

A Change of Ingredients

by Rose of the West

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Not Exactly an Accident

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: The characters here and the world they inhabit are the creation and property of JK Rowling and her assigns.

It seems that only one person saw the wizard walk down Diagon Alley on a particular afternoon. Apparently only one witch stared at him from her shop window. To be fair, he kept well covered within the hood of his cloak. Perhaps she was the only one standing at just the right angle to see his face as he lifted the brown bottle in his hand to his lips. The witch gasped aloud and thought to herself that she would never be the same again.

Carson, the most exclusive hair dresser on the lane, burst into the apothecary's shop on a dreary Tuesday. "Quick! I need every bottle of Sleakeasy's potion you have!"

The apothecary's assistant, who was used to Carson's volatile moods, looked up from her magazine, cracked her Drooble's bubble gum, and said, "Oh?"

"I just worked it into Millicent Bulstrode's hair to give her a brush out, and, my dear, the most amazing thing happened! It sprang into the most delightful curls without my irons or curlers! When she left my shop, a sudden downpour had no effect upon it. It has to be the Sleakeasy's! Did they change the formula?"

The girl shrugged. "I couldn't say. It looks the same to me." The gum popped again.

"Well, girl, where do you keep it?"

She stretched but was clearly fixed magically to the stool upon which she sat. Then she pointed as if the effort might be too much. "Aisle four, where it always is."

Carson put the entire stock in his Super-Shrinking-Shopping Basket® and shouted, "Put it on my bill!" He ran down to his shop, singing to himself, "Let Mrs. Weasley bring that Medusa-haired child of hers to me *now!*"

Mrs. Weasley was dealing with her own worries at that particular moment. "How did it happen, Ron? It wasn't permanent, but the staff of the school is very worried. This is a very serious letter."

Ron looked at the row of bottles on his table and shook his head. "George and I made it exactly as we always have. It's hardly changed since the day they tried to get into the Triwizard Tournament with it."

"That can't possibly be true," she said. "No one ever experienced senility and dementia before. Have they?"

"Well, Fred was a little odd that day," George started to joke but then it fell flat. It had been a decade and more since the Battle of Hogwarts, and many good things had

happened since, but at times he really missed his twin.

This letter was very serious indeed, if the allegations were true. A student had taken their Ageing Potion in an attempt to get into certain shops during Hogsmeade Weekend. He had been granted admittance, but was unable to remember the purpose of his visit. Instead he had sat in a corner muttering to himself until the potion wore off and he was clearly an underage Hogwarts student who suddenly remembered what he wanted to buy just as the shopkeeper had grabbed him by the ear and goose-stepped him out of the shop. The school demanded an explanation and Hermione was determined that it would be a good one.

The seriousness of the situation didn't prevent her from patting George's hand and gently saying, "Show me your workbench."

The two brothers exchanged looks and led her to the workroom. Hermione went over every single item in the room, from the manual containing the recipe for Ageing Potion to the cabinet containing supplies of the ingredients used. The brothers had long since arranged their cabinets such that each potion or candy had its own, and those items which might foul others were kept carefully away from each other in different compartments.

Hermione took a pencil from behind her ear and put a check mark beside each item. Then she went through the cabinet and likewise made sure there was nothing unnecessary to the potion. "Well, it's exactly right. Only..." She uncorked a couple of bottles and sniffed. "Here," she said, handing it to George. "Does it usually smell like that?"

George sniffed cautiously at first one item and then another. "That's very odd. I had a cold when we made this, so I didn't notice the smell at all. What *is* that?"

The bottles made their way around to Ron. "I didn't notice either." He sniffed again. "I think I recognize it, but why would anyone add that?"

"Ah... I know what it is, now. Well, consider our supplier," said George.

"But she's always so precise. That's why we switched to her years ago," said Ron.

"I always knew she'd do something crazy, eventually," said Hermione with an air of vindication.

At Hogwarts, they were less worried about a student who had taken Ageing Potion than they were about a present mishap in the Potions classroom.

"Everyone, Horace?" asked Headmistress McGonagall.

"Every second-year student has some part of their face swollen. I've never seen the Swelling Solution do that before. Several of my students have never made a single mistake before this. I cannot imagine what happened. It was very effervescent."

"I assume Poppy has the proper antidote, at least."

Horace looked at the floor and then at his colleague. "That's part of the problem. There seems to be something odd about the Deflating Draught, too. Everything shrinks to its proper size, but the students have been very dizzy."

"Dizzy?"

He cleared his throat. "They remind me of House-elves drunk on butterbeer."

Minerva pinched her nose between her eyes and thought for a time beyond count that she wished either of her forebears in the job were still living. Albus and Severus were much better suited to sorting out a fiasco in the Potions department than she was. She finally sighed and said, "I can't imagine you made mistakes on two potions. Go over everything, Horace, especially your ingredients."

The bell above the door of Luna Lovegood, Potions Mistress jingled much longer and more merrily than necessary, in the opinion of the annoyed customer who crossed the threshold. He had a complaint that required him to go into public, and he was quite annoyed indeed.

"Excuse me!" he hurled at a door toward a back room.

"I'll be right out!" came a voice in response. "This Amortentia is at a ticklish spot."

The customer fumed, but rolled his eyes, thinking this is what one gets for working with potioners like Luna Lovegood. She was as smart as they come, but a bit scattered at times, and prone to frightening fancies. He looked at her shelves, which in places were neatly arranged and in other places a bit haphazard. It was as though she had started to straighten them but then got caught on a different idea. Perhaps a mote in the air, he thought to himself.

He took a bottle of Draught of Peace from the shelf and uncorked it. He noticed the same odd smell he'd discovered in several of her products. Then he suddenly felt very good. He giggled as his hood fell to his shoulders. It was an innocent mistake after all. He put the bottle down in annoyance as the slight amount of potion receded from his mind. He *never* giggled. He opened a bottle of another potion and took a more cautious whiff. Then he checked another and another. They all had the same contaminant.

"May I help you...Oh, *you!*"

"Good day, Miss Lovegood. I'm here to return my Doxycide. Instead of falling flat and laying still, the doxies buzzed around in some sort of aerial ballet before dropping into my bucket."

"Is that a problem?"

He looked into her blue eyes and suddenly wondered if it really was.

"I never thought I'd ever see you, Professor S-"

"Scamander. Professor Rolf Scamander."

"Oh, I'm sorry, you looked like..." Her voice trailed off as she realized it was a forbidden fragment of conversation. She sucked in her breath and said with great excitement, "It must have been *you!*"

"It must have been me...what, Miss Lovegood?"

"I was stirring some Amortentia just about this time last week when I happened to see...I guess it was you...and I thought it was a vision, telling me to use butterbeer in all my potions and ingredients. I think it gives it that little something extra, don't you?"

Rolf rolled his eyes. He wondered if it might have been better to stay hidden after all. Years before, he had retired from the world and gone to stay with the one uncle of his mother's who didn't hold her marriage against her. The life of a naturalist was not unlike his previous work, after all.

"Don't you realize the havoc that can be created by adding butterbeer to potions without considering the effects? You have some people in raptures and others pulling their hair out."

"Is it really so bad?"

He was trapped by saucer-like blue eyes. *Was* it really so bad? Aside from some side effects that were amusing when all was said and done, no real harm had been done.

"Perhaps not, but I think you might want to narrow the scope of your change. It's not necessary for all of your products, and you might be able to charge a premium."

She smiled a little and said, "You seem to know a lot about it. Do you suppose you could help me sort it all out?"

He found himself smiling in response. Was this the sort of thing he was looking for when he had bought that butterbeer the week before? More human interaction than he could get in the world at large?

Without realizing it, he was already answering her. "Yes," he said, "That would be agreeable."