

Back Then

by sunny33

Back then, they were happy, and Sevvie had cows.

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Back in the halcyon days when Eileen and Tobias were desperately in love; back before he discovered she was a witch and tried to drown his fear of the unknown in the bottle; back when Sevvie was a black-haired, grinning baby, and his nose was simply unique; back then, they were happy.

Tobias arrived home the first anniversary of his beloved son's birth with a surprise. He had scrimped and saved for weeks to buy the softest, fluffiest toy he could find. It was a cow. A black-and-white, squishy cow, which mooed when its tummy was poked.

Sevvie was in love at first sight. Precocious child that he was, he reached out with his pudgy fingers and cried, "Me! Me!"

Eileen's tender smile at her husband's thoughtfulness enveloped both her boys in warmth and love. Relinquishing the toy to the excited baby, Tobias wrapped his arm around his woman and chuckled as Sevvie buried his face into the cow's softness.

"Zen!" he declared, holding the toy aloft. "Zen!"

"Then Zen it shall be," agreed his parents as they tucked him in for the night.

Every birthday and Christmas, Sevvie received another cow. He welcomed them all to his herd with glee, but Zen was the only one to share his bed. Zen was special.

When the bubble of joy encompassing the family collapsed after Tobias discovered his wife's secret – after all, Sevvie summoning Zen from across the room required an explanation – the herd became the child's comfort and security. He never let Zen out of his sight, hiding away in the bedroom when the yelling became too loud and singing little made-up cow songs to his black-and-white friends.

Eventually, Tobias turned his rage onto the greatest disappointment in his life – his aberration of a son. Sevvie was wise enough at six to hide his cows and leave them hidden for fear they would be confiscated in a fit of rage.

Thirty years later, Professor Severus Snape had a secret, carefully shielded even from Dumbledore himself. Deep in the dungeons, hidden in a chest in his bedroom, a small herd of well-worn stuffed cows were wrapped in a soft blanket, with Zen, the most beloved of all, tucked away in their midst.

The house-elves who cleaned his quarters smiled to themselves as they dusted and swept. Master Potions Professor really was not as scary as everyone thought although they didn't really understand the odd little songs he would croon to his cows late at night.

A/N: Saturday Night Drabble Prompt from janus: This one is a special birthday request for my friend onlynanda. She would like bitty Severus and cows. Thanks to kittylefish

for the beta.

This story is dedicated to blue_paris's zenbaby.