

The Belated Birthday

by phoenix

What happens when the Hogwarts staff did not forget Severus Snape's birthday after all? Set during his first year at Hogwarts.

One-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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There were few things that Severus Snape hated more than staff meetings. Sirius Black and James Potter had been two, but one was in prison and the other was dead so neither could bother him anymore. Staff meetings were actually one activity he hated more than teaching dunderheaded students. There were the motivated and knowledgeable students that he enjoyed teaching... and then there were the *others*.

He knew why a rudimentary knowledge of Potions was important, but he seemed unable to instill that importance in some of his students. That was why he had set his standards so high for NEWT students. Some would say that Exceeds Expectations was more than sufficient for a NEWT student, but he only wanted to teach the very best, so he only took students scoring an Outstanding.

That morning at breakfast Dumbledore had announced that there would be a staff meeting after the last class of the day. Severus had more important things to do, such as grading the holiday term papers he had assigned. And since most of the students had placed their time with family as a higher priority than their schoolwork, it was taking longer than he had anticipated.

After his last class of the day hurried out of the dungeon, he sighed, straightened up his desk and headed to the staff room to see what words of 'wisdom' Dumbledore had to impart on them today.

He opened the door and saw that it was pitch black, which struck him as odd. He was never the first one to the staff meeting. He made a point of being the last one so that he did not have to wait around for the meeting to start. For a moment he thought about returning to his office to grade papers and assume the message the meeting had been cancelled had never reached him, but he reconsidered.

"*Lumos!*" he called out as he flicked his wand toward the lamps.

The lights sprang on and a chorus of "Surprise!" came from the other members of the staff. The room was garishly decorated with silver and green streamers and a large banner proclaimed 'Happy Birthday Severus' over a table laden with a large serpentine birthday cake.

Severus could feel the blood drain from his face and he scowled. Surprises, especially surprise birthday parties, were something he hated more than staff meetings. Of course, he had never had a birthday party, but he did not want one. Celebrating the anniversary of one's birth was an idiotic tradition. "You're a little late," he replied sardonically.

Dumbledore placed his arm around Severus's shoulder. "Severus, I knew that you would never come to a staff meeting on your actual birthday, so we decided to hold the celebration a day late."

Severus could only scowl. After celebrating Minerva's birthday shortly after his arrival on staff, he had resolved that he would avoid all other such gatherings. Parties were a tremendous waste of time. He thought of turning and leaving, but Dumbledore had a strong grip on his shoulders and shoved a glass into his hand.

Dumbledore whispered to him, "It would be very poor form for the guest of honor to leave."

From Dumbledore's tone of voice, Severus realized that he had no choice other than to stay. It was a reminder that Dumbledore had done a great favor for him and he owed the old man staying for his first ever birthday party.

He was deepening his scowl when Dumbledore looked into his eyes. "Enjoy the day, my boy."

Realizing that was not a request, he took a long draught of his punch and resigned himself to a miserable evening of trying not to look like he was miserable.

Thankfully no one mentioned his age. He knew that his being hired as a professor had been controversial not only because of his Death Eater past, but also because of his age.

As his colleagues congratulated him on the anniversary of his birth, he began to realize how much of a miracle it was that he was not only still alive, but not in prison. Youth had not protected many from imprisonment, and it would not have protected him. He was here because Albus Dumbledore had seen him for who he was and that he was not someone who had embraced the Death Eater culture, but had been a victim of his upbringing and had been swayed by the promises of a better future. Albus alone had seen his true heart and had accepted him for who he was.

Yes, being alive was something to be celebrated.

With this new mindset, and a fair bit of punch, he loosened up a little. While he would not go so far as to say he was enjoying his surprise party, he was at least no longer miserable.

After an hour of mingling, with the Wizarding Wireless playing happy tunes in the background, Albus declared that it was time for cake and presents.

Presents? Severus was truly shocked that anyone would think enough of him to buy presents especially since he had done his best to distance himself from the other members of the staff. Part of the distancing was because it had felt so odd to be colleagues to people who had so recently been his professors, but also because he felt that he was not deserving of their friendship. Actually, he had been afraid they would shun him for having supported Voldemort. Not wanting to risk rejection, he had done his best to isolate himself from everyone.

He moved over to the table where the garish serpent cake was and reflected that it was perhaps not as garish as he had first thought it to be. It was an excellent representation of the snake on the Slytherin crest, down to the iridescent scales. There were a number of candles on it, but he did not bother counting them.

After suffering through a hideous rendition of 'Happy Birthday', he blew out the candles. When a few of them popped back alight, he forced himself not to use his wand to ensure they were out as he listened to the chuckles of the others. He had no doubt that Dumbledore had been responsible for the trick candles. Instead he licked his fingers before blowing out the handful of trick candles one at a time.

"Ah, I should have known that you would figure out how to douse those," Dumbledore replied sadly. "Still, the look on your face when they relit was quite good."

"Indeed," he replied dryly.

"Now, let's enjoy the cake and then we can do gifts." Albus then pointed his arm towards Severus. "If you will do the honors, Severus."

He picked up the knife and served cake to the others before enjoying his own slice. Presents. He both dreaded and anticipated this moment. He had no idea what his colleagues would have got him for his birthday since they knew very little about him. But at the same time, he had not received a birthday present since his mother's passing five years ago.

Interestingly, everyone but Albus got him a book. Some were ones he had a habit of borrowing for extended periods from the library, and he sensed that Madam Pince had had something to do with those being selected. Others were ones that he had had a passing interest in, but had not yet purchased. He arched his eyebrows at Albus's gift, a very fine bottle of Scotch.

Albus shrugged. "I thought that you could use something to drink while reading all those books. Of course, I will require you to share a little of it with me," he said with a twinkle in his eye.

"Of course," he replied and then turned back to everyone else. They were eyeing him anticipation, obviously expecting some sort of speech from him. "I would like to thank you all. This evening has turned out far better than I had ever anticipated." He was loathe to admit it, but he knew that doing so would endear himself to his coworkers. "I daresay I even had a good time this evening. Next year, I will not avoid my birthday, nor the birthdays of others." He did not know what else to say.

Thankfully Albus took care of the awkward silence. "Well done, Severus. Now, I am sure that all of us have work we need to see to this evening."

Severus stacked his books for one of the house-elves to take to his office later, but he carried the Scotch out of the staff room. He had joined the Hogwarts staff out of desperation and to be under Albus's protection. He had never imagined that he would actually come to enjoy being here, but he realized that his fellow professors were ready to accept him and help him make Hogwarts his home. He now had no regrets about his decision to turn to Dumbledore.