

Charmed Bride

by Rose of the West

For the 2011 Snapecase on LJ. After the first war, Severus Snape is pressed into a new service.

The Bride's Arrival

Chapter 1 of 5

For the 2011 Snapecase on LJ. After the first war, Severus Snape is pressed into a new service.

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The Marriage Begins

Chapter 2 of 5

The plan does not go as Severus hopes.

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When he awoke the next morning, Severus found that the robe he had laid out was replaced by a coat cut similarly to the one he had seen on the girl...Kalinda, if the elf told him correctly. He pulled the rest of his clothes on and made his way up to the staff room, carrying the coat and resolving to put a stop to everything. As he reached for the handle of the door, he realized that for once, he had gotten up on a Monday morning, showered, shaved and dressed with very little of the aches and stiffness he usually experienced. He resolved again to analyze the tea she had sent. It might be quite useful.

When he entered the staff room, he had to step out again to make sure he was in the correct hallway. He looked around, felt like a fool, and opened the door again. Someone had gone to great efforts to make the room look like an exotic palace. Thick carpets in many colors lay upon the floors and the walls were hung with silk, which gave the room a much warmer feeling. There was a small fountain in a corner and soft cushions for the guests...Snape's fellow staff members...to sit upon. The most impressive thing in the room was a table laid with a rich cover. Upon it were so many items and foods that Snape couldn't keep track of them all: nuts, sweets, coins, and other precious-looking things.

The bride stood in a corner, wearing clothing similar to that which he had seen her in before, but much richer. Her coat was cream colored silk and brocaded with threads that he somehow knew were real gold. Her face was veiled again, so now he was looking at those eyes. He had forgotten how moved he had been by them on Saturday morning. He put the coat on that had been sent to him and only barely avoided sighing contentedly at how well it fit and how comfortable it was. It was wool, but the softest, finest wool he had ever touched. He turned away because he noticed her eyes light up when he finished buttoning it.

For once, Dumbledore didn't pontificate; he went through the rites that were necessary with a minimum of fuss. Perhaps he sensed that the rites required to satisfy the local authorities and those of the girl's homeland were long enough. It was a school day, after all. In a blessedly short time, Snape walked his bride from the room and to her quarters. He walked into his own quarters and found his teaching robe. Exchanging it for the coat, he returned to tell his...erm, wife...to stay out of his rooms before going to breakfast.

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After breakfast, a morning spent teaching, lunch, and then an afternoon of teaching, Dumbledore forced Snape to return to his own rooms. "You should be with your bride, Severus."

"I have nothing to say to her."

"Ah, but she may have a great deal to tell you. We need to know everything we can learn about Voldemort from her. I doubt he's gone for good. Since you're her husband, she can tell you now."

Snape made a great show of sighing and turning toward the dungeons. "Fine, Albus, but when this is all over and we're sure he is gone for good, we need to get this marriage annulled and send the child back to her parents." He would have stomped away, but it wouldn't have looked dignified.

"She's of age and then some, just as you are, Severus. Keep that in mind."

He went to his rooms and saw that a door had appeared in his sitting room, near the fireplace. He stepped over and lifted his hand to knock but then stopped himself. Turning, he looked over at the coat he had worn that morning. It might be a sign of good will on his part. He had become very much aware during his youth that the right clothes opened pathways that might otherwise be closed. He changed back into the coat and knocked on the door.

The door opened, and he stood in the doorway in confusion. The sitting room was laid out as the staff room had been that morning. The cushions were placed on the floor before a warm fire. A table was covered with delicious-smelling foods and the fountain in the corner gurgled merrily.

What confused him most was the girl. Instead of the attire she had worn previously, tonight she was wearing filmy trousers that did little to hide the shape of her legs, nor...he averted his eyes upward. There he found a flat belly which beckoned the touch of...not himself...a man. Keeping his eyes moving, he discovered that her breasts were covered by a snug blouse or shirt that clung and outlined a form that was not in the least girlish. Her veils were lying over her hair, which had been let down.

He couldn't look at her. It caused him to entertain thoughts, and he shouldn't have such thoughts. He was in mourning, after all. "You were going to tell me your story."

"I cannot tell you my story."

"What?" This new development was irritating. Was the marriage a waste of time? A line formed between his eyebrows.

"I think we must be husband and wife together for a while first, perhaps."

Snape sighed. Perhaps they needed to prove something to the fates who controlled the charm. "Very well, then."

"I can tell you a story, however. Would you like to hear it? First you must eat and tell me such things about your day as you would like."

He found himself strangely motivated to describe small anecdotes from his classroom with her. She nodded her head in agreement with all that he did and shook her head or laughed at the antics of the students. He found her attention and her desire to agree with him quite gratifying.

Eventually, dinner was finished and the house-elf carried off the remainder. They were alone. The elf must have turned down the lamps, because the room seemed a bit darker and the mistress of it seemed to glow in a way he hadn't noticed before.

"You were going to tell me a story," he reminded her.

"Yes, of course," she said. She started to speak. There must have been some magical charm about her voice, for as she told her tale, pictures of the events passed before his eyes.

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I have learned, my lord husband, that a long time ago, but not too long, a young man realized he had curious abilities. At an age when it is common among your kind, this young man learned that these abilities were more common than he liked. It was a source of great consternation that others could have such skills. Yet when the opportunity to learn about and develop his art was offered, he eagerly took it.

When he arrived at his school...such an odd school, but wonderful to him...he discovered that his abilities, while common, were above those of his peers. He comforted himself in the fact that, once fully trained, he would be the greatest wizard of his time.

He gathered weaker wizards and witches around himself. They were drawn to his power and to the promises he made to them. He started suggesting that they carry out certain acts of evil. They loved the power this gave them and continued even as his suggestions slowly became orders. Over time, when they didn't conform to his wishes, he would perform small tortures and they would quickly fall in line.

As his power over them grew, they obeyed him because they feared him. Oddly enough, his following grew, even though he was an object of fear. He promised his followers power and the respect of other witches and wizards. This they received even as they feared him, and so his adherents grew in number.

One thing troubled him. He had a magical parent and a non-magical parent. Of the two, the magical parent had died but the non-magical parent was still living. This was distasteful to him. Surely it should be the other way around, and yet it was the case. His magical mother had died in childbirth while his non-magical father lived. He was greatly angered by the injustice of this. Surely magic should have saved his mother and allowed her to live.

He decided that his mother died because she was a mere woman. He, being male and magical, would find the secret to long life. He asked his teachers to help him, but they gave unsatisfying answers about living a great life or working to ensure the greatness of the next generation. None of them answered the question of how he could live a long life.

He searched through texts that other students eschewed. He found ways to obtain texts that his professors hid from him. Over time, he discovered several options, but no one would explain them to his satisfaction. Unhappy with the results, he chose to look outside of his culture. He started exploring other magical traditions.

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Kalinda fell silent.

Severus looked at her for several minutes. When it became apparent that she was done, he burst into questions. "What happened? Where did he go? What did he discover?"

"These things I cannot tell you, lord husband. I cannot tell you about myself."

"You're not telling me about yourself, you're telling me about..." He stopped short. Perhaps the next part of the story involved the way she came to be in the Dark Lord's possession. He sighed.

"Why can't you tell me about yourself?"

"There's a charm. Only a husband can know me so intimately."

He nodded his head as he mentally cursed the foolishness of this bit of magic. Of course there was a charm, and of course the requirements were murky. Simply being the girl's husband was insufficient. She suggested that it might take some time, and she was more likely to know than he was. He looked at his watch and stood.

"Well, it's been a long day, and I have papers to grade, so I'll bid you good night."

"Oh," she said, "I thought..." her eyes darted to the alcove where a richly hung and cushioned bed stood.

"I wouldn't presume," he answered.

"But you're my husband."

"I'm here to protect you insofar as my name and wand can do so. Don't ever think that what is between us extends further than that." He was unaccountably angry. He stood and went to his own rooms, closing the door between them.

He leaned against the wall. "Lily," he whispered, "I might have betrayed you tonight." He decided that it wouldn't happen again.

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He repeated the story for Dumbledore. "I don't believe that's all there is," said the Headmaster. Snape took his wand and removed the memories of the entire evening up to the moment the door shut. He all but flung the smoky gray thoughts into the Pensieve.

Several minutes later, the Headmaster reemerged from the bowl. "It's a bit of a problem, but not insurmountable. It just needs time, as she said. Perhaps you could hurry it along a bit, by..."

"Not on your life."

"What's wrong with her? She seems quite lovely, for men who are interested in that sort of thing."

"She's not Lily."

"Severus, we need that information."

"You're welcome to take my place, old man." The black eyes were intransigent as they looked into the blue ones.

Dumbledore stared at the professor. The boy had been through terrible grief recently, and this marriage had been sprung upon him unawares. The Headmaster considered that perhaps he had pushed too hard, too quickly. "I suppose we have a little time. The thing is, we've heard this bit about immortality from other sources. If it's true, then perhaps he's not dead and gone after all."

"So where is he, then?"

"That's an excellent question."

"When or how will he come back?"

"Another excellent question. You see why we need the information in that girl's head. The sooner we know what we're up against, the better prepared we'll be."

Snape sighed and nodded. "Do you suppose there's a counter charm?"

Dumbledore didn't think so, but he didn't want to discourage the other man, who was grasping at straws. "That's an excellent idea. You might check with Filius, and there are several books in the Restricted Section that deal with memory charms and charms which invoke the nuptial bond."

It was not an altogether satisfactory interview on either side, but both wizards decided it was the best they would have on this night. They said their goodbyes and Snape headed for his quarters. When he walked through his sitting room, he heard the squeaky voice of a house-elf.

"Mistress is beautiful. Master will see that. Mistress is desirable. Master will love Mistress."

"Thank you, Zurie."

He heard a hiccupping sound, followed by something very much like the blowing of one's nose, and then silence. He sighed and went toward his own bedroom.

A/N: Thank you for reading and reviewing! Thanks especially to Trickey Woo for beta reading!

The Bride's Charms

Over time, the relationship starts to shift.

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The next day, Severus did things exactly as he was accustomed. It was only after being sent from dinner that night that he remembered he had a wife. He asked if he could just sit and eat for a few minutes, but Dumbledore was quite clear.

"See if she'll tell you anything more, Severus. Come to me later, if you like."

He went to her chamber in his teaching robe. Kalinda wore clothes that were colorful and suited her figure, yet he wouldn't remember exactly what they looked like. He was led into the room and seated before the fire. Food and drink were brought to him. He would later recall eating but not exactly what.

He had learned to do as she indicated, so he ate and after a few minutes said, "What can you tell me today? Can you tell me anything about the Dark Lord?"

She cleared her throat and began. "It has come to me, lord husband, that an amazing group of people known as badgers live here. They are very patient and long-suffering, yet they always manage to get what they intend. I also hear that there is a group of snakes who constantly make war with a group of lions. The badgers watched the two fight and said amongst themselves, 'We shall outwit them, because we will wait until both are weak.'

"The snakes lured the lions below the ground and the lions lured the snakes to their den. Once there, the victims were tricked or hurt. As a result, they all became weaker. The badgers watched and nodded to themselves. They stayed away from both lions and snakes. The birds they watched carefully, but because they flew above all and concentrated on the study of magic but nothing else, such animals were no match for anyone. The badgers kept to themselves and worked hard. At the end, they won the battles arranged for all the animals."

She was telling a story about the school. As he considered it, it was true. For the past several years, fighting between Gryffindor and Slytherin had gotten so bad that both houses were often numerically eliminated from winning the House Cup before the Easter Holidays. Ravenclaw had let their Quidditch and certain other skills dwindle of late and therefore were not much match for the hard-working Hufflepuffs.

"Where did you learn this story?"

"I have heard different things."

"Is there anything you can tell me about the Dark Lord?"

"Not tonight, lord husband."

He sighed and bid her good night. Then he went up to the Headmaster's office.

They discussed the observations she had made about the character of the school and Dumbledore chuckled. "Sometimes it takes an outsider to see us as we really are."

"Does it get you what you want?"

"Oh, no. Keep at it. I'm sure that with a little effort on your part, you will find it enjoyable."

He left the Headmaster and went to the library. There were several books in the Restricted Section he wanted to look through. He thought he could handle one or two on that night. Surely there was some discussion of the sort of charm she must have been placed upon her as a child. He would have to discover what the charm was and then he could reverse it.

The winter passed as she told him anecdotes from the school. These she seasoned with tales of the Death Eater exploits. In some he recognized himself, and he wondered if she knew she was speaking of him. Most interesting were those she told of her homeland and the creatures that inhabited it. He was surprised to be spellbound by stories of brave princes, evil viziers, man-eating giants and kind kings.

She always spoke quietly, and her voice was more lyrical than those he had known before. There was almost a song-like quality to it. Some nights he stayed longer than he intended and asked questions, just to hear her speak. She never answered his questions except to open doors to new questions, especially about the stories she had surely known since childhood.

She could not speak of herself. In many ways it reminded him of a Fidelius Charm. If that was the case, it would be difficult to break without having the spell caster present. It would be difficult, not impossible. He questioned Zurie, an odd creature among odd creatures, hoping the house-elf would know the answer. She would giggle in her high-pitched voice and leave him.

As Dumbledore had foreseen, Lily's loss started to recede. There was a picture he kept near his bed. It was the first thing he looked at in the morning and the last before he doused his lights, but he was starting to forget her during the day. As the creature who was his wife smiled and told her stories, he even found himself laughing from time to time. Some nights he looked guiltily at the picture before he went to bed, but the face in the picture looked happy no matter what he did.

He became aware of the woman Kalinda was. He carefully avoided her eyes, which seemed to read his soul and concentrated on her colorful garments. That was dangerous because they encouraged him to become increasingly aware of her nubile body and other charms. He told himself not to look at the bright fabrics that accentuated the shape of her womanly curves but then found himself caught by the jingle of an ankle bracelet. Moments later he would realize that he had been contemplating the elegance of her trim ankles.

He didn't know what she did during the day. It didn't concern him, so he didn't ask. If he had ever been asked, he would have answered that he supposed she was lurking in hallways and gathering material for her stories.

On the eve of the Easter Holidays, he enjoyed her story so much that he made a request of her. "I see that I shall never get anything useful from you, so perhaps you could entertain me a different way." He handed her a copy of *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*. "I would like to hear you tell one of these stories in your way tomorrow night. Can you read?"

"Oh, yes, lord husband. It's a lovely book. Is it very old?"

"It was my mother's and she prized it. Please take good care of it."

"Of course."

Wishing her good night had gotten a little awkward. He wanted to reach out and shake her hand or pat her arm or something, but he didn't understand such gestures. Bah, he told himself, it was a foolish urge, anyway.

He was strangely eager to hear what she would tell him the next night. He graded papers and was sure she would choose the tale of Babbity Rabbity. It was just the sort of tale of cleverness that she loved to tell him from her own childhood tales. He tested potions and thought that perhaps she would choose the one about the fountain. It was the one most of the teenaged girls and young women loved. He himself had no use for the dunderhead knight. A real man would find some ability to make his fortune.

She looked at him sadly as he came to the room. She was dressed in the golden clothes she had worn on their wedding night. Zurie served their dinner and they sat, as

always, before the fire.

"Did you pick a story?" he asked.

"Yes, lord husband. Tonight, if it pleases you, I wish to tell you about a powerful wizard who had everything he could want. To protect himself, however, he had hidden his heart away by means so powerful that it had become leathery and hair-covered. The charms of no woman could penetrate it.

"He met a woman whom he came to desire. She was all that he could wish for, and he started to develop a friendship with her. She did her best, but she was unable to respond quite as he wished, for she sensed that she would never be able to truly enter his heart. He loved her as well as he could with his hairy heart, but she eventually turned her sight to another man. He tried to sway her, but she sadly told him that they were not right for each other.

"He continued his attempts to win her, turning ever to power when he should have turned to love. In an effort to gain more power and prove his love for her, he inadvertently caused her death..."

"Enough!" Snape roared. He stood and seized Kalinda by the wrists. "Is this some sort of a joke to you? Do you really think I'm cold and unfeeling? I can feel as much as the next man. I'll prove it."

He dragged her to the bed in the alcove and tossed her onto it. Clothing was ripped and beads scattered everywhere on the bed and the floor. He leaned up over her...and then looked into her eyes. It was a mistake. He had always avoided her eyes because of their similarity to those of his Patronus. If they had been tear-filled or defiant, he would have been able to finish what he had started. Instead they looked resigned. She had expected this from him. She was disappointed, but she would accept it. Because of his Patronus, it was a look of condemnation from his own conscience.

He sat up and looked away from her. "I can't do this."

"Lord husband..."

"I can't do this, yet as I sit here, I want to."

"I am your wife."

"I can't rape you."

"Then why not do what a husband does with his wife?"

"Are you willing?"

"I accepted it when we decided to marry."

"I'm not sure I can accept it... to be tied in marriage for the rest of my life. I've been looking for a counter-charm to the one that keeps you from speaking of yourself. If I can accomplish that, then we can have the marriage annulled and you can marry the man of your choice."

"I chose you, in Dumbledore's office."

"That was under duress. You need to be able to make a true choice." He looked at her eyes and they compelled him to be honest. "And I don't want to be tied down."

"You're tied to Dumbledore. I think I can offer greater compensations."

He looked at her body and then quickly away, hoping to quiet the wave of true desire that had swept through him. "I'm sure you could, but it wouldn't be fair to you."

"I have come to know you in this odd sort of courtship we have shared for quite a few moons, now. Lord husband, I am content with this choice."

Another thought crept into his mind. Perhaps the only way to unlock the charm was to become her husband physically as well as legally. It was worth a try. His last coherent thought as he reached to touch her was that perhaps it would still be possible to annul the marriage. His last incoherent thought was that her eyes were now promising a happiness he'd never received in conjunction with his Patronus.

A/N: For those who are unfamiliar with The Tales of Beedle the Bard, you've just read spoilers for the story about the hairy heart. Dumbledore's notes for the story compare the wizard with Voldemort, but since Voldemort never loved a woman, a comparison to Severus Snape seems more likely.

Thank you to beta reader Trickle Woo!

The Marriage Adjusts

Chapter 4 of 5

Snape finds certain compensations within his new life.

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Severus got up the next morning from his own bed and performed his ordinary morning ablutions. Keeping to his routine, he got dressed. Then he happened to see the picture he always looked at every morning and night. He had been too tired the night before to give Lily proper attention, and there was a pang of guilt this morning. Yet he wasn't sure what to think as he gazed at her. Did he imagine the twinkle in her eye? It was almost as if she was glad about what he had done the night before. How could that be?

He opened his bedroom door and stopped dead at the sight of his wife. She was dressed in what he somehow knew was servant attire. It was very similar to what Zurie wore. Instead of the sly smile she usually wore, her eyes were downcast. A tray was in her hands, covered with a breakfast that he suspected was similar to the meal she had sent him the night before their wedding.

"I thought you might like your breakfast in your rooms this morning."

"How did you get in here?" He didn't want to admit that he had locked the door against her, but she must know by now.

"Zurie helped me." She shifted her weight. "Please sit down, husband."

He sat at the table where he graded papers and occasionally ate meals, and she placed the tray before him. After pouring his coffee and seeing that his plate was placed just right before him, she knelt at his feet. He was torn between the smell of the best coffee he'd ever had and the sight of her. He lifted the cup to his lips but realized it would taste horrible with her behaving this way.

"Kalinda, don't do that. Sit near me, please. Aren't you eating?"

"Oh, no, husband, I couldn't eat your meal. I broke fast earlier."

"At least sit near me." He conjured a chair for her and indicated that he wished her to take it. When she finally sat down, he asked, "What is the matter? Can you tell me your story, yet?"

"Oh, husband, I feel the story within me, but I cannot speak quite yet."

"Why did you kneel at my feet? I'm no one that you should treat me that way."

She looked up at him with liquid eyes. He had to adjust his gaze away from them. "My husband, did I please you last night?"

"Is that what worries you?"

"You left me, and I worried that you left in anger or disappointment."

Something bubbled up within him. It wasn't often that he came upon a person who was more wretched than he was, and he didn't know what to call this feeling. It made him uncomfortable, which was one of the reasons he tended to avoid situations where he might find a person in such straits. In this case, he knew he was responsible for soothing the girl's...his wife's, that is...distress.

"Of course I was pleased. Did you not hear me say how lovely and wonderful you were?"

"But you left me!"

"You had gone to sleep, and I didn't wish to trouble you in your rest."

"It would have been no trouble, my husband."

He sighed. The simple reason was that he couldn't stand the intimacy of actually sleeping with her. He would have been vulnerable in his sleep, and he couldn't stand the thought of it. He turned his head and mumbled, "I just couldn't stay. Do not ask me to."

His coffee cup was empty and she stood to refill it for him. "Will you come back for the evening, then?"

He should refuse. After all he had tried it, and it had not worked. He remembered the night before, however, and somehow could only say, "Of course. I found the evening quite pleasurable. Did you?"

"I..."

He looked from his yoghurt in surprise to see that he had made her blush. "Kalinda?" Now there were actual tears in her eyes. He started to panic. "Foolish woman! What have I done to make you cry?"

"I did not expect a husband so considerate of me," she whispered. Clearing her throat, she continued. "I was swept away by your touches, husband, and your gentle tenderness as you made me your own. I had been taught to expect pain from that moment, yet you gave me only joy. I know you do not love me, yet your treatment of me has been most kind, and you showed me great pleasure."

"Then you would like to continue?"

"Oh, yes!" Her eyes were shining. They were the same as he had always known, yet he wondered if it would be possible to conjure a Patronus with such eyes in the future. The doe's eyes had never had quite that glow.

"I'll come to your rooms at dinner time tonight, then?"

"I'll be waiting for you, husband."

He finished his coffee and the last of his fruit. Then he picked up his teaching robe from where he had left it and caressed her cheek. "I shall look forward to it."

He didn't really expect to think about her, but as he took an inventory of the stock room, he opened a bottle to check how much was left and a spicy scent wafted out. The second time he had made love to her the night before, he had unfastened her hair and found himself surrounded by a similar fragrance. She had tossed her head and her black hair went everywhere. Then she had leaned over him, and he couldn't keep from pulling her close.

He found himself looking forward to dinner. That night they established a pattern that would take them to the end of the school year. She still entertained him with tales that were mostly from her homeland. Now as they finished eating, he would draw her toward the bed where they would spend several enjoyable hours before he went back to his own room. The picture of Lily continued to twinkle up at him as though congratulating an old chum, and he found that life had new interests.

His meetings with Dumbledore had continued infrequently. As they contemplated a bottle of cognac, Dumbledore asked if Snape had learned anything new about Kalinda. He thought for a moment. He had learned that she was ticklish behind her knees, he had learned that sliding his hand up the bare skin of her abdomen ignited her desire, and he had learned that her head fell back just as she lost control during passion. None of these things would help Dumbledore, however.

He was starting to enjoy their moments together. He couldn't quantify his feelings, but he knew he was happier with her than at any other time. There was something about the words she whispered during their moments of pleasure that he found endearing. He had no idea what she was saying, but the way she looked at him and touched him as she said the words gave him clues. He found himself thinking of Lily even less than before. He placed her picture in a drawer and spent even less time looking at it.

There were two occasions when their evenings were different. Twice Nature exacted the price of womanhood upon Kalinda during that spring. Severus found that he had urges to provide comfort for his wife if at all possible. On one evening she seemed particularly wretched with aches and he sought the advice of the school's Matron. He found ways to warm and soothe her, and then he attempted to distract her with stories of his own. She smiled wanly, as though to reward him for his effort. Within a day or two she was much better and he didn't think of it.

The end of the term loomed, and Snape considered how to move back to his home. It was not as luxurious as what they had known at Hogwarts. Yet she had managed to turn the cold stones of the school into a warm and welcoming haven; perhaps she could do the same for his house.

There was another consideration. There was really just the one bedroom at Spinner's end. The other room was hardly bigger than a closet and he couldn't ask her to take it. He would have to let her have his room; could he stand to take the smaller room?

The other option was to share the one room. The part of him that still gazed at Lily's picture for an hour at a time shrank from that idea. The rest of him quietly warmed to the idea. There had been one night, when she had her monthly pain, when he had held her in his arms. He had stayed for nearly the entire night. Nothing terrible had happened, and he decided that he actually liked sleeping while so close to another person.

They spent hours packing for the summer. Over the last week, she became quieter and less controlling, and he started to miss her personality as he had come to know it. He wondered whether she could be ill, but shrank away from asking. On the last night before they would leave, she was dressed in a thin shift that was entirely sheer. They sat on the cushions as ever, and Zurie was attending them.

He leaned over to touch her, but she stayed him with a gentle touch on his hand. "Wait, Severus. There is a story I must tell you, first. A choice must be made between us, and then we may lie together."

"I know that I will love any story you tell me, Kalinda. You tell good stories and your voice is most pleasurable to the ear."

She smiled and began.

A/N: This chapter ends up being pretty short, but the final one will post in a day or two. Thank you very much for your kind attention to my story. Thank you especially to Trickie Woo for beta reading.

The Groom is Charmed

Chapter 5 of 5

Severus hears a story and listens to his heart.

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"Wait, Severus. There is a story I must tell you, first. A choice must be made between us, and then we may lie together."

"I know that I will love any story you tell me, Kalinda. You tell good stories and your voice is most pleasurable to the ear."

She smiled and began.

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"In days not so very long ago, a terrible wizard came to power. This wizard loved no people and feared few, yet he was able to raise a following that threatened the fabric of the Wizarding World. He cared little for other people of any sort, yet he managed to amass his followers, by targeting those of non-magical parentage. His power was so great that few wizards and witches chose to resist him; yet a small contingent of people did.

"One thing troubled him. He had a magical parent and a non-magical parent. Of the two, the magical parent had died but the non-magical parent was still living. This was distasteful to him. Surely it should be the other way around, and yet it was the case. He himself would find ways to live forever. He searched through texts that others eschewed. He found ways to obtain texts that those in power hid. Over time, he discovered several options, but no one would explain them to his satisfaction.

"He spent time at a shop where dark objects were sold, even before he reached his majority. He became friends with the owner of this shop, who showed him an amulet from a distant country. The owner had never found the secret of the amulet, because it was written in a different language, but this boy copied the writing carefully and promised himself to discover the secret if he could.

"On his next holiday, he went to the shop and took the amulet into a back room. Holding the dreadful object in his hand while speaking the spell inscribed upon it, he summoned a djinn from a land far away. He demanded help in his search for immortality. This djinn was loath to help the wizard, for he could tell that the other man was evil. However, he was bound to obey due to the spell upon the amulet.

"The djinn was forced to help the wizard store portions of his soul in various objects. It was distasteful work, for it involved watching the wizard kill several people. Several times he was summoned by the evil wizard over many years to carry out this horrible deed. Eventually the djinn begged to be released from such dreadful work. The wizard had broken his own soul enough times for his satisfaction, anyway, and said, "I shall release you if you give to me your greatest treasure."

"This djinn had a fine home and rooms full of gold and gemstones. Yet he knew that he had no need for all of it. He was sure that perhaps a particularly fine ruby or a chest of golden coins would be exchanged for his freedom. It was a small price, so he agreed. The wizard handed him the amulet, and the djinn went to his home.

"His mortal wife greeted him in tears. Their daughter, who had just come of age, had disappeared at the moment the deal had been struck. The djinn knew his error immediately, for in truth, he had no greater treasure than his wife and children. He hurried back to nullify the exchange, but the evil wizard was happy with the exchange.

"Since his magical mother had died, he assumed that death comes to and through women. He had long since vowed not to have anything to do with them. However, this daughter of the djinn was useful. Through her arts and those of her house-elf, he would have home-comforts such as clean clothes and warm meals. He refused to nullify the exchange and kept the girl.

"Eventually, this evil wizard was killed by a spell he didn't expect. His soul drifted away, although it waits in different objects to be regenerated. The girl was found in his flat and brought to a castle. There she met and was quickly married to a different wizard. He had been a follower of the evil wizard, yet he was a false servant to him. The girl consented to the marriage because he reminded him of her father, who was likewise tied to a man his inferior in many ways.

"The marriage did not go as normal marriages do. This young wizard had other loves and wishes. Yet eventually, he laid with his wife and found pleasure in it. He would not stay in her rooms nor invite her into his, because he still did not love her. He never even kissed her. Yet this marriage progressed in this odd way for three moons.

"At length, his wife became pregnant. Her house-elf quickly took these tidings to the djinn and his wife, who rejoiced and sent messages to their daughter. When the child was born, the parents of the girl would come for her. With the death of the wizard, the spell was broken, and they would rather suffer the shame of divorce than see their daughter tied unhappily to a man who did not love her back."

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Severus was swept by many thoughts as he looked at Kalinda. What she had told him explained so many things, and the tidings she had just given him were something he had never contemplated. His first urge, which he decided to obey, was to pick her up and carry her, not to the nearby bed, but to his rooms.

For the first time ever he placed her on his bed. As always, her skin glowed, and she lent new life and beauty to the linens and hangings of his room. He removed her shift and undressed himself. Then he proceeded to touch and caress her until she sighed for more.

After they were done, he touched his lips to hers. She tasted as good as she had looked and smelled. He kissed her for a long time and then carefully put his arms around her as he sorted out his thoughts.

"If the Dark Lord's death nullified the arrangement, then why didn't Zurie bring tidings of his death to your family sooner? You might have gone home and avoided me entirely."

"I would have gone home in disgrace. Everyone knew that I had gone, and to return without a husband would have left me vulnerable to much evil. At least this way, returning with a child, the men will know that I am fertile and will bear them children."

He asked her about the broken soul of the wizard that had been placed in various objects. She told him what she knew, but that was unfortunately little. Perhaps her father would help Dumbledore when he came for the child's birth. After a while the serious conversation became playful as the two spoke of their attachment to each other.

At length Snape said, "I have one other question."

"I will answer if I can."

"How can I prove to your father that I am in love with you and that I wish to make you happy?"

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After an idyllic summer spent in the greatest freedom Severus had known, he and Kalinda returned to Hogwarts. They fell easily back into a pattern similar to the one they had known the previous year, with the exception that they spent the nights in one bed together.

Her labor came upon her sooner than expected during the winter. Within hours, Severus and Kalinda were admiring their son. He was quite dark, as they expected, and both parents found him to be quite beautiful.

A few days later, Severus was summoned to the Headmaster's office from a class. When he arrived, he met a being who frightened him even more than the Dark Lord had. He came into the room cautiously and tried not to be nervous.

"You wished to see me, Headmaster?"

"I understand that this is your father-in-law, Severus. He came to meet his grandson."

"Yes, of course." He pondered putting his hand out to shake but didn't know if this was acceptable. What were the proscribed manners for dealing with a djinn?

He found that his hand was taken between two much larger ones. "So you are the young man who has taken such good care of the daughter I so carelessly lost."

"Yes...sir." He wasn't sure how to address the djinn, either. "I'm sure you would like to see her, so I'll take you down to see her."

"Ah, I've already seen that she's happy, and her mother is even now with her. I shall not turn you into a bloody pulp. Just remember that Zurie tells her mother and me everything, and remember that we shall come to visit our grandson frequently."

"I will remember that."

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After these events, the Snapes lived a quiet life together while Dumbledore pondered the meaning of Kalinda's story. He spoke at length with Snape's father-in-law, who told him the nature of the objects containing Voldemort's soul. He could not tell where they might be stored or hidden. He gathered information from shopkeepers and professors, from house-elves and contemporaries of Voldemort. He didn't understand all that he learned, but he slowly built up his knowledge. He could only hope that by the time he needed it, he would have the entire puzzle in place.

A/N: Dear Readers, I wonder if you can help me out a little bit. This story has been very popular compared to some of my other stories. The view counts have been huge compared to my usual averages. I wonder if you could drop me a quick review just to tell me what it was that brought you back to it. Was it the OC? Was it the time frame? Was it the style? Was it something else? I'm not fond of requesting reviews, but in this case it's in the interest of science. Obviously, if most people liked something in particular, it will have an effect on my future work. Thank you in advance! You've all been lovely to stop by and read!

Thank you especially to Trickie Woo, who beta read this story.