

Father's Day

by Pyttan

Tobias Snape gets an unexpected visitor.

Father's Day

Chapter 1 of 1

Tobias Snape gets an unexpected visitor.

Disclaimer: All recognisable Harry Potter characters, settings, situations etc. are the property of J.K. Rowling. No money is being made from this work, and no copyright infringement is intended.

Many thanks to my lovely beta, Diabólica, who, with her endless patience and kindness, helped me with this story.

Father's Day

He unlocked the door and stepped into to the dark hallway. The air was stale, as if the house had been standing empty for a long time. It hadn't. He had only been gone for a few hours. The house always smelt of stale air and dust. Today, he didn't mind. It was a good day.

He didn't turn on the lamp. He knew what he would see: a narrow hallway, with fading wallpaper peeling from the walls. The dirty carpet on the floor, littered with envelopes no one had bothered to pick up, open and read.

He made his way through the hallway, ignoring the post. He turned on the lights as he stepped into the living room. When the light came on, he flinched in surprise and then turned rigid.

Sitting in Tobias's armchair was his son. He hadn't seen him for ... how long? Not since the boy had left school. Two years? Three?

For a fraction of a second, he had thought it was his wife sitting there. If it hadn't been for the nose, the boy would have been the spitting image of her. His son really was ugly.

Severus's hands were curled around the wooden ends of the armrests. His legs were placed apart with his feet firmly on the floor. He was dressed in a long black robe and wearing heavy boots. He didn't look anything like a normal person. He never had.

Severus was watching him with expressionless eyes, his long hair surrounding his sallow face. The hair was so long now, it almost reached his waist.

That hair. Tobias hated that hair. He had even shaved the boy's head once. It had grown back overnight. He had caned him for it.

"What are you doing here?" Tobias said.

"What am I doing here? I thought it obvious. It's Father's Day, after all." The boy's voice had deepened since the last time he saw him.

"Not likely. What do you want? Money?" he said. Breaking eye contact, Tobias went to the telly and turned it on. The picture was distorted and kept rolling, making it impossible to see the football match he'd been wanting to watch.

"I thought you knew better," Severus said behind him, voice mocking. "If you want to watch a football match ... get a ticket. At least as long as I am in residence ... or Mother for that matter."

Tobias stiffened at the mention of his wife. It was just a few hours since it happened, and no one at the Mill Town hospital had suspected anything. He threw the boy a quick glance over his shoulder. He couldn't know.

"I would like to say hello to her, Father. You don't mind me doing that, do you?"

It was the boy's eyes that had changed the most, Tobias realised. He couldn't describe them. The eyes were ... flat maybe, or empty. Like the real person was hiding, not showing himself. The boy hadn't looked like that when he was little. It had been so easy to read him.

"She isn't here. She's in the hospital," Tobias answered, turning his head back to the telly again.

He heard Severus move behind him, probably rising from the armchair.

"Hospital." Severus's voice was calm and low. "What happened?"

"She fell down the stairs," he answered and turned to face his son. Severus had moved to stand behind him, and that frightened him. Now the boy had his wand out too. A long black wand. Unadorned. Nothing more than a straight stick. His wife's wand had been dark too, but it had had a handle and pretty carvings. When he broke it, it was the carvings that had splintered.

"The stairs? Again? Tell me, Father, how many times is it now? Fifteen, sixteen? "

The boy had grown very tall. He wasn't a short man himself, but the boy now towered over him by several inches.

"... and all those burns from the stove and the flatiron, not to mention all the times she scalded herself." The mocking note in Severus's voice was more prominent now.

Severus had started to walk around him now, with his head slightly tipped forward, watching him. He reminded Tobias of a vulture circling a carcass.

Fear started to clog Tobias's throat.

"How bad is it?" said Severus.

This was not the boy he remembered. Not this calm, well-spoken man with the spare movements. This was nothing like he remembered. This was not how it should be. He cleared his throat.

"Bad. She's in a coma," he said, making an effort to sound plaintive, "but I made sure to take her to hospital."

His son gave him a cold look and stopped walking.

"Why didn't you bring her to St Mungo's?"

Because if he had, there was a chance she would have lived. He didn't want that. This way she was almost sure to die.

"It's hard for a Muggle to do that, son," he said.

"Don't call me son. And no, it isn't difficult at all. You should know."

Tobias hadn't realised that he was retreating until he backed into the telly.

"I don't know what you mean. I -- "

"You had to bring me in often enough when I was little." Severus's voice sounded thick with tension, and Tobias saw that he held the wand so hard his hand was shaking.

"How many times did you bring me there so they could mend my broken bones? I can't remember. Can you?" Severus said and cocked his head.

Tobias's heart was beating hard against his breastbone. Heavy, sluggish thuds.

"Who held me when I cried from pain? Who held me when the effect of the Skele-Gro kicked in, Father?"

He tried to answer, but he couldn't. The answer came out as a faint hiss of air.

"Mother held me while I cried. Mother held me while I was in pain. Always Mother."

Severus was roaring at him now, and then he fell quiet and straightened his neck looking at Tobias.

Severus's eyes were burning now, and that frightened Tobias more than anything he had ever seen before in his life. They burnt with emotion, as they had back when he was little. Back then, they had burnt with longing, with pain and sometimes with fear. Now they burnt with rage.

He realised his teeth were clattering, his knees almost folding underneath him.

Eileen had been proud of the boy, he remembered. Severus had won awards for his magic at school. She had even said something about him doing research. New spells, she had said.

He watched with horror as Severus lifted his wand and – without uttering a word – pointed it at him, aiming for his heart.