

On the First Night of Hogwarts

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Severus receives some words of wisdom on his first night as a Hogwarts student.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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He was sitting in an obscure stairwell, sniffing, when she found him. She crouched down beside him, and he turned even redder in sheer mortification. The prettiest professor in school, and her first impression of him was of a sobbing, snot-nosed *infant*.

"What's wrong?" She offered him a handkerchief. "Homesick?"

He snorted, a ghostly, liquid sound. "Not hardly."

"Hmm." She didn't press further, but settled down next to him on the step. "I cried a lot, my first year," she offered. "I *was* homesick and lonely— and Muggle-born, which made it all worse."

"Did it get better?" he asked desperately.

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The young woman glanced at the student beside her, stymied slightly by the curtain of black hair. "It's a long, complicated story, and I haven't time to tell it all before curfew, but yes, I found a place— and friends —before the year was out." She hesitated, fingers seeking the pendant concealed under her high-necked robes. How much could— should —she say? "I won't deny that much of that was luck, Mr. Snape. But... I hope you can find comrades who bring out the best in you, not ones who belittle you, or encourage Slytherin ambition while sacrificing everything else."

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Even as a first year, his sneer was impressive. "You're trying to turn me into a *Gryffindor*," he accused her.

To his surprise, she laughed a little, and her eyes turned merry. "Much as you lot try to deny it, Slytherins have a little Gryffindor— yes, *and* Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw—in them, too. People aren't really as simplistic as we like to pretend." Her face grew distant, and she added softly, "I've seen the most magnificent nobility in a Slytherin— and the most terrible betrayal in a Gryffindor. Houses, Mr. Snape, are a convenience, not an iron-clad definition." He frowned.

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"Now. I've a lot to do, and you're for your common room before curfew," she said briskly. "There's a bathroom just there so you can wash up, and I'll see you in class tomorrow, all right?" She paused, squeezed his shoulder. "My door's always— *always* —open to you, Severus Snape."

"Yes, Professor Granger." He watched her intently as she strode down the corridor. A last swipe at his nose with the back of his hand, and he stood, stuffing the

handkerchief with its 'H.G.' monogram in his pocket. Maybe... Maybe the next few years wouldn't be so bad after all.

This was written for the 'Slytherin Firsties' challenge at GS100, conceived when I tried looking for a plot that involved *Severus* as the Firstie in question rather than an anonymous group of students. I've received a few requests already for a full-length fic to continue this; I plan to follow up with at least one—hopefully two—short-fic scenes to round it off, but a full-length Time-Turner fic is something I think is currently beyond me for a few different reasons.

Anyhow, I hope this has been worth the few minutes it's taken to read it. Please, if possible, drop a little coin or two into the little review box.