt if your putting poisonous plants in the Janus Thickley ward, so if you can make excuses for that ward, you can excuse this room, too."

"But, miss," the whiny entity said again. "He ain't gonna eat them, like those residents would."

"No," she argued dangerously. "But he might decide to wake up and feed that plant to the idiot that placed it here. . . . On second thought, maybe you should leave it here. It might give him incentive to wake up. But I'd make sure your will was in order if you do that."

Whoever she was, she knew him quite well, he thought. It would be tempting to feed the hideous red plant to the idiot, as she'd called the other visitor.

"Perhaps, you're right, miss, his room don't need any other decorations," the idiot conceded. The act was quickly followed by the shutting of a door.

"Sorry for that argument, Professor," she said to him. "I try to keep this room how I imagine you'd like it. Dark and intimidating, just like your classroom was. It seems to keep most away. Even Harry doesn't like to come and visit, but I think that's as much a pride issue as it is remembering what you were like in the classroom. He's more mature than that though. He's admitted publicly, and frequently, that he was wrong about you, your intentions, and your actions. He's even paying for part of your care. He just has a hard time coming in and saying those things to your face, even if you can't tell him what an imbecile he is. Of course, I tell him that just the privilege of being able to do that might be good incentive for you to wake up. He's come in a few times and stumbled over a few apologies, but he mostly mumbles. He argues that you can't hear him anyway and that you wouldn't want his apologies or gratitude, that you'd rather he just leave you alone. I think that that is what he is afraid of most. With Remus gone, you're his last tie to his parents, and it has never been a welcome tie from either of you, and I think he is really just afraid that he lost any chance of ever learning from you, because of stupid old grudges. . . ."

She continued on that thought for most of her visit this time. It made some sense to him. He recognized the names Harry and Remus, and they brought an anger up in him that he hoped could push through the fog and the haze that was holding him prisoner.

"I'll be a bit late tomorrow, sir," she said, finally changing topics. "It's Christmas and I've promised Harry and the Weasleys I'd spend part of the day with them. Of course, I'm spending tonight and tomorrow morning with my parents. So, I'll be by with my present for you tomorrow night. Happy Christmas, Professor Snape."

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He was more aware of the passage of time and of the Healers as they visited him on their rounds. He even understood them when one of them mentioned that his eyes were reacting to light and that other signs continued to point towards improvement. He anxiously waited for his visitor, quite certain that in another situation he was most likely annoyed and exasperated with the increasingly familiar woman. He just wished he could place her.

"Good evening, Professor." Her voice held an air of false cheeriness. "Happy Christmas. I'm sure you'd be delighted to know that Ronald Weasley is likely the biggest dunderhead that you've ever taught. Though, I'm sure you already knew that. He gave me a ring for Christmas. It was gold with a single diamond surrounded by rubies. He had to save most of his salary for the last few months to get. It was really quite beautiful. Unfortunately, he saw it as an engagement ring, and I've already told him that I'm not ready for that level of commitment. I'm working full time, studying for N.E.W.T.s so that I've got real scores not the honorary ones that got me my entry-level position in the Department for Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, and trying to earn my parents' trust back after sending them away for a year without their consent -- that I want to experience something other than being just one-third of The Golden Trio before starting a family. When I explained that to him again this afternoon, he got angry. I gave him the ring back, told him to find someone who'd appreciate it and all that comes with it, and left. Oh, you probably don't want to hear anymore of that, anyway."

"Look, I got you something for Christmas. Though I had to fight Harry for this particular book. It's *Deorcnysses Gān, Lēoht Winnan: Stories from the Year of Darkness by the Survivors*. Shortly after all the funerals, we started hearing buzzing about others trying to capitalize by writing about the war, so we, a small group from the Order, decided we'd beat them to it and donate the profits to Hogwarts, St. Mungo's, and families devastated by the Death Eaters. We had two editions printed, a normal one, and one signed by all the contributors, but only had one hundred of those, numbered of course. I bought number one for you. Harry wanted it, but when I told him that he wrote and published your story without your permission, the least he could do was let me buy it for you. Our compromise was that he paid for half, and then bought number two for himself. I bought a regular one for me; he bought number one hundred for me for Christmas."

"The Healers don't want me to read it to you, though. So, we'll just have to keep this between the two of us, and not let them know."

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She read one story a night for nearly a week and then stopped coming. He was very aware of the passage of time now and could make out light and dark, differentiating day time versus night time. He showed some minor physical responses opening and closing his eyes, but not communicating with them. So on the third night in a row he was beginning to get worried. It bothered him even more when one of the trainees came in and began blathering about how strange it was that his little girlfriend had not shown up since New Year's; she'd never missed more than a day. Not visiting in three days was unheard of.

She hadn't been to seem in three days. Four days. Five days. Six days.

"Listen, if I have to go and get an order from Minister Shackbolt and the Wizengamot, I'll do it, but as I'm paying for him to have this room to himself, then the least you could do is listen to me when I ask that she be moved into the second bed."

He knew that voice. He hated that voice, the owner of that voice.

"Mr Potter, please. Her parents have asked that she . . ." the Healer responded.

"I'll talk with her parents. You've said yourself that he was making great progress until a few days ago, when she stopped coming. Since the both require similar treatment from the same Healer, it makes sense to have her here with him. I think they'll both do better. She's been in that other room for five days and hasn't made progress. Professor Snape has made backwards progress. Maybe there's a connection."

"That's . . ." the Healer began to say.

"Just try it," Potter pleaded. "If in a week or two, neither has made any progress, you can move her back, but don't tell me it can't happen if you won't try."

Later he heard some shuffling noises, like the room was being rearranged. Fearful voices talking to the Healers and Potter. Potter talking to him and his roommate.

He could see. He could move his head to the side, just slightly, but he could see and move. All he could make out was a mass of matted brown hair, attached to a small female frame.

"Good morning, Professor," he heard the hated voice say. "I knew that just her presence was helping you. I've stayed away, because even when you were completely catatonic, you showed some sign of agitation when I was around. Only Hermione seemed oblivious to the negative effects. She took it as a good sign. I thought she was crazy for making time for you every day. That was until I got a report from your healers that since her absence you'd slid back from the progress you'd made."

"She was moved her yesterday, from another room in the ward. She was attacked by acromantulas while looking for the centaur herd in the Forbidden Forest. She almost didn't make it, but she's doing better in just the day that she's been in here."

It was all coming back to him. The bossy, annoying voice could only have been one person: Hermione Granger. Only Granger was stubborn enough to visit him nearly every night for how long was it now. He looked at Potter and tried to speak.

"Don't try to talk, Professor," the Boy Who Lived admonished him. "The Healers put a spell on you when you brought in after the battle to help you heal. You lost a lot of blood, thankfully the snake missed your jugular, but your larynx was pretty badly damaged. They have to remove the spell before you can talk."

He glowered at the boy. Even in hospital robe and in bed, he could be intimidating.

"I suppose I should go and let the healers know you're awake and alert," Potter babbled.

For the next day he was subjected to poking and prodding by healers and the presence of Potter. He could talk, but his voice was scratchy from injury and disuse. The Healers said that would go away in time. His throat was almost entirely healed, just a few scars on his neck. Their concern was the effects of the snake venom that had nearly killed him. He had been nearly dead when he had been brought in between the venom and the loss of blood, a magical coma was necessary to help the body heal, but even that was risky. They'd nearly given up hope that he would wake up.

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He spent his quiet moments staring at the young woman in the next bed. As her teacher, he found her quite irritating, mostly because she reminded him of what he was like as a student and what he might have been like if he'd had a proper family. He'd only seen her so still on two other occasions: when she was petrified her second year and when she was injured in her fifth year in the Department of Mysteries. She'd been visiting him for the better part of seven months. It had been her bossy voice that had kept pulling him in from the void to near consciousness. And now here she was in a similar state.

He spent most of the night watching her and wondering why she would spend so much personal time on him and why he even cared that she took the time. However, he had spent much of his time as headmaster worrying about her and Potter and being thankful that at least someone with brain power was with Potter. How had she ended up in the bed next to him after everything that she had survived?

Shortly before dawn he started to hear soft sighs and groans from the next bed. Finally she spoke and he heard her for the first time since being conscious.

"Where am I?"

"In the bed next to mine at St. Mungo's," he answered.

"Professor Snape?" Her voice held a tone of pleasant surprise as she asked her question.

"Who else?" he answered drolly.

"You're awake," she commented.

"Obviously, and you held much better conversations when you thought I couldn't hear you," he teased.

A short, painful laugh came from her direction. "What happened?"

"Potter. He bullied the Healers almost as brilliantly as you did and made them put you here, claiming that I was not doing as well without your incessant visits and that you'd made no progress in the few days you were in another room. As to why you are a resident, evidently the acromantulas took offense at you being in their forest attempting to meet with the centaurs."

"Thank you," she replied. "What day is it?"

"January ninth," he answered.

"Oh, happy birthday, Professor," she said, her voice weak as she drifted back to sleep.

Author's Note: Thank you for reading this story. Please review if you are so inclined. This was written to be a stand alone story; however, an idea popped in after writing for a possible brief continuation, likely only one chapter, but it may be awhile before being written and posted. Thank you.