

# Trick or Treat

*by Sevvv*

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## One-shot

*Chapter 1 of 1*

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Severus Snape prided himself on having nerves of steel. Well, that is to say, *convincing* himself and the world at large that he had such.

Having come through all those years as a spy and having been at the beck and call of a tyrannical madman for so long he should, by all accounts, be afraid of absolutely nothing, he told himself.

And yet, here he was, at the age of thirty-nine, re-instated in his role of Hogwarts Headmaster after the "tyrannical madman's" defeat and demise, and having survived the fangs of a clearly equally psychotic giant snake, feeling ridiculously scared and out of his depth.

He suddenly noticed that his hand had, inadvertently, flown to his throat at the memory of his near-death where, beneath the layers of protective high-necked clothing, the scarred evidence of the horrific attack lay, hidden from prying eyes. He subconsciously, and somewhat sympathetically, began to rub the area round and round in a soothing, flat, one-handed motion. But it was his other hand that held the offending item, causing him so much distress: a simple, plain white invitation card, delicately embellished and decorated in gilded, glittery red and gold.

It was not a summons to the Dark Lord that had him panic-stricken or an order to be obeyed without question from his transgressors. Nor was it even the requiring of his attendance at one of Dumbledore's boring and tiresome little "soirees", he mused none of these events could ever take place again now anyway.

No, it was, in fact, the simple request from the Ministry for "the pleasure of his company" at the Annual Halloween Ball.

And the words that had the dour, stoic former spy quaking in his black, still highly-polished-and-sexy boots? "And partner"!

No one could ever accuse Snape of being a coward (though many had tried) but, for days now, he had contemplated just throwing the damn thing in the fire, or shouting '*Incendio!*' at it and forgetting or denying its whole existence.

Yet, as headmaster now, he knew he would have no choice but to attend the ball and would simply be expected, indeed required, to produce the "and partner".

Of course, when Albus Dumbledore was in his position, Minerva McGonagall had always accompanied the elderly wizard more as a simple matter of logic than mere etiquette or choice really, Snape suspected. And, despite the fact that she'd relinquished the position of School Head in order to re-instate him and was now, once again, Deputy Headmistress, Snape somehow didn't feel it quite right to ask her to join him.

Therefore, his large, strong, yet elegant hands continued to shake disproportionately as they tightly clutched said invitation whilst his mind whirled around in kaleidoscopic chaos. Every now and again, his thoughts came to an abrupt stop at a place he didn't want them to a jolting halt he was so desperately trying to avoid but knew he could

do nothing to prevent. Time and time again, the same name and face resurfaced, as he desperately sought to both fight and conjure up different ones more suited to accompany a headmaster to a Ministry Ball. He tried again: Pomona Sprout? No, too old and short. (Not to mention clumsy and likely to turn up in her tatty, grass-stained gardening overalls, trowel in hand his over-sized nose twitched at the thought.) Rolanda Hooch? Great Merlin, no! She'd have him whizzing round the dance floor faster than a niffler after the Golden Snitch he'd simply never keep up with her, he reasoned. Aurora Sinistra then? No, too standoffish. In all the years he'd known her, he realised they'd never spoken more than two words to each other. He was rapidly running out of options and found himself back to the same old mental image again.

It was no good he couldn't fight it any longer. She was haunting him. Just like she did in everything else these days not just his every waking moment, but his dreams as well there appeared to be no escape from her. The "femme fatale" (he snorted at the thought) of "the Golden Trio", friend of "the Chosen One", "the Gryffindor Princess", the bookish know-it-all and brightest witch of her age: Hermione Granger.

Whilst her cohorts, Potter and Weasley, had decided to rush off characteristically head-first into Auror training (after what, Snape could only concede, was the culmination of circumstantial luck dressed up as the Dark Lord's defeat), Hermione herself had chosen to return to Hogwarts. This was in order to finish her NEWTs and continue her studies in general.

Quite when the now 20-year-old "slip of a girl" had morphed from child and former student into "desirable young woman" in Snape's mind, he couldn't say. All he knew was that it had certainly been aided by the fact that, more recently still, and having finished her exams, she'd joined the staff as Professor Flitwick's temporary Charms assistant. Indeed no longer a student.

And, whilst he couldn't quite get used to the idea of her being a colleague, Snape found he couldn't exactly refuse to treat her with anything less than quiet respect and polite implied indifference. It was only latterly that his wandering mind, perhaps having gradually relaxed from all the years of its enforced tightly reined-in existence, had started to become laced with what could only be described as lust.

No one could deny that Miss Granger was anything but beautiful now. Gone was the childish awkwardness, which had become replaced with gentle, understated confidence and poise, a sort of worldliness beyond her years. Not that it surprised Snape she had always been mature, had to be really, and shown a courage that had rapidly made her grow up even more quickly in order to face all that was thrown at her. Now, any remnants of the bushy-haired, buck-toothed ugly duckling had given way to an elegant if a little gaunt at first, after all her ordeals and graceful swan.

But, more especially, Snape had begun to notice that she looked at him in a certain way these days. It was not just in the respectful, polite way she'd done in their teacher/student days something Snape had always admired her for, even though he would have never let on. At first he thought it was just his imagination but, as time went on, he came to the conclusion that there really was something there. Those shy underneath-the-eyelashes glances that she cast in his direction at the dinner table in the Great Hall, at staff meetings or in the staff room for example had only ever been sent his way once before, unless one counted the silly schoolgirl crushes on him that he'd occasionally seen personified, most especially in his younger teaching days. The only other young woman who'd looked at him with such interest and dare he think it admiration and possible attraction had been Lily, of course. That was before James Potter came along and changed the whole scenery, and indeed, the very course of history.

Yet, despite the evidence of his own eyes, Severus Snape still thought of himself as a dirty old pervert, acting out a Lolita-like scenario, for even thinking of her in such ways. Not only was she a former student, he was old enough to be her father!

He looked again at the invitation in his hand before carefully placing it back on his desk, noting as he did so that October 31st was less than a week away, and he should have already responded. Oh well, his "RSVP" would just have to be late then. He almost smirked to himself at the idea it was surely one of the privileges of being headmaster, he reckoned. As it was, he was supposed to be over-seeing the Halloween celebrations at the school, although admittedly the task had mostly fallen to Minerva, as it always did; she wouldn't have had it any other way in any case. They too would be having an annual Halloween Ball for both the staff and students of Hogwarts, complete with autumnally decorated Great Hall and a multitude of pumpkins, fake cobwebs, and brightly-coloured candied sweets. As always, all manner of so-called ghoulish and ghostly goings-on would be planned for the event not least apple bobbing and hunt the pumpkin. Snape shivered at the thought of it all. Quite how the trivial trappings of what had become such a Muggle occasion had managed to gatecrash in on an originally strictly Wizarding event, he would never know.

For him of course, the date signified a much more serious event: the death of his beloved Lily. Even though time had moved on, and her son had somehow managed to bring calm and order to the Wizarding world with the defeat of He-who-can-safely-be-named-now-if-you-can-be-bothered, her memory, and his guilt over her murder, would always remain with him for the rest of his days. As would his love unrequited as it had been.

Sighing deeply, the raven-haired, still striking-looking professor turned sharply and glanced across the grounds of the ancient castle, which were clearly visible from his vantage point of the headmaster's office window. And, despite not having cast any kind of spell, right on cue, the subject of his current dilemma came into view as if to tease, or perhaps guide, his thoughts towards her again.

To his chagrin, she was accompanied by one of the new professors Angus Devine, professor of Arithmancy who had only recently taken over from the newly-retired (and not before time, Snape reasoned) Professor Vector. Whilst seemingly nice enough, and enviously young, Snape had nothing personal against the young man. Or, at least he thought he hadn't up until now when he became aware of the fact that the young and rather good looking professor was currently walking extremely close to Miss Granger. Furthermore, it appeared that the pair were looking rather too comfortable with each other than he would have liked to see whilst apparently engaged in easy conversation.

It just so happened that Hermione looked up at that point, making the darkly-attractive headmaster quickly duck out of view. She threw her head back in girlish laughter, letting her hair fly freely around her face, and Snape felt his chest constrict. He wanted to ride along on the bubbling wave he felt her exuberance had created. In spite of the bricks, glass and distance that separated them, he felt sure he could touch it as plainly as the wooden desk under his fingertips. Clearly something her colleague had just said had greatly amused her, and it made his heart rate increase to an alarming extent. It was then that he also realised that he was digging his nails rather too forcefully into the palms of his hands. Jealousy was a nasty trait one he despised in others yet he knew it was an emotion which could call on him all too easily. Once again, an un-invited memory of Lily flashed into the forefront of his thoughts.

That seemed to be the incentive he was looking for though, as suddenly his focus seemed to shift, and his mind was made up. He would ask her to the ball! What was the worst that could happen in any case? But, as usual, his mind answered back with a number of retorts to that one. He ignored it anyway and decided to ask her after dinner that night.

His opportunity came sooner than expected whilst exiting the Great Hall, following on from the evening's meal. The two literally collided with each other in the corridor outside in their respective haste to both exit and enter the same door at the same time.

'Oh, I'm so sorry, Headmaster!' Hermione Granger said, her cinnamon-coloured eyes shining in amusement as he held the door open for her.

'Er,' he stammered. 'As a matter of fact, I'm glad I've bumped into you, Miss Granger.'

'Oh?' was all she said in response.

'Er, yes. I was, er, wondering if you would er consider accompanying me to the forthcoming Ministry Halloween Ball? I need a partner, you see, female of course and, well, Minerva can't make it this year. Would you be interested?'

Somehow Snape could detect that, despite her outward appearance of calm, he'd flustered her a little by his unexpected request: hesitant, unrefined and ineloquent as it had been. He somehow liked to feel he was responsible for the slight flush that seeped across her cheeks as she clearly considered carefully before replying.

'Yes. Yes. Of course!' she said brightly, and he was graced with one of the most perfect smiles he'd ever seen courtesy no doubt, he suddenly recalled, of both her parents being dentists.

'I am, after all, female,' she grinned cheekily, 'and I'd be more than happy to take Professor McGonagall's place. Especially now we're colleagues.' She added the last bit

somewhat shyly but, at the same time, accompanied it by what Snape could only think of as being a flirtatious glance, aimed directly into his eyes.

Her sudden welcoming reaction threw him off-balance for a minute, and for the second time that day, Snape's heart sped up extensively, but for a very different reason this time round. He also found himself at the mercy of some very explicit images as his mind simultaneously and unexpectedly went into overdrive too. Inwardly cursing himself for allowing his baser feelings to come to the surface like that, he managed to console himself with the thought that luckily he was the only Legilimens in the vicinity. But at least it confirmed his suspicions that she was, very probably, attracted to him. And maybe just maybe she saw him as more than just the headmaster and her former professor and fellow-Order member, not to mention a man so very much older than her.

'I'll wait your instructions then, shall I, sir?' Hermione asked, with a definite twinkle evident in her eyes as she emphasised the word "sir", accompanied by a decidedly saucy grin.

Most definitely *not* his imagination then.

'Yes, I'll let you know the arrangements in the next couple of days,' he said, feeling the corners of his mouth spontaneously trying to lift, and quickly schooling them back into a more suitable expression for the stern headmaster of Britain's foremost Wizarding school.

But, as he started to walk away, he suddenly turned and called back over his shoulder, 'Oh, um, Hermione.' It was the first time he'd ever used her given name, to his recollection, and the look of shock on her face could not have been greater.

'Yes, sir?'

'I was wondering if you'd like to join me for dinner tomorrow night? Outside of school I mean. I don't know if you're aware, but there's a really nice little Italian restaurant not long opened in Hogsmeade? I've been meaning to try it out for a while ... Shall we say eight o'clock?'

*In for a penny, in for a pound*, he thought.

'We can discuss things for the ball in more detail then if you like,' he quickly added. After all, he didn't want to give her the wrong impression or hint that it was a date or anything even if it could almost be construed as such in the "warped and perverted" depths that masqueraded as his mind.

'That would be really lovely. Yes. Thank you,' she answered, seeming to be looking happier by the minute.

'Good. I'll meet you here in the entrance hall at 7.50 then. We can walk to Hogwarts perimeters to Apparate.'

And, as he walked back along the corridor, customary black cloak billowing behind in the way it always had, and probably always would, he started to think that the 31st of October was not such a bad date after all, and that the past really should stay the past.

He had a future to seriously start thinking about now, and whether or not the Granger girl would ever be a part of that, he needed to start making new memories to overshadow the old. And there really was something so refreshingly lovely about her youth and vitality. The words "old man" and "indulge yourself" couldn't be prevented from forming in his head, and he simply couldn't suppress a slight chuckle at the audacity of his own mind.

There clearly was nothing to be scared of on Halloween after all, he concluded nothing even the remotest bit frightening about it.

(Once again, my grateful thanks go to my dear friend, hexgirl, for so wonderfully beta reading for me.)

**A/N: I keep insisting that I'm in 'fanfic retirement' but, as you're probably aware, this 'hobby' is addictive and, after more than four years now, it shows no sign of stopping in my case! Once again, current ill health has somehow created a reappearance of the muse and, consequently, just the other day while in my sick bed, I found myself writing this Halloween one-shot. If you've enjoyed it (or even if you've hated it!), please, please just spare a few moments to review it makes all the difference to an author and I promise in this instance to reward with sweets and candy (albeit 'virtual' ones), rather than nasty tricks!**

I'm also being totally shameless here, but for those of you Snape fans who may be interested, I now have a number of items for sale in my on-line shop on Etsy, including to coincide with this story my new, exclusive Halloween design.

This is the link to my shop the Snape Halloween items are the most recent listings:

[Sevvy's Etsy Shop](#)

Please feel free to browse I have T-shirts, fridge magnets, mugs, bags, etc. and less expensive choices of bookmarks, greetings cards, etc., available in BOTH my Snape designs.

If you don't see what you'd like, but would still like to have something with either my original 'The Real Magic is ...' design or my current HALLOWEEN SNAPE one, please contact me, and I feel sure we can sort it out!