

# The Man Who

*by Dementor Delta*

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Written for Snape-Potter's Snarry-a-Thon 2009, beta read by Cruisedirector and Swtalmnd.

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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"I won't do it!"

"But Harry--"

"Won't!" Harry shook his head stubbornly as though the action had had any effect on Hermione the last fifty or so times he'd done it.

"It's for charity," Hermione said in what was obviously meant to be a coaxing tone.

Pursing his lips, Harry repeated his reasoning. "Just because it's for a good cause doesn't mean I have to humiliate--"

"You *won't* be--"

"Is Harry still bugging off?"

They both looked round as Ron, holding an apple with a bite taken out, joined them in the study, settling himself in a chair across from them.

"I'm not bugging off," Harry pointed out. "Just because I don't want to parade myself in front of a horde of screaming, giggling--"

"It's for charity, mate," countered Ron, crossing his legs and gesturing with his apple. "Widows and orphans."

"I know it's for--" Harry blinked. "Orphans?"

Hermione, obviously scenting blood, er, victory, nodded. "There are so many whose parents were killed during the war," she said, injecting pathos into her tone.

"That doesn't change anything," said Harry, sticking to guns that were rapidly running out of ammunition. "I'm not offering myself up for any stupid charity bachelor auction no matter what the cause is."

Hermione opened her mouth to speak but Ron beat her. "George is doing it," he said, his mouth rather unflatteringly full of apple

"For a laugh," Harry said with a snort. "He'll probably fill the winner's pockets with puking pastilles." He crossed his arms over his chest, hoping it gave him that impenetrable fortress look he was going for.

"At least he's doing it. With *Witch Weekly* sponsoring it, you're bound to have loads of interest," Hermione said, leaning forward in her eagerness to exploit what she obviously saw as a chink in Harry's fortress.

"Except I'm not doing it. I spent the last few years, in case you've forgotten Miss-My-God-This-Tent-Is-Damp, being chased around the country, training, fighting and nearly getting killed, and I don't owe anybody anything." As fortress buttresses went, he thought this was a pretty good one.

Hermione sighed expressively. "Too bad those poor orphans don't have your advantages," she said.

"Advantages!" Harry began in sheer outrage. The extraordinary gall of this nearly jerked him around. In his mind, having a powerful dark wizard focus all his energy into killing you couldn't really go in the advantages column.

"Malfoy's doing it," Ron interjected, gesturing again with the considerably smaller apple. "I heard some girls were pooling their money to try and get him."

Harry did swing around at this, then turned back to Hermione with a 'see' gesture. Except she did not appear to see at all. "It'll be much easier for them to get publicity if you're in the auction," she said, ignoring, just as much as Harry had ignored hers, Harry's sputtering.

"My. Point. Exactly," he all but shouted.

"Charlie said if he could get away and get that burn healed up in time, he'd do it," Ron offered helpfully.

Harry swung around to glare at him. "For the widows and orphans and all," Ron added weakly, hiding behind his apple.

"Why aren't you doing it then?" Harry accused.

Ron made a chopping gesture across his throat. "Ixnay on the auction-nay," he said desperately. The supposed ominous effect was somewhat mitigated by the trail of apple juice he left against his own throat.

"Ronald and I have an understanding," Hermione said frostily.

"If it's for such a good cause--"

"Widows and orphans," Ron said, looking grateful that the attention was no longer on himself.

"Two Weasleys ought to be enough to please the bidders," Hermione said as if that had settled the matter for all time. "Though not as much as one Potter." She picked up the copy of *Witch Weekly* that she'd brought along as ammunition. "Look, even Neville's agreed." She held out the open magazine but all Harry could see was the banner headline that read, *Will He Or Won't He? The Boy Who Lived Plays Coy!*

Harry sighed.

Ron pushed himself out of his chair, tucking the apple core into his pocket. "Let's see that," he said and Hermione handed the paper over. "Look they've even got a poll," he said, tracing his finger down the column. "Looks like you're ahead of Neville." He grinned. "But not by much."

Harry leaned over, looking at the pages again, upside down. "How much ahead?"

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"I think you should do it," Professor Snape said the next day when Harry dropped by. He'd been regaling Snape about the unfairness of Ron and Hermione's expectations when Snape dropped this bombshell on Harry's unassailable fortress.

Improbably enough Snape and Harry had formed their own kind of understanding between them after Snape had been found barely alive in the Shrieking Shack. Harry had kept vigil by his bed in St. Mungo's while Snape fought against the fate Voldemort had planned for him. And been nearly shouted out of the room--if Snape could have raised his voice above a whisper when he'd woken--for his idiotic bravery.

Since then Harry had been a frequent visitor to Snape's kitchen--though perhaps visitor was being a bit generous. More than once Snape had threatened to move, leaving no forward Apparating address. Usually when he was in one of these moods, Harry left him alone for a week or two then dropped in again. Snape grumbled, but he always offered tea.

He could not say what it was about visiting Snape that was different than visiting with Ron and Hermione--well, except for the fact that Ron and Hermione actually liked him.

"What?" he spluttered, nearly choking on one of his favorite ginger biscuits. "Why?"

Snape moved more slowly than he had when he'd been a teacher. "You know why," he said, seating himself at the small--Harry suspected Snape shrank it for his visits--kitchen table. "They'll raise a thousand more galleons if you do it."

"I'm not humiliating myself for any number of galleons," Harry said stubbornly.

"This from the man who chased my healer down the hall of St. Mungo's in your underwear."

"That was different," Harry said. He hadn't been quite sure Snape had been awake at that point.

Snape's smirk clearly said 'if you say so' but what he said aloud was, "I can't believe you're depriving war widows--"

"And orphans," Harry put in, full of misery that Snape--Snape!--didn't understand.

"You won't do it for the *orphans*?" Snape said, clearly aghast.

Harry took a sip of the tea that had gone down to the dregs without him noticing. "If it'll make you feel better, I'll give the war fund a thousand galleons."

"That isn't the point," said Snape, "with you there the event will bring in more--" He shuddered delicately--"bidders. It will show that you support what they're doing."

"Of course I support what they're doing," Harry burst out.

Snape shrugged. "Not enough, apparently, to publicly show your support."

Harry drummed his fingers on the table in agitation. "What if I--" He paused, studying his brainwave from every angle.

"Yes?"

"What if I gave the money indirectly--no, wait, hear me out," he said when Snape began rolling his eyes. "What if I got someone--a...friend, to bid on me, using my own money. That way there'd be no chance that some screaming fan girl would get me."

"That's--" Snape frowned and began drumming *his* fingers on the table. The table was so small that his fingers nearly brushed Harry's. "Diabolical," he concluded.

"But it would work," Harry said with growing excitement. "Wouldn't it?"

"Providing you had a friend you could trust," said Snape, giving one more tattoo upon the table before drawing his fingers back.

"Well," Harry began, not quite looking at him.

Snape's tea cup hit the saucer with a loud rattle. "Oh no," he said.

"You're already in on it," Harry said as Snape pushed his chair away.

"Oh no," said Snape again, "I'm just an innocent bystander in the wild landscape of your imagination."

"It's brilliant," Harry said, taking no notice of Snape's objections. He examined the scheme from every angle and could find no flaw with it.

"It's mad," Snape rebutted, waving a hand in front of Harry's face as if he'd caught him sleepwalking. "Potter!" Harry blinked and looked at Snape. "Don't you see that if I bid on you...if *any* man bids on you, everyone will think you're--"

Harry could almost see the list of socially acceptable euphemisms being examined and discarded. "Gay?" he suggested helpfully.

"Queer," decided Snape.

Harry shrugged.

Snape stared at him a moment. "Oh."

"You don't, er, mind, do you?" Harry said as Snape continued to stare. When no answer made it past Snape's slightly agape lips, Harry went on. "Because I notice that you don't mention any objection for bidding *on* me since everyone will think you're, um--"

"Gay," said Snape though Harry couldn't tell if it was a question or not.

"Queer," Harry finished.

They stared at each other. Snape was the one who looked away first, staring down into his tea cup as if he'd suddenly developed an affinity for divination. "I suppose it's too late to mention the 'in love with your mother' thing?" Snape said without much hope.

Harry shrugged again. "I love Hermione too, but I have never, ever wanted to see her naked." He sat forward in his chair. "So, you'll do it? We don't have to spend an actual weekend together."

Snape's eyebrows shot up. "A weekend?" He pushed up to his feet mumbling something about more tea.

"That's the term of the auction agreement, one weekend with the winner," Harry explained. Hermione had actually believed it had been a selling point to obtain Harry's cooperation that the term on the agreement was *only* a weekend.

"And if I agree," Snape said, rejoining him at the table and refilling his tea cup. "What do I get?"

Harry's teabag splashed as he dropped it into the reheated water. "What do you, er, want?"

Snape was looking at him in a strange way. Even more strangely he said, "One weekend with the winner." His teabag squeezed itself before he sat it aside and looked up.

Harry shivered. "You mean--"

"I mean, I have an elderly aunt, great aunt really, in Sussex. She'd like to meet you."

"Oh," Harry said, not certain why he felt slightly disappointed by this. "Sure." He dunked his own teabag and made a mental note to ask Snape about that squeezing spell before he said, "You know I'd do that anyway. For, um, you."

"And deprive myself the pleasure of publicly outing the Boy Who--"

"Man," Harry corrected.

Snape's smirk disappeared behind the rim of the tea cup.

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There were a thousand last minute instructions before the auction. Unfortunately with the team of hair and fashion experts hired by the auction organizers to spruce the bachelors up hovering around him, Harry couldn't remember any of them.

A makeshift dressing area had been set up behind the dais, with racks of clothes, boxes of shoes, trays of make-up and mirrors, magical or otherwise.

Harry had been led to a curtained-off cubicle. Unfortunately the curtains were only waist-high so he could preview the other entrants. Competition was going to be fierce. If the fix hadn't been in, Harry would have been a bundle of nerves.

"Any amount, remember?" he told Snape, who was observing the proceedings with amused detachment. "I don't care how high the bidding goes. I want you to have me." His desperate determination made his dresser, who was spotty enough to be a cousin of Stan Shunpike's, let out a little whimper.

In the next cubicle, Harry saw Neville modeling some kind of leather outfit. He gave Harry a little wave, pointing down to his skin tight trousers.

Harry gave a feeble wave back. He leaned over so that his dresser could hear his frantic whisper. "No leather."

"Oh no, sir," the man--Harry tried to remember his name, then gave in and tried to spot the writing on the name tag.

"Harvey." Snape had leaned over and whispered the name into his ear. He must have guessed the cause of Harry's distress--or one of the causes anyway.

"Thanks, er, Harvey."

"Miss Granger wanted something flashier for you." Harvey unfolded from the valise he was unpacking and held up a shirt. At least Harry thought it was a shirt.

"Mesh," Harvey supplied helpfully.

"Fuck," said Harry.

"Indeed," said Snape.

"What's wrong with what I have on?" he said, looking down at his jeans and t-shirt. True, there was a tiny burn in the knee from where he'd singed it on a burning cup in the vault at Gringotts. And true, the letters on the t-shirt had faded so that he wasn't sure what it had originally been an advert for. But at least everything fit. Sort of.

Charlie Weasley strolled by in a something that shimmered...dragon-hide, most likely. He gave Harry a wave and a wink, his ponytail flipping as he waved away his own harried dresser.

Harry realized he wasn't the only one staring. "I'm not wearing mesh," he said, tamping down the surge of--of something that arose in his chest at the realization that he was not the only one checking out Charlie's arse.

Fortunately Snape ceased his perusal of said arse and turned his attention back to Harry's predicament. "Potter isn't the flashy sort," Snape intervened, stepping further into the cubicle and rummaging through the clothing rack. "He needs something that makes a man--er, his bidders, think of cozy evenings by the fire with the Boy Who--"

"Man," Harry insisted.

"The man in question," Snape said with amiable amusement. While he and Harvey consulted over the various racks in Harry's cubicle, Draco Malfoy leaned over the curtains. He'd been done up as a Regency buck complete with riding crop and a beauty mark shaped like a small diamond on one high cheekbone.

"What's that look, Potter? Going for the rubbish collectors?" he said with a sneer.

"Bugger off, Malfoy," Harry said, feeling suddenly very exposed standing on the raised platform they'd put him on.

"I'm sure there's always a call for that sort of thing." Draco went on, ignoring Harry's comment.

"Indeed there is," said Snape, showing himself from around the rack of clothes.

"Professor," Draco said, gulping.

"Bugger off, Draco," he said, and to Harry's amazement, Draco did.

"How about this?" Snape said, holding up a short sleeved black shirt that was so shiny it looked wet and a pair of slender dark green trousers.

"It's not very flashy," Harry said dubiously.

"Your reputation is flashy enough," said Snape, hanging both garments on the hook on the end of the garment rack.

The dresser flicked his wand at the curtains, raising them enough for privacy so Harry could change. Harry took off his t-shirt and had to admit it had seen better days.

"Perhaps you'd like to, er--" Harvey began, addressing Snape, when Harry reached for his jeans. Both Snape and Harvey turned their heads to look at him. "Wait outside?"

Snape's mouth did that twitching thing it did when he was trying not to laugh. "It's all right, I've seen Potter in his big boy underpants."

"Hey!" Harry said, shoving down his jeans. "That healer was wrong about not letting me stay in your room and I was right." He yanked the silky shirt out of Harvey's fingers and shrugged into it. "You woke up, didn't you? After a month of them telling me you wouldn't."

He probably looked ridiculous in the black shirt with just his pants. Snape however did not insult him. "I'll go take my place," he demurred.

"Any amount, remember?" Harry called after him as the curtains closed behind him.

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There was a rush of excited noise as all the bachelors began parading out, first along the sides of the raised stage, then, as the music swelled, out onto the catwalk that split the first twenty rows of seats that had been set up in the enormous tent.

A wizard Harry didn't know was introducing each bachelor as they took a walk into the spotlight illuminating the out-thrust lip of the catwalk. Harvey had tried hard to get him to leave off his glasses but when it was Harry's turn in the spotlight he was glad he hadn't. Applause rolled through the tent. Harry smiled weakly and the first few rows gasped in delight. He thought a couple of the girls might have swooned. The lights were so bright he couldn't see past the first few rows on seats so he gave up hope of spotting Snape.

At least he wasn't going to be the first one up for auction. That dubious distinction went to Charlie Weasley--who, from the looks of things, had the same girls swooning in the front rows every time he flipped his ponytail.

Harry's stomach clenched at the memory of Snape checking Charlie out. True, Harry himself had enjoyed the admittedly fine view of Charlie's arse in the shimmering dragon-hide trousers, but his was different.

To Harry's amazement, Charlie went for two hundred and fifty galleons and the winner screamed as soon as the auctioneer shouted, "Sold!" At least she didn't swoon but came racing down the aisle to hand over the galleons and sign the documents the auction committee had waiting.

The next two bachelors Harry didn't know but they went for respectable amounts, though both under Charlie's.

Neville was up next and he bounded into the spotlight with a confidence Harry had rarely seen in anyone, much less Neville. To his astonishment the bidding topped Charlie's fairly quickly and closed at just over four hundred galleons.

Four hundred galleons! Harry's stomach clenched harder. What if he only went for a couple of hundred galleons? True, it was his own money Snape would be spending, but he wanted to make a good showing at least.

Several more bachelors rose from their stools near the curtain as one by one their praises were touted and they were led off by their victorious and sometimes swooning winners.

Then it was Harry's turn.

He'd been told he would not be the last bachelor for auction. Because of his fame he was expected to bring in a hefty bid so they were going to bring him in about midway so the losers would be able to bid on other bachelors. Harry hoped they were right.

There was a palpable sense of expectation as his name was called. Nervously trying to remember how Charlie had practically stalked up to the catwalk, all Harry could

think was *More than Neville, more than Neville* with the same furious intensity he had once repeated, *Not Slytherin* over and over.

"Our next bachelor is no stranger to most of you, the boyish hero of the wizarding world, Mr. Harry Potter!" Applause and excited whispers ricocheted around the crowd. "Also known as the Chosen One, the Boy Who Lived and the Man Who Defeated You Know Who!"

It was as if a collective shudder had gone through the audience, but it did not dampen the waves of enthusiasm. It almost looked as if everyone was leaning forward, waiting for the bidding to start. Harry realized probably half the audience had simply come to see him in person and religiously repeated, *More than Neville* a couple of more times in his brain.

Then before the auctioneer could even suggest an opening bid one of the swooners in the first row shouted, "A hundred galleons!"

And they were off.

The swooner was quickly overbid but she kept upping the ante until the bidding was over three hundred galleons. When someone to the left of the audience jumped it up to three hundred and fifty she slumped in defeat. Harry actually managed to wink at her, more confident now that his bid was at least close to Neville's.

But where was Snape? The anxious seconds counted down at three fifty until another voice, someone Harry hadn't heard before, drove the bidding to four hundred. For a few moments bids flew from one side of the tent to the other. Harry's head wasn't the only one swinging from side to side as the bidding narrowed down between these two.

Harry peered into the sea of faces. Thankfully the spotlight had dimmed a bit and he was able to make out where his bidders were in the crowd. One was a very stylish witch with a flashy buckle on her hat. She looked to be quite a few years older than Harry--and very determined. He thought her competition was a knot of girls on the other side of the tent. There was one girl doing all the bidding and she also looked very determined.

He was glad he'd gone with Snape's choice of outfit because it was very hot under the lights. Though he supposed mesh might have been marginally cooler but then everyone would be able to see the sweat pooling on his chest. He could feel the armpits of the shirt growing damp as the bidding went to five hundred, then more quickly, to six.

Where was Snape? Harry wiped his sweaty palms on his trousers, wishing he had a ponytail to flip to give him something to do while he stood there.

Harry's nerves were stretching thin. Could he have possibly not made himself clear to Snape? Really, he'd felt much calmer walking in to face Voldemort. At least then he had *known* he was going to die.

At six hundred seventy-seven the knot of girls seemed to collapse in on itself. One of the girls, the bidder, was making plaintive eyes at a man who must surely be her father. He shook his head, a clear no.

The competing bidder smoothed down the front of her midnight blue robes as the bidding went--

"Going--"

She pulled out a compact and pursed her lips in it, while Harry, sans compact, did the same. Where the hell was Snape?

"Going--"

"One thousand galleons!"

The voice, the first male one in the bidding, rang out from the back. Harry nearly sagged in relief. He heard the sound of tinkling glass as the stylish witch's compact fell to the floor.

The auctioneer's mouth had dropped open, the gavel poised mid-strike as he looked up at Harry. Many heads turned to see if they could spot the bidder in the back but Harry would have known that voice anywhere, even if he had not been expecting it. Many others turned to see the witch who whisked her wand over the compact to repair it, shaking her head at the auctioneer's questioning glance before she stalked out of the tent in a swirl of midnight blue.

"Gone!" the auctioneer decreed as wild applause broke out in the tent. Harry gave a gentlemanly bow to the swooner, who seemed to have recovered from his wink and was now giggling instead. Making his way off the dais, Harry heard the renewed flurry of speculative whispers as Snape, who'd donned his expansive black robes since Harry had seen him backstage, strode down the center aisle.

Snape's head was held high, the black hair flying behind his shoulders. He might have been going to teach a class for all the notice he paid the audience. Harry was so glad to see him he barely noticed the sizable money bag that changed hands as he and Snape signed the contract.

He was, in fact, so busy staring in relief that he didn't realize Snape was holding out his arm for Harry. Snape's elbow nudged him and Harry jumped and took it, still grinning as whispers and what were no doubt some delicious rumors followed them all the way backstage.

Snape, strangely, did not drop his arm once they were alone. "Best thousand galleons I've ever spent," he said with satisfaction dripping from his words like Felix Felicis.

"Well, that I've ever spent," Harry said, detaching his arm and gathering up his things. Harvey had told him that the outfit was his to keep, which considering he'd sweated a small pond in it, worked out.

There was an odd silence behind him and Harry turned to see Snape watching him with a speculative look in his eyes. "Actually, I used my own money," he said when Harry caught him staring.

"What?" said Harry with a laugh, "Whatever for?" Beyond the backstage dressing area he heard the gavel ringing down three hundred and ninety galleons for Draco Malfoy--less than Neville--ha!

"I had some...conditions you might not be amenable to," Snape said and Harry's eyes narrowed.

"What conditions?" He felt his armpits growing damp again. "You don't expect me to--" He swallowed hard. "To sleep with you?"

"Don't be daft," Snape said, so briskly that Harry felt momentarily offended until he remembered what he was being offended about. "This is," continued Snape, offering his arm as Harry hefted his valise and slid his arm into Snape's, "much, much worse."

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They Apparated directly into Snape's kitchen. It looked like it always did when Harry visited except for the stack of blindingly pink boxes stacked on the kitchen table.

"What conditions?" Harry said as soon as his mouth had finished Apparating.

"My aunt Viola would very much like to see me settled before she leaves this life," Snape said, taking the top off the first box. The label read "Pierre's"

"She's damn lucky you didn't leave this life before she did," Harry interjected as pale pink tissue paper spilled out of the box.

Snape swung his face to look at him. "She has been ill for a number of years. The late...unpleasantness has scarce touched her awareness."

Trust Snape to call the ultimate battle between the forces of light and dark a spot of unpleasantness. He pulled out a rather simple green dress that even Harry could tell was deceptively elegant because it was the sort of thing his Aunt Petunia would have never allowed into the house. He held it up to Harry as if comparing it for size.

"Settled? What does that--" He backed away from the dress as if it had a curse on it. "And what does any of this have to do with me?"

"Settled. Married." Snape waved one hand vaguely and tossed the dress over the back of one of the kitchen chairs before opening the second box. There was a package of tights in this one, as well as a pair of shoes in a rather unladylike size--a size more like Harry's own.

"I'm *not* marrying you," Harry exclaimed. Really, he and Snape hadn't even--wait, what was he thinking?

"Of course you aren't," Snape snapped, pushing aside the two opened boxes in favor of the third.

"Then what--" The light dawned with the swiftness of Sectumsempra. "Oh no, I'm not wearing any of that," Harry said with increasing horror.

"Of course you are. Aunt Viola is nearly blind and half deaf. She's expecting to meet my demure fiancé and so she shall before she goes to meet her maker."

"I'm not--" Harry choked when he saw that Snape was pulling several pairs of sheer women's pants from the last box. "You need a fiancé, find a woman."

"I don't have a woman, I have you. And a binding magical contract."

"Polyjuice then," Harry said desperately. Those pants were very sheer.

"Polyjuice takes a month to brew," Snape countered.

"Are you a Potions master or not?" Harry said looking between the pants and Snape in horror.

"Not for several years, all of which I've spent in *this* body." He gestured with his hand, probably not noticing that he had a fistful of knickers in it. "All we are going to do is pay an elderly woman a visit, perhaps have a bit of tea and the rest of the weekend is yours to scratch your privates in public with your mates or whatever passes for youthful entertainment these days."

Harry thought furiously. "Women---women wear trousers. I could--"

"You will be having tea with a lady who was born when Queen Victoria was still on the throne. You will not be wearing trousers," Snape said, waving the knickers around with more exasperation.

"Then I'll get you a girl, any girl. Hermione would do it. I don't know why you didn't just ask her," Harry said, running a hand through his hair as if that would distance him from that fist of lacy shame.

"It is you she wishes to meet, not Granger, or that Dragon Lady bidding on you or Minerva McGonagall, thank you very much," Snape snapped, tossing down the knickers only to pick up the green dress and thrust it into Harry's chest. "I've spent the last bloody year telling her about you--carefully altering pronouns of course--and it is you she is going to meet!"

Harry took the dress before he realized what he was doing. "You told your aunt about me?"

This was clearly not the objection Snape had been expecting. His mouth opened then shut again in favor of a stare. "Yes," he said finally.

"And she's not well?" He looked down at the softly shining green fabric.

"She may be receiving Last Rites even as we speak," Snape replied looking at Harry very strangely. Well, more strangely than usual.

"And no one ever has to know?" Before Snape could reply, Harry went on, "I mean about the dress, not that...that you told her about me."

"No one has to know," Snape said at last.

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Aunt Viola, contrary to Harry's admittedly recently acquired expectations, did not live in a quaint rose-covered cottage.

Harry adjusted his skirt--amazed that he could even think a phrase like 'adjusted his skirt' without breaking into hives--and looked up at the rambling old stone house. He was by now, after nearly a decade in the wizarding world, familiar with wizarding architecture enough to know that the crooked towers were probably in no danger of toppling. There were--Harry counted as they strolled up the lawn--four of them, in seemingly random points around the house. The walls had a mixture of old-fashioned square sash windows, a row of circular windows that looked more like portholes, and one window in the back that was arched and looked like it belonged in an abbey.

It hadn't been easy to learn, in the course of an hour, how to get himself done up as a woman. And to think, a couple of hours ago he had been worried about being auctioned off to someone who wasn't Snape.

He wasn't sure, even now, which one was worse.

He'd regretted the rush of sentimentality that had prompted him to agree as soon as he tried to tuck his bits into scraps of nylon that had no outlet for them. Snape had directed him to the bathroom to get dressed, through honestly Harry could have used a bit of help figuring out where everything went.

"I'm not shaving my legs!" he'd called out through the bathroom door.

Snape must have been pacing up and down just on the other side because he said, "The tights are opaque. No one will be able to tell if you've shaved or not."

With the tights as extra insurance that his bits didn't go astray and the thankfully low heeled shoes that Snape had provided, he'd presented himself for inspection. Snape had taken one look and said, "You aren't wearing a bra."

"I've got nothing to put in a bra!" Harry had protested. Nevertheless Snape had made him go back in and put it on, necessitating another round of bitter regret.

"It shapes the dress," Snape had explained through the firmly closed door.

When he'd emerged the second time Snape had been waiting, wand in hand. Instantly something filled the modest cups of the bra like two balloons inflating. Harry yelped and pulled away the collar of the dress, trying to see what Snape had done. "You didn't--" He almost didn't want to know.

"Just socks, you big baby."

Harry sagged in relief.

Now as they trod up the steps of the storied house Harry wished he had worn something a little dressier for the occasion. There was a heavy brass knocker on the door, in the shape of a bird with a prominent beak.

The door swung open as soon as Snape knocked but there was no one there. Oh wait, Snape was looking down. Expecting a house-elf Harry was surprised to see a goblin at the door.

"Your aunt's a goblin?" Really, Harry thought, it would explain a lot.

"No, you id--, no, this is Giselle, her nurse."

"Er, how do you do?" Harry said, trying out a little curtsy.

Giselle eyed him through lenses that were thicker and heavier than Harry's own. She was wearing a heavy velvet gown that trailed along the floor and oddly enough, trainers on her goblin-sized feet. The trainers had tiny wings on them. In fact Giselle was hovering an inch or two above the floor as the little wings beat frantically.

"Very well, thank you," she replied, her raspy goblin voice carrying a posh accent.

"Giselle, this is my fiancé, Hetty," Snape said, as Giselle bowed them in.

Harry winced. At least it wasn't Harriet. As the introductions continued Giselle shook her head when Snape asked--politely for him--after Viola's health.

"Not well, sir, not well at all," Giselle said, the winged shoes carrying her into the entrance hall, gliding effortlessly around the heavy old furniture. She sighed, a sound more like letting air out of a bag. "I think she's been holding herself together until she meets Miss Potter before she goes to her great reward."

Snape looked down at Harry. Harry gulped. Looking around as they headed for the stairs, Harry thought the house looked like a fussy old lady lived there, which, Harry imagined Great Aunt Viola must be. It reminded him a bit of #12 Grimmauld Place if old Mrs. Black had decorated in pastels instead of Dark Magic.

Giselle fluttered up the stairs. Harry grasped the banister in case the unpracticed heels gave him any trouble. He got a glimpse of himself in a large faded mirror and thought from the back, his legs looked pretty good in tights.

There seemed to be a lot of noise coming from the stairwell and Harry supposed it was lined with portraits. As they hit the first landing, Harry realized it was indeed lined with paintings, but the whispers and squeaks and sounds he heard were not coming from human mouths. Instead there were dozens of paintings of animals--a flock of luxuriantly plumed birds in one, a mare and a foal hippogriff in another, a pair of giraffes nibbling from the top of a tree beside a coiled up painted boa constrictor. One canvas seemed to be entirely greenish blue until a curious tentacle came out, followed by a single eye that watched the trio's progress up the stairs.

The upstairs was airier and lighter--there was a pair of glassed in French doors at the end of the hallway. There were more animal paintings here. A sleeping rhinoceros watched them pass through a half-slitted eye. There was a cluster of small frames with tiny buzzing insects flitting back and forth in each other's frames.

"Aunt Viola was a naturalist," Snape explained, when he saw Harry bending down to see if the rest of the Runespoor would come out from under the painted copse.

"She painted all these?" Harry asked in astonishment.

"Oh yes. The house is full of them," replied Snape, eyeing a large raven perched on the wall beside the only open bedroom door.

"She likes to hear the chatter," Giselle said, hovering in the open door, looking down at them approvingly. The shoes had hoisted her so that she was now taller than them both as she glided into the room.

Harry clenched the small matching handbag, sidling closer to Snape as they crossed the threshold. The room was as airy as the outer corridor but had the unmistakable air of a sick room--one that had been used as such for a very long time.

Aunt Viola sat propped up among an avalanche of lavender and yellow pillows. She looked very small under the covers, her face lined but not worn. Her eyes, Harry noticed as they followed the bobbing form of Giselle to the bed, were the same black as the raven's from the painting just outside her door.

"Come in, come in," she called in a thin but sure voice. "Severus, you've brought your bride at last."

"Affianced bride, Aunt Viola," replied Snape, leaning over to kiss her cheek. "Hetty, this is my great aunt, Viola Prince Todd."

Viola didn't look half blind or sound nearly deaf but Harry had no choice but to stick close to Snape. Giselle was fluttering around the bed, pushing up armchairs for them.

There was a most unladylike snort from the mound of pillows. "Viola Prince Andion Dumbledore Todd," she said with a touch of autocratic regalness. "I've had three husbands and I've outlived them all. Well, except Dumbledore, that was a divorce."

"Albus?" Harry asked, trying to keep his voice soft but unable to keep from blurting it out. He'd thought Albus was--

"Aberforth," Viola corrected, wrinkling her nose. "Couldn't get the smell of goat out of the place for months."

Harry laughed, though he couldn't tell if the look Snape gave him was approving or not. They seated themselves in the chairs, Harry trying to remember how Hermione sat when she was wearing robes, knees together, back straight. He tucked the little purse beside him in the armchair, not sure what else to do with it.

He heard the flutter of busy wings behind him as Giselle skimmed along the faded carpet and out the door, reappearing with a tea tray that she set on a large dresser.

"How have you been?" Snape asked though Viola was peering curiously at Harry. Her small head was encased in an old fashioned nightcap from which curls of wispy silver hair emerged.

"You know how I've been, Sevvy," she said, settling herself back in the pillows.

Harry turned in astonishment as Snape let the 'Sevvy' pass un-rebuked. Sevvy? Really?

"Holding body and soul together until I can see you settled at last and here she is!" She clapped her heavily veined hands together.

Harry sat up a bit straighter in his armchair, tugging self-consciously on the hem of the jewel-green dress. "Very pleased to meet you, ma'am," he said.

"We mustn't stand on ceremony," Viola said, smoothing down the blankets of her lap. "Not when we're to be family. You must call me Aunt Viola." She sat back again as if the words had taken a lot out of her. Giselle dipped in with a tea cup for her, patting her hand in concern.

"Yes, ma'am, er, yes, Aunt Viola," Harry said, his nervousness making his voice break slightly. Aunt Viola looked to him in no danger of shuffling off any coil, mortal or otherwise.

Giselle had returned with tea for both Harry and Snape. Harry took his cup with barely a rattle, wondering if girls drank tea any differently than blokes.

"Sevvy told me you stayed with him in hospital," Viola said, looking a bit distressed. "How I wish my health permitted me to travel," she went on, shaking her head sadly.

"I knew you were thinking of me," Snape said.

"Indeed I was," Viola said forcefully, followed by a spate of coughing. "It doesn't do to outlive one's family," she said, getting control of her breathing. She wrinkled her nose

in a lady-like manner. "Gauche."

Harry found himself relaxing, now that the conversation was not on himself, going as far as to take an elegantly decorated petit four.

"I don't mind telling you I didn't think I'd live long enough to see the day when Severus would introduce his bride-to-be to me," Viola said placidly. Harry nearly choked on his buttercream rose.

"It all happened very suddenly," Harry said honestly, hoping he wasn't contradicting anything Snape had said.

Viola looked pleased though and there was a bit of color in her papery cheeks. "Young people are so romantic," she said behind her tea cup.

Harry had a hard time thinking of Snape as either young or romantic but he didn't think either sentiment would win him any points from either Snape or his aunt.

"You know I am no such thing," Snape said with gentle rebuke. "Hetty and I simply suited."

Viola smiled serenely, addressing Harry. "Pay him no mind. Severus is a man of deep abiding passions."

Snape was glaring at Harry as though trying to invent Long Distance Occlumency and prevent Harry from ever hearing his aunt's words.

"Though I expect you already know a touch or two about those, don't you, dear?" Viola went on, serenely unaware of the undercurrents in the room. Abruptly Harry was no longer the focus of Snape's ire.

"Aunt Viola!"

Harry felt his cheeks warm as the implication of her words sank in.

Apparently being born in the Victorian era had worn off Aunt Viola. She was not one to rest on mere implications. "Come, come, don't tell me you are one of those tiresome young people who thinks they invented pre-marital relations."

Harry's cheeks were no longer warm, they were flaming.

Snape however had gone chalk white. "I think we should go," he said stiffly.

Viola seemed blithely unaware of his discomfort. She reached out of her hands and after a moment, Snape took it. "Go tell Giselle to clear away the tea things," she said, "I want a word with Hetty."

Harry glanced desperately at Snape. "I don't think--" Snape began but Harry's saving people thing kicked in and he threw Snape a lifeline.

"It's all right, er, dear. I'll be right out," he said, reaching over and giving Snape's shoulder an awkward pat.

Slowly Snape stood, looking warily between them, much as he had done when Harry had watched him looking between Voldemort and the bubble encased Nagini, as if one or the other was going to strike.

Once the door had shut behind him, Viola patted the bed beside her. "Come, sit closer to me, dear."

Obediently Harry got up and sat on the bed though his feet dangled off the floor. Viola slid his hand into hers. The bones felt very frail to Harry but she squeezed his hand and patted it.

"You have no idea how much I've been longing to meet you," she said.

Up close her eyes looked more clouded, sunk deep in their sockets. "I'm glad you got the chance then," Harry said, meaning it.

"I almost thought I was going to have to come back as a ghost and haunt Severus if he didn't finally bring you over," she said, heaving a reedy sigh.

Wait--Severus? "Not Sevvy," he said aloud, watching the corners of her mouth turn up, much like a certain great-nephew he knew.

"I only do that to rile him," she said, leaning over as if confiding something. "He needs a little riling now and again."

Harry couldn't help but agree. He laughed, not minding that his dress was bunching up around the backs of his legs.

"You'll make him happy?" she asked, leveling her watery gaze upon him. The hand holding his tightened. "I think of him as a, well, not a son since I never had any children, but a dutiful great nephew. Even his old Aunt Viola can tell he deserves some happiness at last." She squeezed his hand again, her grip surprisingly strong. "So promise me, young man, that you'll make him happy."

"I--wait." Harry's fingers went stiff. "Young man? You knew?"

Viola patted his hand again before releasing it, her lined face wreathed in amusement. Harry could see why at least three men had given their hearts to her.

"Severus is very dear to me, but he must be especially dear to you for you to agree to wear a dress for him." She patted his cheek. "Kiss me like a proper great-nephew and be off. I need my rest."

~\*\*~

They Apparated separately to Snape's house, though Harry was alone when he arrived. He knocked on the door, reasoning that Snape must have Apparated directly inside. Snape jerked the door open without a word. He hadn't spoken since Harry had rejoined him, not even to ask what his aunt had wished to speak to him about.

Harry followed him into the kitchen, uncertain about Snape's mood. "I bet you're glad that's over," he said, playing with the pale pink tissue paper frothing out of one of the boxes still on the table.

"I'm not the one wearing the dress," Snape pointed out, sounding waspish.

"Oh, right," Harry said, trying to reach the zipper in the middle of his back. After several tries he gave up and nudged back against Snape. "Undo me?"

There was a moment's hesitation before fingers found their way to the zip. Once the slider started had started its descent, Harry asked, "Did you really mean all that stuff you told your aunt?"

The zip stopped halfway down. "Which stuff?"

Harry gave an impatient wiggle and the zipper began moving again. "About being glad I was there with you in St. Mungo's." The zipper was all the way down but Snape hadn't moved away. Harry almost held his breath, then Snape reached up and unhooked the bra.

When there was no reply Harry rushed on. "Because you never told me that you were, you know, glad I stayed with you."



"Should I be grateful that the Boy Who Lived took a month out of his heroics-filled life to tend to a poor dying teacher?" Snape replied, taking his hands away at last.

"You're more than my former teacher," Harry said, frowning, "and you didn't die. They all told me you would, that you wouldn't wake up, but you did." He'd turned back around, the now-loosened shoulders of the dress flopping down his arms.

"And I'm not the Boy Who Lived, not anymore. I'm the Man Who--well, I don't know what exactly." He jerked the dress away from his chest, gathering up the bra and both came away in his hand. He stepped out of the dress, kicking it away, not sure why he was angry so suddenly. "I thought I wanted to be your friend, but you don't care if I come round to see you or not."

The silence went on long enough to give Harry his answer. He whirled and fled into the loo, slamming the door behind him. He heard Snape's voice behind him.

"Don't be ridiculous, Potter, *Potter!*" There was a thump on the other side of the bathroom door. "You are behaving like the Man Who Threw A Tantrum," came the exasperated voice from the hallway.

"God, I can't believe I put on a dress for you!" Harry said, staring at himself in Snape's tiny bathroom mirror. He rubbed his hand over his face, upsetting his glasses. When he set them to rights he caught sight of the knickers and tights and groaned again.

"Potter! Come out of there at once!" Snape demanded.

"And a bra!" Harry wailed. "With socks in it!" He bent his head, bumping the top of it against the mirror. "Just because you're too much of a coward to come out to your--"

There was a loud pop and suddenly Snape was in the bathroom, pushing Harry against the door he'd just been on the other side of. "We have discussed my...dislike of that word," Snape said, the low hiss of it sending a frisson down Harry's back.

"Come out?" Harry asked, blinking very fast behind his glasses. "Well, they probably started using it after you were gay, but really it's not so hard. You told me, in a manner of speaking."

"Not. That. Word," Snape said, and his mouth was so close Harry could feel the breath of each word.

"What word...oh." *Coward.* "I didn't mean it like that," he sputtered but Snape's eyes only narrowed as if focusing on just which hex to use on Harry.

"I do not wish any of the current definitions to be applied to me," Snape said.

"I was only saying that today coming out isn't such a big--" Snape was looking more furious, not less. "I told my friends and it wasn't so bad, not after they started speaking to me again." Actually it had only been Ron who hadn't spoken to him for two days. Hermione had just smirked. "I didn't take out an ad in the Prophet."

"We are *not* having this discussion," Snape said, finally backing away from him. There wasn't much room in the tiny loo, so he backed away far enough to sink down on the toilet. Thankfully the lid was closed.

"Look, I'm sorry I called you that," Harry said as Snape buried his face in his hand.

"For your information, everyone who has needed...that information, has had it at the appropriate time. Just because I don't feel the need to burden an elderly lady in failing health doesn't make me any less brave than you for telling Granger, who, I'll warrant, knew before you did."

Harry thought about telling him that there was no need to hide anything from the canny old lady but he didn't think Snape was in the mood to appreciate the irony. In fact he wasn't sure what kind of mood Snape was in. He still had his face pressed into his fingers, the ends of his hair covering his wrist.

"You told me, well, sort of," Harry said again. "You must not mind me." He was determined not to make the last a question but he wasn't certain he'd succeeded.

"It slipped out," Snape said, finally lifting his head. There were reddened finger marks in his cheeks.

"I thought maybe you wanted me to know, because you might be as attracted to me as I am to--"

Snape was looking alarmed now. He shot off the toilet and clapped his hand over Harry's mouth. "You are not attracted to me," he said, his gaze boring into Harry's.

"Yes, I am," said Harry, only Snape's hand was over his mouth so it came out as 'Mmmphmmmmph.'

Snape released his mouth, pointing one finger under Harry's nose. "You are not."

"But--"

"Not." The fingertip touched Harry's nose.

Harry squared his shoulders. "All right, I get it. I'm not really a prize." He looked down at himself, bare-chested, his legs still in tights.

"If this is some misguided attempt to denigrate yourself so that I'll enumerate your many charms," said Snape, "I'm not playing along."

"You think I have charms?" Harry asked brightly.

"The only charm you currently possess is that you will be leaving. Soon," Snape snarled, sinking back onto the toilet.

Sagging against the bathroom door, Harry looked down at himself. "You wouldn't throw me out in knickers, would you?"

Snape blinked. Harry realized Snape had only just become aware that Harry was half-naked in his loo. And then Snape was looking, really looking, though Harry suspected he was trying not to.

"Why...why don't you think I'm attracted to you?" asked Harry, straightening back up so that his chest wasn't slouched over. "Because there aren't many people I'd put on ladies knickers for."

"Binding magical contract," Snape said, his voice oddly muffled and he seemed to be having trouble lifting his head above Harry's waist. Since he was still sitting on the toilet, his eye level was about Harry's crotch, which reacted with predictable interest at being stared at.

"You know I could have gotten out of that if I'd wanted," Harry scoffed. He'd wanted to reach over and feel whether Snape's hair was as soft as it looked but he was afraid to move. It was a bit like meeting a wild creature in the forest. Harry smiled to himself--a doe perhaps.

"I wanted to meet your aunt," he went on, "and I wanted to help you out. Everyone asked me why I stayed there in the hospital with you, why I wasn't out celebrating our victory." He didn't know what else to do except keep talking though he wasn't certain Snape was paying attention. "I just thought you...you needed someone."

Snape managed to lift his eyes at that. Harry met his gaze briefly then looked away.

"But you really didn't need anyone, did you?" Harry said. He couldn't stop himself. It felt almost like his own brain had performed an Imperius Curse on him to reach out and stroke Snape's hair at last.

Snape didn't dart away like a startled doe. He didn't even snarl at Harry and pull away. What he did instead was lean in slightly, just enough that Harry could reach him better, before turning his face to rub Harry's hand along his cheek.

"You read to me," Snape said, his voice gone quiet. It was not a question, but Harry nodded. Snape must have shaved right before the auction because his cheek was smooth.

"Every day," replied Harry, just letting Snape have Harry touch his fingers, like a cat spreading its scent. "Silly stuff, mostly. The Prophet, some magazines from the visitor's lounge. I knew you'd wake up and want to know what had been going on. That we'd won."

Snape nodded, the motion bringing him closer to Harry's outstretched fingers. Harry touched the corner of his mouth, then slid along his bottom lip a few inches then back. "I didn't mean to lie about you to Aunt Viola," Snape said. "Her curiosity was inconvenient."

Harry chuckled softly. "I'll just bet. You might try telling her the truth."

Snape shook his head, nearly dislodging Harry's fingers. "The last few times I visited I thought she was on her deathbed, so I let her think--" He shook his head again. "She may not be as weak as she led me to believe."

He looked up and Harry's fingers dropped beneath his chin, cupping it. Harry was smiling, bending over without quite realizing what he meant to do. He felt a muscle jerk in Snape's neck just as their lips met but he didn't move away from Harry's kiss.

Snape's lips were dry but Harry suspected his were too. A pulse flared beneath his fingertips as he lightly licked the backs of his own lips before pressing in again. Snape's breath whispered across his mouth, slightly bitter from the tea. Then he made a move forward, pressing back as though trying to remember how a kiss went.

Harry held still, letting Snape set the pace, suspended between the most wanting he'd ever experienced and the need not to break the spell. Slowly he lifted his other hand into Snape's hair, dragging his fingertips across his scalp before letting strands of it gather in his fingers.

"You did that in the hospital," Snape said, his voice just above a whisper.

"I liked it then too," said Harry, "I didn't know if you could hear or...feel anything."

"Only slowly," Snape said, no longer kissing him but still very close. His eyes seemed all black. "Your voice, your hand." He lifted his own hand, examining it front to back. "I wasn't sure it was real."

"It was real. I talked to you and read to you and stroked your hand." Harry moved his hand out of the thick black hair until it was palm to palm with Snape's, fingertip to fingertip.

Without warning Snape surged up off the toilet and pressed his mouth harder against Harry's. Harry leaned back against the doorjamb, arms twining around Snape. One hand cupped his chin, almost too hard and Harry moaned. The other hand slipped behind his head, gripping the back of it as his mouth moved over Harry's.

Harry's hips thrust forward, eager to show that despite the ladies knickers, he was all male. Snape groaned into his mouth, the most thrilling noise Harry had ever heard. He was no longer concerned with moving too fast or of breaking this particular spell. He no longer thought of Snape almost as one of the timid wild creatures in one of Viola's paintings.

Harry broke for breath and Snape kissed along his jaw under his chin. Harry whimpered and clung, nearly spilling out of the silky knickers that had never been designed to contain the sorts of things Harry had put in them.

"Take me upstairs, please," he crooned, more concerned with getting horizontal than that his first time with Snape would be in a bathroom.

"Hang on," said Snape, the ragged rasp in his voice doing agreeable things to Harry. He realized at once that Snape didn't mean hang on, as in wait a minute, when he wrapped his arms around Harry and Apparated them both into his bedroom.

They broke apart, both breathing hard as if they'd run up the stairs. Then Snape was kissing him again, pushing back toward the bed. Harry returned the favor by letting himself all but fall backwards, one hand clutched at Snape's robes, pulling them together.

There was a tussle of arms and legs, robes and tights before Snape said, "I am not having sex with you in ladies knickers."

Levering himself up on his elbows Harry watched as Snape grabbed the tights and knickers, slipping them down and off. His cock, as if to negate the unspoken accusation of the knickers, sprang up eagerly.

Instead of waiting for Snape to rejoin him on the bed, Harry stood, reaching for the robes Snape was already struggling out of. He could not resist tasting what he uncovered--a line of throat, a stripe of shoulder, rubbing his chin through several delightful patches of hair. Snape's fingers had grown more clumsy with Harry's 'help'.

Harry eased back onto the edge of the bed after Snape had kicked off his shoes and pulled him by the waist of his trousers. He grinned up at Snape. "I didn't do this in hospital," he said, rubbing his cheek across the front of Snape's trousers. "But I thought about it." He tugged down the zip and pushed his face inside. "Thought about whether you'd wake up if I had my mouth here."

Snape's underpants were not gray but a nice severe black. Harry pushed his fingers against the cock beneath before sliding them down, letting the hot flesh arch toward his mouth.

"I might have woken up and hexed you," Snape said, obviously not even willing to let a moment pass when he could be berating Harry's bad judgment for anything like a mouth around his cock.

He slid he pants and trousers down, letting him help before Harry said, "It would have been worth it to have you wake up."

"You have surprising priorities," Snape said but Harry wasn't listening so much as looking at the long, lean body generating the voice.

"I always have had, with you," Harry said. Snape didn't seem to mind being naked or of letting Harry look his fill.

"Are we just going to look?" Snape asked and Harry laughed, reaching for his legs. Snape obliged by stepping forward, his cock bobbing enticingly close to Harry's mouth.

Harry let his hands just slide up and down the backs of Snape's legs. "I want to do everything then look some more." He tugged gently, scooting back on the bed so Snape could follow. The earlier rush of lust had muted somewhat, but like a good potion, it had transformed into something more interesting and elusive.

"Have you done *everything* before?" Snape asked, studying him with his head propped up on one hand.

Harry wiggled up onto the pillow next to his. Their legs were very close, touching here, brushing there, cocks not quite hard, but definitely on call. He'd been afraid Snape would ask him something like this.

"Only with girls. Not...not with a man," he admitted.

Snape drew a finger down Harry's chest. "How do you know you'll like it?"

"How did you?" retorted Harry.

The smirk was back, looking no less intimidating now that Snape was naked. "Fair point." He leaned forward, rubbing his mouth over Harry's. "I never kissed your mother like this."

Harry yelped. "Could we make a pact to never mention my mother when we're naked?"

For some reason, this question seemed to please Snape. "Are we going to be getting naked often?" he asked.

"Yeah," Harry said and they were kissing again and Harry didn't think either of them had ever kissed a woman like this. Harry wanted to do a lot more than kissing, especially when they were so conveniently naked. Snape's chest pressed against his, pushing Harry back in the bed, throwing one leg over his. Harry wanted to wrap himself around Snape and threaded his arms through Snape's, his fingers spread over his shoulder blades.

Snape made a noise that was too guttural to be quite a groan--it was more like ache given voice and it made Harry shiver.

Harry had made a point to familiarize himself with the basics of what he wanted--what he'd wanted with Snape--but the actuality of it was proving a test of his hormones. The first stroke of spell-warmed oil between his legs made his cock send urgent messages to his brain. Most of them were along the lines of "Now?" and "Oh god, this is better than the pictures." Then more "Oh god, *nows* until Harry was panting with each stroke of Snape's fingers inside him.

He wanted that space filled by Snape's cock more than he had ever wanted anything in his life, even to get a higher bid than Neville. He could picture himself standing in front of the Mirror of Erised and seeing nothing but every hot dirty thing he wanted Snape to do to him.

"Please," he moaned but Snape had the same sort of Sexual Legitimacy he'd always had with Harry's thoughts. He was guiding himself between Harry's legs, pushing in, retreating, watching Harry each time. Then deeper as Harry lifted his legs around Snape's waist. They both groaned when Snape's cock sank in.

They moved in little jerks, bucking and twisting, squeezing and stroking. Snape's hair brushed across his shoulders, tickling. Harry wrapped his arms around Snape's neck and held on. His hormones were rapidly reaching critical point in their testing as he bucked, his cock pumping against Snape's belly amid a refrain of Oh fuck yeses.

Snape clenched and clawed at him, then went rigid as Harry clung. Dark hair spattered his face, sticking where they'd got sweaty but Harry hung on until the shudders slowed and stilled.

Instead of collapsing on top of him, Snape lifted his head at once, searching Harry's face, brushing his own hair off it.

"That was better than looking," he said, the velvet of his voice against the nap.

"That was better than *anything*," Harry said. "'How do you know you'll like it?'" he parroted, with much eye rolling. "Honestly!"

Snape rubbed his chin across Harry's collarbone. "You wouldn't be the first person to mistake a sense of responsibility for affection."

Harry let his legs flop back onto the bed. "You think I stayed with you because I felt responsible?"

Still making little patterns with his chin, Snape said, "You do have a rather well-publicized heroic streak."

"Hmm, because you always sit back and let other people take the risks?" Harry pointed out. "Out for a stroll, were you, when you got bitten by a snake?" He shook his head. "Sevvy!"

Snape made a face at the nickname and slid beside Harry. "You know she says that just to rile me," he said, pulling a pillow under his head.

"I know. She told me. She thinks you need a little riling now and then." Harry wiggled closer in case he was in any danger of being asked to leave.

"I'm not going to be called 'Sevvy' by the Boy Who--"

"Man," Harry said firmly. Snape's arm had draped over his waist. "The Man Who--" Snape looked expectantly enquiring while Harry thought how to finish, at last deciding upon. "The Man Who Made Severus Snape Happy."

Snape's snort of derision was worth it. He'd have to tell Aunt Viola next time they had tea. Snape--Sevvy--did need riling now and then.