

Rx

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Minerva is ill, and Severus has a prescription for her.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: I wrote this quick little hurt/comfort fic for a friend with a bad sore throat. Severus might be a bit too soft here, but hey...there has to be some comfort somewhere, or I couldn't call it H/C! Read it in health.

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Minerva wasn't altogether surprised when Severus turned up at her rooms late in the evening, wearing a familiar scowl and bearing an unfamiliar parcel. She'd seen the annoyed looks he'd given her at dinner after it became clear that the head cold that had plagued her all week had now deprived her of her voice. She'd thought he might have a few choice words to utter on the subject, and apparently she'd been right, for here he was.

She concealed a smile. There was an irritable predictability about Severus that Minerva found rather comforting.

"I can understand why you wouldn't lower yourself to ask me for any assistance with this ridiculous cold," he said, brushing past her into the sitting room and thumping his parcel onto a table. "After all, I'm just a potions master, not a healer, and I'm a Slytherin in the bargain. So of course no self-respecting Gryffindor would deign to accept my help."

He turned around to glare at her. "But I fail to understand why you have not gone to Poppy. She is the school mediwitch, she has potions that would alleviate some of your symptoms...the fact that most of said potions were brewed by me is neither here nor there...and she is a safe Hufflepuff. Oh, wait...of course!"

He broke off to snap his fingers and smirk at her in that way that he knew drove her to distraction. "Of course. How could I forget? Gryffindors are not like the rest of us mortals. They can't look for relief from their misery...they have to be martyrs to it. Apparently they think they're more courageous that way. Personally, I would say it's foolish to forego necessary medical advice, but that's because I so often forget that to Gryffindors, courage and foolishness are one and the same."

"If you have come here merely to insult me, Severus, you may leave," Minerva whispered, and then wished she hadn't. Even that slight effort made her throat burn.

Goodness, but she felt dreadful. She probably *should* have gone to Poppy, though she wasn't about to admit it now. Drawing her dressing gown more tightly around her, she suppressed a shiver; she didn't want the sight of her weakness spur Severus on to even longer flights of invective.

But he wasn't looking at her. He was engaged in unshrinking and unpacking his parcel: a sharp knife, a small jar, a stoppered stone flask, a crystal phial, a lemon.

"*Accio*," he said, summoning two tumblers from her cabinet and adding water to one with a muttered *aguamenti*. "And why is it so cold in here? Is this another example of Gryffindor stoicism?"

A wave of his wand freshened the fire; a moment later, Minerva also felt the soft air of a warming charm wash over her. It was chilly in her room, but she simply hadn't had the energy to adjust the heat.

"Sit," Severus commanded, pointing at her sofa with his wand and then charming his knife to slice into the lemon; the first cut released a clean citrus scent sharp enough to penetrate even Minerva's clogged head. "You need warmth and rest."

She glared at his black-clad back and contemplated remaining precisely where she was...Severus needn't think she was going to take orders from ~~him~~.

But after a moment, Minerva felt suddenly very tired indeed. She waited just long enough to make clear to Severus that she was sitting down because she wanted to, not because he'd told her to, and then sank onto the cushions.

Sadly, her display of independence had been lost on him. He still had his back to her, oblivious to her entire performance. Minerva sniffed. So much for Slytherin subtlety. He was supposedly so concerned about her getting some rest, and yet he didn't even check to see if she'd sat down.

Then it occurred to her that he had probably simply taken it for granted that she would obey him. She considered taking offense at this, but finally decided that she felt too ill to bother. Besides, Severus had started talking again, and even if she spoke up, she doubted she could make her whisper heard above his whinging.

"Really, Minerva," he said, turning towards her as he upended the small jar and allowed a thick ribbon of honey to flow into the now water-and-lemon-filled tumbler, "I think even Potter...even *Longbottom*...would have wit enough to take themselves to the hospital wing if they'd been ill for a week. I'd like to think that you are at least somewhat more intelligent than those two dunderheads."

He meticulously replaced the lid on the honey jar before unstoppering his flask to add the scent of firewhisky to the scent of lemon in the air. Minerva thought with relief that she must be getting better...surely she hadn't been able to smell anything at dinner?

Rather than acknowledge Severus's still-smirking face, she watched instead as he poured a healthy slug of firewhisky into the tumbler, used the knife to stir everything together, and cast a heating charm over the lot.

"Drink this," he said, handing the glass to her with a flourish, and this time she didn't even worry about being given orders. She took a grateful sip; the toddy was wonderfully hot and felt soothing on her raw throat. She even fancied she could taste it through her stuffiness, just the hint of tart sweetness.

Minerva sighed with the first pleasure she'd felt in days.

"Don't bother to thank me," Severus said. "I'm used to ingratitude from Gryffindors." As he spoke, he took up the second tumbler and poured two fingers of neat firewhisky.

She raised her eyebrows. Was he intending to stay awhile? Severus sometimes stopped in at her rooms with a question or complaint, but he never spent leisure time with her on school nights.

"What?" he said, noting her surprise. "I'm not allowed to have a drink of my own? I need something to fortify me while I watch you finish your medicine...because I'm not leaving until you've drained every drop. Now budge over."

It was just as well that she couldn't talk, Minerva reflected as she made room for him on the sofa, for she would have been speechless anyway. A long school-night visit from Severus? A hot toddy? And now his arm around her and his free hand softly stroking her hair?

This was unprecedented. Their occasional trysts were usually much more prosaic -- practical, unsentimental couplings with no romantic entanglements and few caresses. What was going on? Perhaps her cold was worse than she thought; perhaps she was dying, or. . .

"Polyjuice?" she croaked.

"Don't be an idiot," he snapped, but the stroking continued, and she felt unable to stop herself from drawing her feet onto the sofa and curling into his embrace.

She had finished the toddy and was almost asleep before she remembered the phial that had been in his parcel. She raised her head and pointed to the bottle sitting squatly on her table, next to the squeezed-out lemon.

"Oh, that?" Severus asked, making no move to get up or to remove his arm from her shoulders. "It's a laryngitis potion. I've been experimenting; it should give you your voice back immediately."

Minerva twisted around to glare into his face. Why hadn't he given it to her at once?

Severus understood (he knew her too well, damn him) and gave his rare bark of laughter. "You expected me to offer you the potion earlier? Come now, Minerva, be reasonable...if such a thing is possible for a Gryffindor. When am I likely to have another opportunity to talk to you when you can't talk back? You may have the potion when I leave and not a moment before."

Why, the insufferable...! Minerva opened her mouth to give him a piece of her mind, sore throat or no sore throat...she'd show him "can't talk back"...when he shocked her into silence once more by leaning down to give her the lightest of kisses.

So quickly did he sit back and resume his supercilious sneer that she would have thought she'd imagined his touch...were it not for the burn of firewhisky that lingered on her lips.

Well, well.

After a moment, Minerva settled against Severus and closed her eyes once more. He was right: she needed warmth and rest, and his arms were turning out to be an excellent place to find both.

There would be plenty of time for talking back tomorrow.