

A Summer Rose

by Owlbait

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: All honor and glory to JKR, who owns Severus and his world.

AN: This was written as a birthday gift to Trickie Woo, who wanted new SS/OC fic with an adult OC. Thanks to Rose of the West, who passed on the wish and graciously beta'd.

Manchester, July 1992

It was a hot sticky summer, the kind that made Severus miss his nice cold dungeon. He also missed having house-elves cook all his meals, which would save him this hot sticky walk, in Muggle clothes, to the grocery store. He could at least take some satisfaction in the fact that there would be no children underfoot or up his nose until September.

His mood worsened, as it always did, when he passed the park. There was a whole crowd of children playing there now. Noisy, thoughtless children. Muggle children. Children with no magic and no fire. Children who had no idea there had ever been a Lily Evans in the world.

"ROSE!"

Severus's head whipped around involuntarily at the scream. A woman, obviously a mother, was running towards a small girl of about five or six years old, who was running right into the path of a larger boy on a bicycle. The boy was turning to shout to his mates and not looking where he was going. Right before he plowed straight into the child, she laughed and pushed the air with her hands. The bicycle swerved sharply to the left, nearly spilling the boy who was just able to recover and pedal on away. The mother rushed up and grabbed the girl.

"It's ok, Mummy, I'm fine. Did you see what I did?" She laughed again.

Severus gave the girl a long stare. She was small and pink, with messy locks of dirty blond hair, a sturdy little body which was scratched, bruised, and tanned in the normal manner of an active child. She had a mischievous grin about a mile wide with a huge gap of missing teeth in the middle. Her mother was thin, drab and awkward.

"Let's go home, Rosie, it's time for lunch."

It was the end of August. Severus had walked by the park many times this summer, frequently observing the child playing there. More than once he spotted a shimmer of magic, or something not quite happening the way one would expect. Today he was walking on the park road instead of the street. There was shade in the trees and he

could catch another glimpse of the blond girl, Rosie.

A Muggle-born witch, no doubt. Several years from getting her Hogwarts letter. Her parents were going to have an interesting time of it.

In the park, Linda again saw Severus pause in his walk and gaze fixedly at her daughter. Enough was enough. It was best to confront this head on. Linda stood up and walked towards the trees, straight to Severus, who watched her approach warily but stood his ground.

"I've seen you. You are always watching my daughter. I want to know why."

Severus drew himself up, his eyes and nostrils narrowed. "She reminds me of someone. It is of no importance."

"You're damn right it isn't. My daughter is of no importance to you whatsoever, Mr Severus Snape, of number twelve Spinner's End," Linda told him, throwing down her challenge fiercely. She lifted her chin when she saw she'd startled him. "That's right. I've been watching you too, and I've been asking around. If you don't stop, if anything happens to her, I'm taking your name straight to the police."

Severus sneered. "You're daughter is in no danger from me. I only noticed her because she is a witch. Good luck with that, Muggle."

With that he turned and strode off before Linda could react. *A witch! how dare he insult my daughter. And why? She's a six-year-old, for heaven's sake. What a weirdo.* Furious, Linda turned back to the playground, resolved to make sure the strange man with long greasy hair stayed well away from her child.

She needn't have worried; it was ten months before she laid eyes on Severus Snape again.

Ten very strange months.

July 1993

It's him!

Linda started in shock at seeing the weird thin man with the straggly black hair again. He was ahead of her, hadn't seen her. She watched him draw further ahead with long strides and thought.

The next morning, she dropped Rose at a friend's house to play, and walked towards Spinner's End. She almost turned back, at least three times, but in the end she found herself standing on the doorstep. She had to know. She knocked.

After a long enough pause that she was about to leave, the door opened. He was dressed very strangely, in a flowing black robe. Past his shoulder she saw a bit of a shabby room, and more bookshelf than she'd ever seen outside a library.

"May I come in?"

Linda had never seen such an inscrutable face as Severus's as he considered her request. Finally he stepped aside and ushered her into the living room. It was ... very unusual. There were bookcases floor to ceiling, all the way around. Linda couldn't see any way to get to the rest of the house. There was a small fireplace and no lamps, but there was a chandelier hanging from the ceiling, dark now. The whole room was dim; very little daylight came through the small windows covered by dark curtains.

She was worried; this was too weird. But she had to know. No one else could tell her.

"I take it you had questions for me?" Severus told her, with an eyebrow cocked.

He knew. Of course he knew.

"Why did you say that, last summer? That my daughter is a witch?"

"Because she is one. I take it from your presence here that you have noticed odd things happening?"

"Odd, yes. The dress she hated never fit. Her dolls, I think they move. It's me, I must be crazy. It can't be real."

"Sit." Severus showed her to a chair, and sat in another, facing her.

Linda found herself almost falling into the blackest eyes she'd ever seen, as a sensuous, hypnotic voice told her what she had suspected, but couldn't begin to believe:

"There is magic in the world."

Linda let out a sigh that was almost a whimper.

"Your daughter is part of it; she has magic."

"What? How?"

"Witches and wizards keep apart from non-magic people; we live alongside you, secretly."

"You are a wizard?"

"I am."

"But, my daughter, Rose?"

"Sometimes a magical child is born to non-magic parents, Muggles. No one knows why. Magic starts manifesting in childhood, normally around nine or ten, but sometimes earlier. She will have to be trained. It is dangerous to have teenagers running around with no training and no control."

"How can I train her?"

"You can't," he told her with finality, "she must go to school."

"Witch school?"

"Essentially. When she turns eleven, she will receive a letter written in green ink, inviting her to go to school at Hogwarts. You will be instructed how to get her the things she needs for school, her wand, spellbooks, and such. She'll live at school and learn how to do magic properly."

"Did you go to this school?"

"I did."

"What is it like?"

Severus sat back a moment and remembered. He tried to recall the wonder of it she did not need to hear about the bullying and the misery. Little Rose would be pretty and have friends, she would be like Lily, not like him.

"It is a magic castle, far to the North, set over a lake and a forest. Her first sight of it will be from the lake crossing. It will be lit with thousands of candles twinkling against the night. She will be taken to the Great Hall, and sit down to the welcoming feast with hundreds of other magical children."

For a long time Linda sat staring into nothing. She no longer saw the worn room with its ridiculous number of books. Her vision was leagues away and out of this world.

"No!" Linda suddenly shouted, jumping to her feet. She stood in front of Severus staring at him. "It's not true!"

"There is no need to shout at me in my own living room. Though I assure you, it is true, there is no need for you to believe me at all. In a few years, the letter will come whether you believe in it or not."

"It won't! It can't! There are no magic castles, no witches and wizards, no fairy processes and no happy ever afters! The prince never comes and takes you away to a magic castle he has you and he leaves you, and you have a baby and have to work ... so hard ..." She was crying now, with her face in her two hands to hide it. It was too bitter, too private; she pressed her hands hard to her face and her elbows to her chest. She rocked with sobs.

Suddenly she felt two hands on her wrists, hard like steel vices, pulling her hands away.

"Look at me," Severus told her fiercely.

Frightened, she looked up at him. His black eyes glittered at her, and she suddenly recalled how little she knew about him and how uneasy he had made her all last summer in the park.

"Look at me," he insisted, voice tight and hard. He held her wrists away from her face, and though his glare was a demand, his voice pled. "Please. She is what she is; she can't help it. Please. Don't hate her because she has magic, because you don't."

She stopped crying, overcome at the pain in his voice, and stared back at him. "Did that ... were your parents ...?"

"I don't choose to speak of it," he told her sharply, still gripping her wrists and willing her to face him.

The tension in the stuffy little room grew almost tangible. Linda looked away and watched a few dust motes float through a tiny slice of sunbeam cutting past the curtain edge.

"I won't hate her. She's all I have, and I love her no matter what." Linda felt suddenly desperate for him to know that.

He sighed and relaxed his grip on her. The air in the room felt lighter somehow.

"Can you ... would you show me? That it's real?" Linda whispered, soft brown eyes wistful.

After a long moment of silence, Severus picked up a paper bookmark from the nearby table. He took out his wand in his other hand and gestured with it, whispering a few words she could not make out. The paper bookmark shimmered and folded in on itself. In a moment, a perfect yellow rose bloomed in his hand. He offered it to Linda, who took it from him as if might vanish into a puff of mist. Holding it with just her thumb and two fingers, she brought it to her nose and sniffed. It smelled just like a rose the most perfect May rose at the dawn of summer.

Over the next few years, Linda saw Severus occasionally. He gave her advice when Rose's magic made her crazy. He told her a little, a very little, about himself. She learned he actually taught at this Hogwarts, and lived there most of the year.

She had told Rose what she learned, and Rose absolutely could not wait till she got her letter. She was looking forward to her wand and her lessons. She was glad she'd know at least one person there that funny Mr. Snape would teach her Potions.

The last two years before Rose was eleven, Linda saw even less of him than she had been. He looked more tense and spoke less. He frowned sometimes, when he looked at Rose. She wasn't sure what to make of him.

June 1997

It had been a strange spring cold and misty. Linda didn't expect Severus back at the house on Spinner's End yet, but she walked past it sometimes anyway. With surprise, she saw someone coming out; a scruffy little man scuttled from the door and around the corner. She heard a loud crack and wondered briefly what it was.

She thought she'd welcome Severus back early and went to knock on his door. It whipped open barely before her hand pulled back. "I told you, Wormtail," Severus shouted into her face. "Oh, it's you." He recognized her, bleakly, but she barely recognized him.

Never really taking any care for his looks, now he looked just awful. Drawn and haggard, eyes red-rimmed, he positively reeked of alcohol.

"I was passing by, and I saw you must be back. I wanted to tell you, Rose got her letter," Linda told him, uncertainly.

"I advise you to write back with her regrets. Find a Muggle school, and forget you ever heard of magic." Severus glared at her from haunted red eyes and slammed the door shut.

Well. I wonder what happened. It seems as if he's been sacked.

Linda tried his door again a few times that summer, but got no answer. She wasn't sure if he was avoiding her, or if he just wasn't home. He didn't take his regular walks to the grocery store this year. She hoped he wasn't having trouble buying food, if he'd lost his job.

In late August, she tried once more. She didn't know if he'd answer her knock this time, but it was almost time for Rose to go to Hogwarts, for him to go. She wanted to see him, to speak to him. She wanted to find out what was wrong, and she wanted ... something else.

She brought Rose's Hogwarts letter and a rose from her garden. This time, finally, he opened to her knock, but when he saw her on the step, he looked strongly tempted to slam it on her again. He didn't. "Come in. Sit."

"We got a visit from one of the Hogwarts professors. Pomona Sprout, I think she said her name was," Linda told him. "She explained everything, just like you said, years ago."

"Did you tell her you knew me?" Severus asked sharply.

"I ... no. I'm not sure why not, but I didn't think I ought to. Rose didn't mention you either. I think she was overawed to find it was really true; she didn't say much."

"Did Pomona say anything about recent events at the school?"

"She did. She said there was a war in the Wizarding world. She said many parents were keeping their children home this year, but she advised me to send Rose. She said that the protections at Hogwarts were very strong, and Rose could be a danger growing up with no training. Is that what you meant before, when you said I should send regrets?"

"Partly. When did Pomona visit you?"

"A few weeks ago, mid July. We've been to Diagon Alley. We got Rose a wand and robes and things, but I really wanted to talk to you before she leaves."

"Why?"

"I've been worried about what you said, and worried about you. Were ... were you sacked?"

"Not exactly."

Linda waited several heartbeats, but he did not elaborate.

"So you'll be there this year? You can watch over Rose?"

"If I can watch over anybody," he responded sourly.

Linda bit her lip, then stepped forward. "I wish you would." She took another half step forward and put her hands on Severus's shoulders. "She's the only magic thing in my life, and I have to let her go. I wish I could see it all. Will you tell me, next summer? How she is and what she does?"

"I will," Severus answered, but his eyes were shadowed.

"Thank you," Linda sighed, and she leaned forward and kissed him.

At first Severus thought it was a simple kiss, a thank you, or a good bye, and kissed back in kind, until he found it wasn't. "What are you doing?" Severus asked her, breaking off the kiss.

"Kissing you. I've wanted to, you know. I've wondered. Is it different, with a wizard?"

"I don't know, I've never kissed a wizard."

"Check with me later, then," Linda said, smiling, and leaned in to kiss him again.

A few minutes later Severus started to suspect she meant she'd been curious about more than kissing, and while parts of him heartily concurred, the more rational parts thought it was a very bad idea indeed.

"Stop, you don't want to do this."

"I do want to, don't you?" she asked, looking suddenly very insecure.

He did want to; he hadn't in a very long time. *Sod rational thought; it is overrated.*

Picking up his wand, Severus opened the hidden door to the staircase. "Come upstairs, then?"

Severus's bedroom was as shabby as the living room, but the bed looked comfortable and the linens were clean.

"I ... it's been a long time," Linda told him shyly. "Blokes don't want much to do with you when you have children."

"It's been a long time for me too," Severus admitted. "We'll just have to put up with each other."

"Deal." Linda laughed.

Slowly Severus removed her clothing trainers, socks, shirt, jeans, bra, knickers, until she was naked on his bed. Reverently, he kissed her cheek and chin, shoulder, sensitive spots inside her arm and thigh, the arch of her foot. Linda lay back relaxed and sighing.

In her turn, she marveled over the strange robes he wore as she removed them. He wore plain underclothes underneath, which she took off shyly. Touching and kissing his skin as she went. He was thin and not much to look at, but plainly desired her. She'd never seen his expression soften as it did now. She kissed his shoulder and arm, but hissed in shock when she saw the mark on his arm.

"It's nothing," Severus told her. "A stupid tattoo; I was young."

Linda stared. "I've seen one like it, a long time ago. It was faded though; you could barely see it. This looks much newer."

She saw the mark distort as Severus made a fist with his left hand, and the muscles of his forearm pulled tight.

"Where did you see ... was it Rose's father?"

"Yes. I'd forgotten all about it until just now, when I saw yours."

"What happened? Will you tell me?"

Linda thought this would be an impertinent question, if she wasn't sitting naked on his bed with him. "I was at University; I went out for a drink with some friends. There was a man there who ... I'm not sure what happened. He whispered something to me, and I just got up and went with him. I'm not like that; you have to believe that." It seemed unlikely he should believe that, considering where she was and how she'd all but thrown herself at him just a little while ago.

"I daresay I understand what happened. He left you then?"

"I went home the next morning; I never even knew his name." She blushed hotly.

"When you found you were pregnant, why didn't you get rid of it?"

"It's so strange. I didn't really remember that night for a long time. I didn't realize I was pregnant for months. I know that sounds stupid, but my cycle was always irregular, and I often skipped during exams, from the stress. Then I thought I just had the flu or something. When I finally got to the doctor and learned I was pregnant, I was five months along. It wasn't until then that I really remembered what had happened that night. I was going to end it, but then ... I felt her move. I couldn't."

Linda had wrapped her arms around herself, trying to shield the nakedness she was suddenly ashamed of. Severus took her in his arms and murmured in her ear. "Hush, it's ok. You don't have to be ashamed. You couldn't have stopped him; he used magic on you. He forced you, and he made you forget. It's not your fault."

She looked up at him suddenly. "You could have done that, any time?"

"I could have. I don't." He said it so sternly, she believed him.

"I'm sorry, I'm afraid I've rather killed the mood."

"Don't concern yourself." He pulled her close into his lap and kissed her shoulder, noting wryly to himself that his mood, at least, was not entirely dead. She sighed and melted into his arms. *Perhaps hers wasn't either*, he thought hopefully. He kissed the side of her neck and heard her breath catch. With a growl, he rolled her down onto the bed, kissing her deeply and fervently.

"I brought ... in my jeans pocket ..."

Brought what? Severus wondered. Summoning her jeans, he fished in the pocket and found the answer. Muggle contraception. "I can do a little better than that, if you will trust me."

Wide-eyed, Linda nodded. Taking his wand, Severus placed his free hand over her abdomen and murmured a charm.

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Some time later, she lay relaxed in his arms. She would have to leave soon. Sighing, she reached for her clothing.

In the living room, Linda turned for one last kiss before going. Severus kissed her deeply and gratefully, but didn't hinder her leaving.

When she'd gone, Severus made himself tea and sat in the living room to drink it and think. There were going to be changes at Hogwarts this year which he had not warned Linda about.

Soon, she'd stand on platform nine and three quarters to send Rosie off. She'd meet the other parents. She'd hear what he'd done, that he'd killed Albus and served the Dark Lord. She'd remember his Dark Mark, how very red and clear it was, compared to the one she'd seen long ago. The announcement of his appointment as Headmaster would come that day.

What would she think? Would she be ashamed that she'd lain with him, or would she be glad, thinking she had bought her daughter's protection with her body? Whether she meant it or not, she had. When the Muggle-born persecutions begin, he would be able to vouch that Rose was a half-blood witch. It would help; it might keep her safe.