

Soroche

by Hechicera

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

Apu Kuntur

Chapter 1 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

Thanks, first and foremost to JKR, for creating these amazing characters...and even more, for having the generosity to allow the creative explosion that is fanfiction to flourish unquashed. Everything that is good in these pages belongs to her. The clunky, amateurish stuff is all mine.

This story branches off at the beginning of OotP. The only significant differences are that Rawa, rather than Dolores Umbridge, comes to Hogwarts to teach DADA; and Sirius Black is out of prison and on the Hogwarts staff as Flight Instructor.

All of the geographical and linguistic details in Soroche are as accurate as I can make them. I haven't made up any words...all non-English words are either Spanish, Quechua, Mapuche, Guaraní, Nahuatl, or Miskito. Most, but not all, of the spells that Rawa uses are in one of the indigenous languages.

All of the flora and fauna, and products thereof, that Rawa brings to Hogwarts are real. With the one exception of the potion made from Black Widow venom, all of the uses of those products are currently practiced as described by the various indigenous peoples of Central and South America.

All of the places in Rawa's world...except of course for the Yachay Wasi school...are real.

Outside, a light dusting of snow gleamed blue in the moonlight, but underneath her bare feet, the belly of the mountain warmed the floor of the small room. The great brown bird stood perched on a chair in the corner, ripping with its curved talons at a luckless rodent, while Rawa turned over in her hands the large, cream-colored envelope it had brought.

Tungurawa Akapana

Yachay Wasi, Cotopaxi

She broke the red wax seal, drew out the single sheet of folded parchment, and peered, frowning, at the few brief paragraphs written there. English print she could read...most journals and many spell books were in English...but this fine, slanting sepia handwriting she found nearly indecipherable. She turned the lamp flame higher and murmured "*Rikisichiy*," smoothing the parchment with a small brown hand. Immediately the letters stood out stark and legible on the page:

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Dear Miss Akapana,

I am writing to offer you the position of Professor of Defence Against the Dark Arts for the coming academic year, as word of your extraordinary talents has reached my ear.* It is rumoured, for example, that you possess the power to compel truthfulness; such a skill would likely prove quite valuable when dealing with the garden-variety magus adolescens.

I would be remiss in my duties if I failed to advise you that we have had some difficulty in keeping this position filled during the past decade: more than one of your predecessors has unfortunately lasted less than a year. However, I feel certain that if your magical abilities are as your reputation has led me to believe, you will have an excellent chance of success.

If you are agreed, I will send a conveyance for you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely yours,

Albus Dumbledore

Headmaster

*I cannot imagine why it has reached one ear and not the other, but there you have it.

She read through the missive twice before laying it back on the table. There had been a group from Hogwarts at the conference she had attended in France last April at Beauxbatons, but try as she might she could not picture the author of this letter. She didn't think he had been in attendance at her lecture, but perhaps that was what he meant by "reached my ear": someone who had been there had told him about her.

What was a *conveyance*? she wondered. Another letter? Some kind of contract? Well, it hardly mattered...she had no intention of traveling half the world away to teach in a language that made her teeth hurt.

Go, said a soft voice in her ear. *Ama quella. You must go.*

Her head jerked in irritation. "It has nothing to do with laziness," she snapped, then had to smile at herself for answering aloud. She knew, now that she was grown, that the voices of the spirits that guided and advised her came most often from within herself. When she was a girl she had seen the gray fox in her dreams, had had long conversations...and sometimes loud arguments...with him. But the literalness of those visions became less and less necessary as she grew older, and now when she needed guidance she simply quieted herself and listened within, and it nearly always came.

You must go. It is time.

But this felt different, not like the subtle voice of her own wisdom; not even like the voice of *theatoc* that she used to hear as a child.

"I will not travel across an ocean to live in a country where the winters are cold and dark."

Yes. You will.

To ignore such a voice outright was, she knew, very foolish. So, grudgingly, she stilled herself and waited, and listened, but nothing more came.

Finally she said aloud, "I will not leave my people. I am not going."

Yes. You are. Because it is time.

"Who are you? If you would tell me what I must do, then at least show yourself!"

When there was no answer, she rose and padded silently into a little storeroom, rummaging among the jars on the shelves until she found one labeled *Ayahuasca*. This she brought into the kitchen, where she mixed the dried leaves with water and set the concoction to boil. The owl's great head swiveled as its yellow eyes followed her movements, and she looked over at it and said, "Patience, *tuku*. You will have your answer soon enough."

When the mixture had cooled, she strained it and drank it down, gagging on the bitter taste and clenching her teeth to keep it down, then sat back in the chair and wrapped her shawl about her. "Now show yourself," she repeated grimly.

For a while there was nothing, and then the floor abruptly vanished from beneath her, and she was standing on a mountainside far above the treeline, her brown toes bare among the lichens. It was cold, and the air was even thinner than she was accustomed to.

She saw it from far away, and drew in a sharp breath. It was gliding silently on the updraft from the mountain, black against the clear sky, making straight for her. The great wings began to beat slowly as it drew closer, darkening the whole sky with their four-meter span. It alighted on a rock outcropping so close to her that she could feel the gust of air when it folded its vast wings.

She dropped to her knees. "Apu kuntur," she breathed.

The creature turned its head and regarded her out of one dark glittering eye, the tiny feathers of its white collar moving gently in the wind.

She waited, afraid to speak again.

Later, she would try to remember how she knew she was to go with it, how she understood what it told her. Certainly the great curved beak never opened, no sound broke the silence of the treeless páramo . . . but she knew, nonetheless, that the voice belonged to the Condor.

Come with me.

It wheeled and rose into the sky, and she followed it without thought or hesitation, rising through the thin air, the mountainside dropping away beneath them. They climbed higher, up through the cloud layer, until they were clearing the highest peaks of the cordillera. And higher still, until she could see both great oceans flanking the land, and the gentle curve where the world ended.

The Condor slowed and then stopped, suspended in the air, and turned to her. It extended an enormous wing, pointing toward the north and east.

Look far, daughter.

She looked toward the horizon, but saw only endless blue water.

Farther.

And then she saw it, just at the edge of the world where sky and water met: a tiny smear of dark gray among the clouds, a shadow that seemed to suck in the light around it so that, even from this great distance, it was a dreadful sight.

You must go.

The eye regarded her, unblinking.

"Will I be safe?" she dared to ask.

No.

"Will I die there?"

Daughter, you know that no one is ever told when and where they are to die.

She looked again at the horizon, at the fearsome smudge of darkness, and understood that it was, indeed, better not to know such terrible things.

But the people of that land wait for you.

"Yes," she sighed.

And dropped like a stone to the earth below.

She awoke in the chair, with her shawl wrapped tightly around her. At once she leapt to her feet and ran out into the cold night and vomited violently onto the ground; there was always this price to be paid for visions summoned with ayahuasca. When the retching finally subsided, she scrubbed her mouth out with snow and returned to the warmth of her rooms.

The hot floor felt wonderful underneath her frozen feet. She fetched ink, and a red-and-blue macaw feather, and turned Dumbledore's letter face-down upon the table, so that she could write on the blank reverse side of the parchment. Dipping the quill into the ink, she wrote simply: *I will.*

Then she rolled up the parchment, fastened it to the leg of the owl, and watched as he flew off into the darkness.

Soroche

Chapter 2 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

She sat beside a large trunk, surrounded by an assortment of bottles, jars, and packets. Here was an earthen *tinaja* filled with *waka waka* beetles packed in salt; there a bundle of *achuma quewillu* spines. An array of small stoppered bottles held all manner of liquids, including a variety of poisons. One by one she carefully packed each item into the trunk, cushioning it with straw and eucalyptus leaves.

There were live creatures as well, although these did not go into the trunk: brilliantly colored arrow-poison frogs in a small glass vivarium, and a large cage fashioned from dried vines, housing several dozen finches.

There were boxes and boxes of books as well, and an ancient carved wooden chest holding the hundreds of knotted *kipu* on which were recorded generations of spells and potions.

A commotion down by the road made her look up from her task. A small knot of students was running up the hill, pointing towards her house, and in their midst was a most improbable sight: a huge motorcycle, ridden by the biggest man Rawa had ever seen.

He was absolutely enormous, with a great mane of wiry hair and a beard that looked as if it might house a family of birds. He roared up the hill, surrounded by the excited swarm of students, and came to a noisy stop in front of her. The motorcycle belched forth a final cloud of malodorous smoke and then was mercifully silent.

The giant dismounted and, extending a hand the size of a small pig, said something enthusiastic but completely incomprehensible. When it was clear that Rawa had not understood a word, he repeated himself, this time more slowly and considerably louder. Finally, on the third repetition, she caught the name "Dumbledore," and, turning to one of the students, said, "Find me Sammy Begay."

Sammy Begay was that rarity at Yachay Wasi, a student from the US—or, as the students insisted on calling it, *Gringolandia*. The practice of real magic in the States had dwindled almost to extinction. Counterfeit magic—illusions and crystals and astrology—was alive and well, but such true practitioners as remained were limited to parts of Louisiana and the Navajo Four Corners. It was from this latter area that Sammy Begay had come two years ago, hoping to expand upon his training as a tribal shaman. At the time he had known only a smattering of Mexican Spanish, and of course no Quechua at all, so the ensuing months had been difficult for him. Rawa thought of him now with a fresh sense of empathy—soon she would herself be in that position, trying to make her way in a foreign land and a foreign tongue.

And God help her if all the *ingleses* spoke like this one.

At first, Sammy did not seem to be having much more success than she had had, but after much back-and-forth with the visitor, he turned to her and said, "I think I have this right, Q'ala Chaki. He says his name is Jegrit, and he's come to take you back with him to Jaguars."

"In that?" she asked incredulously, pointing to the motorcycle with its rickety-looking sidecar.

The enormous stranger reached into a pocket and pulled out a crumpled bit of parchment, which he handed earnestly to Rawa. On it was written, in the now-familiar slanting hand:

I assure you, it is much safer and more dependable than it looks. As, for that matter, is Hagrid. --A. D.

She looked up at him. "Jegrit," she said carefully, and he broke into an alarming smile, nodding vigorously.

"Tha's right, Hagrid!"

She gazed dubiously at the motorcycle. The *layqakuna* did not normally use magic for transportation—indeed, they used magic very little for everyday tasks that could be accomplished without it—so she had naturally planned to travel to Scotland in one of the airplanes of the *runakuna*. But she had no wish to offend Dumbledore by declining

the transport he had sent for her, so she nodded assent, smiling nervously.

The plan, apparently, was that she was to sit behind Hagrid on the motorcycle, and her belongings were to go into the sidecar, whose capacity seemed magically infinite. Her students set about the task of stowing all of her trunks and boxes, but she stopped them when they came to the frogs and finches, uneasy about the welfare of living creatures inside what seemed to be some sort of magical compression device.

"Sammy," she said, "ask him what we should do with the animals."

Sammy ran over to Hagrid, who was sitting on a nearby rock, demolishing a stack of empanadas. After a brief conference, he returned and said, "He says not to worry—care of magical creatures is his specialty and the *animalitos* will be quite all right in the sidecar."

Just at this moment there was a tremendous crash, and she looked over at the rock where Hagrid had been sitting a few seconds earlier. It was empty, and on the ground beside it lay the foreigner, looking like a beached leviathan. He was holding his head and groaning horribly, thrashing back and forth. Hurrying to his side, Rawa saw that his face was gray and covered with sweat.

"Ask him if he can feel his hands and feet."

A garbled exchange, then, "He says his head hurts like hammers."

"I can see that for myself—what about his hands and feet?" Impatiently, she reached up and pinched one of Hagrid's sausage-like fingers as hard as she could, but he did not react at all. His lips were now noticeably blue, and his eyelids had begun to flutter.

Rawa cursed under her breath. "It's the *soroche*. I've never seen it hit anyone this fast, or this hard. We have to get him down the mountain."

"You can't cure him?" Sammy asked in surprise. "What about *mate de coca*? You gave that to me when I first came here. I was pretty sick for a couple of days. Although," he admitted, "not like this."

"No, this is the worst I've ever seen," she agreed. And then, in answer to his question, "There's no cure, magical or otherwise, for *soroche*. The *mate de coca* makes you feel a little better, but *soroche* is like starvation: you can use magic to ease the pain, but you can't keep a starving man alive with magic. You have to get food into his belly. With *soroche* this bad, the only cure is richer air, and quickly."

"So how did I get over it, then?"

"Most people do, in a few weeks. Your body adjusts, your blood gets thicker. It helps if you're young and strong."

"Well, what's wrong with him? I mean, besides that he's *ananciano*."

She raised an eyebrow. "He's not that old, Sammy. I think it must be some difference in his blood, or his lungs. I mean, there's clearly at least one giant up his family tree." She reached up and felt Hagrid's pulse, then turned back to Sammy.

"Run down and ask Miguel Huamán if we can borrow his truck. And a tow bar."

Culture Shock

Chapter 3 of 26

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A/N:

My profound thanks to RedSkyAtNight for her tireless and excellent help.

They stayed the night at the Bilsa reserve outside Quininde, where Rawa cast a spell around them to ward off mosquitoes, conga ants, jaguars, and other unwelcome guests. If she had come on her own, she would simply have slept in one of the tree platforms high in the canopy, but she had no wish to contend with the puzzle of lifting Hagrid the requisite thirty meters. So they stayed on the forest floor and dealt with the mud and the annoying fauna.

Early in the morning they were awakened by a ferocious growling roar, and Hagrid...whose condition, as expected, had improved dramatically with the drop in altitude...sat up and said, "Bloody hell! Are there dragons in these woods, then?"

"Monkeys," said Rawa.

"That's never a monkey!"

She pointed up into the trees where a band of innocuous-looking howlers was swinging through the branches above them. Hagrid was convinced that nothing so small could possibly make such a horrific sound without the aid of magic, and their departure was delayed for over an hour while Rawa and Sammy tried to convince him that these were ordinary monkeys, and talked him out of capturing one of the young ones to take back with them.

By late morning, however, Sammy was on his way back home in the truck, and she and Hagrid, after a makeshift breakfast, mounted the motorcycle and took to the sky. The journey itself was surprisingly short, and in just a few hours they were landing, with a bone-jarring thump, on the grassy lawn of an enormous castle.

They were greeted by a small army of dwarflike creatures who identified themselves as house-elves and who carried Rawa's belongings into the school. She was relieved to see that the frogs and finches had survived the journey unscathed, and pleasantly surprised when, after navigating a labyrinthine series of stairways and corridors, the elves ushered her into a small apartment. They deposited her things, bowed profusely in response to her thanks, and left.

She looked around. The apartment was a little larger than her rooms at Yachay Wasi, and consisted of a sitting room with a small kitchen off to the right, a bedroom in the back, and a bathroom. There was a pot of tea waiting on a low table in the sitting room, along with a small plate of cakes and crustless sandwiches, and she sank gratefully

into an overstuffed armchair and drank the tea, wishing only a little that it was *café pasado* or a good hot chocolate instead. It was cool in the room...cooler than she was used to in August...and the sunlight coming in through the single window was not intense. It was already mid-afternoon here, she realized: they had been flying against the sun.

She finished the tea, and then set about unpacking her trunks and boxes. About an hour into this process, she heard a knock at the door and opened it to see a tall, elderly man with long white hair and a beard that reached his waist, dressed in a purple robe and wearing gold-rimmed half-moon spectacles.

"Professor Akapana!" he said. "Welcome! Jelly bean?"

This greeting completely mystified her, until she realized that he had thrust forward a small bag of multicolored sweets; she took one and found it unfamiliar but tasty enough.

This, then, was Albus Dumbledore, the author of the letter. She was relieved to find that she could understand him (and he her, apparently) without difficulty. They exchanged pleasantries, and then she said shyly, "I brought some things," and retrieved from a side table the cage of finches.

"They are for carrying small messages," she explained, "but only indoors," and she showed him the minute papers that could be rolled into the tiny compartments fastened about their necks.

"Interoffice memos!" he cried delightedly. "Please tell me they will leave random droppings about the castle. Filch will be beside himself."

She smiled uncertainly. "I have some other things," she said. "Seeds, and plant cuttings, and some herbs and poisons you may not have here."

"Ah, Professor Sprout will be glad of those . . . except perhaps for the poisons. I think we'll leave those to Professor Snape." This made him smile for some reason.

She gathered up the botanicals she had brought, and he led her out to the greenhouse to meet Pomona Sprout, a roly-poly woman who seemed quite pleased to receive them. Some she had heard of ("Cecropia seeds...wonderful for repelling snakes!") and others, like the hallucinogenic *chakruna*, she had not. But she accepted all of them with an indiscriminate enthusiasm which went a long way towards easing Rawa's awkwardness.

Thus she was feeling just a little less out of her element by the time Dumbledore asked her apologetically if she would mind finding the Potions classroom on her own, as he had some pressing business to take care of before dinner. She returned to her rooms and gathered up an assortment of bottles, along with the glass vivarium, and...armed with a little map that Dumbledore had sketched on a scrap of parchment...went to find the Potions master.

The Potions classroom was the polar opposite of the greenhouse: where one had been light and airy, the other was a dark, gloomy room located in the bowels of the castle. Its sole denizen was a tall, angular man with lank, greasy hair and a dour expression, who brightened not at all when she introduced herself. She had trouble with his name...his surname was impossible for her to pronounce without adding a vowel before it, so it came out of her mouth "Esnep," and she could see that he was neither charmed nor amused.

He was dressed in black trousers and a white shirt. The shirt had a high, stiff collar that was unbuttoned at the moment, and the sleeves were rolled up to his elbows, revealing a strange tattoo on his left arm. He had been stacking cauldrons on a long table at the back of the room.

"A gift of poisons," he said. "How very . . . significant." He accepted the arrow-poison frogs, along with an assortment of other substances...including a tiny vial of *wayruru* venom that had cost her very dearly indeed...with a bemused expression and without further comment.

Rawa regarded him uncertainly. He seemed annoyed at her very presence, although she was at a loss to divine why. As always when she was nervous, her English deteriorated, and her efforts to explain the reasoning behind the gifts, and the uses of the various poisons, were less than a brilliant success. The *wayruru* in particular defeated her, and she finally resorted to pictures, drawing on the dusty blackboard a picture of the spider with the hourglass on her belly.

"The black widow," he said.

"Yes, the one, she kills the male after they, after they . . ."

He let her flounder, a look of mordant amusement on his face.

Finally he said, "And does it have a practical use, this venom, other than the expedient elimination of undesirables?"

"Yes, you can make with very small quantities of it a, an *antídoto* for the love that is ..."she groped in vain for the right word "...*enfermizo*."

"Well, that certainly clears that up."

Whatever had she done to antagonize this rude man?

"I will go," she said simply, and turned toward the door.

"Wait," he said.

She looked back at him.

"It's time for dinner," he said. "Just let me lock up here and I'll show you the way." He rolled his sleeves down and fastened the cuffs, buttoned his shirt collar, and took down from a hook on the back of the door a long black frock coat, which he put on, buttoning it as he walked toward the door. He locked the cabinets, and then the room itself, with a dismissive wave of a black wand.

In the corridor he looked pointedly at her feet. "Don't you own a pair of shoes?"

"I do not wear shoes."

"Never?"

"Very rarely."

"Why not?"

Maleducado, thought Rawa resentfully. "I just do not," she said. "I never have."

"But surely," he persisted, "you must have some compelling reason for such a peculiar practice."

She was tired, both from the journey and from dealing with the unfamiliar surroundings. "Surely," she mimicked him, "you must have some compelling reason for being so rude."

He seemed taken aback for an instant, then gave a little half smile. "Point taken," he said.

She looked up at him. The eyes that looked back at her were as black as night; his face was narrow, almost gaunt. Its most striking feature was a strong hooked nose,

which presented itself at an unfortunate angle to someone of her short stature. He had buttoned the black frock coat almost all the way up, so that only a narrow strip of the white shirt collar was showing. He extended a long, black-sleeved arm, indicating the direction of the stairs.

And suddenly she knew.

Knew that he was the reason the Condor had dispatched her here, knew that in fact he was the reason it was the Condor, and not some other messenger, who had been sent to her. Knew that this strange, unpleasant man was going to matter very much to her.

He was looking at her very oddly. "Shall we go?"

"Yes," she said.

Ama Llulla

Chapter 4 of 26

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A/N:

My profound and humble thanks to RedSkyAtNight for her beta and Britpicking help. And thanks to all the insolent students I've had over the years who taught me that it's best to get the bitch-slapping out of the way the first day of term.

Rawa stood at the front of the classroom, watching the fifth-year students come in. This would be her last group of the day, a double period. On the lectern before her their names moved about the seating chart like bees as they took their places at the desks.

She noticed at once how tall they were. Most of the girls, even, were almost a head taller than she was. And the boys! What was in the food here?

A group this age, she knew, would need a firm hand at first, especially from one as small and harmless-looking as she was. She had dressed as she always did for teaching, in a simple shirt and drawstring trousers cut from *aguayo* cloth, and her hair was pulled back into a single long plait. She saw several students looking curiously at her feet; some of the girls giggled and nudged each other. She waited patiently until the scraping of chairs and buzz of conversation died down, and then addressed them.

"Good afternoon," she said. "My name is Rawa Akapana; I am the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher." She gestured to the blackboard, where she had written her name.

A hand shot up. "Please, miss, what are we to call you?"

"'Professor Akapana' will serve. Or you may call me 'Q'ala Chaki'; that is how my students at home address me."

"What does that mean?"

She smiled briefly. "Bare feet."

A murmur rippled through the class. "I am accustomed to addressing my students by their first names, so I may seem less formal to you than your other teachers."

A red-haired boy in the second row nudged his neighbor and said, *sotto voce*, "She certainly seems more shaggable to me than our other teachers."

She glanced at the seating chart, then looked up. "Ronald Weasley?"

He nodded, his fair skin beginning to color.

"Tomorrow morning you will deliver to me a one-thousand-word essay explaining why that remark was inappropriate, and you will apologize to me and to the class for making it."

They were all silent now.

"All right," she said. "Are there any other questions before we begin?"

Next to the red-haired boy, a girl with wild *ch'aska* hair raised her hand. Rawa consulted the chart again. "Hermione Granger?"

"Please, . . . Q'ala Chaki..." she began haltingly, and Rawa heard a boy on the other side of the room whisper, "Suck-up."

"...there wasn't a textbook on the list for this class."

"That is correct. You will not be using a textbook. But before you become too excited..." she looked pointedly in the direction of a student who had hissed, "Yes!" "...you should know that you will spend many hours in the library this term. I will be assigning chapters from various books, as well as current articles from the scholarly magical literature."

A collective groan.

"Also, you will not need wands in this class."

The *ch'aska's* hand was in the air again. "Won't we be doing any practical exercises, then?"

"Yes, you will. But all of the magic you will be using will be without wands."

Another murmur of comment, louder this time.

"All right," she said. "We begin, then." She turned to the sheaf of notes on the lectern. "Today's subject is the compulsion of truth. Can someone tell me a way to force a person to speak the truth?"

A black-haired student with glasses raised his hand. "Harry," said Rawa, after a glance at the chart.

"There's Veritaserum."

"Very good, yes. Can you tell me its properties?"

"It's odorless, colorless . . . and quite expensive."

"And what are its limitations?"

He stopped and thought for a moment. "I don't know about limitations. But there are some restrictions on using it."

"For example?"

"Well, for one thing, teachers aren't allowed to use it on students."

"Thank God for that!" said a boy in the back of the room, to general laughter.

"Right." She smiled. "Any others? Yes, Hermione?"

"It's forbidden to use it in social and romantic relationships."

"Forbidden by law?"

"I don't think so. It's just, everyone knows, it's . . . not done."

"A social taboo."

"Yes, that's it," said Hermione.

"And why is that, do you think?" There was a silence. "Anyone?"

Finally a boy with white-blond hair, the one who had mocked Hermione for calling her "Q'ala Chaki," said, "Because girls don't *really* want to know if their arse looks fat in those jeans."

Everyone laughed, including Rawa, and she said, "Well, you are probably right. But I want all of you to think about the role of trust in intimate relationships, and imagine the effect that something like Veritaserum could have on it."

After a moment she said, "What about more concrete limitations? For instance, how long do the effects of Veritaserum last? Hermione?"

"Veritaserum has a half-life of just over three hours, longer in children and the elderly, and shorter in the morbidly obese."

"Very good! Harry, you have a question?"

"Yes, well, no offense, but . . . what does this have to do with the Dark Arts? It seems like more of a topic for a Potions lesson."

"Really? You cannot think of any Dark uses for Veritaserum?"

"Well, yes, I suppose so . . ."

"Think of it this way. There are lies, which we generally consider to be bad, correct?"

"Yes."

"And then there is the matter of privacy, which is generally a good thing. Is there anyone in the world who is entitled to know everything that you are thinking and feeling?"

"No, of course not."

"So there are many things that you have the right to keep to yourself, no?"

"No," he agreed. "I mean, yes."

"Think about the kind of important secrets that some people must keep. Do you see how great evil could be done, if the wrong people had the power to compel others to reveal those secrets?"

A shadow crossed his face, a look of desolation that was too grave for a fifteen-year-old. *Something there*, thought Rawa. *I wonder what it is.*

"Yes," he said slowly. "I see what you mean."

"Most spells and potions are not intrinsically good or evil; they are just instruments of the person casting them. It is all about intent."

"But what about the Unforgivable Curses?" persisted Harry.

"What about them?" asked Rawa. "Can you honestly say that you would never, ever use one, even to save your own life, or the life of someone you loved?"

Harry paused.

"Got you there, didn't she, you conceited tosser?" said the blond-haired boy, and everyone sitting around him laughed.

There was a joke there, but Rawa did not understand it. She looked at the seating chart. "What was that, Draco?"

"I was just remarking that Harry is a tosser," he said, with a smirk.

"Meaning what?"

His face took on an air of studied innocence. "It's a term of endearment, miss. Harry and I are best friends."

She looked him sternly in the eye. "*Ama llullakuychu, sut'inta niy*, Draco Malfoy. What did you mean by calling Harry a 'tossler'?"

The smirk returned, and he said, "It's a slang term for a stupid person, a person who masturbates, miss, because I don't like him, and I thought it would be funny." The

expression on his face changed immediately to one of horror, and he clapped a hand over his mouth.

She smiled. "Thank you for clarifying that, Draco."

Hermione Granger was fairly bouncing up and down in her seat, her eyes shining. "That's the *Ama Lulla* spell, isn't it? I've read about it, but I've never actually seen it done before!"

"Excellent, Hermione! Yes, it is. Now, what have you read about it? Can you tell me some differences between the use of *Ama Lulla* and Veritaserum?"

"You have to say it aloud, and you have to say the person's name that you're using it on."

"Yes. Which means what?"

A tall, awkward-looking boy raised his hand, and she looked down at the chart.

"Yes, Neville?"

"You can't use it on someone without them knowing you're doing it."

"Exactly. No slipping it into someone's drink when they are not looking. Anything else?"

"It doesn't last."

"Correct again, Hermione. You have to repeat the spell with every question. Now, does anyone know the literal meaning of *ama lulla*?" When no one answered, she said, "*Ama lulla* means *do not lie*. Can anyone think what the difference is between the principle of not lying, and the truth-telling principle behind Veritaserum?"

There was a long silence, and then Neville Longbottom raised his hand tentatively. "It doesn't actually force you to say anything?"

"Excellent, excellent! That's exactly it: if you have taken Veritaserum you have no choice about answering the questions that are asked of you. *Ama Lulla* doesn't force you to answer, it just ensures that anything you do say will not be a lie."

"You mean you can just keep quiet if you want to?"

"*Así es*. Although, as you know, there are some questions to which silence is as good as a response."

Hermione's hand went up again. "So why did Draco say what he did? Why couldn't he just have said nothing?"

"A very good question." Rawa smiled and turned to Draco. "Draco, would I be correct in thinking that what you said was not what you thought you were going to say?"

"Yes," he muttered.

"Your intent was to make another clever remark?"

"Yes," he said again, sullenly.

One more, my little güero. Because I am going to drive this home, and then I will not have any moránsolencias from you for the rest of the term. "You could have kept your mouth closed, am I right?"

"Yes! All right?"

She smiled tightly. "Now we are going to have some practice, so I want you to pair yourselves. First you will learn how to pronounce and direct the spell, and then you will be trying it on your partners." Seeing the looks of alarm on the faces of a few students, she said, "I will give you a list of questions you are permitted to ask. And I would advise you to follow it very carefully, unless you want to spend many, many Saturdays assisting me with menial tasks."

Ron Weasley raised his hand.

"Yes?"

"How come Malfoy doesn't have to write a thousand words and an apology?"

"*Porque no*. And because he was good enough to provide me with a perfect teachable moment."

Ron turned to Hermione. "How many inches of parchment is a thousand words, anyhow?"

"Ron! Just count them! You do know how to count to a thousand, don't you?"

"A thousand!" said Harry. "He can't count to twenty-one without undoing his flies!"

Rawa cleared her throat. "Now would you all please repeat after me: *Ama lulla KUYchu . . .*"

Flying Lessons

Chapter 5 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

Thanks, as always, to RedSkyAtNight—in particular, in this chapter, for suggesting the Flight Instructor position for SB. She's a genius, I tell you.

Quidditch was a mystery to Rawa. She found it hard enough to follow two-dimensional games like football (she had never really grasped the concept *obrsay*, despite repeated explanations) and had little faith in her ability to decipher the convoluted tangle of rules and exceptions the students had been laying out for her for the past hour and a half.

"Balls and rings is all I really comprehend about it," she admitted, as they descended the stairs. "I suppose it is a little like *lachtli*, only the outcome is perhaps not so serious."

"Not serious!" spluttered Ron Weasley. "Not bloody serious? How can a game be more serious than Quidditch, I'd like to know?"

"When you sacrifice the losers on big stone pyramids," she said.

They had reached the bottom of the stairs, and she walked with them out onto the pitch, where Harry was talking with Sirius Black, the flying instructor. She had met Black once or twice, at meals and in staff meetings, and found him quite personable, if a bit self-involved.

"Rawa," he said, turning to her, "Harry tells me you don't fly."

"No," she admitted.

"Never been on a broom?"

"Never."

"Don't they fly, where you come from?"

"Not in the *altiplano*. I think perhaps it does not work so well, at the high altitudes. I know some of the *echiceros* in the *oriente*, the rainforest, fly, but not on brooms. They use some kind of tree branches."

"Want to learn?"

"Yes!" she said, without hesitation. "Yes, I would love to!"

"Have you got an hour before dinner? About half-past four, maybe?"

She nodded.

"I'll meet you here, then." He smiled. "Wear something warm."

She could tell that Harry was pleased at this development. Walking back across the grounds toward the school, he said, "He quite fancies you, you know, my godfather. He's asked me about you several times."

"He seems to be a very nice person. Did he teach you to fly?"

"No, I learned from Madam Hooch. She's the regular flying teacher and Quidditch ref, but she's taking the year off, and Professor Dumbledore asked Sirius to fill in."

"It must be agreeable for you, having him here."

He grinned. "Much better than last year, when he was in hiding all the time and could just get the occasional secret message through to me. It's all down to Professor Dumbledore—he got the Ministry to reopen the case and look at the new evidence. If it hadn't been for him, Sirius would probably be back in Azkaban by now."

"I had better go and change. He said to wear something warm."

"He's right—it gets cold up there."

She put on a hooded woolen poncho, but left her feet bare, reasoning that they would be warmer in the air than on the ground anyway.

Sirius was waiting for her with a broom in either hand. He gave one to her and showed her how to mount and kick off, then stuck close by her as she made a few circles round the field, very tentatively and never far from the ground. He was all business, apparently taking the role of instructor quite seriously, and she began to think that Harry must be mistaken, or exaggerating, when he said Sirius was interested in her.

After an hour he declared that that was enough for one day, and, although it was clear to Rawa that she had very little natural talent for flying, made much of her progress.

On the way back to the school, he put a hand on her arm. "There's a meeting tomorrow night at my house in London. Dumbledore wants you to come."

"What kind of meeting?"

"It's a kind of secret society—you'll see when you get there. There's usually dinner afterwards, but I thought you and I could go out and get something to eat, if you'd like."

His hand was still on her arm, and she realized that Harry had been right. "Yes, of course I will come to the meeting," she said.

"And after?"

"Maybe another time," she said, softening the words with a smile. She was grateful for the flying lesson, and liked Sirius well enough, but there was no point in leading him on.

"I'll hold you to that," he said. "And I'll see you tomorrow for the meeting of the Order, then. We can leave around five. Remus Lupin stays there all the time, so I don't have to go early to open the house for the others."

"Who else will be there?"

"It varies. Dumbledore for certain, and sometimes his brother as well. Minerva always comes, and Arthur and Molly Weasley, and Kingsley Shacklebolt usually—you probably haven't met him yet. I expect Snape will turn up. And probably half a dozen others; like I said, it varies."

Snape. That was all she heard. Snape would be there.

Chravu'un

Chapter 6 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

As always, thanks to RedSkyAtNight—especially, in this chapter, for helping me get Minerva McGonagall to swear. I just love imagining her saying “Bugger!” when she loses at cards.

“Out,” said Sirius Black, playing his last ace.

“Bugger!” said Minerva McGonagall, slapping her cards face-up on the table. “Five minutes and twelve seconds.”

“Ouch,” said Sirius happily. “Rawa?”

“Three seconds. Sirius, you always win. I think you cheat.”

“It’s all skill, my darling. Filius?”

“One minute five seconds. Your deal, Rawa, I believe. And do see if you can throw some picture cards Sirius’s way, won’t you?”

They were playing fan-tan in the staff room. While Rawa was shuffling the cards, the door opened and Snape came in. He took one look at the group seated at the table, however, and left immediately. He had done something similar at the meeting of the Order, disappearing as soon as the business was dispensed with rather than staying for dinner with the rest of them.

Rawa stopped dealing. “Tell me something,” she said. “Have I done something to offend Professor Snape?”

The others exchanged glances. “Why do you ask?” said McGonagall.

“He cannot seem to tolerate my presence.”

“Oh, that’s easily enough explained,” said Sirius. McGonagall shot him a warning glance, but he continued. “He’s always wanted the Defense Against the Dark Arts position, and he really thought Dumbledore was going to give it to him this year. Then you turned up and dashed all his hopes.”

“Sirius,” said McGonagall. “Do try not to be such a gossip. You have no evidence whatsoever that that is the case.”

Sirius looked at her from under raised eyebrows. “You know it is, Minerva.”

“I know no such thing. Deal the cards, please, dear. I’m feeling a sudden thirst for vengeance.”

“Can you imagine Snivellus teaching DADA?” he went on. “He’d have Dementors in the classroom practicing the Kiss on students, insisting that it builds character.”

There was an uncomfortable silence as Rawa finished dealing the cards. Then she asked, “What is the Kiss?”

Sirius laid a seven of hearts on the table. “It’s a nasty move where they suck your soul out through your mouth.” There was a forced lightheartedness in his tone, and he was not meeting her eyes.

“Really?” she said. “I can do that.”

All three stared at her.

“You can *what*?” McGonagall finally asked.

“Transfer souls—well, parts of souls, from one person to another. We call it *chravu’un*.” When they continued to look at her, she said, “You do not do this?”

“You mean to say that you do?” This was Sirius, who was looking suddenly sick, as if she had announced that she ate babies for lunch.

“Not often,” she admitted. “I myself have only done it once before. It is a very risky practice, but sometimes useful.”

“Useful in what way?” said Flitwick.

“To lend strength, or skill, to someone,” she said. “Minerva, it is your turn.”

“Oh,” said McGonagall, looking slightly relieved. She looked down at the card on the table, and then at her hand. “Pass,” she said disgustedly.

“So,” said Flitwick, laying down the six of hearts, “you’re talking about a transfer done by mutual consent.”

Rawa put down the eight. “Yes, of course. How would you do it otherwise?”

“Believe me,” said Sirius, “You don’t want to know.” He glanced at his hand. “Pass.”

“Ha!” crowed McGonagall, then seemed somewhat abashed. She played the nine of hearts, then looked narrowly at Rawa. “Did you say ‘parts of souls’?”

“Yes.” She looked around at them. “A full transfer would be fatal, no?”

“Or worse,” said Sirius.

McGonagall laid her cards down. “Come with me, dear,” she said. “You and I need to have a talk with Dumbledore.”

Sheep as a Lamb

Chapter 7 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

For those of you who are wondering in disgust why the hell this story has an NC-17 rating, I promise: the naughty bits are coming. Really, they are. Meanwhile, enjoy all this English dialogue and know that RedSkyAtNight really earned her exorbitant salary this time around.

Rawa had never heard of Horcruxes.

"I think I could do the first part," she said, "although I have never attempted an exchange with a person who was not . . . I do not know how to say this. I can do the pull, but I do not know if it will work without the push."

"And then what?" asked Snape. The four of them—Rawa, Snape, McGonagall, and Dumbledore—were in Dumbledore's office. "Now the bit of Voldemort is gone from Potter, but it is trapped inside Professor Akapana. How has this improved matters?"

"Because Harry is a child, for one thing," said Dumbledore patiently, "whereas Rawa is an accomplished witch." He turned to her. "Can you expel this fragment into some object where it can be destroyed?"

She shook her head. "Even if that were not forbidden—which it is—I would have no idea how to do it."

"And even if she could," persisted Snape, "we are left with the problem that the Dark Lord retains within him a bit of Potter, does he not?"

"Yes," said Dumbledore.

"The push," Rawa said slowly, "would be easier than the pull, I think."

"What do you mean?" asked McGonagall.

"If I had a way to make contact with . . . with this person, I could return to him the fragment that is his."

There was a long silence.

"What kind of contact?" Snape asked at last.

"I would have to kiss him," she said, "and it would have to last long enough for me to make the transfer. I do not know how long that would be, if I am doing the work of it alone."

"What a ghastly idea," said McGonagall.

"Indeed," said Dumbledore.

"A kiss," said Rawa, "or any other prolonged . . . intimate contact."

McGonagall turned to Dumbledore. "Albus, it doesn't bear imagining."

"No," agreed Dumbledore.

For a long time no one said anything. Then Rawa asked, "Except for the . . . the repugnant nature of the task, what exactly are the risks?"

"You could be killed," said Snape at once.

"As could whoever took you to meet Voldemort," said Dumbledore. "And that would be Severus, of course. Killed, or exposed."

"I think the biggest problem," she said, "is, how are we to induce Voldemort to initiate such a contact?"

"I hardly think he is likely to turn down the opportunity," said McGonagall dryly.

"No, she's right, Minerva," said Dumbledore. "A man like Severus, or Sirius Black, might jump at the chance—" here he gave the ghost of a smile "—but I never knew Tom Riddle to show the slightest interest in girls."

"You think he's gay?" McGonagall said incredulously.

"No," said Dumbledore. "I think of him as rather asexual."

"What does bring the Dark Lord pleasure," said Snape, "is the pain of others. And in this he is quite indiscriminate in his tastes."

Rawa had begun to feel a sick fear in the pit of her stomach. She knew that this was why she had come here, and understood now why the Condor had refused to warrant her safety. Was this it, then? Was Voldemort the source of the darkness she had seen, and was it her portion to offer herself up as a sacrifice?

She took a deep breath. "Once it happens," she ventured, "it should be quite pleasurable for him. He will be receiving something that will strengthen him, help to complete him. He should feel a rush of power, in the moment. And perhaps a lesser sense of relief if I can find and extract the fragment of Harry. The beginning is the problem." She saw McGonagall looking at her, aghast. "He must be made to believe that this contact with me will cause me pain."

"To you," said Dumbledore, "or to someone else."

They looked at him.

"Severus," he said, "can you make him think that you want Rawa for yourself?"

“Possibly.” Snape’s face revealed nothing.

“Can you keep her safe?” asked McGonagall.

“We are none of us safe,” Snape said, in a flat voice.

“And you?” Dumbledore asked him. “Are you willing to take on the risk yourself?”

Snape shrugged. “Might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb,” he said.

These responses did nothing to alleviate Rawa’s fear, and she looked at him uneasily. She was finding it difficult to know exactly where he stood in all of this, although some aspects had come clearer to her since the meeting of the Order. Evidently Dumbledore—who of course knew Snape far better than she did—trusted him implicitly, and so must the other members of the Order, including Sirius, even though he made no secret of his dislike for him. In fact, she thought, to call Sirius’s attitude toward Snape *dislike* was to accord it too much importance; it was more of an amused contempt. And it seemed to be mutual: every contribution Sirius made during the meeting was met immediately by a scathing rejoinder from Snape. Not that these had had any visible effect on Sirius, whose attention had been focused almost entirely on Rawa.

She had not seen the *mortifago* tattoo on Snape’s arm since that first afternoon in the Potions classroom, and realized now that he took care to keep it covered up when others were around. It was only because she had surprised him at work in his shirtsleeves that she had seen it at all. But she knew it was there: incontrovertible evidence that he had once been a follower, however much he might now profess to have changed his allegiance.

And she was about to stake her life on the genuineness of that change of heart.

She was proud that Dumbledore had trusted her enough to invite her into the Order, and prouder still that he was asking this tremendous risk of her so matter-of-factly, without protectiveness or apology. She hoped desperately that his confidence in Snape’s loyalty was well-placed.

The plan they came up with was hardly foolproof—in fact, it had weaknesses everywhere you looked.

Snape was to let Voldemort know that Rawa wanted to meet him—might, in fact, be induced to join him. Then they would wait to be summoned.

The transfer with Harry must be put off until the last possible moment, since every second that Rawa carried the fragment of Voldemort inside her would leave them open to discovery. They had no way of knowing whether he could see out of that portal at will, or whether he was even aware that it existed; in any event, for him to realize that Rawa, rather than Harry, had become the host would be disastrous.

They had no idea how Voldemort was to be induced to kiss Rawa, nor indeed any plan to escape once the exchange had been effected.

As plans go, it was not one of the best. But it was the best they had, and so Dumbledore took on the task of explaining it all to Harry. How this went Rawa did not know, except that in the end apparently the boy was persuaded.

Snape sent a message to Voldemort, and they waited.

Two weeks later Rawa was in the middle of an afternoon lesson when one of the finches fluttered into her classroom and perched on the lectern. She unrolled the tiny scrap of paper, feeling the blood drain from her face as she read it.

She looked up. “Harry,” she said. “It is time.”

Codo a codo

Chapter 8 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

Thanks as always to RedSkyAtNight, out whose various orifices the sun shines.

About the title of this chapter: It’s a reference to a poem by Uruguayan writer Mario Benedetti, who died in May. The poem, called *Te quiero*, is a love song to a companion in the guerrilla resistance against the seventies right-wing dictatorship:

Si te quiero es porque sos

mi amor mi cómplice y todo.

Y en la calle codo a codo

somos mucho más que dos.

Loosely translated:

If I love you it is because you are

my love, my accomplice, everything

And in the street, side by side (lit., elbow to elbow)

we are so much more than two.

She was holding both of Harry’s hands in hers; his face was white and tense. They were in Dumbledore’s office, and Snape was standing behind her.

"Try to relax," she said. "It should feel like going to sleep. Just give yourself up, if you can."

He nodded, closing his eyes, and she leaned forward and kissed him gently on the lips. She made herself very still, dropped the gate, and began to look.

It was like walking through a maze filled with sounds and images. The closest ones were all of Hogwarts, and were filled with people she recognized. For the most part they were happy, or as happy as the thoughts and memories of most adolescents are. But there was a deep underlying sadness, and this, she realized, was the scent she must follow. The farther back she went, the stronger it became, until she saw its source: a dark smear near the beginning, ugly and festering, fearsome in its malevolence, all the more dreadful for the innocence of the field on which it lay. *Dios santo*, she thought. *This poor child*.

She began to gather it in.

It did not want to come.

This task was unlike anything she had ever done, and she was very, very afraid. She struggled to shield herself from the power of the thing, to encapsulate it and protect herself from it.

It was a messy, exhausting business, and when it was over she pulled back from Harry and sat down heavily in a chair. She felt completely drained, and the undertaking was only begun. How could she possibly finish this?

Harry was asleep, looking more peaceful than she had ever seen him.

She looked up at Snape and nodded, and together they left, walking silently through the corridors of the castle and out onto the grounds.

"There's a Portkey at the edge of the forest," he said tersely. "We need to hurry—the Dark Lord doesn't like to be kept waiting."

"How long did that take?" she asked. "I've no idea—it could've been a few minutes or a few hours."

He had stopped, and was looking at her in horror.

"What?" she asked.

"Your accent," he said. "It's gone. It's completely gone."

She gave a mirthless laugh. "No problem," she said. "It'll be back, once I get rid of this, *this thing*."

"It's really in you, isn't it?" he asked, looking stunned. "It's part of you."

"Yes," she said. "That was the idea, wasn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose so." He had stepped back from her a bit, and looked slightly sick. "Listen, you'll have to fake it. The accent, I mean. If you're speaking perfect English, he'll know something's up."

"I'll do my best."

"I will," he corrected her. "You never say 'I'll,' and you never say 'I shall.'"

"I will, then."

"Better. And try to remember that my name is Esnep."

"And you try not to be such an arsehole."

The Portkey was an overturned wooden bucket lying at the edge of the forest.

"Are you ready?" he said, reaching for it.

She grabbed his arm. "Snape," she said. Her voice was shaking, and she did not know what to call him. "Professor Snape" seemed ridiculous under the circumstances, but "Severus" seemed too familiar. "Snape. Don't leave me alone with him."

He regarded her levelly. "No," he said, and bent down and laid his hand on the bucket.

There and Back Again

Chapter 9 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

More than the usual thanks to my wonderful beta and Britpicker, RedSkyAtNight...because this chapter took a lot of revision, and ~~was~~ so much better once I had implemented her suggestions.

And a special thanks to President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, for the "smell of sulfur" image. *Guacho, vos tenés tres pelotas*.

The room in which they found themselves was large, and expensively appointed. There were tall, velvet-curtained windows, and gilt-edged chairs, and portraits of long-dead aristocrats on the walls. At the far end of the room, a single high-backed chair faced the massive fireplace. There was a strong, nauseous smell of burning sulfur.

At first it seemed they were alone in the room. She was clutching Snape's arm in a death-grip, and he gently reached down and disengaged her hand, then put his arm

around her shoulder.

"My Lord," he said.

A figure rose up from the chair and turned to face them, and Rawa felt the bile come up in her throat.

It was a reptilian face, the eyes icy and glittering, the nostrils mere slits in its smooth, featureless surface.

"Severus," it said, in a cold, sibilant voice. "What have you brought me?"

"A visitor," said Snape neutrally. He sounded surprisingly relaxed, and had begun to stroke Rawa's upper arm with his fingers. "Our new Defense Against the Dark Arts professor, Rawa Akapana. She wished to meet you."

Rawa inclined her head but did not trust herself to speak. It took every ounce of will she had not to shield herself, and she leaned into Snape, glad of his arm around her.

Voldemort looked her up and down. "What an interesting little creature, Severus," he said. "I hear Dumbledore found it swinging from the trees in the very jungle."

Rawa lifted her chin. "I am descended from kings, my Lord," she said.

"It speaks," he said with a condescending smile. "Bring it here and let me look at it."

She forced her feet to move, and Snape came with her, his hand still warm on her shoulder. The noxious smell grew stronger as she approached Voldemort, who looked from Snape to her and back again. "We will have to see if this little gift offers any potential for amusement." His thin lips curved in a chilling smile. "Take your hand away from her," he said to Snape in a voice like breaking glass.

"My Lord..." began Snape, but Voldemort silenced him with a look, and with a kind of despair Rawa felt Snape's hand leave her shoulder. She looked quickly over at him, and he met her eyes and gave a barely perceptible nod. Then Voldemort ran a finger down her neck, and it was all she could do to keep from shuddering and shrinking back from his cold, sinuous touch. She saw Snape stiffen.

Voldemort saw it, too, and smiled coldly. "You must not let this tendency to grow attached to females become a tiresome habit, Severus," he said thinly. "It would irk me to have to keep getting rid of them."

He reached out almost casually and ripped her shirt from collar to hem.

Snape's face was white and rigid. "No!" he said, and Voldemort looked over at him.

"Speak again," he said softly, "and you will have leisure to regret it."

With an enormous effort of will, Rawa raised her eyes to meet Voldemort's. "The kiss of the Inka is a powerful magic," she said.

He looked from her to Snape, and back to her. "Really?" he asked in a bored-sounding voice.

"Taste it and know," she said. "Or wonder." She did not drop her eyes.

He reached out one smooth, hairless arm and grasped her jaw in his hand. His grip was as cold as death, and horribly strong; fear roared through her. Still watching Snape, he brought his mouth cruelly down on hers.

The smell of sulfur was overpowering. His thin lips on hers were cold and smooth and dry, and she fought hard to stop herself gagging.

Ya, she thought, *te devuelvo lo tuyo*, and pushed, and pushed, gathering the fetid thing from its hiding place in her consciousness and vomiting it back into its owner.

When her mouth broke free of his, she knew it had worked. His eyes were bright with greed, and his grip on her tightened.

"Did I speak the truth?" she asked in a triumphant voice. He pulled her to him again and clamped his mouth to hers, and she thought, *cannot go on with this. I cannot.*

But she knew she must, that to falter now would be to fail completely. She steeled herself and dropped the gate.

It was like falling into a pit of vermin.

They seethed about her, the images of fear and pain, of cruelty and torture. She was suffocating in the darkness, slipping and falling on the slithering creatures all about her, drowning in the stench of them.

Somewhere in all of this was a bit of Harry, and she knew with a sudden anguish that she could never find it, that searching it out amid this seething mass was an impossible task.

She began to call to it. *Come to me*, she said. She brought the image of Harry into her consciousness, the unruly hair and green eyes, the self-deprecating smile. *Come to me. Come home to me.* She conjured the sound of his laughter: *Come to me, Harry. Come home.*

There was nothing, and nothing, and then she felt it: a tiny thread. She pulled, and pulled, and felt it move toward her at the same time she felt Voldemort began to loosen his viselike grip on her. *Come to me.* She pulled, gathered it into her arms like an infant, came away with it just as the reptilian face drew back from hers and the hairless hands pushed her away.

She took a great breath of the poisonous-smelling air, and suppressed an almost irresistible urge to scrub her mouth with the back of her hand.

She saw the disappointment on Voldemort's face, and said, with a great effort at calm, "It is not a bottomless vessel, my Lord."

"It would seem not."

"Slow to replenish itself, but worth the wait, would you not agree?"

"How slow?" There was naked greed on the snakelike face.

"Six months, perhaps nine." *He is vain*, she thought. *Flatter him.* "I know, my Lord, that patience is among your many powers." A gamble, it was such a terrifying gamble. *Que lo trague*, she thought. *Let him swallow it.*

"Very well," he said. "Take her home, Severus. And be warned," he added, as Snape came forward and took Rawa by the arm, "she is not yours to feed from."

"As my Lord wishes," said Snape, bowing slightly; he seemed to have regained whatever composure he had momentarily lost. He grasped Rawa by the arm and led her away, walking slowly until they reached the Portkey, where he took her shaking hand and laid it on the bottom of the upturned bucket.

When they came out on the other side, Rawa was clawing at her skin and clothes.

"A bath," she gasped. "Get me to a bath."

He picked her up and tossed her over his shoulder as easily and gracelessly as if she had been a sack of quinoa...hooking his left arm around her knees and holding his right hand against her buttocks...then set off across the grounds at a brisk walk. She put her arms around his midsection and rested her cheek against his back, letting his sharp, smoky odor replace the suffocating stench in her nostrils.

Once inside the castle, he brought her to a capacious room with a bath the size of a small swimming pool, with dozens of taps at either end.

"Hot," she said, ripping at her clothes. "As hot as you can make it."

She had had no strength left to shield herself, and now felt as if thousands of horrible creatures were scurrying across her skin, looking for a place to enter. She could see nothing there, but could feel them with hideous clarity: many-legged vermin, quick and devious, probing, testing, seeking, looking for a point of weakness. In desperation, she stripped off the rest of her clothes and plunged into the steaming water, staying immersed until her lungs could stand it no longer and she had to come up for air, then immediately submerging herself again. This she did perhaps a dozen times, swimming under the water to the deepest part of the bath.

When she finally emerged from the surface of the water, Snape was squatting by the edge of the bath, holding out a small glass filled with a clear amber liquid.

"Drink this," he said.

It felt like liquid fire, and she held it in her mouth for a moment, letting it scour her lips and tongue, then swallowed. It burned going down, but the relief on her skin was almost instantaneous: the crawling sensation subsided, and she was left with only exhaustion, and a profound sense of contamination. "Thank you," she said, leaning her head back against the edge of the bath and closing her eyes.

After a while, without opening them, she said, "Snape?"

"Yes?"

"Would you bring me some clothes?"

"Certainly. What shall I do with these?"

"Burn them."

He drew his wand and dispatched the clothes in a single flash.

"Does your door open with a key or a password?" he asked.

"A password," she began, and then stopped.

He waited.

"A charm, really," she lied. "It can recognize those who have my permission to enter. Just say your name and it will admit you."

"Interesting," he said, and left.

While he was gone she took soap and a sponge and scrubbed herself until her skin was red, and then scrubbed some more. She undid her plait and washed her hair over and over again, rinsing it under the taps and then sniffing it until she was satisfied that the sulfurous odor was completely gone.

Snape returned with a small stack of folded clothes and a large towel. He set the clothes down, then walked to the edge of the bath and unfolded the towel and held it open for her. Suddenly self-conscious, she stepped out of the bath and wrapped herself in the towel, then leaned over and wrung out her hair.

"All right?" he said.

"Yes, I think so, thanks," she said.

"I'll wait for you in Dumbledore's office, then, shall I?" he asked. "He'll still have Potter there, I expect."

She nodded.

He left again, and she sat down on a bench and began drying, and then dressing, herself.

There was only the business with Harry to finish, and that should be simple enough. Then it would be over, this loathsome day would be done with, and she could go to bed and lie awake and ponder the sad truth that Severus Snape had looked, apparently unmoved, on her nakedness.

Opportunism

Chapter 10 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

My usual thanks to RedSkyAtNight, of whom I am patently unworthy.

The three of them were waiting for her in Dumbledore's office. Dumbledore himself was smiling broadly, while Snape wore his usual opaque expression. Harry looked apprehensive, but not nearly as tense as he had before.

She turned to Dumbledore and asked, "Albus, do you have some kind of . . . *aguardiente*?" Even after the potion that Snape had given her, her mouth still felt vile. Dumbledore fetched her a glass of what smelled like grappa; she dipped two fingers into it and rubbed them across her lips. Then she took the rest of the liquid into her

mouth, swished it around, and spat it back into the glass. "Thank you," she said, handing it back to him.

"Ready?" she said to Harry, sitting down next to him.

He nodded.

She took a deep breath. "Listen, Harry," she began. "I need to prepare you. This experience, this receiving of part of someone's soul—yours or anyone else's—can be very . . . intense. It will surprise you, but it is important that it not confuse you. Do you understand?"

He had begun to look a little more apprehensive. "I think so," he said.

She smiled. "Do not worry. It is not unpleasant. Just very strong."

He nodded, and she took his hands in hers.

"All right?" He nodded again, and over his shoulder she saw something—a little twitch of distaste—pass across Snape's face.

She leaned forward. "*Te devuelvo lo tuyo*," she said, closing her eyes, and placed her lips gently against his.

She hardly needed to push at all. *Home*, she told it, *que te vaya bien*, and felt it separate itself and leave, passing out of her like a sigh. She could feel the tremor pass through Harry's body as he received it, and then she sat back and opened her eyes.

He was staring at her, wide-eyed. "Fucking hell!" he said.

Snape opened his mouth to say something, but Dumbledore restrained him with a gesture.

"Yes," she agreed. "You see what I mean? It is important you not misunderstand it."

"Right," he said, looking a bit dazed.

She looked up at Dumbledore. "It is done, then," she said with satisfaction. "All good. He is whole again, I think."

This seemed to nudge Harry out of his shock. "I—thank you."

She smiled wearily. "*No hay de que*."

Dumbledore laid a hand on Harry's shoulder. "Come on, Harry, I'll walk you back to your dormitory, and we'll find you something to eat. Can't have you getting into trouble with Filch for being out after hours. Rawa, Severus, my profound thanks. Well done."

She nodded briefly, then rose to go herself. Snape stood as well, and said, "I'll come with you."

She raised her eyebrows; this seemed uncharacteristically chivalrous of him. They walked a few paces in silence, and then he said, "What was that you were explaining to Potter, about the exchange?"

"That it is intense?"

"Yes."

She thought for a moment. "It is like a powerful drug. Or really good sex."

The expression that flitted across his face was unmistakably anger, and something else which she found a bit puzzling. "So what you said to Potter, about not misunderstanding, that would apply to the Dark Lord as well."

"Just so," she said. "He will not have understood what was happening, only that the effect was powerful, and pleasurable."

"He will think it can be repeated."

"Yes. But I hope I was able to buy some time."

They walked on in silence for a while, Rawa remembering the evening's events through a kind of haze. Suddenly she stopped. "Snape!"

"Yes?"

"When you carried me back here . . . your hand, did you put it . . . ?"

He did not reply, but the smallest of smiles tugged at the corner of his mouth. She punched him on the arm: "*¡Atrevido aprovechado! ¡Oportunista!*"

It was a full-blown smirk now, but he still said nothing.

"I can walk the rest of the way by myself, thank you," she said. "And—" she glared at him—"do not think that my door will continue to admit you."

Treachery

Chapter 11 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

Thanks to all of my readers and especially to those who take the time to review!

Concerning the new Potions laboratory that was being donated to Hogwarts by the Malfoy family, Rawa knew three things: first, that Dumbledore was not especially pleased about it; second, that knowledge of it was making Draco Malfoy even more *insupportable*; and third, that she was not sure what she was going to wear to the festivities. Dumbledore's announcement of the event had been heavy with ironic overstatement, the kind of communication with which no one can find literal fault, but so fulsome in its effusiveness that neither can they mistake its true intent. He had used the phrase "full dress regalia," which Rawa took to mean formal ceremonial robes, of which she had none.

None, that is, of the kind the *inglases* wore: silk or velvet, in black or some other somber color.

She was disinclined to buy new robes for the occasion...largely because she so disliked the guests of honor...and in the end decided to wear the clothes she already had. There was pride involved, certainly: her own ceremonial garb had been in her family for many generations, and there was honor and dignity in wearing it. But to the extent that she was honest with herself, she had to admit that her decision was in part motivated by a knowledge of the kind of reaction these particular clothes were likely to provoke.

The celebration was to take place in the Great Hall on a Sunday evening. The pupils were assembled first, seated with their houses at the long tables. Then Lucius Malfoy and his wife Narcissa, resplendent in black velvet, took their places of honor at the high table. Finally the staff entered, proceeding in single file the length of the hall between the Slytherin and Ravenclaw tables on one side, and Hufflepuff and Gryffindor on the other. Dumbledore, at the head of the line, wore dark purple robes trimmed in gold; Snape as usual was all in black; and Minerva McGonagall wore dark green velvet robes and her signature tall black pointed hat.

Rawa was close to the end of the line, and when she walked in, she could hear the buzz of conversation among the students, and see clearly the rising anger on Lucius Malfoy's face.

As the professors ahead of her took their places at the table, facing the hall, they caught sight of her for the first time. She saw the twinkle in Dumbledore's blue eyes, although his face maintained a suitably solemn expression. Flitwick and McGonagall were much less guarded in their amusement, while Snape . . . Snape looked as though someone had struck him.

On her head, Rawa wore a parrot-feather crown nearly half a meter high. Her feet, as always, were bare, her ankles adorned by dozens of thin circlets of gold. Wrapped low around her hips, a cloth of hummingbird feathers, once worn by Pachacuti himself, floated, nearly weightless, about her.

Any one of these things would have been a remarkable departure from traditional wizards' robes, but none of them, at the moment, was exciting any comment at all, because there were two aspects of her appearance upon which every pair of eyes in the hall was focused.

The first was her face, which was painted in bold red diagonal stripes, with a thin black line bisecting it from forehead to chin, and black cross-hatches on either cheek.

The other was the hammered gold breastplate that covered...just barely...her chest. It conformed to her body in such exact detail that she looked as though her breasts had been gilded by a thousand daubs from a tiny brush. Her black hair hung in one thick dark plait down her naked back, swaying gently from side to side as she walked up the steps and took her place at the high table between Snape and McGonagall.

Gradually the hum of voices died down, and, when Dumbledore rose and walked to the lectern, quieted entirely. Before he could begin to speak, however, Lucius Malfoy's voice...dripping with disdain...pierced the silence.

"If the school has sunk to such a level, Dumbledore, perhaps I should have funded the appointment of a properly qualified Defense Against the Dark Arts professor rather than a laboratory."

Turning to him, Dumbledore said evenly, "I'm sure I've no idea what you mean, Lucius."

"I *mean*," said Malfoy, "that under your direction a once-respected school which I was proud to call *myalma mater* has been reduced to employing half-naked savages in the place of qualified academics."

Rawa had begun to have a very nasty feeling. This was more than just a routine display of the Malfoy family tradition of arrogance and insult; there was a calculated quality about it that suggested some deliberate purpose. Crossing her arms casually across her gold-plated chest, she quietly enveloped herself from head to toe in a Shield Charm. Beside her, she felt Snape shift in his chair and knew he must be sensing the slight ripple caused by its presence. Without turning his head, he glanced quickly at her out of the corner of his eye.

There was a fresh murmur of voices and Dumbledore, his tone still mild, said, "If you are referring to Professor Akapana, I can assure you that her credentials, and her abilities, are equal to those of any person present."

"Really?" said Malfoy. "Then she will surely not object to favoring us with a little . . . demonstration?" He turned his gaze to Rawa, and she looked back steadily at the pale blue eyes, determined not to show the anxiety and confusion she was feeling. Why was he doing this? And why now, at an event where he was the guest of honor? He was going to be the center of attention anyway; all he had to do was sit quietly and be showered with accolades. Why create a disruption?

"A duel, Professor Akapana?" he suggested, raising an eyebrow.

"Mr. Malfoy!" McGonagall had leapt to her feet. "Really! You are a guest in this hall!"

"A guest?" Malfoy said. "I think not. More of a patron, wouldn't you say, Minerva?" His cold eyes stared contemptuously at her. "And it would seem to me, that given the size of my financial investment in Hogwarts, I have a right to verify the bona fides of any new member of staff."

"Then there is a time and a place...not to mention a proper procedure...for doing so. And challenging a member of staff to a duel in front of the whole school is not it."

The "whole school" was as quiet as Rawa had ever seen them. No one moved or spoke, but every eye was on her. She knew that if she did not accept this challenge, she would lose all credibility with them. No matter that Lucius Malfoy's challenge was discourteous and untimely; what they would remember was that their Defense Against the Dark Arts professor, when presented with the opportunity to defend herself against the Dark Arts, had chosen not to do so.

Slowly she rose to her feet. She could feel the fluid warmth of the shield around her. Inclining her head in Malfoy's direction, she said, "I will duel with you, Mr. Malfoy."

"No!" cried McGonagall. "Albus! This is outrageous! You must put a stop to it!"

But Dumbledore just smiled and said, "If Professor Akapana is willing, I see no reason on such an occasion not to provide a little entertainment of an educational nature. Professor Flitwick, will you do the honors?"

The diminutive professor nodded and stepped forward. "Mr. Malfoy, will you choose a second?" he asked.

"Severus Snape."

Stony-faced, Snape walked over to join Malfoy, and the two men walked together to the far end of the high table.

Flitwick turned to Rawa. "Professor Akapana?"

She was caught out for a moment, because she too would have chosen Snape, if for no reason other than his skill. Having him at her back would have been the surest guarantee against treachery by Malfoy. Now who could she choose? Dumbledore was out, as of course was Flitwick. Minerva was a skilled witch, but not especially quick with her wand. Sirius? He was too much of a *farolero*, likely to seize on any pretext to start a fight with Malfoy. She needed someone Malfoy would respect too much to cross, but who could be trusted not to needlessly escalate the duel. She looked out across the crowd of expectant students and was struck with a sudden inspiration.

"Draco Malfoy."

There was a second's silence, and then a cheer went up from the Slytherin table and Draco stood and walked up to the dais.

As soon as he was close enough for her to see his expression, Rawa regretted her choice. It had felt like a clever tactic...Lucius was unlikely to endanger his own son...but she hadn't stopped to think how Draco might feel about it. His face was paler than ever, and rigid with tension.

"What do I have to do?" he whispered to her.

"Nothing, really," she said in a low voice. "Just stand down here at the end of the table." She smiled to take the seriousness out of her next words. "And pursue justice for me if there is treachery. Which there will not be." She leaned forward and kissed him lightly on the forehead, to a chorus of whistles and catcalls from the Slytherin table. "I am sorry, Draco. I should not have dragged you into this."

He shrugged mutely, and stood back as she leapt lightly onto the table. At the far end, Lucius Malfoy stood facing her, his white-blond hair luminous against the black velvet robes.

There was absolute silence in the hall. Flitwick brought down his wand, and Rawa raised both hands in front of her: "A *la izquierda, amachay*," she thought, spreading first her left palm, and then her right, "*a la derecha, hark'apay*."

Malfoy slowly, dramatically, raised his wand, and slashed it in a downward diagonal in front of him. A stream of violet fire shot forth, and Rawa raised her shielded right hand and deflected it, passing it back and forth between her two hands until it formed into a phosphorescent purple ball. Holding it made her stomach cramp slightly: this was some powerfully destructive curse.

She was shocked, although at some level not surprised. She had expected Malfoy to take the opportunity to try to humiliate her with jinxes that dissolved her clothes, or made her break out in boils; instead he was using the kind of curse that could do real damage.

He pointed his wand directly at her and loosed a bolt of red lightning; this too she caught, adding it to the glowing ball of purple fire. It was hot, even through the shield: some kind of flesh-burning curse, she guessed.

She took a step towards Malfoy just as he unleashed another jet of fire at her, this time a bilious green. By now the fiery sphere that she was tossing from one hand to the other to keep from burning herself was growing quite large, and glowing almost white. She walked towards him steadily, as stream after stream of malevolent power surged forth from his wand, and each one she caught and added to the blazing globe in her hands.

When finally she stood directly before him, she saw that his face was a frozen mask of fear. All she had to do, she realized, was toss the fireball at him and the combined power of all those curses would surely kill him.

She looked steadily into his ice-blue eyes and let him wonder what she was going to do. After a moment she threw the ball into the air and clapped her hands together, and it exploded with a loud bang into a huge cloud of black smoke.

She held out her hand for Malfoy's wand. "*Vente*," she said, and it leapt into her hand. Then she turned, the feathered skirt floating, light as air, about her legs, and began the long walk back down the length of the table. The hall erupted in a cacophony of applause, cheers, and whistles.

Draco was waiting for her, a stricken look on his white face, holding out his hand to help her down from the table. Instead of stepping down, she placed his father's wand into his outstretched hand, and said again, "I am sorry," but her voice was lost in the din. He gave her a brief nod, pocketed the wand, and then held out his hand again to help her down. She was reaching for it when she heard an unfamiliar voice behind her, shrill above the tumult, cry out, "Avada Kedavra!" and a tremendous blow struck her between the shoulder blades. There was a smell of burning hair; a feeling of crushing, suffocating pressure; and then everything went white.

Illustration for this chapter by Thanfiction.



Aftermath

Chapter 12 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

My continued thanks to RedSkyAtNight, whose patience, humor, and skill are apparently boundless.

She was lying face down, and her back felt as though it were on fire. There was a loud, high-pitched humming in her ears, and she could see nothing. Her hands and feet were cold, but she could not move them to warm them.

For a long while she lay like this, barely conscious of her surroundings, or of the passage of time, only of the burning pain in the center of her back.

Very gradually she became aware of the bed on which she was lying, and of the hushed comings and goings of the people who came to attend her. Every so often someone would pull back the sheet that covered her and dress her back with a wonderfully cooling ointment.

Mostly, she slept.

The ringing in her ears had subsided, and she could hear voices: whispered conversations that would cease immediately anytime she made the tiniest move. She could move her hands a bit now, although mostly they lay still, or twitched of their own accord.

Someone entered the room, and a woman's voice said, "Have you been here all night again, then?"

"Mmh." A man's voice, barely audible.

Hands lifting back the sheet, and the man's voice again: "She's dreadfully thin."

"Not surprising...she's gone nearly three weeks without food."

"That's going to leave a terrible scar, isn't it?"

A soft snort from the woman. "I'd say a scar is the least of her worries at the moment."

The cool sensation of the ointment on her back, and she slept again.

When she finally came fully awake, it had been twenty-six days since the duel. She was lying on her back now, the pain there reduced to a dull ache, and when she opened her eyes she could see that she was in a severe white room. Wherever this was, it was not the Hogwarts hospital wing.

Her mouth was as dry as paper. She brought one hand in front of her face and hardly recognized the brown monkey's paw before her; the effort of moving it was exhausting, and she let it drop again.

She was alone in the room, but not for long. A Mediwitch came in, and, seeing that she was awake, fluttered about her, checking her pulse and plumping her pillow, talking to her in that strange way that nurses have, referring to Rawa as "we" in a voice half an octave above normal.

And then there was food, a thin soup that she sucked down as greedily as any meal she had ever eaten in her life, straining forward like a baby bird each time the spoon was lifted to her mouth. She finished every drop and would have gladly taken as much again, but the Mediwitch said, "No, dearie, we don't want to be eating too much at once now, or we'll be sick all over these nice clean sheets."

The soup felt wonderful in her stomach: warm and surprisingly substantial. She was struggling to sit up, supporting herself on stick-thin arms, when there was a soft knock at the door and Dumbledore came in.

When he came and sat next to the bed, she saw that his eyes were glittering with unshed tears. "My dear girl," he said, "I am so relieved to see you back among us."

She smiled shakily. When she spoke, it took several attempts before she could manage anything but a hoarse croak.

"Who is teaching my classes?"

"Severus, Sirius, and Minerva are taking it in turns. And I myself have taught a few lessons."

She looked down at her wasted body, felt the ache between her shoulder blades. "What happened?"

"You fought a duel with Lucius Malfoy. Do you remember?"

Suddenly she did remember. Everything, right up until the moment she had pitched forward onto the hard gleaming surface of the table. "Lucius did this? But how? I had his wand." It was possession of his wand that had made her feel secure enough to begin dropping the Shield.

"Not Lucius, Narcissa."

"Oh." And then a wave of horror and guilt washed over her. "Oh, god. Draco."

"Yes." His face was serious. "He's had rather a hard time of it, I fear."

She felt abruptly sick, and closed her eyes for a moment. "What will happen to her?"

"She's being held in Azkaban until her trial. I believe they've been . . . waiting to see how you got on, before deciding what to charge her with."

Waiting, she understood, to see whether the charge would be attempted murder or just plain murder.

"I will not prosecute," she said.

Dumbledore looked at her in surprise. "She tried to kill you."

"I know. Believe me." She gave a bitter little laugh. "Do not misunderstand. It is not some selfless gesture, turning the other cheek or whatever you call it. I would love to see her locked up with the Dementors for the rest of her life." In fact, she was filled all at once with a vengeful rage, and would in that moment happily have watched Narcissa pulled apart by dragons.

"What then?"

"Draco. If there is a trial, he will have to testify against her, as my second. Can you imagine how terrible that will be for him, for a son to give testimony that may put his own mother away? I should never have involved him to begin with."

Dumbledore looked at her gravely. "You will forgive an old man for speaking out of turn," he said, "but I don't believe that is your decision to make."

"Do not be ridiculous. I am the one lying in this hospital bed, no?"

He took off his half-moon spectacles and began polishing them on the hem of his sleeve. "Rawa, I have found over the years that it is almost always a mistake, even with

the best of intentions, to shield people from the natural results of their behavior."

"Draco has done nothing to deserve this."

"No. But his mother has, and it is not for you to decide that she should escape retribution for her actions."

"I am the one who brought Draco into it. If I choose to spare him further pain, that is surely my affair."

"Yes, you are the one who brought him into it...and that is a decision for which you must suffer the consequences. But remember that your duty to Draco is not to spare him pain: it is to teach him."

She looked at him mutely, dumb with grief and guilt.

Finally she said, "He is just a boy."

"He is. And you are right: you should not have involved him. But what's done is done, and he's involved...and his mother is, as the historians say, the proximate cause of his current painful situation. It is hardly a secret that the penalty for use of the Killing Curse is imprisonment in Azkaban, and she had to have known that Draco, as your second, would be forced to testify against her. Yet she did what she did."

Rawa was obdurate. "He has suffered enough, I think."

Dumbledore was silent for a few minutes. Then he said, "There is a kind of hubris...do you know that term?"

She nodded.

"...A kind of hubris in thinking that in our wisdom we can pull the strings of fate and arrange for the outcome that we think best. The clockwork of the universe is unimaginably complex, and things almost never turn out the way we plan. If we begin our clumsy interventions, then we must accept responsibility for the outcomes, whatever they are."

"You will have to be more concrete with me," she said irritably. "I am too tired for riddles. What do you mean?"

"That if you shield Narcissa from prison, and she goes on to harm or kill someone else, her liberty to have done so will be on your head. That if Draco sees his mother commit this horrific act and then escape punishment, he will inevitably learn from that...and it is not a lesson you would likely wish him to learn."

She closed her eyes and lay back on the pillow.

After a while he said, "In any event, it may not be up to you. There has already been a visit from the Ecuadorian Minister for Magic, accusing us of an act of international aggression and demanding redress. In all probability the Ministry will prosecute, whether you choose to testify or not."

"Please go away," she said crossly. "I need to rest."

He smiled, and squeezed her hand briefly before leaving.

When he was gone, she found herself unable to sleep, and looked about the room restlessly for something to read. On the floor in the corner by a chair she spotted something small and dark, and lacking anything else to do, decided to get out of bed and walk across the room to see what it was...an arduous task that took her nearly fifteen minutes. She picked it up, and sank down exhausted in the chair to look at it.

It was a black, fabric-covered button.

She knew that as soon as he saw that it was missing, he would simply Summon it, unless she effected some sort of concealment! "*Churapuy*," she said to it, and then, clutching it in her hand, began making her way back to the bed.

A Gift of Sky

Chapter 13 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N: Thanks as always to RedSkyAtNight for her help and support, and, in this chapter, for the coffin nails.

Incidentally, the detail regarding loss of hair pigment among indigenous Central and South Americans due to malnutrition is accurate. Sadly, I have seen it manifested many times, including in my own sister.

They moved Rawa to the Hogwarts Hospital Wing, where she stayed for another three weeks, gaining weight and strength. By the second week, she was restive and impatient to be back in the classroom, although she still tired quickly if she was out of bed for longer than an hour or so. Madam Pomfrey was strict about visiting hours, especially with students, whom she would allow at the bedside only one at a time, and for a maximum of ten minutes. She made an exception for Hermione, who was helping Rawa transcribe the spells and potions recorded on the *kipu* onto ink and parchment: she was allowed to stay for up to half an hour, as long as it did not fatigue Rawa too much.

Harry, Ron, and Neville visited, as did many others—most, she suspected, more out of curiosity than compassion—but Draco Malfoy was conspicuously absent.

Snape visited every day, always at odd hours. It was from him that she learned that the trial of Narcissa Malfoy had proceeded without her, and that Narcissa had been summarily sentenced to a lengthy term in Azkaban.

Another bit of news he brought surprised her, although on reflection it should not have. Voldemort, it would seem, was furious with Lucius Malfoy for provoking the duel with her, and had punished him severely; he was seen only rarely outside his home, and then always in the company of Fenrir Greyback or another of Voldemort's frightening associates.

"He had no idea, you see," said Snape, "that you had ever had any contact with Voldemort, much less that the Dark Lord had some interest in your well-being."

She shuddered. "At least now I have some excuse for postponing any return visit."

"Yes," Snape agreed. "To that end, I have knocked as many nails into your coffin as I thought plausible."

She gave him a puzzled look.

"Exaggerated the severity of your condition," he explained. "Made you likely to die any second now."

"Oh. Thank you. I think."

"Not that it has needed much exaggeration." He leaned forward and looked at the top of her head. "What has happened to your hair?"

"It was burned off," she said, surprised that he would not have surmised this on his own. Her hair, which had formerly reached to below her hips, was now cut bluntly off at a point about halfway down her upper back.

"No, I don't mean that," he said. "I mean the color."

"What!?" She had looked in the mirror only a few times since waking, and then only perfunctorily, and never in strong light.

"Just here," he said, reaching forward and running a finger along her center parting. "It's red."

She snatched up a hand mirror from the bedside table and peered at her hairline, where about a centimeter of growth was indeed showing a dull red. For a moment she was alarmed, but then realized what it must be, and relaxed again.

"Malnutrition," she said. "It's because I didn't eat for so long. That happens to us, to *theindigenas*, if we don't get enough protein. The new hair will grow out black again."

His gaze had dropped fleetingly to her chest, and she said dryly, "Yes, they are sadly reduced, aren't they?"

He had the grace to look embarrassed, and she went on, enjoying his chagrin. "Madam Pomfrey says they will never be *asresplandecientes* as they were before."

She should have known better: his discomfiture (or at least the outward expression of it) lasted only a second, and then the familiar half-smirk was on his face and he said, "It should save you some expenditure on underwear, at least."

"*Descarado*," she said, but could not help smiling. She wished he would touch her again, and wondered why it was that she enjoyed this sort of suggestive teasing from him, but found Sirius's more persistent and sophisticated flirtation simply irritating.

"Thank you for teaching my lessons for me," she said. "I hope my students are behaving themselves."

He snorted. "I can't promise you that they are learning anything. They make it clear every day that they can't wait for you to return, and they all expect to be taught impenetrable Shield Charms the very first day you do."

She sighed. "We will see how that goes. I will do my best, but that spell is done without a wand, and is very difficult to teach."

"Could you teach it to me?"

"I will try," she said, "but it seems to be harder to learn the older you are. Much easier to teach to very young children; they seem to pick it up more naturally."

"When you are well, then," he said seriously.

"Yes." She smiled. "Some private lessons." And her heart gave a little leap.

Christmas came and went before she was able to resume a full teaching schedule. A handful of students stayed at Hogwarts over the holidays, and there was a modest exchange of gifts among the staff. Rawa had brought fat pairs of the brightly-colored alpaca-wool oversocks that could be found in any Andean street market; in fact, the floors of the castle were so relentlessly frigid in December that she often padded around in a pair of them herself.

To Snape alone she gave something different, justifying it to herself on the grounds that it was simply impossible to imagine him wearing those gaudy socks: a flat disc-shaped amulet with a hole in the middle, painted with an Inca design in red and black. They were alone in the staff room when she presented it to him, the others having gone into Hogsmeade in search of entertainment.

He looked at it curiously, turning it over in his hands. "What is this symbol?" he asked.

"Apu Kuntur," she said. "The Lord Condor. A protector against the powers of Darkness."

The black eyes looked at her speculatively for a moment. "Thank you."

He slipped the amulet into his pocket, and when he brought his hand out again, it was holding a tiny black marble, which he placed into Rawa's open palm. A wave of his wand extinguished the room lights, and the two of them were plunged abruptly into inky blackness.

"Say a place name," said Snape's voice in the darkness.

"Cotopaxi," she said immediately.

Instantly the ceiling was filled with tiny points of light, and she caught her breath: there, low on the horizon, was the Southern Cross, and just to the left of it, the Phoenix.

"It's an Astrocaster," he said, bringing up the room lights again. "It lets you—"

He stopped, looking at her. "Is something wrong?"

"No," she said, wiping the tears from her cheeks. How to explain to him that the night sky, more than any other thing, let her know how far she was from home? The first night after arriving at Hogwarts, she had walked out onto the grounds and looked up at the cloudless August sky. It had hit her like a punch to the stomach: a totally different firmament. She felt literally disoriented: the familiar backdrop of her whole life gone, and in its place this sparse carpet of unknown stars.

And now here was home again, in the palm of her hand.

Confusion

Chapter 14 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

When the spring term began, Rawa undertook the task of teaching Shield Charms to all her classes. As she had expected, the youngest students were quickest to pick up the technique: almost all the first-years were producing reliable Shields within the first week. Among the fifth-years, Neville surprised her by grasping it almost immediately, while Hermione grew increasingly frustrated with her own inability to produce even the feeblest protective field.

Snape was not having a very successful time of it either, although she had to give him points for sheer doggedness. They had been meeting two afternoons a week, in the hiatus between lessons and dinner, and he had very little to show for it.

She viewed these encounters with a strange mixture of anticipation and dread. Anticipation, because by now she had finally admitted to herself that she was completely *encaprichada* with him and happy for any opportunity to be in his presence; and dread, because as the weeks passed, he invariably arrived in a foul humor and left in a worse one.

For one thing, he could not pronounce the words correctly, however much he tried. “Notharkapay,” she said one afternoon. “Hark’apay. Do you hear the little break? How the throat makes that little ‘pop’ sound?”

“No,” he said grudgingly, “I don’t. They sound exactly alike to me.”

“Listen,” she insisted. “It’s there. Hark’apay. That is as clear as I can say it.”

“This from someone who pronounces my name ‘Seberos Esnep.’”

The other problem he had was with his hands. She attributed this difficulty to his age as well: he had been using a wand since the age of eleven, and the careful, precise motions necessary for wandless magic were not coming easily to him.

“I don’t understand why one can’t use a wand to cast these spells,” he complained. “The entire wizarding world has been using wands for millennia. Otherwise we might just as well be goblins.”

“Magic has been practiced without wands in the *altiplano* for ten thousand years,” she said calmly, “and the *layqakuna* are hardly goblins. The magic comes from you, Snape, from your hands—not from a stick of wood.”

But his right hand was accustomed to holding a wand, and his left to playing no part at all, and so even when he managed to produce a Shield of sorts, it came out terribly lopsided, or inside-out because his hands made a mirror image of hers.

“No, you cross in front like that, but the left hand is inside, and moves downward first,” she said. “You have it backwards. Here.” She turned her back to him, and brought his hands around in front of her, crossing them over her chest. “First the left, then the right.”

There was a delectable, audacious moment when she remained standing like this, holding his hands to her breasts, his body touching hers from neck to knees. And then he snatched his hands away and drew back from her as if burned.

“I think,” he said quietly, “we should probably just face the fact that I am not going to be able to learn how to do this.”

Rawa could not turn around to look at him. “All right,” she said, her voice little more than a whisper. She stood frozen, staring at the floor, until she heard the door click shut behind him.

She was mortified, and terribly confused.

Hot and Cold

Chapter 15 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

Thanks to RedSkyAtNight, the official Queen of the Universe. The dare was her idea.

Snape’s behavior the next day did nothing to lessen Rawa’s confusion. He sat in his accustomed place next to her at meals, making polite conversation as if there had never been any awkward moment between them at all.

He was, of course, in his usual irascible humor, but it did not seem to have anything in particular to do with her. Today’s complaint du jour seemed to be focused on the St Valentine’s Day dance, and why staff—who all, according to him, had much better things to occupy their time with—were being required to attend.

“Bad enough we have to spend our days with the spotty little scrotes,” he said at dinner. “Now we’ve got to waste an entire revolting evening watching them grope one another to music.”

"Precisely why our presence is necessary, Severus," said McGonagall. "We are there to make sure the groping doesn't get out of hand."

"And at least they're groping for a good cause," said Sirius. "St Mungo's needs the money."

Rawa ate her roast chicken and potatoes in silence. She had been quite looking forward to this dance, and had in fact gone into Hogsmeade a week before and spent a not inconsiderable amount of money on a dress for it. The dress was scarlet, close-fitting (her mother, with a disapproving little purse of the lips, would have called it *ajustado* and refused to let her leave the house in it) and cut low in the back, just shy of what she had heard one of the older boys refer to as "arse cleavage."

She had hesitated a little over this last feature, because since the duel she had not worn anything that fully exposed her scar. In the end she decided that people might as well start getting used to seeing it—and besides, it wasn't as if she had any of the usual kind of cleavage to show off anymore.

She had, of course, been thinking about dancing with Snape when she bought the dress. But after yesterday's humiliating incident, she had volunteered hastily to work at the charity table, where refreshments and gifts were being sold to raise money. It would give her something to do.

After dinner the tables were cleared out from the Great Hall, and Flitwick and a group of seventh-years set about decorating it. The centerpiece was a huge pink cauldron out of which rose an endless cascade of balloon bubbles, which were chased about the room by tiny golden cherubs. Each time a balloon was struck by one of the miniature arrows, it burst with a soft musical *plink*, and a little shower of glittering confetti floated to the floor.

Rawa would have found it all very charming and romantic if she had not been in such a grumpy mood. As it was, she sat next to Dumbledore at the table as the hours dragged on, collecting money for chocolate frogs and talking sugar hearts and the assortment of magical novelties donated by the Weasley twins, and trying not to look at Snape, who was standing nearby, glowering and leaning against the wall with his arms folded across his chest, presumably on the lookout for excessive groping.

You didn't think it was so revolting when you groped myculo on the way back to the castle, she thought crossly.

"Twenty-five Galleons for a dance with you," said Sirius's voice behind her, and she looked up to see him drop a handful of coins into the donation jar. He had a way of doing this—of backing her into a corner so that she could not turn him down without seeming churlish—and it annoyed her. She did not feel like dancing tonight, least of all with him, but it was a significant amount of money, and, after all, it was already in the jar. Making him fish it out now would draw attention, and she would be the one who would end up looking bad.

She managed a polite smile, and got up from the table. She heard Blaise Zabini say, "Hsst! AC at six o'clock!" and turned around and shot him a sharp look.

The music played softly, and the balloons went *plink, plink, plink*, and Sirius steered her around the room, holding her a little closer than she would have liked, but nothing inappropriate to a school dance with students present.

"Come to dinner with me on Saturday after the Quidditch match," he said into her ear.

"Thank you, Sirius, but I have some things I need to do." *Plink.*

"Such as?"

She hated it when he did this. She hated it when any man did it—asked for reasons, tried to argue you into liking him. Did he think it was a debate, that if she couldn't come up with a plausible excuse, she'd be forced to go out with him? She had been turning Sirius down for a good six months now, and it didn't seem to have made a dent in his determination.

"Things. Things I have to do." *Plink, plink.*

Mercifully, the song finally ended and she made her way back to the table, where Dumbledore was eyeing her speculatively.

"He doesn't give up easily, does he?"

"No. I think he thinks it is romantic, but the truth is I find it very tiresome."

She looked up to see Harry and Ron approaching the table. Ron was prodding Harry, who was looking at once mischievous and apprehensive.

"Go on," Ron was saying. "I dare you! It's the last dance, it's now or never!"

He is going to ask me to dance, she thought in amusement.

Snape apparently was thinking the same thing, because he followed the two boys, standing silently behind them as Harry dug in his pocket for money.

"I'll donate fifty Galleons," Harry said, laying the coins on the table, "if you'll dance with Snape."

Ay, mi hijo, thought Rawa. *That's going to cost you more than galleons.*

"That's 'Professor Snape' to you, Potter," said Snape, and Harry whirled round.

Seeing the look of controlled rage on Snape's face, it occurred to her that this might not be the first time that he had been the object of such an unflattering dare. She scooped up Harry's coins and dropped them noisily into the jar. "*Trato hecho,*" she said briskly, getting up from the table. "Severus, will you dance with me?"

Harry had backed away from the table, and Ron was suddenly nowhere to be seen.

Snape hesitated, looking furious, and she held out her hand and said, "Fifty Galleons is fifty Galleons. You can deal with him later."

The top of her head did not even reach his chin, and she stepped into his arms, thinking *I love the way you smell.* He was a surprisingly adequate dancer, in an understated way. It felt so good to have him hold her, even if he was keeping a slight distance. *Come on, Severus,* she thought. *This is supposed to be a contact sport.* But he was very careful to leave a little space between them, even though they had danced—and he was leading her, so she thought this must have been deliberate—away from the center of the room and into one of the corners, where there was less light. He was holding her lightly and formally, one hand on her hip, moving gently with the music but making minimal contact.

She had begun to conclude that he must find her truly repellent when she felt the hand that was on her hip begin to move, sliding around behind, his fingers insinuating themselves in between her skin and the low backline of the dress. And still he did not hold her close—just took advantage of the darkness to explore, with the tips of his fingers, the part of her that was concealed from view.

The song ended, and the lights came up, and he moved away from her. His eyes met hers briefly, and he inclined his head and gave a little half smile.

"Thank you," he said, and turned to leave.

She walked back to her rooms alone, more confused than ever.

She thought she might have a bath.

Never Did Run Smooth

Chapter 16 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

Words cannot express my gratitude to RedSkyAtNight for her help with the logistics for this chapter and the next.

"Come in," said Dumbledore. "I'm afraid I've been expecting you."

Rawa stood for a moment in the doorway, the letter clutched in her hand. Behind Dumbledore, Snape and McGonagall were sitting on a small sofa that Rawa didn't remember ever seeing before: the landscape of Dumbledore's office seemed subject to frequent and random changes.

"Come in," he repeated, and she entered and sat down in an armchair. She held the letter...two brief paragraphs on intimidating Home Office letterhead...out to him, and he took it and read it without speaking.

"The same thing?" asked McGonagall.

"Yes," he said.

"Albus, I've never heard of the Ministry's doing such a thing before."

"I have," he said, "but only once, and it was many years ago."

"What exactly has happened?" asked Rawa. She understood the gist of the letter, which was that her permission to stay in the UK was being terminated, but she had no idea why this was happening, or what the implications might be.

"The Ministry of Magic has requested that your visa not be renewed. Such requests are, as I said, extremely rare, and the Home Office always honors them; of course, they would be afraid not to."

"Surely there's something you can do," said McGonagall.

He shook his head. "Not directly. I can write a letter of appeal, but if they've taken this kind of action, no doubt they have some compelling motive, and they're unlikely to give much weight to a letter. In fact, given some of the people currently influencing the Ministry, a recommendation from me might do more harm than good."

"How long do I have?" asked Rawa. To her dismay, she had begun to cry, and she pressed her lips together and tried to regain control by counting the tiny dots in the paisley fabric of the armchair.

"Six more weeks, so don't make any definite plans just yet," said Dumbledore. "I think our best chance is to find some other venue where you can teach...not too far away, but outside the Ministry's jurisdiction. Ireland, perhaps, or somewhere in Scandinavia."

"Why are they doing this?"

She saw a look pass between Dumbledore and Snape, who had been quiet the whole time.

"We can't be sure," said Dumbledore. "Let me do some investigating. And in the meantime, try not to worry about it." He smiled gently. "We'll find a solution of some sort."

She crossed to the window of her room and looked out at the forest. Sorrow and anger surged in her chest, and hot tears stung behind her eyelids. She felt ambushed and foolish. She had concentrated so on protecting herself against Dark Magic that it had never occurred to her that her enemies might simply use the Muggle laws to send her away.

She rested her forehead against the cool glass, and let the tears come. Magic she could fight, but against this simple maneuver she could think of no defense. Even Dumbledore, as influential as he was, apparently could not keep her at Hogwarts if her legal permission to stay in the country was revoked. It was masterly in its simplicity.

There was a soft knock at the door, and she turned in irritation. She did not want to be with anyone. She wanted to be alone with her rage and her grief and her bitter disappointment, alone to reflect that in seven months she had been unable to stir the heart of Severus Snape, and that now in a few short weeks he would be out of her life forever. Even if they found a place for her to teach in some nearby country, Snape would be here at Hogwarts. She would never see him.

Wiping her eyes on her sleeve, she opened the door to see Snape himself standing there, his tall, spare, black-robed body filling the frame. She drew in her breath sharply, inhaling his dark smoky fragrance, closing her eyes and allowing herself, for one fleeting second, to hold the scent in her nostrils and visit that place in her imagination where he was hers. The vision would not stay...the heavy reality of her impending exile pushed insistently at her thoughts...and fresh tears flooded her eyes.

She opened them, and saw Snape's impenetrable gaze regarding her. Neither spoke. He reached into a pocket of his frock coat and gravely withdrew a white handkerchief and held it out to her. She took it and pressed it briefly to her eyes.

"Shall I come in, then," he asked, "and make you some tea?"

These *ingleses*, they thought any tragedy or difficulty could be put right with tea. Rawa stepped back from the door and Snape came in, ducking his head to pass through the low doorway into her small kitchen.

She remembered that the button from his coat was sitting on top of her dresser, and took advantage of his occupation with the tea-making to sweep it into a drawer. Catching sight of her swollen eyes in the mirror she thought, *Look at me, the one time he's here in my rooms and I look dreadful, and then with a wrenching pain, it doesn't matter. He is not mine, he will never be mine; I could look like a howler monkey for all it matters now.*

They sat opposite each other over the tea, she on the little loveseat and he in the overstuffed chair.

"This is Lucius Malfoy's doing, of course," he said, pouring milk into her cup.

"I suppose it must be," she admitted. "Losing the duel must have been humiliating enough, but all the rest, too...Narcissa in Azkaban, and Voldemort angry with them both." The tea was hot, sweet, and strong, and she held the cup in both hands.

"Yes" he agreed. "But more importantly, it revealed your strength. Lucius has gone to the Dark Lord and reported that you have formidable powers of protection. He has convinced his master that you will teach those powers to others and that soon, if you are allowed to remain here, all his adversaries will be able to cast impenetrable shields, even without their wands. The thought of Dumbledore's supporters impervious to all his curses, even to *Avada Kedavra*, is a great threat to him."

"He could just have me killed, then, no?"

"It would seem not," he said, smiling a little. "I think they will not risk a second attempt. Besides, the Dark Lord wants you kept alive, since he believes you to be a well he can drink from periodically to strengthen himself."

She shuddered.

"And now what will happen," she said, "is that I will be removed from Hogwarts so that I cannot teach, but the time will come when he will come looking for me." Her voice was heavy with defeat.

Snape did not answer. There was a long silence as they drank their tea. Finally he set his cup down, and cleared his throat.

"There is a way." Seeming suddenly restless and ill at ease, he rose and walked to the window, facing away from her. For a long moment he looked out at the forest.

She waited.

Finally he turned and came away from the window, standing behind the chair with his hands on the headrest and looking across at her. "You could marry," he said evenly, "an English wizard."

Of all the things he might have suggested, this one had never entered her mind.

"This would make me a British citizen?"

"No, not a citizen," he said. "But it would grant you residency for an extended period."

For the briefest of moments it seemed almost plausible. Then reality intruded, and bitterness rose in her throat. She turned on Snape, her voice tight with anger and frustration.

"What are you suggesting that I do, Snape? Place an advertisement in the *Prophet*? 'Desperate foreign witch seeks willing partner for purposes of immigration fraud?'"

"Professor Akapana. Rawa." He paused for a moment, as if choosing his words. "I am certainly not suggesting that you do any such thing." His dark eyes were watching her intently. "I am making you an offer."

Her mouth fell open, and she sat for a moment in stunned silence. Seeing her expression, he added hastily, "It would, naturally, be a formality. I would hardly expect..."

"*De acuerdo*," she interrupted.

"That is, I would not...I beg your pardon?"

"Yes, Severus," she said quietly. "Of course I will marry you."

He sat back down in the chair, drew in a deep breath, and let it out slowly.

"That's settled, then."

She looked at his lanky figure and tried to take in the fact that she had just accepted an offer of marriage from Severus Snape. She had imagined this moment so many times that now it seemed it could only be another flight of romantic fancy. Was it really possible that it might happen, that she was going to wear his ring, live with him . . . share his bed?

"Severus . . . how is it possible that the Ministry will not stop this from happening?"

He gave the barest hint of a smile. "Ah, there's the beauty of it. The Ministry doesn't locate individual witches and wizards, it locates their magic. It keeps track of particular people by setting traces on their magical activities. As long as we keep completely Muggle-side, and use no magic whatsoever, we will remain totally invisible to the Ministry." The smile deepened a little. "It has a certain poetic justice to it, don't you agree?"

"And the . . . the *amonestaciones*? The . . ." She paused, searching in vain for the correct words. "The *legapapeleo*? The Ministry won't intercept them somehow?"

He shook his head. "Again, no, not if it's all done through Muggle channels. It's perfectly legal for witches and wizards to be married in Muggle churches by Muggle clergy...mixed couples do it all the time. But it's almost unheard of for a witch and wizard together to have a non-magical wedding."

"So the Ministry will not know until it's too late, is that the idea?"

"In essence, yes. What's more, even if they suspect that you might make a hasty marriage in order to stay in the country, it will not have occurred to them that I am the one you will be marrying, so they will not be watching my movements. However, I should imagine they will be keeping a fairly close eye on Sirius Black."

His lip twitched in the familiar sardonic half-smile, but his black eyes, fixed intently on her, were not smiling.

She colored slightly and looked away, but said nothing. After a moment he went on, abruptly businesslike. "As it happens, I know someone, a clergyman, from when I was . . . from long ago. He can arrange the paperwork and perform the ceremony. But he's some distance from here, and we'll have to use Muggle transport...no Apparition or brooms or what have you. It will take us about five hours to get there. We should move as quickly as possible."

"Tomorrow, then?" Her throat was dry.

He nodded, pulling a folded paper from an inside pocket and opening it before him on the table. "Tomorrow. The first train leaves Hogsmeade for Glasgow at 8:10 a.m. From there we take another train to Manchester...there's one change...and at Manchester Piccadilly, a bus to Ashton Road. Then it's about a five-minute walk to the church."

It occurred to Rawa that he must have spent the half-hour between the meeting in Dumbledore's office and his arrival at her door making arrangements and checking train timetables. Either that, or this eventuality had been on his mind for some time.

"And after the ceremony?" she asked. She could not quite bring herself to say the word *wedding* aloud.

"We can stay the night at my house...it's not far from the church."

"You have a house in Manchester?" Somehow she had not thought of Snape as having a life anywhere outside of Hogwarts.

"Yes. It's nothing much...my childhood home." The words had an ironic edge, and his mouth made a small involuntary grimace of distaste.

"And we would come back here on Sunday?"

"Yes."

"And live . . . where?" Her cozy little rooms were not big enough for two, at least not without considerable magical expansion. Would he want her to share his apartment?

"Well, ah, that's a bit of a problem." He shifted uncomfortably in his seat. "The marriage must remain an absolute secret until your residency papers arrive, which may take several weeks. We cannot risk the Ministry finding out before the whole business is a *fait accompli*."

"So we will return here, and resume our separate lives *como si nada*."

"For the time being, yes." He shot her a sharp unreadable glance. "Tomorrow morning, then?"

"Agreed," she said, nodding. "And . . . Severus?"

"Yes?"

"I have a ring, if you will desire to wear it."

Rising from her seat, she crossed to the dresser and took a small box from the top drawer. The ring that she held out to him was a thick band of soft yellow gold, with seven emeralds spaced around it, set deep into the metal so that their unfaceted surfaces were flush with the smooth surface of the band. The overall effect was slightly primitive in its simple, imperfect symmetry.

Snape took the ring from her, and slipped it tentatively onto the third finger of his left hand, where the emeralds gleamed darkly in the slanting late-afternoon rays from the window. Her heart gave a little lurch: how many times had she imagined that ring on that finger?

He looked at her. "There is a feeling of great power about this ring," he said. "What is its provenance, if I may ask?"

She sat down on the corner of the low table, facing him. "It was the ring of Pachakuti Inka Yupanqui, one of the last of the *Inkas*, the Inca kings. The emeralds are said to represent each of the lands he took from the Aymara and the Chanca."

He raised an eyebrow. "And you came by it . . . ?"

"All the Inca gold in the *altiplano* belongs to us, to the remaining *layqa families*," she said. "The Inkas were all *magos*."

He looked at the ring for a moment longer, then slid it off his finger, placed it in her palm, and folded her fingers over it. The touch of his skin against hers sent a jolt of desire through her like an electric shock. *Kiss me*, she thought, leaning in slightly towards him. *If we are to be married, surely you will kiss me now*.

Instead he released her hand, saying, "I shall bring a ring for you as well, of course, though I must say it will be much humbler than that one." He rose and walked to the door, then turned, his hand on the doorknob.

"Eight o'clock, then, at Hogsmeade station. We would do better to arrive there separately, I think."

And he was gone, the door closing with a soft *click* behind him.

Well.

She moved about the rooms like a sleepwalker, collecting a few changes of clothing and packing them into a small carpetbag, her head a whirlwind of thoughts. Tomorrow! Tomorrow night she would be wife to Severus Snape, would lie naked with him in the house where he grew up, would feel the touch of his hands, taste his mouth . . . could it possibly be happening? She could not think beyond that point, to the prospect of actual married life, of everyday domestic intimacy. Her thoughts refused to venture further than that first night together. Night after night she had lain awake in her bed, imagining her body in his arms, the feel of his hands on her skin . . . the realization of that vision now loomed so large that it was impossible for her mind's eye to see beyond it.

At the edge of her consciousness was a small, nagging voice of doubt that said, *He does not have the same vision of this marriage as you. It is a practical bargain for him, a way to gain advantage in the struggle against the Dark Lord*. She tried not to dwell on this thought, not to wonder what he had been on the verge of saying when she had cut him off to accept his proposal. *A caballo regalado*, she thought stubbornly.

She was brought back to the present by a muffled crack! followed by a knock low on the door, and she answered it to find a house-elf standing there with clasped hands.

"Please, miss, Professor Snape has sent Morven for your bags, miss. I'm to take them up to Spinner's End so you won't be needing to carry them on the train."

"Oh." She fetched the carpetbag. "I have only the one. Thank you, Morven."

"A pleasure, miss." He smiled and bobbed his head.

"You'll be going to Spinner's End tonight?"

"Yes, miss. Morven is to take the bags, and tidy up Professor Snape's house, and have a meal ready for tomorrow."

"Yes. Well. Thank you, then, Morven. I expect I will see you there."

"Oh, no, miss. Professor Snape was quite plain, Morven is to be finished and gone by the time you arrive."

"Ah . . . Professor Snape has told you the details of our visit?" She was surprised.

"Oh, yes, miss. No need to worry yourself, miss, Morven is most discreet." There was a loud crack! and he vanished.

She stood for a moment. It was really happening, then. Tomorrow.

The troublesome voice intruded again. *A formality, he said. His is a vision not of passion but of practicality. He is dreaming at this moment not of your nakedness, but of Voldemort conquered. You do not wish this to be the truth, but it is*. She pushed the thought aside, but knew it was unlikely to let her sleep undisturbed.

In the kitchen, she washed the tea things, and prepared a sleeping-draught infusion of mango bark and sacred lotus. Undressing for bed, she saw that she had left Snape's handkerchief on her dresser. She picked it up and ran her finger across the single embroidered S, then held the scrap of cloth to her face and inhaled again that smoky

fragrance that made her pulse quicken. *I love him*, she thought, *and that will have to be enough*.

Still clutching the handkerchief, she told the mirror to wake her at six-thirty, then climbed into bed and fell asleep straight away.

Qhari Warmi

Chapter 17 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

Besides the usual extraordinary job of Britpicking and betaing, I owe RedSkyAtNight a huge debt of gratitude for all the hashing-out of logistical details in this chapter: the wedding arrangements, train travel to Manchester, Snape's house in Spinner's End. I am not worthy to tie her shoelaces.

I also want to thank Richard Ingram, pastor of Fairfield Moravian Church in Manchester, for generously sending me a number of interior photos of the church so that I could get the details right. He might be appalled if he read the next few chapters (in which, I *promise*, the threatened "explicit, lewd, or deviant sexual descriptions" are finally going to make an appearance). But then again he might not: I've known a lot of Moravian ministers who were pretty frisky.

For those of you who are concerned about the legal loopholes in this marriage...specifically the lack of a required waiting period...just sit tight. All will be revealed. Snape, after all, is not without resources.

With the exception of Snape's solitary figure, the Hogsmeade platform was deserted when Rawa arrived. He was dressed, as always, in a black frock coat with black waistcoat and trousers, the narrow edge of a high white shirt collar showing beneath his chin. The only concession to the occasion was his freshly washed hair, which was fastened at the nape of his neck into a neat ponytail.

The morning was cold. Rawa hugged her arms to her chest under her red shawl, and was glad of the warmth of the wool against the damp. She was dressed simply and traditionally, in a full white blouse and long black skirt with a split of white underskirt showing down one side. Wrapped several times around her waist were two multicolored layered belts, and on her head a narrow-brimmed black felt fedora.

She was also wearing shoes: black cloth *pargatas* tied about the ankles with ribbon. She suspected that in northern England, her clothes, as ordinary as they might have looked in Quito or Cuzco, were already enough to turn more than a few heads. Besides, she was not even sure she would be allowed on the train in bare feet.

Snape nodded briefly at her, and, without speaking, handed her a stiff orange-banded ticket the size and shape of a small playing card. She held it in a gloved hand, her breath frosting in the morning air.

The train arrived, and they boarded, Snape stepping on first and turning to offer her his hand. At this hour the train was not crowded, and they took seats at the end of a nearly-empty carriage. She was astonished at how clean it was, and said as much.

Snape raised an eyebrow. "I would not have considered this particularly clean," he said, looking around at the bits of litter and abandoned newspapers.

"Only because you have never ridden the bus from Quito to Otavalo," she said, and tried to picture him jostling for elbow room on one of the grimy Co-op buses that was usually filled to about twice capacity, and sharing space with beggars, food vendors, and small livestock.

The train lurched out of the station, and they sat in awkward silence as the rails clacked rhythmically by. She felt completely unable to make polite chatter, mostly because her mind was racing with the questions she was desperate, but did not dare, to ask. Finally, just outside Glasgow, she said haltingly, "Severus . . . you know you don't have to do this."

He looked at her, his expression guarded. "Nor do you," he said. "Have you changed your mind?"

"No, no," she said hastily. "It's just . . . I don't want you to feel you have to sacrifice yourself."

"Sacrifice myself?" he said dryly. "Are you planning to devour me like a spider once the marriage is con- . . . is . . . final?"

Consummated. That's what he started to say. She blushed furiously and looked down at her feet. "Do not laugh at me, please."

He reached over and touched her shoulder. "Sorry," he said, pressing his lips together into a tight line. "This is unfamiliar territory to me. I've never married before."

"I don't know what to expect," she said apprehensively. "I don't know what *you* expect."

"Very little, I assure you," he said, the dry edge back in his voice. "It has proven, in my life, to be the policy that leads to the least disappointment."

Just then the train arrived with a screech of brakes at Glasgow Central Station, and from that moment on they were not alone again. Snape led her by the hand at a run through the great glass-roofed concourse, weaving in and out amongst the crowds with the sure-footedness of one who had made this same journey many times before.

The train to Manchester was crowded, and they sat side by side without speaking, Snape's countenance as usual revealing nothing. As the hours crept by, Rawa grew more and more apprehensive and miserable. At one point a tear slid down her cheek, and he turned to her and silently brushed it away with his thumb.

Finally they arrived, stepping off the bus into the gentle afternoon sunlight of early spring. Snape seemed more than ever engrossed in his own thoughts, and she followed him mutely for several minutes along quiet tree-shaded pavements, stopping at the entrance to a two-storey brick building unadorned except for a white-lettered black iron plaque identifying it as a Moravian church.

To Rawa, accustomed to a more ornate tradition, it hardly looked like a church at all. The glass of the windows, although figured into a graceful leaded wreath pattern, was not stained, and the entrance hall into which they stepped was a plain room of oak paneling and white plaster. There was a row of coat hooks on which she hung the red shawl, a bulletin board with notices pinned to it, and a simple vase of freshly cut flowers on a low table by the door.

They sat in two straight-backed chairs and waited in silence. Presently a tall black man with close-cropped gray hair emerged from an interior door, breaking into a radiant

smile upon seeing Snape.

"Severus!" he said warmly. "What a wonderful surprise it was to hear from you!" He turned to Rawa. "And this must be your young lady." His eyes sparkled with genuine delight. "I can't tell you how honored I am to be performing this service for you."

"Thank you, Pastor Higgins," said Snape. "We're very grateful you could do it at such short notice."

Rawa had never seen Snape like this: deferential, almost humble. And the "we" warmed her a little, made it sound as though they were an actual couple. *Migajas del banquete*, said the voice in her head, a voice that had grown louder and more difficult to ignore as each milepost passed. *You are grasping at the tiniest straws to convince yourself that he cares for you and that this will be a real marriage.*

The minister withdrew a slim brown volume from his shirt pocket. "I found the service," he said. "I must tell you both, it is the first of its kind I have performed. But not so different from the usual, except that the form and language seem somewhat older."

"Yes," said Snape. "They are. I believe they have changed very little in the last several centuries." He smiled faintly. "Magical society doesn't take to change very well."

Higgins opened the book, pulled out a small slip of paper, and looked at it, frowning slightly. "My dear, will you pronounce your name for me?"

"Tungurawa Akapana."

The minister looked a question at Snape, and scribbled a notation on the scrap of paper. Seeing Snape's look of chagrin, she realized that he must never have heard her full name, must have given Higgins her nickname. She could almost see the minister wondering how well they knew each other, and whether this hasty marriage was taking place because she was with child.

But he kept any such thoughts to himself, saying only, "Well, then. Shall we get started?"

They both nodded, and he turned and laid his hand on Rawa's shoulder. "Severus, will you excuse us?" he said, and led her into the sanctuary, indicating that she should sit in one of the rear pews, and then sliding in next to her. He opened the book at the place held by the little slip of paper, and addressed himself to her with an air of gravity.

"Tungurawa Akapana, dost thou swear before God that thou comest to this marriage of thine own free will, that thou art free of obligation to any other, and that thou art neither pressed nor compelled in any fashion to make this union?"

De perdidos, al río, she thought, and said aloud, "Yes. I do."

"And dost thou further swear, that thou hast cast neither spell, nor charm, nor any other enchantment, to press or compel thy chosen partner in any fashion to make this union?"

"I swear."

"And hast thou, through hex, or curse, or any other enchantment, brought about any influence against any other who might prevent or oppose this union?"

"I have not."

"And, insofar as thy knowledge and thy conscience may attest, art thou this day free of any and all enchantments?"

"I am."

"Then let it be done according to God's will," he said.

Closing the book, he rose and placed a gentle hand on her shoulder. "Wait here. I'll be back presently with your intended."

He was gone for several minutes, and Rawa realized that he must be administering the same questions to Snape. Then the two men came through the door together, and she stood, and the three of them walked down the aisle to the front of the church. The minister knocked on a side door and stepped back to admit two women.

"Severus, you know Rachel and Sarah," he said, and to Rawa, "My daughters. They've agreed to serve as witnesses."

Both women nodded, smiling, and the one named Sarah, who looked to be the older of the two, said, "Well done, Severus. You've better taste than I would have given you credit for." Snape looked at the floor in embarrassment, and her father shot her a mildly reproving look.

They positioned themselves at the front of the sanctuary: the minister with his back directly to the altar, Snape and Rawa facing each other in front of him, and the two sisters behind them, one on each side. The minister lifted Rawa's right hand and placed it in Snape's, then opened the book and read:

"Brethren and sisters, we are gathered here in the presence of God and these witnesses to join this man, Severus, and this woman, Tungurawa, in holy matrimony, which is blessed by God and held in honor among all. Therefore it is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but discreetly, thoughtfully, and with reverence.

"I require and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgement when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment, why ye may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it."

The language of this statement was perplexing to Rawa, and she understood very little of it, but the meaning was clear: this was her last chance to turn back.

"Severus, wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife; wilt thou love her, and honour her, guard her and keep her as it befits a husband should do his wife, and, forsaking all others on account of her, keep thee only unto her so long as ye both may live?"

"I will." His voice was low, and she could hear the tension in it.

Higgins turned to Rawa. "Tungurawa, wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband; wilt thou love him, and honour him, cherish him and keep him as it befits a wife should do her husband, and forsaking all others on account of him, keep thee only unto him so long as ye both may live?"

Her heart was pounding furiously and her mouth was dry, and she clutched the gold-and-emerald ring nervously in her left hand. "I will."

She listened with a growing sense of unreality as Snape repeated his vows, and then it was her turn.

"I, Tungurawa, take thee, Severus, to my wedded husband, to have and to hold, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death us do part, and thereto I plight thee my troth." She had no idea what that last bit meant, but repeated it anyway, stumbling a little over the unfamiliar words.

Snape took a ring from his pocket and reached for her left hand, which was still closed tightly around the Inka's ring. With a smile, Rachel held out her hand and took the gold ring from her, and Snape slid a narrow silver band etched with a worn paisley pattern onto her finger. His eyes fixed intently on hers, he repeated the minister's words:

"With this ring I thee wed, and this gold and silver I thee give, and with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow."

She felt as though that unwavering gaze could look right into her mind and see there the image that those words had instantly evoked.

Taking the gold ring from Rachel's outstretched hand, she put it on Snape's finger, hoping that he could not feel the trembling of her own hand.

"With this ring I thee wed, and this gold and silver I thee give, and with my . . ." she swallowed, ". . . with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow."

Then the minister indicated that they should kneel, and he placed his hands on their heads, and said:

"O eternal God, creator and preserver of all mankind, giver of all spiritual grace, the author of everlasting life; send thy blessing upon these thy servants, Severus and Tungurawa, whom we bless in thy name; that, as Isaac and Rebecca lived faithfully together, so these persons may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant betwixt them made, and may ever remain in perfect love and peace together, and live according to thy law. Amen."

Then they stood again, and he said, "Forasmuch as Severus and Tungurawa have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and thereto have given and pledged their troth either to other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving of rings, and by joining of hands; I pronounce that they be man and wife together. Amen."

Qhari warmi, she thought, and tried the phrase out in her mind: *man and wife together*.

The minister smiled at Snape. "You may kiss your wife, Severus."

Snape looked startled for a moment, then leaned down and gently, hesitatingly, touched his lips to hers. She stood absolutely still, trying to prolong the moment, but Sarah and Rachel burst into wild applause, and he straightened, looking awkward and self-conscious. Rawa took his proffered arm, and they walked down the aisle together, followed by Higgins and his two daughters.

Back in the vestibule they signed the registry, and Higgins congratulated them both, shaking Snape's hand and enveloping Rawa in an embrace. Sarah hugged Snape and then Rawa, and shocked her by whispering into her ear, "You give Severus some beautiful brown babies, hear?"

The old settlement in which the church lay was an island of green and quiet within a larger industrial area that was considerably noisier and grittier, and even though the walk to Snape's house took no more than twenty minutes, the neighborhoods could hardly have presented a greater contrast. The afternoon sun had disappeared behind a low layer of gray clouds, and the temperature had dropped sharply. Snape offered his arm as they left the church, and she took it, even though by raising her arm to reach his, she opened the side of her shawl to the wind.

The house was at the end of a row of nearly identical narrow dwellings, each distinguishable from the others only by the occasional window box or painted door. When they went inside, the house was dark, and she stood still for a moment, glad to be out of the wind, waiting for her eyes to adjust to the dimness of the unlit room. Beside her, Snape reached for his wand, then checked himself and stepped across to light first the lamp, and then the fire that had been laid ready, she supposed by Morven.

The room that was revealed in the soft lamplight was a small sitting-room, with two chairs by the fire and a little low table. She took off her shoes and set them by the door, and hung the fedora and shawl on a coat rack.

"Are you hungry?" Snape asked. "I find I am famished. I hope Morven has left us an adequate meal, because I believe I could eat one of those chairs."

To her surprise, she found that she, too, was hungry. Neither of them had eaten on the journey, and it was now late afternoon. The tiny kitchen revealed a charmingly laid table with a dinner of cold roast chicken, salad, fruit and cheese, along with a loaf of dark bread, a small tub of butter, and a bottle of white wine.

The kitchen was quite chilly, so they carried the meal into the sitting-room and arranged it on the little table by the fire. The food and wine, and the crackling warmth of the flames, began to relax Rawa and even make her a bit drowsy...but in the pit of her stomach there was still a tiny knot of anxiety that would not be loosed.

Snape rose and collected the dishes and carried them into the kitchen, where he set them into the sink. "I'll do the washing-up in a bit," he said. "Let me show you your room."

The knot in her stomach tightened, and the doubting internal voice...which had been mercifully stilled since the ceremony...returned. *No more 'we'*, it whispered, as they climbed the stairs. *No 'our room.'*

To the right of the stairs was a minuscule but newer-looking bathroom, and a tiny bedroom. The bedroom to the left was larger but still quite small, with a ceiling that slanted downward with the roof line on either side. Her carpetbag was there, and her clothes had already been unpacked and hung in the corner wardrobe; there was a single towel folded on the bed. Her heart sank: the room had clearly been prepared for her occupancy alone.

There was a small fireplace, and Snape crossed the room and lit it. "I know it isn't much," he said, "but it's the larger of the two, and we'll be back at Hogwarts tomorrow night. I'll stay in the other bedroom across the landing."

She did not know what to say.

She walked across to where he was standing by the fire, reached up, and began simply to unbutton his frock coat. There were twelve buttons in all...three at the top that were always left unbuttoned, and nine down the front of the coat. She knew this already because she had sat across from him during countless meetings, looking at those buttons and imagining what it would be like to undo them one by one.

There was a moment's silence, broken only by the quiet crackling of the fire, as her slim brown fingers unfastened the black cloth buttons. Nine. Eight. Seven. Six . . . and then he was kissing her, his body pressed against hers, one hand on the small of her back and the other cradling the nape of her neck. It was everything the kiss in the church had not been: fierce, and deep, and full of longing.

She could feel him hard against her belly, and she reached down and touched him through the fabric of his trousers. He gave a little groan and kissed her again hungrily.

And then he fell upon her like a starving animal.

Her knees buckled under her, and he picked her up in one swift motion and laid her on the bed. He pushed her skirt up around her waist and tugged her knickers down, and then his hands and mouth seemed to be everywhere at once, touching and grasping and devouring. She clutched at him, the blood rushing in her ears with such intensity she thought she might faint.

He was clumsy in his urgency, fumbling awkwardly with his trousers as he crouched over her. She opened her legs and reached for him and he entered her, bruising the flesh of her neck with his mouth and pushing her hard into the bed. She pulled him into her with her legs, her body rising to meet his, and cried out once as, with a low moan, he spent himself in her.

It was over in a matter of seconds, and they were both, for the most part, still fully dressed. He buried his face in her hair and said, in a muffled voice, "Oh, god, I'm sorry."

"Why?"

"I didn't mean it to be over so quickly. Did I hurt you?"

Her legs were still around him, holding him inside her. "Oh, no," she whispered. "No."

"Did you . . ." He paused.

"Yes," she said, and then, "I was . . . it was fast for me too."

He rolled off her and sat up, and began taking off his clothes. She unwrapped her skirt and pulled her blouse over her head, flinging both onto a chair, and then made a dive for the covers as the frigid air hit her naked skin. Snape undressed more deliberately, folding each garment and laying it over the footboard of the bed, before sliding under the covers next to her.

He began immediately to caress her, his white hands a stark contrast to her cinnamon-colored skin. She sighed deeply, and turned towards him, lifting her face to be kissed and running her hands over his back. His hand slid down her belly and between her thighs, and she gave a little gasp of pleasure.

"I never knew your whole name was Tungurawa."

"You never asked me."

"What does it mean?"

She grinned up at him. "Throat of fire."

Her last thought, before drifting off to sleep, was that there was still the washing-up to do.

El trago amargo

Chapter 18 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

If you're getting bored hearing me thank RedSkyAtNight effusively at the beginning of every chapter, too bad. Just suck it up. You've no idea how much you owe her.

If the train ride to Manchester had seemed endless, the ride back to Hogsmeade was just the opposite. The hours flew by, and after boarding the train in Glasgow she and Snape sat farther apart, concerned about who might see them. Snape slipped the ring from his finger and put it into an inside pocket of his coat, and Rawa moved hers from her left to her right hand.

She could feel the warm glow starting to fade. The piercing joy of spending the night with him, their naked limbs tangled together under the covers in the narrow bed, was already beginning to take on a quality of unreality in her memory. She tried to hold on to it, to play it over in her mind, but the closer they came to the end of the journey, the more dreamlike it seemed.

"I think I should tell Dumbledore," Snape said in a low voice. "Otherwise he'll be taking up the fight against the Ministry, and more attention is the last thing we need."

"Yes." Her voice was tense.

They left the train separately, and she made straight for the school without looking to see which way he had gone. Once in her rooms she took off her shoes and lay down on the bed, too exhausted to undress but too agitated to sleep. How was it possible that a mere two days ago she had been standing at that window thinking she was about to leave Hogwarts forever?

She closed her eyes and remembered the night before, playing it over in her mind, lingering over every touch. Snape was not an experienced lover, and she had found his earnest clumsiness oddly endearing. They had both fallen asleep after that first frantic coupling, but awakened during the night and come together in the darkness, their bodies joining in an easy rhythm. His hands on her were hesitant at first, then surer and more demanding, pulling her against him as his lips and teeth found her breasts.

"What do you want?" she had whispered in his ear, and he had replied, "You. This. Everything."

She must have dozed off after all, because she was roused by a knock on her door: "*Pasa, mi amor,*" she said without thinking, still half in a dream state, and was surprised to see not Snape, but Dumbledore, enter through the low doorway.

"Expecting someone else?" he asked with raised eyebrows.

"I was asleep."

"Ah. My apologies, then. Shall I return at a better time?"

"No, this is fine. It is almost dinner, anyway."

She sat up on the bed, and Dumbledore pulled a chair over and sat facing her. "My dear," he began, "Severus has been to see me."

"He told you, then."

"Yes. Let me ask you something. This church you were married in, did it have colorless glass windows in a wreath pattern?"

"Yes," she said, puzzled.

He smiled. "There's one mystery solved, then." He paused as if collecting his thoughts. "Rawa, I've known Severus Snape for a long time. He is not easy to understand. In fact, he is not easy in any sense."

"No." She smiled.

He took her hand. "I don't wish to interfere, but neither do I wish to see you hurt. I'm sure it's not too late to undo this."

She looked steadily at him. "I do not wish to undo it."

Ignoring her, he went on. "You must know that there were some irregularities around the posting of the banns, and the required waiting period. It is not outside Severus's powers to meddle slightly with the continuum of time, but he would still have needed to do something, if not illegal, then certainly questionable, to circumvent the necessity for your presence, and the presence of witnesses. I don't know what he did exactly; whatever it was, that alone would be grounds for an annulment."

"I do not want an annulment."

His blue eyes were intense and serious. "Rawa, this is not the only way. I know you are concerned with supporting the Order, and with your part in keeping our students safe, but, I repeat, this is not the only way." He hurried on before she could protest again. "Spain is not so far from here. We have colleagues in Salamanca who would be willing to provide a place for you to teach, and we could send our students to you there to complete their training."

She looked at him stubbornly. "No."

He shook his head. "You are a sweet, innocent girl, and you have no idea what you are letting yourself in for. I assure you, you may think you know Severus Snape, but you do not."

"I know what I need to know."

"Do you know that he is deeply, passionately in love with another woman? Has he told you that?"

She was unable to keep the shock and pain from her face.

"Forgive me if that was a bit brutal, but you see what I mean. Severus is not a bad person...he is capable of tremendous loyalty, bravery, and self-sacrifice...but he has also been capable of the most appalling manipulation and cruelty when he felt it to be expedient. Or when, for instance, he felt it was necessary in support of some more important objective. For him, a worthy end may justify any means."

When she did not answer, he continued.

"He has had a very hard life, and it has left him bitter, cynical, and ruthless. I have no idea why you would want to tie yourself to such a man when there are other, simpler ways out of the difficulty in which you find yourself at the moment."

"I love him."

His eyes narrowed. "And this feeling . . . did it come upon you suddenly? Recently?"

She smiled. "No. It has made my life miserable for some time now." She rose and crossed to the dresser, and took out of the drawer the handkerchief and Astrocaster and the stray button. "See? I have a pathetic little assortment of mementos collected over many months. He has not bewitched me, Albus, if that is what you are thinking. I came to this point . . . *por mi cuenta*."

"And Severus? How does he feel?"

She looked at him. "I believe he has feelings for me."

"Well, that is certainly damning with faint praise." When it was clear that she did not understand this phrase, he asked bluntly, "Has he told you he loves you?"

"Not in those words."

"In any words, then?"

"No," she admitted, then said defensively, "but he is . . . ardent with me. He makes love to me with such . . . intensity that I know he must feel love for me."

Dumbledore briefly buried his face in his hands. When he raised it, he was looking at her with an expression of great tenderness and pity.

"Oh, my dear, dear girl. What an innocent you are! Have you looked in a mirror? There is not a male over the age of twelve in this school that would not take you to bed in a heartbeat if given the opportunity. I myself might consider it, and believe me, it's quite contrary to my nature."

She raised her chin defiantly. "But to marry me? Why would he marry me if he did not love me?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "Rawa, Severus Snape is very vindictive, and extremely intelligent and cunning. Who knows why he does what he does? For any of a dozen reasons. Perhaps he wants children...and fertile young women are not exactly offering themselves up to him in droves. Then there's the bad blood between him and Sirius Black: it's no secret that Sirius is hopelessly in love with you. Severus could have married you just to spite him."

She did not want to hear any more. Taking a deep breath, she said, "Perhaps you could explain something to me."

"If it's in my power, yes."

"The minister who married us...how is it that he knew that we were *magos*? I thought that was such a carefully guarded secret here."

Dumbledore smiled, and dipped his head briefly to acknowledge her deliberate change of subject. "There was an . . . incident, when Snape was a boy; the Ministry had to be brought in to smooth things over. And there is a longstanding tradition, left over from more credulous, superstitious times, that clergy are not to be Obliviated except in the most exigent of circumstances. England is full of vicars who are keeping magical secrets of one kind or another."

"They seemed to be friends, he and the minister."

"Yes, well, you will have to ask Severus about those windows...but there are more important things you should be asking him, I think." He paused. "I am going to go forward with the arrangements for Salamanca. At the very least, it will provide a distraction for the Ministry, and it will mean the possibility is open to you should you change your mind."

"I will not change my mind."

He took her other hand in his, and looked into her eyes. "Rawa, listen to me. I am very fond of Severus Snape; in his own way he is quite dear to me. And I know him perhaps better than anyone else in the world. Believe me when I tell you that this marriage has the potential to destroy your life, to make you bitterly unhappy; and if I have played a part in that by bringing you here and involving you in our problems, I shall never forgive myself. Promise me you will at least think about it."

She did not answer, and he sighed, and rose to leave. As he walked through the doorway, he turned back to her and said, "Ask him about Lily."

Rupaq Siki

Chapter 19 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

I don't usually provide gratuitous translations to the foreign words and phrases in these chapters, but since I'm using it as a title, I'll tell you that the literal meaning of *rupaq siki* is *hot bottom*.

Thanks as always to my brilliant beta and Britpicker, RedSkyAtNight. Her attention to anatomical detail in this chapter provided me with some of the most hilarious email exchanges I've had in my life.

Dinner was a strange business. Rawa took her accustomed spot next to Snape and was, as always, mercilessly conscious of the proximity of his body. Not for the first time, she wished that the *ingleses* were not so profligate with their magical powers, using them for mundane matters like passing the salt; she would have welcomed the opportunity for an occasional covert touch. As it was, she felt completely exposed to the view of staff and students alike, and was scrupulously careful to avoid contact above and below the table.

But it was very different from every other meal she had taken seated next to him. This time she knew, and that knowledge made it at once both more and less bearable. Instead of the wistful ache of longing she had always felt in his presence, there was now the hot immediacy of recall, the image of his white skin and black hair beneath her hands, the sharp unforgettable moment when he had plunged into her for the first time. Seated there at the table in his habitual long coat and high collar, covered except for his face and hands, he might as well have been naked. She could see him naked.

There was nothing in his demeanor to suggest that this night was different from any other. He addressed himself to his food, his keen eyes roving over the assembled students, and responded civilly if not warmly to the conversation of his colleagues. Except for a superficial exchange regarding the upcoming examination schedule, he did not speak to her or look at her at all.

She had no appetite, and ate almost nothing. As soon as the meal was over, she fled back to her rooms.

It was already dark out, and she looked through her window at the moonless night. It seemed suddenly empty and barren, and she felt newly alone and far from home.

What have you done? said the inner voice of doubt. *You have tied yourself to a man who can never love you, who loves another, and now it is too late to turn back. You will die alone in this cold land, far from your own people.*

She had worn a *campesino's* plain cotton shirt and drawstring trousers to dinner, and these she now removed, stepping into the bathroom to turn on the shower. She could smell him on her skin, knew his sweat was still dried there from that morning. As the steam enveloped her and the hot water sluiced over her face and chest, she wondered how the man who had taken physical possession of her so fiercely could be the same one who had just sat next to her, appearing so cold and indifferent, at dinner. She wished he were not so skilled at dissembling.

Here, she thought, running her soapy hands over her wet body. You touched me here . . . and here . . . and . . . ay, dios . . . here. Alone in your rooms, as I am alone in mine, are you thinking of me now? Or of someone else? The ugly thought occurred to her that he might have been thinking of someone else...of the woman Lily...even as he kissed her and touched her and labored above her. Pain stabbed through her and she tried to push the notion from her mind.

In bed, she lay awake for a long time wondering what she ought to do. "Ask him about Lily," Dumbledore had said, which sounded simple enough, but she knew it was not. For one thing, they had not been alone together once. For another, she would be a fool to ask the question when she did not really want to hear the answer. What possible response could satisfy her? Any one he gave would either cut her to the bone, or be a lie.

And yet she would ultimately have to know.

Her mind pacing in a relentless circle around this unpleasant truth, she eventually fell into a restless sleep, only to be awakened a short time later by the unmistakable sounds of someone moving about her bedroom. The darkness in the room was absolute, and she listened intently, wondering if she had dreamed the noises. She had almost concluded that she had, but called out sharply, "Who's there?"

At once a hand covered her mouth, and Snape's voice, like silk in her ear, whispered, "Shhh."

He drew back the covers and climbed into bed next to her. He was naked, and she could feel that he was already hard. *Ay, dios, she thought, this is enough. This has to be enough.* He pulled her up underneath him and kissed her, pushing one knee between her legs. Then his mouth searched out first one breast and then the other. "Severus," she said in his ear, savoring the feel of his name on her tongue, "what do you want?" Each time he had taken her, it had been like this: his body above hers, his mouth and hands hungry on her, penetration and finally a frenzy of ecstasy that left both of them spent. It was satisfying but she longed for more, wanted to take him in her mouth, ride him, make him cry out with pleasure and desire.

But she wanted him to direct her to do these things, because she did not want to seem like *rupaq siki*.

She was aware that this was absurd and hypocritical.

So she had asked him, that first night, "What do you want?" and now she asked it again, hoping that he would at least give her some hint or gesture on which she could seize as a pretext. But tonight he said only, "You," and then again, "you," his hands never still, his body pressing down against her; and she thought, *ya que estamos en el baile, bailemos*, and put her palms flat against his shoulders and pushed him over onto his back.

He gave a little grunt of surprise. The darkness was so complete that she could see nothing; it was as if he existed only where she touched him. She slid downward, her mouth moving along the line of hair that ran down the center of his abdomen, picturing it in her mind, dark against the white skin, following its path and sucking, licking, biting her way down until she felt the velvet tip of his penis against her face. She heard his sharply indrawn breath as she began kissing it, at first lightly and then more insistently. She gently slid the foreskin back and ran her tongue around the head. Then abruptly, greedily, she took the whole shaft in her mouth as far as it would go, pushing down against him and opening her throat to receive him. *This, yes, she thought, as his sharp smell filled her nostrils, and heard him say, thickly, "Rawa," and then "ah, god . . . ah . . . that . . ."* as she worked up and down on the shaft, one hand leading and then following her mouth, her thumb and forefinger sliding along the wet skin.

His penis curved upward slightly, and as her mouth traveled along it, she could feel the blood surging under the skin beneath her tongue. She tasted the first salty drops of fluid and thought, *Ya, sí, vente, mi vida*, and took him as deeply as she could, feeling his hands clutching at her hair, and hearing with a sense of triumph the animal sounds now escaping him as control slipped away and he buried himself in her mouth.

Then, suddenly, he said, "Wait. Wait," and reached under her arms and pulled her up, pulled her on top of him, groaning as she lowered herself onto his penis. "Wait. Hold still. Still. Just . . . still. Just one minute."

"*Dame*," she whispered, and ground into him, her small breasts swaying over his face in the darkness as she rocked forward. He grasped her hips and pulled her to him, driving upwards against her. She was frantic with desire, pushing down against him and making little whimpering noises, and she reached back and took one of his hands and dragged it forward, touching his thumb to her clitoris. He reacted immediately, pressing against the tiny hardness and stroking his thumb in little circles. A great wave of heat and pleasure engulfed her, and she cried out, her body convulsing once and collapsing forward onto him.

As her breathing began to return to normal, she realized he was still hard inside her, and she began again to move against him, feeling his hands tighten on her buttocks as she rose and fell. His breathing grew ragged, and she said aloud, "*Vente, mi amor, vente ya*," and he thrust ferociously into her again and again, and then was still.

They lay for a long time, the sweat cooling on their skin.

"My door was locked," she said finally.

"Silly girl," he said. "Do you think the lock exists that can keep me out of a room I wish to enter?"

"If I wanted to keep you out," she said, "do you really think you would have been able to get in?"

There was another long silence, and then he asked, "What is *vente*? You said that to Malfoy, in the duel."

"I said it to Malfoy's wand, not to him. *Ni se te ocurra*."

"And it means?"

"*Come*," she said. "But not just *come*. *Come* is *ven*. *Vente* is more, it is stronger, I cannot explain it, it is like, bring yourself to me."

She turned toward him and laid her forehead against his shoulder. He reached across with his other arm and gently stroked her hair, and she gave herself up to sleep.

When she woke in the morning, he was gone.

All We Shall Know for Truth

Chapter 20 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

As always, my profound thanks to RedSkyAtNight. I've buried a tiny little *homage* to her in this chapter; it's so obscure even she will never find it.

"These quantities are all so subjective," Hermione said disapprovingly. "It's not like a proper potion formula at all."

Rawa nodded. "That is why you are working with me, no? To write these out in 'proper' form. I think if anyone is able to do that, you are the one."

"Well, yes, all right," said Hermione, slightly mollified by the compliment. "But how do you know exactly how much it is? Just here, for example, it just says 'tumpa.' That means 'a little bit,' doesn't it? But how much is a little bit?"

"You have to look at the next two or three strings as well." Rawa teased apart the strands of the *quipu*. "Here. I'll read the quantities and pour out the amounts. Then you can write how much it is."

Assembled on the table where they were sitting was an assortment of laboratory glassware borrowed from Snape. She selected a small graduated cylinder and poured a minute amount of water into it, then passed it to Hermione, who examined the markings on the side.

"Five fluid scruples," she said, and wrote $f \text{ } \exists v$ on the parchment in front of her. "And what's this?" she asked, frowning. "Yawar is blood, isn't it? What kind of animal is a *drako*?" She grinned suddenly. "There's a question many would like the answer to."

"Not an animal, a tree. *Yawar drako* is a tree sap. Good for many things...stops bleeding right away, heals ulcers. There's no English equivalent, I think; just write *angre de drago*."

"Drako sap," said Hermione, still amused, as she wrote. Then, looking at the next section, "These are dry measures. Have you got some scales and a set of weights?"

"No. I'll have to see if Professor Snape has some he can lend me."

"I've got to stop for today, anyway," said Hermione apologetically. "I promised Ron I'd help him practice for the Transfiguration exam, and if he starts without me, the consequences could be dire." She rolled up the unfinished parchment, and began gathering up her things. "Same time tomorrow?"

"Only if that is convenient for you. I know this is a lot of work for you at a busy time."

"Oh, not a problem! I'm just excited about actually seeing my name in print!"

When she had left, Rawa walked down the hall to the Potions classroom, glad enough of an excuse to pay Snape a visit during the daylight hours. Since that Sunday night, they had continued the same strange divided existence: workdays spent as polite colleagues, followed by nights of violent passion. They had never discussed it, never agreed to the compromise; it was just a pattern they had fallen into naturally.

Rawa had not yet asked him about Lily. She knew that it was a conversation that must happen sooner or later, but she had put it off, fearing that it would mean the end of his nightly visits to her room.

Snape was nowhere to be seen, but the Potions classroom was still unlocked. She was looking through the student supply cabinet when a noise behind her made her turn around to see not Snape, but Sirius Black, holding a thick leather-bound book and standing rather too close for her comfort.

She tried to hide her disappointment. "Sirius! Shouldn't you be at Quidditch practice?"

"I just skipped out for a minute to return Snivellus's book."

His use of the puerile nickname irritated her, but she tried not to show it. "I'm sure he'll be right back...he never leaves this classroom unlocked."

"Just as well; I'd rather see you than him anyway." He stepped in even closer, and her heart sank. "I've been wanting to talk to you." He laid a hand lightly on her arm. "I was thinking of spending a weekend in Spain, before it gets too hot there. Maybe Bilbao; have you ever been to the Guggenheim?"

"Sirius, I...thank you, but I can't."

"Don't give me an answer yet...just promise you'll think about it." He grinned mischievously. "You might as well say yes and save us both some time. You know I'm not going to give up, ever." Before she could move aside, he had leaned in and was kissing her.

She pushed him away, breaking free of the kiss just before she heard Snape's dry voice behind him say, "Sorry, am I interrupting something?"

"Snape!" said Sirius genially. "Just dropped by to return your *Karjane*." He set the book on a desk and looked at Snape, who was not even attempting to conceal the mixture of anger and dislike on his face. "Something wrong?" Then, looking back and forth between the two of them, "I believe our Severus may have a little crush on you, Rawa." He turned back to Snape. "Good luck," he laughed. "Got to get back to Quidditch practice," and he left.

Snape looked at Rawa for a long moment, then said, in a low, even voice, "I would appreciate it if you would refrain from public displays of affection with our colleagues."

"Severus! I did not do anything! He just..."

"You would do well to remember that...at least on paper...you belong to me."

"That is not fair! And besides, you cannot expect Sirius to know that!"

"I rather think it's up to you to discourage this sort of thing."

"Really?" Now she, too, was angry. "Why not just urinate in a circle around me and save me the trouble?"

He grasped both her arms, holding them fast against her sides, his body trapping hers against the cabinet. There was anger showing in the set of his mouth now. "You belong," he repeated, "to me."

Releasing one arm, he reached behind her to take a handful of hair and pull her head back. His mouth came down hard on hers, and there was no affection in this kiss, only resentment and frustration. She tried to match it, tried to maintain the pitch of her outrage, but she could not: her body responded to him as it always did, and after a few seconds she leaned into the kiss, bringing her free hand up behind his neck and caressing it.

Some of the tension left his body, and the kiss became gentler but no less insistent. He let go of her hair and reached into his coat pocket for his wand. Without taking his mouth from hers, he pointed the wand toward the door, and she heard the lock click into place.

Then he reached down and untied the drawstring of her cotton trousers. "Now," he said thickly. "I want you now. Here."

Her hands were working at the buttons of his frock coat. "Severus," she murmured. "*Qanta munani*. I love you."

She had never said this to him before, but it was out now and there was no unsaying it. To her horror, he froze for a moment and then stepped back. He said, his voice cold and deliberate, "Don't lie to me."

"I am not lying," she said, her voice trembling. "Why would you say that?"

"I will not let you make a fool of me with other men, and I will not be lied to."

"It is not a lie!" she insisted. "How can you think it is a lie?"

"Because I have no illusions: I know who you are, and who I am, and I know why you married me."

"I married you because I love you!" she cried. "Have I not shown you love these past nights? Do you think I would let you take me here, on a classroom floor in the middle of the afternoon, if I did not love you?"

He looked at her contemptuously. "This is not love," he spat. "This is . . . I know it excites you when I touch you in certain ways. That's evidence of nothing, except that you are a female animal like any other."

She slapped him, hard. "*¡No seas cochino!*" She was crying now, tears of hurt and anger spilling from her eyes. "Why will you not believe me?"

"Why would I?" His cheek was reddening where she had struck him.

She pushed away from him and went into the little storeroom. There was a ladder there, and she scrambled up it, rummaging through the dusty bottles until she found what she was looking for: a tiny crystal bottle labeled *Veritaserum*. Returning to the classroom, she set it on the table and saw Snape's eyebrows rise a fraction.

She filled a glass beaker with water, then added a few drops from the vial. Her eyes never leaving his face, she drank deeply, then sat down at one of the tables. "Ask me anything," she said. "Anything."

He pulled over a chair and sat facing her. "You know this is forbidden," he said.

"I do," she said. "It is a very bad idea. But I do not have a better one, so ask."

There was a long silence. He swallowed, then took a deep breath and said, "What do you feel for me?"

"I love you more than air."

"Why?"

She considered this. "I do not know," she said finally.

He thought for a minute, then said, "When did it begin, this feeling you say you have for me?"

"The day that I met you."

He gave her a long, calculating look. "Everyone knows you can compel truth in others. How do I know that it is not among your abilities to resist the power of Veritaserum?"

"Why must you think that?" she cried. "Why is it so hard for you to believe I would love you?"

He looked at her, skepticism written clearly on his features. Slowly he began to shake his head.

"You married me so you could stay at Hogwarts. I am better off accepting that truth than believing some romantic fable."

"Severus, *por el amor de dios!*" She slapped her palm on the table in exasperation. "Why do you think I wanted so desperately to stay here?"

"To help the Order."

"*A la mierda* with the Order! It was to be near you . . . you stupid, stupid man!"

For a long time, he did not reply. Finally he said, "Have you had other lovers?"

"Yes," she said.

"Sirius Black?"

"No."

"Never?"

"No."

"Why would you choose me and not him? Women buzz around him like flies around a dunghill."

"What a . . . repulsive image." She had tried to say *lovely*, but the Veritaserum did not permit sarcasm.

"Answer me."

"Severus, how do I know? *En el corazón no se manda.*"

He looked at her steadily. "I know he is much better looking than I am."

"Yes, he is." The potion was merciless.

"And more socially adept."

"Yes."

"What, then?"

She considered for a bit. "Most people," she said, "we reach adulthood and life has beaten us a little. We do not always get what we want. We have loss, and grief. It is part of what makes us who we are." She paused. "I do not mean to say that Sirius has not had more than his share of pain and loss. The time in Azkaban has clearly taken . . . taken a great price. But somehow he has come out of it the same person he was when he was in school here."

"But surely that's a good thing?"

She shook her head. "Maybe that is what helped him endure, in that horrible place. Maybe he learned to go away in his mind. Whatever the reason, he is still the same Sirius who ran with James Potter and Remus Lupin, who played, what do you call them, heavy jokes..."

"Practical jokes."

"...practical jokes, who skipped classes and broke all the rules and called you demeaning nicknames." She smiled. "Severus, if I wanted to make love to a seventeen-year-old, I am surrounded by them."

They sat in silence for a while. Then, slowly, she pushed the beaker towards him.

"Your turn."

He looked up in alarm, and she regarded him unblinkingly. "Are you afraid?"

"No." He lifted the beaker and drank.

"Who is Lily?"

His eyes widened, and his face tightened with pain.

"Harry Potter's mother."

"But she is dead!"

"Yes." He closed his eyes.

"Do you love her?"

"I did love her, yes."

"And now?"

"I feel . . . her memory is sacred to me. My love for her is what has driven me all these years."

She did not really know what this meant for her. Surely it was good that there was no living rival with a claim on his affections, but how could she compete with the perfection of an idealized adolescent love?

"And you never fell in love with anyone else?"

"Not before now, no."

She bit her lip. It was terribly hard not to ask what he meant by this, but she had resolved to ask him nothing about his current feelings for her. She liked to think that this

decision was motivated by integrity and a sense of fairness...after all, the Veritaserum had not been his idea...but knew in her heart that it had more to do with cowardice. Better not to know if he cared for her, than to know for certain that he did not.

But there was one thing she could not resist asking.

"In February, when I was trying to teach you the Hark'apay Charm..." She could see by his face that he knew exactly what she was going to ask, and was not especially pleased. "I put your arms around me and you pushed me away. Like I disgusted you."

"No."

"Why, then?"

"Because I didn't want you to know you'd given me a raging hard-on."

"A what?"

"Hard-on. Erection."

"You felt desire for me then? And when you carried me back to the castle, and watched me get out of the bath...then, too?"

"Desire?" he said dryly. "You could call it that. Certainly I wanted to fuck you. I've always wanted to fuck you, from the first time I saw you."

"Why were you so unpleasant to me, then, that day when I brought you the poisons?"

"I never said I liked you, I said I wanted to fuck you. Don't know much about men, do you?"

This was straying into dangerous territory, and she cast about for a harmless question.

"Tell me about the church windows."

She saw the relief behind his rueful smile. "I was ten. I knew it was forbidden for me to use magic, but I was wild, and full of bitterness, and let's just say I was left to my own devices a lot. One Christmas Eve for sport I blew out all the windows of that church during a candlelight service. The Ministry had to Obliviate the whole congregation, and half the neighborhood. That's when I met Dumbledore...the Ministry brought him in to talk to me, convince me I had to behave if I wanted to go to Hogwarts the next year. And he repaired the windows, but I spent the rest of the winter polishing all the woodwork in that church by hand."

She leaned forward, took his face in her hands, and kissed him. He reached for her and gathered her to him, pulling her into his lap to sit astride him as he unbuttoned her shirt.

Almost ritually she whispered in his ear, "Severus, what do you want?"

She had quite forgotten about the Veritaserum, and remembered it only when she saw the look of panic cross his face a fraction of a second before he blurted out, "I want to fuck you up the arse."

Trust

Chapter 21 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

Thanks *como siempre* to RedSkyAtNight, whose suggestions made this chapter so much better than it started out being.

Thanks for reading and reviewing.

It took a moment for Rawa to understand the words. "You mean," she said with an explicit gesture, "you want . . . *en el culito*."

"Yes."

A little shiver of fear and excitement went through her. He had touched her there once, briefly, with his tongue, and the sensation had been wickedly delicious—but the thought of his whole *jisp'ana* penetrating her there was a little scary.

"Why?"

He had taken off her shirt, and was caressing her breasts; now he looked up at her and said, "Because it is the filthiest thing I can imagine doing to you. Because I want to possess you completely, and violate every orifice you have. Because I want to do something to you that no one else has done." He drew a breath. "Has any man ever had his cock in your arse?"

"No." Her heart was hammering in her chest.

"Are you afraid?"

"Yes."

She saw something change in his expression, and comprehension dawned. "It excites you, that I am afraid, no?"

"Yes," he admitted, and she could hear the shame in his voice.

She was still sitting astride him, and had unbuttoned his coat. "Like this?" she asked. "Sitting like this?"

"No. I want to bend you over that table and split you like a ripe melon."

Taken aback, she said, "You know you will need something, some kind of . . . *lubricante*."

He raised an eyebrow and smiled faintly. "I am," he said, "the Potions master." He pointed his wand toward the cupboard. A small bottle flew out into his hand, and he set it on the table.

Then he lifted her from his lap, and tugged at the waistband of her trousers. "Take them off," he said, and she complied, treading them under her feet until she stood naked before him, her pulse pounding in her ears. He shrugged off his coat, and she reached for his shirt buttons, but he grabbed her by the shoulders and turned her roughly about, then bent her over the table, planting his left hand in the center of her back. She flinched reflexively, even though the scar had ceased to be painful for some time now.

"Does that hurt?" he asked, in a husky voice, and she said, "No," wondering if he would have it would have aroused him more had the answer been *yes*.

He rolled up his left sleeve, then switched hands to roll up his right one, all the while pressing her down against the table top. She could feel his movements as he unbuttoned his trousers and reached for the little bottle. She felt a cool liquid spill into the cleft between her buttocks, and then his finger, gliding over the exquisite slipperiness, flickering around the opening. She groaned, and he leaned over her and said in a low, urgent voice, "Do you want this?"

"Yes," she replied. "Oh, please, yes."

"Why?"

"Because I will give myself to you any way you will take me."

"Only that? I want it, and so you're willing?"

"No."

"What else, then?"

The tip of his finger was slipping in and out of her anus, and she felt herself opening to him. "Because it feels good *ay dios*, when you touch me there it makes me, it . . . *me caliente*."

As if to torment her, he took his hand away, and she felt more of the slippery liquid trickle between her buttocks. "Get up onto the table," he said. She climbed up, and he pushed her knees underneath her, so that she was kneeling face-down on the table, her buttocks in the air. He began again to tease her anus with his finger, and she spread her knees apart as far as they would go and pushed back against him, forcing it deeper.

"Now touch yourself," he ordered, and she reached between her legs and began to stroke her swollen clitoris.

He withdrew his finger, and she gave a little whimper of protest.

"Do you want this?" he asked again.

"Yes, oh yes, oh, *sí, sí, sí*," she gasped.

"Ask me for it, then."

"*Éntrame*," she said, "*penétrame, por favor, por favor por favor*." English had deserted her; she was wild with wanting him inside her.

He placed a hand on either side of her buttocks and spread her apart with his thumbs, and then she felt the head of his penis forcing her open with a pleasure so intense it was almost painful. "*Ay, mi amor, mi vida, mi corazón, dámele, métemela, métemela*," she cried, stroking herself harder and harder as he pushed into her. His penis seemed impossibly large, and the sensation threatened at any moment to cross over into pain, but she took in a deep breath and willed herself to relax, opening to receive him as he began to thrust rhythmically into her.

"Oh, god," he said. "Oh, god, I love your cunt but this is so tight."

She was beyond words now, making only a little *anh, anh, anhcry*, pushing back against him, driving him deeper inside her with each stroke.

"Oh, fuck," he said, "oh, god, I'm coming," and she felt the hot liquid spurt inside her, seconds before she screamed out his name and shuddered beneath him.

He slid gently out of her, and stood for a moment crouched over her, his mouth against the back of her neck.

"I love you," he said.

Solitude

Chapter 22 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

Thanks to my patient beta and Britpicker, RedSkyAtNight, coiner of the immortal phrase, "wank venue of choice."

They dressed in silence, and he pulled her back onto his lap and kissed the top of her head. She sat for a few minutes with her arms about his neck and her face against

his chest.

After a while he said, "We've missed dinner."

She looked up. "They will be wondering where we are."

"Perhaps not. You've got quite a set of lungs."

Taking a key from his coat pocket, he handed it to her and said, "Go back to my rooms. I'll go down to the kitchens and see if Morven can organize us something to eat."

She had never been inside his rooms at the school before. They were much as she expected them to be: spare, and tidy except for the abundance of books stacked on every available surface.

Without hesitation she went directly to his bedroom, consumed with curiosity about this most private of spaces. It was stark to the point of asceticism, with only a dresser, a wardrobe, and a bed with a small table to one side of it. There were no pictures or other adornments on the wall, and the bed was covered with a simple dark-colored counterpane. Knowing that he would hate this invasion of his privacy but unable to resist the temptation, she rifled quickly through the dresser drawers. No surprises there: a modest supply of unremarkable, neatly folded clothing; a wand case with several spare wands in it; a velvet box containing a pair of worn gold cufflinks. Inside the wardrobe there was a set of dress robes, two identical black everyday cloaks, a heavy overcoat, two pairs of black shoes, and a pair of boots.

She opened the drawer of the small bedside table and got a considerable shock.

There were only two objects in the drawer, and one of them was a thick plait of black hair, fastened at the fatter end with a scrap of black ribbon, and at the other with a small gold clip in the shape of a jaguar, with emeralds for eyes.

Stunned, she sat down abruptly on the bed, and looked at the plait. There was still a faint scorched smell about it, and she could see the singed ends above the black ribbon.

"Having a look round?"

She gave a guilty start. She had not heard Snape come in, but he was standing in the doorway holding a tray of sandwiches. She opened her mouth to deny it, but the Veritaserum was evidently not yet gone from her system, because what she said was, "Yes. I was curious."

"Find anything interesting?"

"You know that I did."

When he did not reply, she said, "How do you come to have this?"

He set the tray of sandwiches on the dresser, and said, "After the duel, when they carried you away to hospital, it was left there on the table. I took it."

She paused for a moment to absorb the implications of this statement, and it was only then that she noticed the other object in the drawer. It was a small bottle, the twin of the one he had Summoned from the potions cabinet not an hour before. She picked it up, removed the stopper, and poured into her hand a few drops of the same slippery liquid.

She looked up at him. "What you did to me, in the classroom, had you been planning it?"

"No. Thinking about it, imagining it . . . but not planning it."

Suddenly she understood, and almost laughed aloud.

"So what is this doing here?" she asked innocently, holding up the little bottle.

She could see him struggling, and losing, against the diminished but still adequate level of Veritaserum in his blood. Clearly hating the words, but powerless to keep himself from uttering them, he said, "I use it when I'm by myself."

"What for?"

"You know what for."

"Tell me."

"To have a wank."

"To have a what?"

"You know. To make myself come."

"And when you do that," she said wickedly, "what do you think of?"

"You, mostly." He was red with embarrassment. "Fucking you."

She was enjoying herself mightily. Then his eyes met hers, and his look of discomfiture was replaced by a slow smile. "And you?" he asked, coming over to sit next to her on the bed. "Do you think of me and touch yourself when you're alone in bed at night?"

"No," she answered truthfully, and then was unable to prevent herself from adding, "I do it in the bath."

He pushed her down on the bed, sliding his hand up under her shirt. "I know where there's an excellent bath," he said.

"Severus!" she laughed. "Get off me!"

"Why?"

"Because I am hungry. What did you do with those sandwiches?"

Cards on the Table

Chapter 23 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

Thanks as always to RedSkyAtNight, who betas and Britpicks me like a pro.

For the next two weeks, Rawa was as happy as she could ever remember being. She and Snape spent every night together, either in her rooms or in his, and he had not accused her again of deceiving him. Of course, she thought wryly, this might simply be because he had had no time, as they seemed to spend every waking minute they were alone together *culeando*.

Her contentment was marred only by the continued need for secrecy about their marriage and by Sirius Black's unrelenting persistence in the face of her rejection. One evening after dinner he caught up with her in the corridor and began again, and she turned to him in annoyance.

"Sirius," she said, "please stop it."

He grinned. "You know I can't do that. Eventually I'm going to wear you down."

"No," she said, "you are not. And you are beginning to really irritate me."

He dropped the teasing manner immediately, and said, "Rawa, I mean this—I've never felt like this about a woman. I honestly think you could be the one."

She softened just a little. "I *am* sorry, Sirius, but it just is not going to happen."

"Why not? Can you give me one good reason why not?"

In desperation she said, "Because I love someone else."

For a second he looked taken aback. "You've got a boyfriend back home?" Then an idea seemed to strike him, and he added, "Or a girlfriend?" A little of the teasing manner returned. "Because if it's a girlfriend, I can be very flexible."

She shook her head. "Go away now, Sirius."

"I'm not giving up, you know," he said. "Love the one you're with, and all that." The grin was back in full force now. "Are you coming down to play cards?"

"Probably," she said. She loved to play cards—and besides, Snape had started coming down to the staff room to join the evening games.

"I'll see you there, then."

And he did: by the time she arrived an hour later, he was already there, as were Snape and Flitwick, who was shuffling the cards. Snape looked up at her and gave a little jerk of his head in the direction of the pigeon-holes where the staff post was delivered, and she saw that there was an envelope in her box.

She picked it up, and looked over at him, and knew that he had seen the return address. She opened it with shaking hands, and took out her passport and a folded letter. Inside her passport was a small pentagonal stamp, with the date and the words *HOME OFFICE IMMIG & NAT DEPT.*

□

The letter informed her that she had been granted permission to stay in the country for twenty-seven months, after which she could apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain.

Relief flooded over her, and she looked at Snape and nodded.

"Good news, I hope," said Flitwick, looking from one to the other.

"Yes, my visa has been extended. Good for two more years."

"Really? Was there a problem?"

"Sort of." She permitted herself a small smile.

"Bad news for that Ecuadorian boyfriend," said Sirius with a grin.

Snape gave her a questioning look.

"Sirius," she said, "the Ecuadorian boyfriend exists only in your imagination."

"I knew it!" he said. "I knew that business about you loving someone else was rubbish."

"No," she said, "I do."

"Who, then?"

"Severus."

There was a moment when it seemed as though he was going to laugh, and then he stopped himself. "Oh my god," he said, "you're not joking."

"No, she's not," said Snape. He gave Sirius a look that said, *I've waited a long time for this moment, and I mean to enjoy it.* "As a matter of fact, she married me."

"She *what*?" Sirius looked at the letter she was holding, and then at Snape, and then back at her. "Rawa, you foolish girl, what have you done?"

There was a discreet cough from Flitwick, who got down from his chair. "I'll just be going, then," he said, and disappeared through the doorway.

Sirius was still staring at her. "I would have married you, you know. If you had a problem with Immigration, why didn't you come to me?"

She heaved an exasperated sigh. "Sirius, understand this, please. I did not want to marry you. I wanted to marry Severus."

"Why? He can't possibly love you!"

"Actually," said Snape quietly, "I do. I love her very much."

Rawa turned to look at him, astonished. It was so unlike him to say such a thing that she hardly knew what to think. The warm glow that spread through her lasted all of five seconds, until Snape added, "Besides, she sucks me off like a pro."

"Severus! Jesús de Veracruz!"

Sirius looked at him, tight-lipped. "You are disgusting," he said. "Unbelievable." And he turned and left, slamming the door behind him.

"I doubt very much that he'll be bothering you any more," said Snape.

"Severus!" she said again. "I cannot believe you said that!"

"Why?" he said, all calculated innocence. "You do, you know. Suck me off like a pro. You're quite talented in the cock-sucking department."

"Sirius Black does not need to know that!"

"Oh, I think he does." He looked very pleased with himself. "Did I offend you?"

To her chagrin, she realized that he had not. She felt as though she ought to be offended, but the truth was that she rather liked being told she was talented in the cock-sucking department, and the look on Sirius' face had been priceless. Instead of indignation, what she was really feeling was a mixture of smugness and an overwhelming desire to laugh.

"You are a very bad influence on me," she said.

"Am I?"

"Come back to my rooms and let me show you how bad."

The Wayward Wand

Chapter 24 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

Thanks as always to RedSkyAtNight, my wonderful beta and Britpicker.

Those of you curious about the Wayward Wand establishment may want to check out the story of the same name.

"So glad you could make it for dinner, Severus."

Snape and Rawa were walking down the steps of twelve Grimmauld Place into the cool evening when Sirius delivered this sarcastic parting shot. Rawa looked up at Snape, and as soon as they were out of earshot, said, "I just realized. This *is* the first time you have stayed for dinner after an Order meeting."

"Yes." His voice was carefully neutral, but she thought she could detect, in the soft light of the streetlamps, the barest hint of a smile.

"Why did you always leave before?"

"I had more interesting things to do."

Now she was sure it was a smile. They were ambling along, with no clear destination, and she felt his hand move smoothly downward from the small of her back where it had been resting. It was one of the oddities of his character that while he never, within view of their colleagues, made the smallest gesture of affection toward her, in semi-public places he was ruthless in his liberties. Tonight during dinner, for instance, he had sat next to her with apparent indifference, but after dessert was finished, his left hand, concealed under the table, had slipped through the slit in the side of her skirt and roamed over her thigh, his fingers at one point hooking into the elastic of her knickers and searching out the cleft between her legs.

She had squirmed in her chair, and clenched her teeth to keep from moaning aloud. Reaching under the table, she pinched his arm, but instead of removing his hand, he had pinched her back, on the inside of her thigh. By the time they rose to leave, she was so wet that she was sure she must have left a damp mark on the chair.

Now in the half-darkness he drew her into a doorway and grasped her buttocks in both hands, pulling her up against his growing erection. He kissed her hard, sucking her lower lip into his mouth and biting it gently, and began with both hands to lift her skirt.

"More interesting than this?" she asked, rubbing against him through the fabric of his trousers.

To her surprise, he laughed, and she pulled back slightly and said, "What?"

"Not more interesting, no. But undoubtedly less expensive in the long term."

Her eyes narrowed. "What do you mean, less expensive?"

He smiled but said nothing, and she said, "Where *did* you go, after those other meetings?"

"To a modest establishment in Knockturn Alley called *The Wayward Wand*."

"A wand shop? You went after every meeting to a wand shop?"

He was grinning broadly now. "Hardly. I was there to have my more . . . non-magical needs tended to."

Suddenly she understood, and her jaw dropped. "This place—it is *aprostibulo*, a place where men go?"

"Men . . . and some women as well."

"And what did you buy there that was so relatively inexpensive?"

"I paid a woman—well, a number of women, actually—to suck my cock."

She was speechless. If they lived together into old age, she would never understand him. He had seemed mortified when she had teased him about the little bottle in his bedside table, but now, admitting casually to frequenting a brothel, he was not just unapologetic but positively smug.

They stood in silence for a moment, and he finally said, sounding a little amused, "What did you think, that I lived like a monk? That 'sucks me off like a pro' was just an expression?" He took her hand and placed it back over his erection, which was harder than ever, and she realized that the conversation was arousing him.

"Of course not. I just . . ."

"Didn't think I would tell you about it, is that it?"

She nodded ruefully.

"Is that what you want? For me to lie to you? To conceal things from you?"

"No," she said immediately. "It is just . . . Severus?"

"Yes?"

"When was the last time you went there?"

"The night we went to see the Dark Lord." He grinned. "You were annoyed with me, and went off to your rooms. It seemed unlikely that you would be willing to personally relieve me of all the tension you had caused, climbing out of the bath like the brazen little tart that you are, all naked and wet and . . . naked."

Not that I would have known at the time that I was causing you any "tension." She reached for his belt buckle. "You like to see me naked?"

He seemed surprised. "Of course. It's . . . naked."

She unzipped his trousers and took his penis in her hand, rubbing her thumb lightly across the underside of the shaft.

"Oh, Christ," he said. "Rawa . . ."

"Yes?" Her fingers teased along the little thread of skin at the base of the head.

"Suck my cock."

"For free?"

"Bitch."

She pulled his penis free of his trousers and began to stroke it lazily. "You have not returned to that place since we were married?"

"No, no, ah, god, please, I want your mouth on my cock."

She dropped to her knees and leaned forward and licked delicately at him. "You will never go back there again?"

"No, never, I swear it, now suck me off before I come all over your face."

She pulled his trousers down around his knees and took his penis in her mouth, sucking hard and working her tongue against it.

"Oh, fuck," he gasped. "Oh, Christ almighty fuck." His hands clutched at her hair.

Her left hand was braced against the ironwork of the steps, and she wet her right forefinger and slipped it between his buttocks and into his anus. He groaned, and she felt his muscles clench around her finger as her mouth moved up and down along his penis.

"Oh, god, Rawa, you filthy whore, oh, fuck, I'm going to come." He pulled away slightly, but she buried him in her mouth, feeling the liquid rush, hot and salty and bitter, against the back of her throat. She sucked him clean, and swallowed, and raised her face to him, her lips tingling and slightly numb.

His knees bent, and he sagged back against the railing. "God almighty," he said. "Come here."

She stood, and he pulled her skirt up around her waist and reached a hand inside her knickers. "You're so wet," he said, slipping two fingers up inside her. "How can you be so wet before I've even touched you?"

"I want you," she answered. "I love your . . . your cock, in my mouth."

"Really? You like to suck me off?" His fingers were exploring insistently inside her, and she groaned and pressed forward against him.

"Ay, *dios*, yes, the taste, the smell, everything. Oh, please, your fingers, that feels so good."

He began circling his thumb over her clitoris and she cried out.

"Oh, Severus, touch me, yes, like that," she said, holding on with both hands to the railing and grinding against his hand.

"Is this good?" he asked, working his fingers in and out of her, and stroking harder with his thumb. "Do you like it when I do this?"

"Oh, yes," she cried, "there, right there, *así mi amor, así, me vengo, ¡me vengo!*" and she came, shuddering, against his hand.

Slowly he withdrew his fingers, making her twitch violently by sliding one gently over her clitoris.

“What do you call that?” he asked.

“What?”

“That.” Another gentle touch, another involuntary jerk.

“*Raka k’akara.*”

“You must be joking.”

“No,” she laughed. “That is what it is called. The place that feels good, the little button.”

“By the time you ever finish asking me to touch that, the moment will have passed. You had better say *lit*, if you want me to respond in a timely manner.”

“English is so much more efficient,” she said, nuzzling against him.

“Come on,” he said, straightening up and smoothing her skirt back over her hips. “A warm bath awaits. And bed. And perhaps another vocabulary lesson. If you’re good.”

Goodbyes

Chapter 25 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

Thanks as always to my wonderful beta and Britpicker, RedSkyAtNight.

She had known all along that it could not last.

After all, it was not her story. This wild joy she had found with Snape was only a footnote to the real story, which was about things much grander than either of them: Good and Evil and the Fate of the World.

She had known this from the first day, when she understood that she was to love him, but not why. She was like an ant, toiling to move the grains of sand that were its portion, neither having nor needing any understanding of the master plan. From the beginning she had known that she was there to play her small part, and that fortune cared little whether she would survive that monumental drama, and even less whether she would be able to snatch some small measure of happiness along the way.

She knew these things, but knowing them brought her neither peace nor satisfaction.

Still, she had hoped, because that is what human beings do. And not without foundation, because there was good news from time to time: Sirius and Dumbledore between them had managed to find and destroy the rest of the Horcruxes, and Nymphadora Tonks had led a brilliant sortie that had finally put paid to the serpent Nagini.

Now only Voldemort remained, and Rawa knew he could not have forgotten her. She had lived her time with Snape like the gift it was, and she had had four months, two weeks, and three days of it when the summons finally came, as she had known it must.

He had sent for both of them. Snape had not seen Voldemort since the wedding, and it was to be expected—given his parting instruction—that news of the marriage would have angered him greatly. She was sure the summons would have come earlier had he not been so preoccupied with the Order’s continued erosion of his resources. But the more ground he lost, the more he would need the infusion of strength she had let him think he could take from her. So come it must, and one afternoon in October, it did.

To her shock, Snape immediately wanted to send her as far away as possible.

“Go home to Ecuador,” he said shortly. “You can go to ground there among your people, and he will never find you.”

“And you?” she asked, stunned.

“I will go and see him and make the best of it.”

“But he will kill you!” she cried.

“Quite possibly. But he is not invincible, you know, nor am I without skills. There is always a chance I could prevail.”

A chance. Her gut twisted.

“We can go together,” she said. “I might be able to Shield us both.”

“No!” he said. “You will not go. Don’t speak of it again.” And she knew that he was right, but not for the reasons he thought.

“Severus,” she pleaded. “I am begging you. Do not do this.”

“What would you have me do? I cannot hide from him. We are bound—” he pulled back his left sleeve “—by this. Anywhere I go, he can find me. Best to confront him on my terms if I possibly can.”

She was weeping uncontrollably now. “He will kill you,” she repeated. “He will kill you, and then how will I go on living?”

“Do you have so little faith in my skill?”

“This is not about faith, or skill. It is about the most powerful evil in the world.”

"Yes," he said, and came and put his arms around her. "But you do see that I have no choice, don't you?"

He leaned down and kissed her softly on the lips. She pulled him to her, kissing him with a fierce, desperate hunger, and then suddenly she knew what she must do.

"Severus," she said, pulling away, "I can help you."

"What will help me is knowing you are far away, where the Dark Lord cannot reach you."

"No, no!" she said, excited. "I can Kiss you!"

He smiled gently. "You can indeed. Let's have a bit more of that before I leave, shall we?"

"No," she said impatiently. "*Chravu'un*, the Kiss! I can send my skills with you! The Shield charms, that you were too old to learn properly, I can lend them to you!"

He looked steadily at her. "Is that safe?"

"Yes," she lied.

"You are lying."

Damn him. "I will make it as safe as I can. And if you do not let me do it, I will come with you, I will follow you, you cannot stop me."

"Do not test me."

"Severus, look at me. I cannot live without you. I cannot. If Voldemort kills you, they will bury me too."

He was quiet for a long time. Then he said, "Tell me what to do."

They were in his bedroom, and she pulled back the covers on the bed. "Leave me here," she said. "Put me in the bed, and cover me with every blanket you have, and make the room warm before you go. I will be very cold."

He swallowed. "I meant, for the Kiss itself."

"I can take care of that. You need only to relax and be willing." She hesitated. "There is one thing. Once it is happening, you will feel a great rush of power and intense pleasure. The more of me pours into you, the more control you will have over the process and the less I will have. Do you understand?"

He nodded.

"There will come a point where you feel my body slacken, when I will no longer be able to stand on my own. When this happens, you must stop. You must break away from me immediately."

"All right."

"Severus, listen. You will not want to stop. It is like sex, you will want more than anything in the world to go on, to finish, to have it all . . . and you must not. You must leave enough of me behind to sustain life in my body until you return."

"I understand. How long will I have, once the thing is done?"

"More than a day is dangerous."

"What if I am . . . what if I don't come back?"

"I will not speak of that," she said firmly. "Now, are you ready?"

"Wait. You haven't told me how to reverse this if . . . when the time comes."

"I do not need to. You will know, because my knowledge will be in you."

"Oh. Right."

"So, ready?"

"Almost. Rawa?"

"What?"

"These past few months . . . I've been happy. I love you."

She was crying again. "I love you, too."

She took his face in her hands. "*Te entrego lo mío*," she said, and kissed him full on the lips.

El condor pasa

Chapter 26 of 26

A witch from the Andean altiplano arrives at Hogwarts to teach DADA. Culture clash, conflict, and smut ensue.

A/N:

This is it: the last chapter. More thanks than I can possibly express to my wonderful beta and Britpicker, RedSkyAtNight, and also to all of you who have followed this story through to the end. Reviews, of course, are always welcome.

It was so cold. The wind came ripping up the mountainside and cut through the thin blanket that covered her as if it were gauze. Her hands and feet, which had at first ached agonizingly, were now mercifully numb.

She could not remember how she had come there, or why. There seemed to be no past at all for her, only this freezing present moment, and the faint flicker of another tiny life within her. She curled herself into a ball around it, to keep the icy wind from penetrating to her core and snuffing it out.

There were snow-covered peaks as far as she could see, and the unrelieved brightness made her head ache. But when she closed her eyes, she was assailed by sudden gruesome visions of blood and violent struggle, of a hideous snakelike face with an expression of triumphant cruelty that sent pain through her like lightning, so she labored to keep them open, and scanned the horizon for movement.

That was all she knew: that she had been abandoned here on this snowy hillside, and that she must hold fast to life—her own and that of the infinitesimal other—for as long as she could.

After a while it seemed that twilight was beginning to fall, although she had no sense of where the sun might be. She was conscious only of a gradual dimming of the brightness around her, and of the deepening of the already bitter cold.

The first trace of movement was so small, and so far away, that she thought she had imagined it in the gathering darkness: just a tiny black speck, barely perceptible, carried along with the wind. As it drew closer, she saw that it was a bird, some great black hook-beaked vulture, making straight for her. She shivered and hugged her knees tighter to her chest, willing herself small and invisible. The darkness grew more and more dense, so that by the time the bird arrived above her, its fearsome wingspan was almost indistinguishable from the blackness of the sky.

It caught sight of her and dropped, plummeting to earth like an arrow, the cruel talons reaching for her and the great curved beak opening to reveal a terrifying red maw.

She squeezed her eyes shut and clenched her arms about her head as she felt the sharp talons bite into her hip and the huge wings settle about her.

“Ábreme, mi vida,” said a soft voice in her ear. *“Mi corazón, mi amor, ábreme.”*

She knew that voice from somewhere, although there was something very peculiar about the way it was speaking to her, the Spanish perfect and unaccented. The sound of it warmed her, and she tentatively unclenched her fists and brought her hands away from her face.

“Sí, mi amor,” said the voice, and she felt the warm breath on her face. *“Bésame. Te devuelvo lo tuyo.”*

Obediently, she offered her lips and felt, not the sharp vicious beak of the bird, but a mouth—warm, firm, and most definitely human. She opened to it, and felt heat flood through her. Heat, and a sensation of excruciating pleasure, almost too intense to be borne. Her hands and feet were abruptly alive again, and in an instant she remembered who she was, and where.

“Rawa,” he said, his voice dark with concern. “Rawa.”

He was with her under the covers, his long arms and legs wrapped about her.

“Severus,” she whispered, and drew in a deep breath.

He smelled like blood, and burned flesh, and sulfur.

“It’s over,” he said. “Over.” Then, after a pause, “You should have told me.”

“I know. I am sorry.”

He placed a warm hand on her belly. “Will it be a girl, do you think? I hope it’s a girl, and looks just like her mother.”

“Better a boy,” she said drowsily. “In case it gets your nose.”

They slept.

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