

Baby, it's Cold Outside

by Rose of the West

Songfic for Trickle Woo, who suggested it. When Snape drops something off for Xeno Lovegood, Luna asks him in for a conversation.

one shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: The characters here and the world they inhabit are the creation and property of JK Rowling and her assigns.

"I've just stopped by to drop this off." Severus Snape handed Luna a scroll containing an article that Xeno Lovegood was going to put in his magazine. The former professor was augmenting his small pension by doing odd jobs after the war. His popularity was more of a notoriety, and he took what small things came his way. Today that was editing for the *Quibbler*.

Luna reached out her hand and pulled him into the house. "You really must come in and warm up."

"I have things I need to attend, Miss Lovegood."

"Come have a warm drink. It's too cold to go back out there unfortified."

"I looked over your father's copy and made my suggestions."

"I'm so glad you stopped by. It gets so lonely up here when it storms like this."

"You might tell him that one semi-colon per page is more than enough."

He stepped toward the door, but she snatched at his hands. "Your hands are so cold! Let me warm them for you." She pulled them close to herself, right up toward her...

He snatched them away. "I told my mother I'd just be a few minutes. She will wonder what became of me."

"You'd be much more attractive if you didn't fret so much."

"I can hear your father pacing above our heads."

"He's just working through a story on how Dementor-spawn are causing this cold snap."

He looked at her and thought, for an unknown time, that she had grown quite attractive in the ten years since the war ended. She had that way of seeming as though she understood him, to... He shook his head at himself. It should not be. "I really need to get going."

"Have something to drink." She walked over to the stove and stirred something that smelled inviting.

"Well, all right... but just half a cup," he muttered as he saw her scoop a ladle-full.

"There should be singing," she said. "If only the Nargles hadn't scared away the Mistletoe-warblers." She looked at a bunch hung over the stairs despondently.

He sipped his drink cautiously, but then eagerly. This was a remarkable brew. Then he remembered who else lived near Ottery St. Catchpole. "The Weasleys would have a fit if they saw me here."

"It's far too stormy to worry about them."

He looked mournfully into his cup. Had he really drunk it all so quickly? "What was in this... concoction?"

"My mum used to make it. Daddy calls it 'grog,'" she said as if that explained everything. She looked at him, and it seemed as though her eyes became luminous and her face shone in the light.

"Are you trying to cast some spell upon me?"

"You know, when you smile, your eyes aren't lifeless at all. There's a sparkle, like a starlit night."

"I'll break whatever charm you're casting." He got up and looked for the cloak he was sure he'd worn to the house. He discovered it by the fire just as she snatched his hat from his head.

"Let me take that. Your hair looks very nice this evening. You must not have been making any potions today."

"As a matter of fact, I..." Did he want to admit that he'd showered and changed before coming here? Of course not. She would misconstrue the fact that he had simply wanted to look his best while meeting with an employer... who was rarely better groomed than he was. He frowned and looked down at her. "It's none of your business." He sat on a couch and folded his arms as he continued frowning. Might as well let the fire do its work and dry off his outerwear.

She sat down next to him and leaned close. "Isn't this comfortable?"

He stood up. "I'm trying to protect our reputations, Miss Lovegood."

She sighed and shrugged. "I don't think my reputation matters, Severus. Most people believe odd things about me, anyway, so there's no reason to protect it." She stood up and reached for his hands again.

He snatched away from her and looked longingly at his cloak. That article of clothing had been drenched on his walk down the lane and was now hissing in the heat. He tried to say it kindly this time. "Miss Lovegood, I really can't stay."

"Don't hold out against your own good."

"Well, it is very cold outside."

"It certainly is."

He sat in a chair and watched drops fall from the brim of his hat. Sensing that he wanted some space from her, she went back to the kitchen and made a rattle amongst the dishes piled in the sink. It was homey and comfortable, the sort of thing he might have known if life had been different.

However, life had not been different, and he couldn't afford to imagine the what ifs. "I need to go," he said abruptly as he stood and reached for his cloak.

"It's too cold for such wet clothes," she said. Somehow she had reached the fire first and noted that his clothing was still quite wet and cold. She adjusted it so that a different side might have the benefit of being close to the fire. She came close to him again, but he stepped away.

"I'm not sure what you're trying to do, but the answer is no. I'm leaving soon."

"It's too stormy to even consider it. Do you find the hospitality here lacking?"

He shook his head. "I'll admit that you've been quite kind."

"I've enjoyed having the company. Daddy'll be working on that story for days."

She was missing the point. "Although your home is warm and welcoming, I must leave."

She pointed to the window. "Look at that storm. You can't possibly leave now."

"Minerva McGonagall would be suspicious," he mused.

She stood very close and looked up at him. "Your lips look delicious."

"Dumbledore would ask what I was thinking."

"I'm not sure his opinion is pertinent to the situation." How did a Ravenclaw know about snaking her arms around his neck?

"Rita Skeeter's mind is vicious," he mumbled as with a gentle tug she pulled his head down to just the right spot. It was several minutes before either spoke again. He was the first to realize that he needed to pull away from her.

She smiled up at him. "Rowena's crown! Your lips *are* delicious."

She was so fey, so soft, so inviting in his arms. He needed space, he needed a distraction, he needed... He grabbed his glass and held it out to her. "Perhaps another half-cup?"

"You certainly could use it before heading into that blizzard." That she went to the kitchen was gratifying but somehow left him cold.

He sat down again, but forgot and sat on the couch. When she brought his drink she sat so close to him that he couldn't move away or get up without touching her. She leaned way in, right into his space.

"I've got to get home," he whispered.

"You'd freeze out there."

An idea struck him and he grasped it. "Your father has a cloak he could lend me, doesn't he?"

"It's way too deep, over the tops of your snake-skin boots, even."

"You've been too good..." He sucked in his breath at her touch.

"I get such a thrill just from the feel of your hand," she said as if reflecting upon it. She worked her fingers between his.

"You have to understand, Miss Lovegood." He reached for a pedagogical tone but instead his voice came out in what was almost a squeak.

"How is it that you do this to me?" she asked. She pressed up against his side in a way that was perfectly natural and yet far too stimulating.

"With my past, and having been your professor, there will be a lot of talk."

"But it would be so much worse..."

He put his fingers over her lips. "What is worse is what they will imply."

She shook her head. "No, it would be worse if you went out there and got pneumonia."

"I shouldn't stay," he said as he worked his fingers through her hair and pulled her face close.

"You don't need to hold out any more," she said matter-of-factly.

It was far later when he spoke again, his cloak long since dry and toasty warm. He listened to her father continue to pace the floor upstairs. The wind still howled outside. He considered the young woman in his arms. She looked at him happily, and for the first time in his life he understood the word cozy. Part of him wanted to glower and snap, but that would mean going out into the weather.

"Ah, it's too cold outside," he growled, as if that was the deciding factor.

A/N: Beta read by Trickie Woo, who suggested this after reading another story inspired by the same song.