

Sleep Tight

by ApollinaV

Severus is visited at night... by a bedbug?

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: I don't own Harry Potter or anything recognizable to the HP-Universe, JK Rowling does. I'm not making any money off the writing of this fanfic.

This was written in response to the drabble prompt from sunny33: Severus Snape is in Azkaban awaiting trial. He has an enlightening conversation with... a bedbug.

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"Psst, Snape!" a voice loudly whispered.

"Ungh," was his reply as the frail man turned on his hardened cot.

"Psst!" the small voice persisted several more times.

An eyelid cracked. A glimmering obsidian eye searched out the darkened shadows of his cramped cell. Moonlight trickling through the narrow window shot a sliver of light across the floor. It wasn't enough light to be useful, but just enough to heighten the shadows of Azkaban.

"Hey, Snapey. Over here!" his conspiratorial voice prodded again.

"Reveal yourself," Severus demanded, laboring up from his interrupted rest. Three weeks languishing in prison had not improved his ability to find rest on the thin straw pallet they'd given him, but it had created a permanent ache in his limbs.

"Down here."

"Where?" Severus asked warily. He had neither seen nor heard another prisoner since arriving at the North Sea fortress.

"Here! On this stone they call a pillow."

Severus' brow furrowed.

"Look closer. I'm a bedbug, so you really need to squint."

"I must be going mad," Severus muttered.

"Possibly!" the bedbug answered. "But nonetheless, I am here, and you've got some explaining to do."

"Pardon?" Severus sputtered, sitting up and dragging the fraying wool blanket around his shoulders. His breath escaped him in little steamy puffs, but the night was not as cold as most.

"Ex-plain-ing," the bedbug enunciated. "I'm Bruno, your conscience, and you, Severus Snape, have quite a bit of explaining to do."

"My conscience? What rubbish," the wizard chuffed. "I have no need for such a thing."

"Yes, well some rate crickets, but you get a bedbug, so maybe you're onto something with that theory."

"Go away," Severus said, suddenly groggy and in no mood to indulge such inanities as talking to his pillow. Correction: talking to Bruno, the bedbug voice of his conscience, on his pillow. He laid back down, hopefully squashing the nuisance.

"I cannot be chased away that easily," a muffled voice announced.

"Fuck," Severus swore, pissed beyond reason that his sleep was being interrupted. He shook out his pillow and turned back to bed.

"You know," Bruno said from the tip of his nose, "you're only making this worse on yourself. And you should really try laughing at my jokes. They don't improve, you know."

"You've told jokes?" Severus asked with confusion.

"Hardy har-har."

Severus crossed his eyes and squinted, staring down the slope of his proboscis. "I have no need of a conscience," Severus declared. "I am already painfully aware of my many failings, so go peddle your wares elsewhere."

Bruno chuckled, "You think so, do you?"

"Shall I enumerate?" Severus drawled in a bored voice. "I will be convicted in the next few days of the cold-blooded murder of my best friend and mentor. This is the second friend I've put into an early grave, but that's hardly a comprehensive list of the blood on my hands. There've been thirty-three innocent Muggles and seventeen wizards I've killed."

"Acts of mercy, given their torture," Bruno piped up.

"Kindly shut it," Severus growled. "You asked for an explanation, and you will receive one. Then I'm going to bed, and you'll not interrupt me again."

"Testy, testy," Bruno chided.

"I've also created numerous potions and poisons that were no doubt put to use for nefarious purposes."

"Is that all?" Bruno pried.

"Isn't that enough?" Severus responded, wide-eyed.

"It is. But that's not what I'm getting at. I wish to examine where your life went astray."

"The haunting of my past?" Severus asked incredulously, thinking in the back of his mind, 'Good luck!'

"Please!" Bruno interrupted. "No ghost references. That's another tale entirely, and I can't afford any more infringement. Besides, Dickens will send that orphan boy to kick my ass again." Bruno shuddered.

"You make no sense at all."

"And yet, I'm a figment of *your* imagination, so what are we to infer from that?" Bruno replied glibly.

Severus emitted a long-suffering sigh. "Then tell me why you are here, so you can go away."

"Fine! Fine! Severus Snape, please name three close friends. Living friends."

Severus remained silent.

"Name the last girl you kissed. Prostitutes don't count; you don't kiss them."

His teeth gritted loudly.

"How many students did you encourage to become Potions masters? Are you aware that you are single-handedly responsible for the paucity of British Potions masters?"

"Dunderheads, the lot of them. Not a shred of talent in the entire school."

"Oh yes, because eleven-year-olds make such terrible masters. You were supposed to prepare them, not demand perfection right off the bat."

Severus could practically hear the eye-roll in Bruno's sarcasm.

"Tell me then, Snape, how is it that you ever lived? Because from what I understand, your greatest failure had nothing to do with any work performed for the Dark Lord or the Order, it was squandering your life. You had all the opportunity to embrace each day and live, and yet you did not."

"I was a spy," Severus shortly defended.

"That's Thestral shit and you know it. Being Order members didn't stop any of those people from having families and living their lives. And it didn't stop your Dark Lord's brethren, either."

Severus was very still and absolutely silent. Every opportunity to make something of his life was a closed door to him now. In the stillness of the evening, Severus realized that even without Dementors, he had not a single happy memory to cling to that wasn't tarnished or tainted.

"You know," Bruno spoke up, "have you noticed how the assistant Wizengamot administrative clerk looks at you?"

"You must be barking! Granger?"

"That's the one. Were it me, I'd take her up on her offer for coffee if she manages to get you released. You need to start living, Snape."

"I know," he whispered desolately. "I know."

A/N:

My appreciation to Christev20 for beta'ing this for me, even when she stayed up all night and put off RL commitments to do so. Thank you, m'dear.

And thanks to sunny33, for her fun prompt. I enjoyed writing this very much. You know how to get to my heart - Severus and Azkaban.