

Muggle Music

by janus

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Language warning.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Severus had a secret. Sometimes, after their missions, he went out into the night and sought out the violent punk gigs in the warehouses down by the river. He kept clothes at his friend's small but luxurious flat in London, Apparating and Disapparating from there. But when he was dressed in his Muggle clothes - his Muggle costume - he left by the front door and slipped down the fashionable street in the shadows until he reached the Muggle subway. It was during the journey that he let himself change. His posture altered from the careful erectness he had cultivated, slumping to a derisive slouch. His blank face transformed into a guarded sneer as he became aware of the humanity about him.

His clothes were like an actor's, helping him to step mentally into his role. His bare arms were chilled, naked in the T-shirt with the sleeves ripped off and the thin material uncomfortable with spray paint. His legs felt confined in the heavy jeans and he wondered that Muggles wore such stiff material by choice, and not even as a coat. His boots were stiff as well, laced around his calves, the soles rigid. He had a bandana wrapped around his left arm, concealing his Dark Mark, his pride, his responsibility, his commitment. This concealment too seemed confining and awkward.

This role was his heritage. It was his father's legacy. He tried to shift into it when his mother's legacy felt too keening to bear. He turned from reason and law, from tradition and commandment and from caution and plan. He kicked them all in the teeth; smashing control and logic; thawing the cold of reasoned, measured, hideous actions with feeling and anger, even rage of helplessness. If he had been his father's son alone, he would have been what he now feigned.

That was the trick of Occlumency - not to feign but to embrace. He embraced the small impulses within him that led him to fight, to pound with the music that was sweeping through the unemployed, angry, useless young men who had been his primary school companions before he became... something better. It was cathartic. It was Dionysian. For its very chaos it was pagan and darker than the missions they ran as Death Eaters.

But there was something more than that. The new bands - the Clash and Crass - were not simply noise, hate, violence or despair, but hope. They were organising the scattered, the lost and disenfranchised. They were offering action, cause, a new world. That was familiar to Severus. As a Death Eater he also knew the siren call of a new world, a new life, fighting, dark deeds and a brotherhood of violence for peace. The demands of courage were familiar: discipline and initiative, standing for what one believed and what one could clearly see. Even the more commercial Ramones and the Sex Pistols echoed principles.

It was confused in his mind. Somehow he went to these events, somehow he was drawn. He went for absolution and to wallow in his Muggle heritage, to cleanse himself of murder and torture. Somehow, he saw a mirror to his Death Eater missions where he should have seen the opposite. And yet, ideas aside, it somehow was truly cleansing to just... lose himself in the machine-gun words, in the moving mass of bodies, jumping and thudding hard and tight yet somehow unrestrained.

It was counterpoint to the studied movements and manners and the careful refined accent that he spent his days struggling to master smoothly. There was something... He

could feel in every usual action, in every movement and expression, a barrier of restraint that one did not cross. Yet here it was shattered. Dancing went beyond rage. Dancing! It was not dancing but an attempt to pound out one's heart in a vicious tattoo of one's feet and, yes, even one's fists, and of one's voice. There were no limits of propriety, just those of physical reality: how fast one *could* twist one's tongue and lips to form staccato words; how much volume and power one's throat *could* generate; how much strength one *could* summon to propel one's fists; how much endurance and control of muscle and tendon one *really could* summon to punish the floor for one's pain. There was some physical immediate release, some sense of power in oneself that was immensely satisfying. Severus gave himself to it as often as it allowed. It let him feel himself, his own being, like nothing else that existed.

When he returned to Evan's flat one night, exultant after his lone adventure, with wind in his face and blood on his knuckles, with his eyes changed with all he had taken and all he had released, Evan told him, "Take me with you. Next time."

Severus was startled, but then... punk dovetailed nicely with Evan's personality, with the parts he rarely showed. He was in many ways less cautious than Severus, so well-versed in pure-blood expectations that he could express his internal self subtly and with seamless aplomb. This was not *his* legacy, but Evan recognised the excitement, the release and the experience of power. It was the prevailing life that ran beneath the Wizarding world. He was intrigued, but he was reckless too, and wanted to throw himself into it. His eyes shone and snapped at Severus when they spoke of various things; his grin was wide and infectious.

They spent time walking together along the streets of Muggle shops. Evan had explored aimlessly by himself, but now he had purpose and a guide. Severus first bought him plimsoles and trousers, a T-shirt, a hooded jumper. Then they could shop. Severus was grateful for the company, for sharing something he had always held tight to his own chest. Someone was interested in *his* activities. It was novel for him. He was the one who now supplied the instruction and coaching of *his* culture.

Evan wanted a leather jacket, but Severus counselled against it. There were punk points. A leather jacket.... You couldn't just buy one. You had to steal one or you had to fight for one. You had to be given one, or you had to inherit one. There were punk points for lying, but not for lying to a fellow punk for no reason. That would take away your points. Certainly lying was not acceptable to bolster posing. One couldn't pose. One had to *earn* everything. When they got T-shirts, Severus explained the bands, letting Evan choose. "You have to *choose*," he said, "and you have to make your shirts *yours*, too. Unique."

Evan raised his hands in protest. "*Everything* is posing. I'm not an unemployed, angry young Muggle. I'm a pure-blood wizard who can have whatever I wish."

Severus shrugged. "We have to make it real. Anyway, you can't have *anything*, because we still have to wear Muggle clothes to walk around most of London." He took a deep breath. Then he let his accent slip and his lip curl. His hands clenched. They were thin and tight and hard. "Wanna fight? No faces, no groins, no pulling punches."

Evan's eyes went round, but he still grinned. He started to answer, but Severus slugged him in the breastbone before Evan could get the word out. "Why you..." Then he came back at Severus, summoning the right words with a drawn out battle cry. "Fuck *yooooou!*"

Younger and lighter, still underfed and overworked, Severus was driven back with Evan's rush and slammed into the window of the shop behind him. Plexiglass did not shatter, and Severus kicked with his foot hard enough to bruise his friend's shin. He also took Evan's fist to his nose. "No *faces!*" Pinned now, he drove his forehead into Evan's own nose in retaliation.

Blood was running down their shirts, staining their new purchases. A girl was screaming for the police, and a burly man rushed out of a nearby shop. "Now see here, you. Get away. Get out! Stop disturbing decent citizens. Pathetic filth." He grabbed them both by arms and shoulders and forced them apart. He was enormous and red-faced.

Evan started to laugh. "Muggle garbage. You dare to touch me?!"

Severus started to laugh too at the useless man full of impotent offence.

He dropped them in outrage. "Just making a scene, you are."

They draped themselves over a postbox, slapping it in helpless laughter. "Chickee, the cops!" Then they walked back to an alley where they could Apparate, leaning on one another.

Back at home they mended one another's noses. "Now, we don't want to Scourgify or Turgeo our clothes. We need to do this the Muggle way, so it doesn't actually work. This is bleach. It won't quite remove the blood, but it will weaken the cloth... And we need to tear the sleeves off," Severus instructed. "Now these clothes are ours, see?"

He played Evan the music and showed him the lyrics. "The words matter. At least, you can't *hear* them, but you need to know what the band's ideas are. Which do you like best? My fave is The Clash."

Evan chose The Skids. Severus got out the spray cans he had brought. And they put the jeans beneath them to catch spare paint. They both put Anarchy symbols on the backs - circles 'A's with the branches sticking out. On the front of his Severus put Crass' amalgam symbol. On his, Evan just wrote 'Skids' in the band logo. It amused him as an accusation.

They had purchased Doc Martens. Evan had protested this time. "They're *more* expensive than that jacket I wanted."

"Yes, but it's ok to buy boots. It just is. Everyone has to buy boots. It's an initiation too - scrabbling enough money together for a symbol."

Severus showed his friend the things others did with their hair. Airplane glue, shaving the sides to stubble, even Muggle bar soap to hold it up. He looked at Evan, frankly but almost slyly, up past his brows. "You know... even for this world - for the punk world - with what we do for the Dark Lord... we win at punk points. No one, no *one* in this life has experienced a fraction of what we have or has done what we have to bring down the establishment. *No one. We win.*"

Evan just looked back with a slow wink.

Finally he was ready for a gig, Severus thought. He should have realised. Languid Evan, casually handsome with his hair grown long, whose poise was perfect, who worked as hard as he should and no harder, who offered what he had and no more, was probably more ready than he was.

Severus himself was circumspect, keeping the secret even from his friends and certainly his patrons. These were violent gigs, held down by the docks, in dark warehouses lined in splintering plywood and coated in spray paint which bloomed to fill each space with foul-smelling airborne Muggle poison. Severus hung back. He did not invite the fights and did not incite anything. He danced, pogoing hard and viciously with elbow thrusts, rough shoves, tight kicks and punches, but... before and after he kept himself carefully and insularly. He never touched his hair, simply letting it swing greasy and long into his face. It was enough. It had been several concerts until he had been brave enough to crowd-surf, and only once had he tried a stage-dive.... He had been proud of that moment.

When he had appeared in Evan's sitting room, however, he was greeted by his friend in a full Mohawk with Muggle safety pins through his ears. As soon as they were in the door at the concert, Evan headed for the wildest area, ingratiating himself ably. Severus cautiously followed. He had explained to his friend that there would be booze and drugs and some would be sniffing glue. He had explained that there would be knives and possibly guns - stupid Muggle devices that were absolutely illegal. Severus reassured himself that Evan would be all right and that tonight's activities were simple posturing, from whatever talk could be heard above the band. Eventually he turned to the dance-floor, leaving his friend. Evan was happy, Severus could tell, even thrilled, with a bright gleam in his eyes and gestures that were as broad and easy here as they were among their friends. Evan was a quick and avid study.

Severus was banging his head up and down, bouncing roughly on his heels, cushioned by the patented Doc Marten soles, when there was a punch to his back of a more insistent quality than the others. He turned to snarl, but it was Evan. His friend was dripping blood again and had a leather jacket wrapped around his arm. His face was white but still grinning. "I think we should go," Evan tried to yell over the music.

Severus nodded and grabbed his friend's free arm, manoeuvring them both through the pogoing crowd. As they passed the area before the entrance, a young man waved at Evan and shouted something unintelligible. The doorman gestured to Severus, "Get your friend there home. He's going to need some medical attention for that arm." Evan got a gaze of admiration.

Severus Apparated them home from the first dark corner he found.

They arrived with a stagger, clinging to one another in their bloody clothes, grimy from the show. Evan had a leather jacket twisted inexpertly about his arm, and his hair that had been standing straight up was... bent now. Both of them were in black boots, ripped jeans and sprayed torn T-shirts advertising Muggle bands.

Regulus Black was sitting on the couch. He was everyone's favourite, the epitome of a Death Eater. He was kind and generous, intelligent and wise, willing for anything, able and hard-working. His loyalty was unquestionable, his provenance absolutely perfect and pure. Everyone loved Regulus. One could not even be jealous. At the same time, this was not a scene for his young eyes. Though he could be relied upon to keep a secret, he was still at school and was the youngest and most innocent, if any of them had any innocence left.

Severus opened his mouth, feeling guilty, dismayed. Oh no. Not Regulus, of all people.

But he had a key, and he sat placidly on Evan's couch in his robes. He had made a fire and tea, and his Slytherin scarf was folded exactly over the back of a chair. He was reading one of Evan's books, waiting congenially for them, not even impatient.

"I... We..." Severus tried to begin. There was Evan's arm to heal.

As his friend peeled off the hard-won jacket, Regulus rose. "I will get the first aid potions." Severus always left them for just such emergencies.

They tended the arm, and Regulus got them tea and cut them slabs of the cake he had brought. "I know what you are," he said conversationally. "You are punks."

The word sounded strange coming from Regulus.

"My brother liked Muggle music, too," he mused. "He liked the Beatles. I did, too. It was one of the few things on which we ever agreed."

It was all right then. Though the Beatles were certainly not the Clash, they were from the same category of phenomena. They told him everything eagerly as they ate his cake, interrupting one another, their words enthusiastic. The cake was cherry, Evan's favourite. He displayed his cut and bloody coat and told the whole story of the fight, word for word, blow by blow, cut by cut. He had brought a knife to a knife fight and emerged triumphant, excited and proud. He had conquered, physically and truly.

Severus awarded him 2000 punk points.