

Laughing Last

by *kellychambliss*

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A/N: I think of the tone here as "Severus Lite" - no depth, just fun.

Setting: At the start of GoF.

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"And that's Professor Snape. He's never laughed once in his life."

The thrilled whisper cut across the Great Hall of Hogwarts as the students finished their Opening Feast, and the definitely-not-laughing Professor Snape closed his eyes in exasperation. Two hours into the new term, and already his life was being rendered unlivable – this time by the insufferably wide-eyed Colin Creevey and his no doubt equally gormless brother, the latter newly-Sorted into (of course) Gryffindor.

Creevey. Snape ground his teeth. The brat was impossible to terrify; Snape's most tried-and-true mannerisms – the cold voice, the narrowed eyes, the billowing cloak, all carefully practiced to render even the most clueless Gryffindor weak-kneed with fear – simply had no effect on the terminally-delighted Colin, who even welcomed detention with a look of beatific joy. No about-to-be-martyred saint could have mounted the pyre with greater exaltation. And now here was *another* irritating bit of Creevey spawn. How Minerva could hold her head up when her House contained such obvious examples of the decay of the wizarding gene pool, Snape had no idea.

"It's true," Creevey major was continuing excitedly to his goggle-eyed shadow. "Clifford MacMillan, he's a Hufflepuff, he says his brother told him there's something wrong with Professor Snape, a birth defect or something, and he really, truly cannot laugh. He's not physically able to. Clifford's brother is a friend of Harry Potter, so he must know. And doesn't he look just like a bat? I *told* you you'd be scared! Isn't it cool?"

"Brilliant," breathed Creevey minor, gazing at Snape with yearning, imbecile eyes.

Snape resisted the temptation to raise his wand towards them, or at least to sweep up behind them and hiss. He knew it would do no good. They would just be pleased.

If Snape had been a man of even ordinary good luck, he could have hoped that the boys would not understand the "Forbidden" part of "Forbidden Forest" and would soon make a tasty snack for some giant spider. Or Dumbledore might once again decide that it made sense to keep murderous three-headed dogs in the corridors of a school,

and the Creeveys could be tempted to take a little stroll in the beast's direction.

But the only sort of luck Severus Snape enjoyed was the bad sort. He was the gleeful sport of malicious gods, and he knew that no such boon would ever be his. He had no option but to suffer the Creeveys and their hopeless Gryffindor ilk in silence – or at least as silent as one could be when endeavoring to best Minerva in their constant battle of dry wits.

"Never laughed once in his life," indeed. Not that he owed the Creepy-Creeveys an explanation, but if he had wanted to, Snape could have called forth any number of witnesses to the fact that he laughed frequently. Bitterly, hollowly, sardonically, perhaps, but it was laughter all the same.

Why, just last Christmas, he had laughed (or at least snorted) when Minerva had handed a bowl of mashed potatoes to the ever-prattling Sybill Trelawney with the words, "Tripe, Sybill?"

And he distinctly remembered the time two years ago when that preening popinjay, Gilderoy Lockhart, had unleashed one of his periodic flights of idiocy during a staff meeting. Minerva had been presiding – Albus being away as usual on one of his endless trips to save the wizarding world – and the discussion had turned to the declining number of students who seemed interested in pursuing N.E.W.T-level classes.

"Minerva, luv, if I may?" the poodle of a Lockhart had said, patting his curls, completely oblivious to the convulsive way Minerva's hand gripped her wand at the word "luv." Snape was sure that only a stern look from her lover Poppy Pomfrey had stopped McGonagall from hexing the fool ball-less.

"I think part of the problem," the unutterable puppy had continued, "is that our course titles aren't sexy enough."

"Sexy?" Minerva had enquired, in a tone that implied that the term was as foreign to her as if Lockhart had suddenly started spouting Middle Gobbledy-gook.

But he had beamed. "Exactly. Now, there's no problem with my field – 'Defence Against the Dark Arts' is already hot, but the same can't be said about the titles of most of our disciplines. No offense, luv, but 'Transfiguration' doesn't exactly light a fire in the blood, now does it? Too many syllables, for one thing."

There was a breathless silence as the staff of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry prepared themselves to witness the first colleague-on-colleague murder since the days of Headmaster Ethelwad the Impaler.

But Minerva had merely nodded. "Sexy," she'd said. "I see. Very well. Professor Snape, henceforth your subject will cease to be called 'Potions' and will instead be known as 'Brews of the Naked Damned.'"

Snape had laughed then. Well, not exactly at that moment – to have laughed then would have conceded a witticism point to Minerva. But later, in the privacy of his own rooms, he had actually chortled.

So right there were two examples of his having laughed in just the last two years, and Minerva, anal-retentive scorekeeper that she was, could surely have thought of more, since just about every time he laughed, she was the cause of it. Yet that bleeding Creevey had the nerve to suggest that he didn't know how.

Just let him catch them whispering about him again. He'd frighten them so badly that the no one would remember that anyone had ever been stupid enough to utter the words "brave" and "Gryffindor" in the same sentence.

He knew exactly how he'd do it. He would walk up to the little horrors, look them straight in their sickeningly-happy eyes . . .

And smile.