

Adopted

by lyn_f

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What were the contents of that letter?

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Chapter 1 of 1

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I don't own them. It's all JK Rowling's. I'm just borrowing them for the moment.

Severus Snape was sitting on his bed in the fifth-year boys' dormitory in Slytherin House. He sighed as he read a piece of parchment he'd received earlier that morning. He was in a state of shock – the person he called Mum was actually not his biological parent.

"Adopted!" he exclaimed, shaking his head. He sighed again as he rummaged through his trunk to extract an old photo album. He flopped on his bed, opened the album, and looked at the photos.

There he was, waving happily at the camera with his four older siblings, David, Alan, Michael, and Sheila Rickman. They were all considerably older than he was, so he essentially grew up as an only child, raised by a single mother. He was closer to Michael and Sheila, as they'd had a hand in his upbringing as well.

He wondered if his mother ... well, his adopted mother knew anything about his biological family. His eyes widened as a thought came to his mind – Dumbledore. If there was anyone who would know the answer, it would be the Headmaster. And the Headmaster did say his office was always open to those who needed to talk to him.

He gathered the parchment and swept out of the dormitory and through the common room. He walked quickly, trying to avoid areas where he knew other students tended to congregate. He reached the gargoyle in front of the Headmaster's office, but had no idea what the password was.

"I'm afraid I don't know the password," he whispered.

The gargoyle appeared to examine him and then after a few moments leapt aside to reveal the staircase leading up to the Headmaster's office. He climbed the stairs and was about to knock on the door when it opened of its own accord.

"Yes, Severus, my boy, what can I do for you?"

"Headmaster," Severus said, "I have a question for you."

Dumbledore smiled at him and gestured toward a chair.

"Lemon sherbet?" he asked.

Severus raised an eyebrow and replied, "No thank you."

Dumbledore smiled as he popped the sweet into his mouth. "What can I do for you, Severus?"

Severus took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. "I received an owl this morning," he said. "Apparently, the woman who I thought was my mother really isn't."

Dumbledore nodded his head. "You are correct, Severus," he said. "Margaret Rickman is not your biological mother."

Severus frowned. "You knew all this time, and you never told me?" he asked.

Dumbledore spread his hands. "I did, but thought it best not to tell you," he said. "It's for your protection that you were placed with the Rickman family."

Severus hung his head as he looked down at his shoes. "Sir," he said, "I am not ungrateful for the love and care my mum, Michael and Sheila gave me as I was growing up. Now that I know they are not my true family, I would like to know who is."

Dumbledore nodded. "I figured you might," he said. He went to his bookshelf and pulled out a book. He handed it to Severus.

"This was your mother's sixth-year potions text," he said. "There are some old newspaper parchments in there."

Severus opened the book and noticed the writing on the inside cover: Eileen Prince. He then gathered the parchments and unfolded one of them. His mother was Captain of the Hogwarts Gobstones team. He noticed a photo of her and saw a skinny girl with heavy eyebrows and a long, pallid face. He unfolded another parchment and noticed a wedding notice: Tobias Snape, a Muggle from working-class Manchester, had married Eileen Prince, pureblood and last of the Prince line. Another parchment indicated Severus' birth on 9 January 1960.

"Sir, why was I taken away from my family?"

"Severus, those parchments don't tell the whole story," Dumbledore said. "However, your family life was not a happy one."

His blue eyes met the black eyes of the fifth-year Slytherin student sitting before him. "You were abused by your Muggle father. He was a drunkard and was often violent toward you and your mother. He killed her and nearly killed you. You were saved and your memory modified. We placed you with the Rickmans and asked them to raise you as if you were their own.

"As for your father, the Muggle authorities took care of him, and he is, to my knowledge, in a Muggle jail, where he will stay for the rest of his life."

Severus felt as if his heart dropped to the floor. He knew he was different from the rest of his family – David and Alan were the artistic ones in the family, Michael was the athletic one, and Sheila the kind one. He was the quiet one, preferring his books over spending time with other children his age. Even his appearance was different – his brothers and sister all had fair hair and beautiful hazel eyes while he was pale-skinned with black hair and black eyes. He felt his eyes burning, but tried to hold back the tears. He did not want to cry in front of the Headmaster.

"I know this is a lot of information to take in all at once, Severus," the Headmaster said. "And I'm sorry you had to find out this way. I'm sure Margaret would still be happy to take care of you until you come of age."

Severus nodded. "Yes sir," he mumbled.

"If you need anyone to talk to, my door is always open to you, my boy," Dumbledore said. "You may also speak with your Head of House if you prefer."

Severus shook his head. He loved Potions, and Professor Slughorn was one of his favourite teachers; however, he couldn't imagine speaking with Slughorn about a matter such as this.

"It's time to take you back to your common room, Severus," Dumbledore said. "Remember, I'm here if you need to talk to someone."

Severus stood up and nodded. "Thank you, sir," he said.

A/N: Prompt issued by HermioneWeasley1972: When Severus Snape was born, he was given up for adoption and adopted by the Rickmans. How does he find out his true identity? I didn't exactly follow the prompt, but I hope this will suffice. Thanks go WriterMerrin for the beta-reading, and to the ladies in TPP chat room for the conversation about adoption.