

Argilah and Smoke Rings

by astopperindeath

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Chapter 1

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Disclaimer: I own nothing from the HP universe, Scholastic, Warner Brothers, or JK's brain. I'm not making any money from this writing venture.

Severus storms into his quarters after a long day of teaching. Longbottom's cauldron-count is up to six melted and five exploded cauldrons for the year, and he's only halfway through the OWL curricula. Severus slams the door shut; if anyone is in the hall, he hopes the racket will deter him or her from bothering him tonight.

He reaches down and unties the laces of his boots before slowly pulling his boots off one-by-one. He slides off his socks and stuffs them in the boots, knowing the house-elves will care for them before the night is over.

He pads across his sitting room, his newly-liberated toes gripping the carpet as he walks. He hates wearing shoes within his quarters. After a day's worth of standing around in dragon-hide boots, praying Longbottom's latest disaster won't eat a hole through the expensive leather, he is more than happy to pad around his rooms barefoot. He sinks into his favorite, overstuffed armchair and stretches his legs. He sighs, breathing deeply as he shuts his eyes and enjoying his first quiet moments in twelve hours.

Let's see, how many points have I deducted today... fifty-nine. Slow day, old chap. Thirty from Gryffindor, twenty from Hufflepuff, and nine from Ravenclaw. Thought after today's cauldron-melting incident, Gryffindor should be down at least one-hundred more...

"One-hundred points from Gryffindor," he grumbles, to no one in particular, while picturing the look of devastation on Granger's face when she realizes her know-it-all ways will not be enough to save Gryffindor this year.

He loves Thursday nights. Thursday is the only day of the week he doesn't have rounds, and is the only night of the week he can truly relax. He rises and moves to the corner of his sitting room and lifts his argilah from the floor, reverently. While most of the western world calls this pipe a hookah, he's always preferred the Turkish name "argilah," mostly for the way the "r" rolls off his tongue. He carries the intricate water pipe carefully into his kitchen and places it on the counter.

He opens a cabinet and ponders the containers of shisha he finds there. *Double-apple tonight? Or grape?* Surprising even himself, he pulls down a container of a new flavor, "7 Spices," which was suggested to him by the clerk in the Middle Eastern store just outside of Diagon Alley. He opens the container, inhaling the sweet aromas of tobacco, molasses, and spices, the same combination of spices that herald the fall and winter holidays. For a moment, he recalls the Christmas dinners of his childhood, before his parents began fighting over money and magic.

Removing the length of the pipe from the base, he conjures some ice and pours it into the bottom of the glass base. With a wandless *Aguamenti*, he nearly fills the glass base—just full enough for the tip of the pipe to barely submerge into the cooled water. Adding ice is always the step people forget—without ice, the smoke is not cooled properly and becomes harsh on the throat.

Replacing the pipe into the base, he removes the bowl from the top and places it on his counter. Lightly packing the bowl with the new flavor, he carefully covers the bowl with a wire screen. He opens a drawer, removes two charcoal briquettes, and carries both the briquettes and the argilah back into his sitting room.

His argilah is one of the few pleasures he allows himself during the school week. He places it next to his armchair and sinks back into the comfort of the overstuffed upholstery. Placing one of the briquettes onto the screen-covered bowl, he snaps, and with a non-verbal *Incendio* lights the coal.

He raises the mouthpiece to his lips and sucks quickly several times, his stern lips pursed around the head of the pipe. Mercifully, the tobacco lights quickly. He leans back into his chair and closes his eyes, periodically taking deep drags off the pipe.

This "7 Spices" was a wonderful choice. It's as subtly balanced as a perfectly crafted potion—layers of nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon, with just a hint of allspice. The other spices are Middle Eastern in origin, but he doesn't mind that he cannot identify them.

His mind wanders, pondering the lessons he has to prepare for next week and the marking he must complete before classes the next day. But as much as he is happy with being alone and being able to hear himself think for the first time all day, he is more happy that he doesn't *have* to think. He inhales deeply from the pipe and begins blowing smoke rings, pursing his lips in a tight "O" and tonguing the smoke as it escapes his lips. He opens his eyes and watches the candlelight as it filters through the waves of smoke-rings filling the room.

The water in the base of the pipe gurgles and churns with every hit, the breaking the silence in the room. The logs in his fireplace crackle and spurt, and he smiles. He has the next eight hours to himself before he has to enter the Great Hall for breakfast.

He stretches out his toes and curls them into the long fibers of the carpet. Closing his eyes once more, he slowly nods off in front of the warm fire, the tip of the pipe still touching his lips.

Prompt taken from ApollinaV: Severus relaxes with a hookah. Is he in the Middle East, or just his quarters? Sharing with anyone? And what's he inhaling... fruited tobacco or something else? What does a relaxed Severus Snape ponder? Bonus Squee points for having him barefoot.

And just FYI, this is the type of hookah/argilah I had in mind: <http://saharasmoke.com/store/catalog/21-Gypsy-Hookah-p-17257.html>. Hope that helps anyone who may not be as familiar with the pipe as I am. I lived in Jordan for a while and came home with an argilah, which we use pretty regularly.