

# Egg Nog

*by janus*

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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Egg nog. The first time he had been presented with it, it was hot in a footed crystal glass on a silver tray wielded by Dobby the House Elf. It had been thinned with rum and had appeared a pale tan-coloured grey flecked with almost-black. He tried everything offered to him, no matter how unappealing. Purebloods had tastes for things he would have scarcely considered food, he had discovered. He would never have eaten fish eggs unless he had been starving, but they served it to their beautiful friends.

Egg nog. It had looked very dubious, but he found it was delicious. The black flecks that had looked so dirty were only spices. It was thick and creamy. It was like liquid milk candy, even better than chocolate. And whether it was the heat of the beverage or the measure of rum, he felt his cheeks glow and his brain happily cuddle up into an ephemeral warm blanket. What delight.

He searched for it at meals and among aperitifs. His hosts smiled at him indulgently, amused by his enthusiasm, for he had never been drawn to sweets particularly in the past. He learned to enjoy it cold, and it reminded him of the milk that had come right from the cows that grazed behind Spinner's End. Even so, it was without tang, smooth as befitted a Malfoy winter comestible. He drank it with and then without rum, pleased that with no additions it lost none of its warming and enveloping qualities. He was sure it was magical, though Lucius explained the recipe.

Ah, the food of Heaven. Because they knew how he enjoyed it, Dobby was instructed to provide it for him during the holiday whenever he wished. His tea was prepared with egg nog instead of milk. He had a small chilled glass upon rising. When passing the kitchens he took small drinks from shot glasses, both cold and hot. In the evening he enjoyed it laced with heady alcohol. But it seemed he was always cocooned in a warm and pleasant daze.

It was a visitor who commented first. "You look as if you have spent a bracing day in the cold."

He had smiled, for he had taken a walk that morning, thinking nothing of it.

Lucius noticed soon. "Your cheeks are bright red. You are usually quite pale. How are you feeling? You don't want to be ill at Christmas."

"Oh, no. I feel wonderful." But Severus had looked in the mirror, and his cheeks were indeed scarlet and the skin felt hot and... stretched. That was it. He had been having trouble concentrating on his potions.

Lucius touched his neck. "You are very warm. I think we should see my father."

Severus didn't wish to trouble Abraxas with problems. It was Severus' job to solve problems of potions and magic, to be an aid. He was supposed to be a solution, not to come to his patron with any of his small troubles. At the same, as he tried any food offered him, no matter how outré, he also immediately co-operated with any suggestion of either Malfoy.

Abraxas ran his thumb over the red cheeks and felt his head. His hands were cool, and Severus realised he was indeed feeling a little... dizzy? Perhaps vague was a better word.

Severus' face was worried. Lucius was right. He *really* did not want to be ill at Christmas, and certainly did not want to be ill here or in any sense a burden. It would be so mortifying to be nursed and so counter to all his work of showing how useful he could be.

"Don't be so concerned, Severus. Everything is all right. You've been drinking a great deal of egg nog recently, haven't you? Have you ever had it before?"

Severus brightened at the thought of his favourite beverage. "No, sir."

"Do you know I am very fond of hot apple cider, especially at Christmas?"

"No, sir." Why were they talking about drinks? he wondered.

"Ah, the crisp flavour, redolent of autumn orchards! The tang presaging the celebration of familial cheer! The feeling of well-being and contentment – of being wrapped in a world of happy dream! And yet... you have seen no cider this holiday season, have you?"

"No, sir."

"That is because it has exactly this effect upon me. And it will grow worse the more you drink. I am allergic to apples."

And Severus was allergic to egg nog. But he had shared this personal moment of wonder and loss with the great man.