

A Merry Yarn

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A tale of friendship, love and loyalty.

One

Chapter 1 of 1

A tale of friendship, love and loyalty.

Still not mine.

This was originally written for the Snapecase fest on lj. Many thanks to the wonderful pyjamapants for the beta.

So much had changed.

It remembered the time when it had been just a wee nightie. Not ordinary. Never ordinary. How could it be when it was made from the finest, most exquisite silk the wizarding world had to offer? Untearable, never fading, never wearing out, and yet as soft and smooth as a warm stream in Spring.

One of its first memories were hands turning it around, probing its seams and then stroking it, lovingly and very gently, whilst silver-grey eyes looked it over. There was appreciation in those eyes and happiness. The eyes belonged to a man, tall, imposing, with silvery-golden hair tied back at the nape of his neck; the hair looked almost as silky and smooth as the nightie's fabric. The man was clad in black, obviously made-to-measure, brocade robes. He carried a long, black stick with a silver top that was now leaning against the table whilst he inspected the seamstress' work.

The nightie noticed the difference between male and female hands. Granted, the only female hands it was used to were those of its maker. Whilst gentle as well, they did sometimes not-so-pleasant things, and they were much more matter-of-fact, not so likely to indulge in stroking.

'It is satisfactory,' the man pronounced, though the way his hands were holding the nightie indicated that he found it a lot more than just satisfactory.

The man with the nice hands also had a nice voice the nightie noticed before its world was muffled by paper that was carefully wrapped around it. Then it sank into what felt like an enclosure, snug, but not too narrow, and the rest of the conversation became a faint murmur.

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The nightie had no idea how much time had passed. Time didn't matter to it, but it seemed to be very important to humans. It had overheard a lot of talk about days, hours, dates of order and such things at the seamstress' place.

The lid of the box opened and light filtered into it. A pair of hands took it carefully out of the wrapping paper and lifted it. Yet another pair of hands the nightie noticed. These were male too, thin, very gentle and slightly trembling. They turned it around and then carefully unfolded it, shaking it lightly, so that the nightie spread out to its full size.

It was turned over and then back again. The man holding it was as tall as the man from the shop...a bit taller in fact. He wore black wool robes of good quality and was very thin with black hair. It looked shiny, but not very silky. The eyes looking at it weren't silver, but very, very dark, and they seemed to burn with something the nightie couldn't

name. Humans had all these different eye and hair colours, and they seemed to attach such importance to it. But then, they came in all sorts of colourings just like fabrics, so it made sense.

The man holding it made a few soft noises before he said, 'It is exquisite. Thank you, Lucius.'

If it had been a cat, like those that the seamstress used to shoo constantly from one pile of fabric to the next, the nightie would have started to purr at the sound of the voice that washed over it like caressing hands...and the nightie liked nothing better than to be stroked. As it was, it snuggled a bit deeper into the hand holding it.

Lucius seemed to be the man from the shop who was standing a few feet away. The nightie noticed that he was wearing different robes now. They were again obviously made-to-measure, but these were dark grey and looked like they were made from finest wool. His hair wasn't tied back now but cascaded loosely down his back. He replied, 'Happy birthday, Severus.'

Then, he came closer, and the nightie found itself stuck between two warm, male bodies locked in a fierce embrace. It was a bit tight, but not too unpleasant, though it could have really done without the buttons from the dark-eyed man's robes that were pressing into its fabric.

'Why don't you try it on?' the man who was called Lucius whispered.

'Here? Now?' the other, who then had to be Severus, answered.

'Is there a better time?' The answer held a note of amusement.

Severus seemed to agree as the nightie found itself dropped on what turned out to be a large bed with sheets nearly...but only nearly...as smooth as its own fabric.

A moment later, it was picked up again. A large nose rubbed along its inner fabric, and then the nightie glided over narrow shoulders onto its first body. It didn't have any experience to compare to, but the body looked and felt nice. Slim, sinewy, pale with a few dark hairs here and there and more of them spreading down from the abdomen. The nightie did what came naturally to it and wrapped itself around the nice body that was currently wearing it.

Mmmh, this was even better than being stroked.

Severus' soft noise indicated that he seemed to agree, so the nightie rippled lightly along his back. Another soft noise, which turned into a series of sighs when pale hands started to slide over silk. For the second time in half an hour, the nightie would have purred if it had been able to. Sliding hands soon turned to roaming over smooth fabric and then under it as sighs turned into moans.

Shortly thereafter the nightie found itself curled up on the very edge of the bed whilst two pale, beautiful bodies became intertwined.

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Life as Severus' nightie was good. Most of the time it lived in the large bed where it had first met him. It was a cosy home, and the nightie happily dozed the days away under warm, fluffy duvets. Night was its favourite time because then Severus would be there and the nightie could wrap itself around his body, caressing it in a tender embrace. Usually the other man, Lucius, was there as well, and he too had a nightie.

They had met the morning after the nightie had been worn...if only for a short time...by Severus, or rather they found themselves folded neatly and laid out side by side in the bed. The nightie was puzzled. What did proper etiquette dictate? Was the other nightie older? Whose bed was this?

For a moment, it was a very confused nightie until it was gently nudged by a fabric as smooth and exquisite as itself, but black not light silver. It belonged to Lucius. Had for some time actually, though it didn't look a day older than Severus' nightie, who gladly reciprocated and introduced itself.

It learnt that the bed belonged to Lucius and that Severus was a frequent guest.

Soon, the two nighties became good friends, which was just as well because more often than not they'd find themselves dumped unceremoniously in a heap on the floor whilst their wizards were otherwise engaged on the bed. It was so much better to snuggle up together than to be all alone on the bedroom floor.

The nightie soon learnt that there were other parts on a wizard's body, apart from arms and legs, that could move. Usually when both wizards were in the bed and usually this was a prelude to either finding itself bunched up around Severus' waist or to finding itself on the edge of the bed or the floor. The nightie didn't mind because Severus usually seemed very happy and relaxed after these events.

Sometimes Severus would fold up his nightie and put it...carefully wrapped...into a bag and take it to another bed. That bed was nice too, not as large and the linen not as fine, but it was cosy and kept them warm against the chilly draught in the room.

The nightie loved this bed too because here Severus never had company and belonged to his nightie alone who wrapped itself around him like a lover's embrace.

Then, things began to change. Severus and the nightie spent more time in the smaller bed, and often Severus didn't stay in the bed, but paced before the fire in his rooms or spent hours on his desk, making notes, and leafing through books. He was also losing weight, and the nightie wrapped itself tighter around him.

Sometimes, the nightie would accompany Severus on long walks through the castle, for that was where his bed stood. A nightgown or, more often, a woollen cloak would keep them warm whilst they walked for hours through long corridors, lit by torches that flared to light at their approach.

Most of the time their nightly walks were quiet and uneventful, so the nightie didn't expect anything unusual when Severus emerged from the bathroom, his hair still damp. As he pulled the nightie on, it felt itself enveloped in the smell of freshly bathed wizard. They were on their way to bed when Severus suddenly turned around, mumbled something and set off at a sprint, forgetting to pull on a nightgown or a cloak in his haste to go wherever he was going. If he didn't notice the cold wind breezing through the castle, the nightie certainly did and wished for a fur lining.

Halfway down a corridor, they heard banging and wailing from somewhere above. Severus spun on his heels and sprinted in the other direction. As they passed a door that stood ajar, light pouring through it, he stopped dead in his tracks. The nightie was starting to become very, very tired of all this running around, the cold and the general hullabaloo. It wished they were back in the warm rooms or, better yet, snuggled toastily under the duvet.

Meanwhile, Severus tiptoed into the lit room, then stopped again and pulled out the wooden stick...his wand as the nightie had learnt...and swept it around the room. Coming up with nothing, he muttered something under his breath the nightie didn't understand, but it didn't sound friendly.

More wailing from upstairs. With another muttered curse, Severus set off again whilst the nightie gave up all hope of being warm again any time soon.

More stairs until they came to a stop in front of a man in a cheap, flannel nightgown. The nightie wrinkled its non-existent nose. The nightgown smelled.

The men were talking about something that involved an egg, a peeve and some other things. Neither of them meant anything to the nightie, but it could feel Severus' body growing more and more tense. At least the wailing had stopped, but now another noise sounded through the night, a sort of irregular clunking, and then a voice growled, 'Pyjama Party, is it?'

It was obvious that the man had no idea. There were no pyjamas present. Only two nightshirts and a nightgown. Not too mention that the nightie wouldn't want to meet either of the other two in any sort of social context. Not even... No. Not any. Not ever. It was used to better company.

The rest of the conversation consisted mostly of growls from the man in the faded, shabby nightshirt, subservient noises from the man in the smelly nightgown, and a few sentences from Severus who was growing more and more tense by the minute. At some point, he clutched his left arm, but let go again quickly when everyone else was

looking at it. More growls and more tension until Severus turned and swept off.

The nightie made sure to billow nicely as they stalked back to their rooms where, after some angry pacing in front of the fireplace, they...finally...retired to bed under the warm duvet.

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Soon after the meeting in the corridor, Severus started to lose even more weight; he'd often leave in the evening and wouldn't return until the wee hours of the morning. He was never happy when he came back but very quiet, and a deep frown had started to appear between his brows.

When he was gone, the nightie was all alone under the duvet or in its drawer, waiting. Often it could hear Severus pacing for hours in the other room; on one or two occasions, judging by the noise, he even seemed to explode something, or maybe he threw something against a wall. When he'd finally come to bed, he'd quickly put the nightie on, slip under the duvet, and then lie awake until morning.

They didn't go to the other house as often, and when they did it was different than before. The two men were quieter, less playful, and to both nighties their embraces looked desperate.

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After some time, they didn't go to the other house at all. The nightie missed its friend, but that was nothing compared to the changes in Severus.

If he'd been too thin before, he was gaunt now. The nightie knew because it wrapped itself around his body almost every night, and there was less and less body to hug. Every night, its wizard tossed and turned, getting up to pace the length of his rooms, or he just sat on the bed staring into the darkness.

And then one night, he didn't come back. The nightie lay all alone under the duvet waiting for its wizard. He didn't come back the next night, or the night after or the one after. In fact no one came. Not even the small creatures that usually cleaned the rooms and looked after the bed-linen.

The rooms lay empty and deserted. Nothing moved and no sound could be heard.

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The door creaked and familiar footsteps approached the bed, walking through the rooms several times, and there was a sound as if objects were moved before a familiar weight settled on the bed's edge. It didn't move for quite some time until a white, long-fingered hand reached under the duvet and pulled the nightie out. Severus was back. The nightie pressed itself into the hand holding it.

The nightie felt Severus' fingers caress it, and then they lifted it up and pressed it to its wizard's cheek. They held it there for a while, then Severus rose with a sigh, folded the nightie and put it into a box on top of a stack of shirts.

All too soon the lid of the box was lifted again. They couldn't have gone very far. There hadn't been the familiar soft, popping noise that usually indicated they were going to the other house where the black nightie and Lucius lived.

This room was larger than the previous one, and the bed was bigger, but it looked like they were still in the castle. Severus hands lifted a slightly disappointed nightie tenderly up and placed it in the middle of the bed. Severus looked at it, shook his head and pulled his wand, and the nightie felt itself floating through the air into a drawer, which then closed.

It was a nice, spacious drawer. No dust. And yet the nightie wished it was in the bed, together with its wizard.

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The nightie was bored. It knew the drawer very well by now since it spent most of its time there. It was nice to have a drawer to oneself, but other garments would at least have been company. Sometimes it wondered if the black nightie in the other house was lonely, too. At this point, Severus' nightie would have been happy to see the smelly nightgown again.

Perhaps not. There were worse things than being the sole occupant of a drawer.

Finally, the drawer opened and Severus peered inside it. When he picked it up, the nightie rustled with enthusiasm in his hands. To its delight, its friend, the black nightie had come to visit and brought Lucius as well. Both nighties noticed that the two men looked tired, sad and pale. In bed, both of them clung to their wizards, trying to offer the comfort they didn't seem to find in each other's embrace. Neither wizard slept, just holding the other in silence. The black nightie and its wizard left when the first ray of light peeked through the window across the bed.

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Lucius and the black nightie didn't come back, and the nightie took up residence in its lonely drawer again. At least it could hear Severus' familiar footsteps and the squeaking of the mattress when he eventually laid down to sleep. Sometimes it heard him come in and putter around for a bit before he left again. Had he chosen another nightie to accompany him on his walks through the castle corridors? Or did he go elsewhere? Without it? The nightie curled up into a crumpled, little silk ball.

The door slammed, then hurried footsteps, a muttered curse in Severus' voice and then the door slammed again.

Silence.

Heavy, foreboding and palpable to every inhabitant of the castle. The silk ball curled up even tighter and squeezed itself into the back corner of the drawer.

Nothing happened for some time. The world seemed to have come to a standstill.

Suddenly, the castle shook and noise, shouting, banging and what sounded like explosions could be heard, even in the far corner of the nightie's drawer.

It went on for quite some time, and then there was silence again. Utter calm. No sound could be heard, but it felt like something fundamental had changed. The nightie rolled back into the middle of the drawer and uncurled a bit.

And a bit more.

It waited for Severus, for the familiar hands to lift it out of the drawer and slip it on so that it could glide over his body once more and enfold him in its embrace.

The nightie waited, but Severus didn't come.

It waited.

And waited.

Finally, the door opened, and two pairs of feet were approaching, one scurrying rapidly, the other more calmly. Both came to a standstill in front of the nightie's chest of drawers.

'You will not touch the headmaster's belongings.'

The nightie perked up. It knew that voice. With it came a small creature with gentle hands that took care of it. Surely, Severus would be here soon.

'Look, Tassy, I know how attached you are to the headmaster. But he won't come back. He's dead.' The voice was soft, serious, obviously used to being obeyed.

'Miss will not touch the headmaster's belongings.'

'All right, we'll leave if for a few more days, then. We all need a bit of time to grieve. Come, Tassy. I won't remove anything today.'

The feet started moving again, and then the sound of a closing door could be heard.

The nightie unfolded itself a bit more. The voice had said Severus wouldn't come back. Bleak despair seemed to crawl into the drawer causing a thread at the nightie's hem to come loose.

And then another.

Before the hem could unravel completely, the nightie pulled itself together. The voice was wrong. Severus would never leave it here, all on its own.

It waited.

And waited.

And waited.

The sound of the door opening and footsteps approaching. Only one pair of feet this time. There were some noises and then the drawer opened.

Tassy's hands lifted the nightie up, shook it out a bit before it was folded again and put into a box together with some books, Severus' nightgown, his slippers, a robe and two smaller boxes.

The box closed. Suddenly, the nightie felt itself shrinking. Then the box was lifted. After some time and what felt like a lot of bouncing around, a whispered conversation reached the inside, but no words were discernible.

More lifting and bouncing until it finally stopped, and the things inside the box went back to their usual size. The nightie was glad it didn't have a stomach, but it was sure its colour was a bit greener than usual.

The lid of the box opened, and a pair of familiar grey eyes looked inside.

'Yes, it's all there.' Lucius nodded. He took the box with him, making it float behind him. At least, he left it open. As they mounted a staircase, the nightie noticed the strange ceiling. It had never been here before. Where was Lucius taking it?

They went into a room, and the box was placed on a bedside table. And there in the bed was Severus.

Pale, with dark shadows under his eyes and a thick bandage around his neck, but he was there. The nightie bounced a few feet into the air.

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So much had changed.

The nightie snuggled a bit closer to its friend. The duvet had been folded back, and a chilly breeze drifted through the open window into the bedroom.

It wouldn't be long before their wizards would come to bed now.

Sometimes in the mornings, the nighties went downstairs with them, either to a room with a table in it or, when it was warm, outside into the garden.

Even if they stayed in the bed whilst their wizards went about what ever it was that wizards did in the daytime, the nighties knew they'd be back at night. Life was good.

~fin~

*quoted from *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* p. 512, UK paperback edition.