

Odd, Very Odd

by sunny33

Severus receives an interesting present for his birthday.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: The characters and settings belong to JKR. Except for the duck, some of the dialogue, and the basic plot, which all belong to Gaelyn Gordon. She wrote the wonderful children's book, *Duckat*, upon which this little story is based.

On Monday morning, Severus Snape heard a noise at his door. Upon opening the door, he discovered a small duck outside, looking up at him expectantly.

"What do you want, duck?" asked Severus, not a little disgruntled at having his morning coffee interrupted.

"Miaow," said the duck.

"Odd," said Severus. "Very odd."

He closed the door and shook his head. Why a duck would appear at his door was a mystery. Still, it was not his problem. The duck would just have to find its own way back outside to the lake.

Half an hour later, Severus nearly tripped over an unperturbed duck as he left his quarters for breakfast.

"Dammit, duck. Why are you still here?"

The duck looked up and said, "Miaow!"

"Bloody stupid duck. Well, come on then. I suppose I'll have to return you to the lake myself. So much for breakfast," he grumbled as he picked up the duck.

It was a beautiful summer morning, even better as there were no students in sight. Severus felt a little silly carrying a duck around, but no-one bore witness to his unwanted task.

"Here, duck. Off you go," Severus told the duck as he set it down at the water's edge.

"Yeowwww!" it yelled, scurrying straight back out of the water.

"I've never been scratched by a duck before," said Severus to no-one in particular. He turned on his heel to head for the castle and soon became aware he had a shadow. The duck was following him. Changing direction, he returned to his quarters and sighed as the duck trailed behind.

"Come on then, duck. You can't mope around out in the corridor all day. Just until I work out what to do with you, mind." He led the duck into his rooms and summoned his

personal house-elf.

"Master called?" asked Totty.

"Some breakfast please, Totty. Bacon and eggs for me, and a little dry bread for my guest."

"Immediately, master." With a crack, the bemused creature disappeared, returning within moments with a tray.

Severus tucked into his late breakfast with gusto, only realising after he had finished that the bread had remained untouched.

"Miaow," said the duck.

"Oh, for Merlin's sake." Severus filled a small bowl with milk, and, sure enough, the duck drank the lot. "Crazy bloody duck!" He shook his head as he left to teach his first class of the day, leaving the duck to amuse itself.

"Excuse me, Professor Snape?" The first-year Hufflepuff cringed as his Potions professor turned his attention to the door.

"Yes, Smedley, what is it?"

"I have a letter for you. It was delivered to Professor Sprout by mistake." A shaking hand held out the missive in question.

Severus took the letter and dismissed the boy without breaking his stride. Tucking the letter into his robes, he continued berating the fourth years' appalling attempts at brewing.

At lunch, he had a strange feeling niggling at the back of his brain. What had he forgotten? And why was Granger smirking at him so? Classes that afternoon proceeded as usual: two detentions, fifty points off Gryffindor, and one melted cauldron. And he had thought Longbottom was bad. By four o'clock, Severus was anticipating a quiet hour in his rooms before dinner. Time for a quick shower, a hard-earned Firewhiskey, and forty minutes of relaxing in his favourite armchair.

"Miaow." The duck greeted him as he opened the door.

"Oh. I forgot about you. I suppose you've left deposits all over my living room, duck?" Severus resigned himself to a wash, a gulp of Firewhiskey, and an hour cleaning up duck poo. The duck followed him about the room as he searched for evidence of its indiscretions, but other than a discrete pile of poo on an old newspaper in the corner, the room was clean. "Well, you do appear to be a polite duck, if nothing else," Severus declared as he went through to the bathroom.

"Miaow," replied the duck.

When Severus returned to the living room, the duck presented him with five freshly caught mice.

"Odd," said Severus. "Very odd." When the duck wasn't looking, Severus hid the mice in his private lab. He wasn't trying to spare its feelings. Really.

One Firewhiskey later, Severus kicked off his shoes and leaned back in his armchair. Just as he had closed his eyes for a brief nap, he felt the duck pounce out from under the sofa and land on his toes.

"Well!" said Severus, too tired to be angry. "You are a very different sort of duck." A rustle from his pocket reminded him of something else he had forgotten. Opening the letter, his eyes widened, and he spilled a little from his glass as he read the contents, written in a strangely familiar script.

Dear Severus

It took me a long time to find something suitable for your birthday. I finally realised you did not have a familiar, but a cat or owl seemed too... ordinary. I hope the duck is behaving. It really is an extraordinary creature.

Just like you.

Yours

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The signature was unreadable, smudged badly by the spilled Firewhiskey.

"A duck? Someone sent me a bloody duck? Are they mad? And you," he addressed the duck, who was curled up on the mat, purring a little, "are odd. Very odd."

The duck went to sleep. Severus stared at it for long moments, then realisation hit. "That duck," said the Potions master, "thinks it is a cat." He searched through his personal library to find his book on *Behavioural Aberrations in Creatures Exposed to Magic* and settled down to read, his dinner forgotten.

What to do for a duck that thinks it is a cat. There must be something in here. Ah... there it is. What? That's bloody ridiculous. It'll never work. Oh, well. Might as well try.

When the duck woke up, there were pictures all around it. Pictures of ducks labelled DUCK, and pictures of cats labelled CAT. Severus watched as the duck, unimpressed, used its beak to switch the labels over.

"Well!" said Severus. "What do I have to do to show you that you're a duck?"

The duck shrugged. "Miaow," it said.

Severus took the duck outside again. "Cats can climb trees," he said.

The duck climbed the tree.

"Odd," said Severus. "Very odd."

"Cats wash behind their ears," said Severus.

The duck washed behind its ears.

"Odd," said Severus. "Very odd."

Suddenly, a large orange cat with a squashed nose leaped out of a nearby window. It nearly caught the duck, but it flew up to the top of a nearby tree.

"You couldn't do that if you were a cat." Severus smirked. He shooped the cat back through the window and used his wand to lock it. "You can come down now," Severus told the duck.

"Miaow," said the duck.

"Cats can't fly down from trees," said Severus, "and I'm not helping you. If you are a cat, you'll just have to stay up there."

The duck flew down. It looked up at Severus. "Quack," it said.

"You were only joking, weren't you?" said Severus, smiling despite himself.

"Quack," said the duck, and it wandered off for a paddle in the lake to cool off.

On Tuesday morning, Severus opened his door. There was a cat waiting in the corridor.

"Hello," said Severus.

"Quack," said the cat.

"Odd," said the duck. "Very odd."

A/N: When ladyinthecloak provided the Saturday Night Drabble prompt – Severus receives, anonymously, a familiar for his birthday – one of my children's favourite books, *Duckat*, immediately sprang to mind. Thanks to ladyinthecloak for the beta. It is a little long for a drabble, but it's the thought that counts!

Of course, the anonymous donor is Professor Granger, who also happens to have a duck as her Animagus form.