

Bucket of Barbed Wire

by peskipiksi

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: I'm away on Saturday, so I picked an old prompt today and set myself the time limit of an hour.

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'When I'm calling you_ou_ou_ou_ou_ou!' The unearthly wail shattered the peace of the afternoon and made Snape's hair stand on end – no mean feat.

Merlin's pants! It sounded like someone was strangling a Kneazle. And it had just interrupted a very enjoyable performance of *Don Giovanni* on the Sky Arts channel. Severus still wasn't sure buying a house in a Muggle area was a good idea. But he was fed up with the cultural wilderness that was Celestina Warbeck and the Wizarding Wireless network. At least here he could get the BBC's Proms coverage in the summer holidays. And this quiet suburban area was much pleasanter than Spinner's End. Or at least, it had been.

Incensed, he strode up next-door's path and hammered on the door. A large lady in a floral twinset opened the door. 'Do keep the noise down, dear. You're disturbing my singing practice. I'm auditioning for the Operatic Society's production of *The Mikado*, you know. Just a formality, of course. I was born to play Yum Yum!' The woman stopped her babbling and looked Snape up and down. 'Ah, you're the man who's just bought the house next door, aren't you?'

Her brisk, bustling manner unnerved him. 'Yes... er... I was just wondering if you could...er... I'm trying to watch *Don Giovanni* on the television, you see, and...' Bloody Hell! What was happening to him? He sounded like blasted Quirrell!

The large woman grabbed his hand and pulled him inside. 'Oh, a fellow opera lover! You must come in and have a cup of tea, dear!'

Helpless, Snape allowed her to propel him to the kitchen and seat him at the table.

'Now, we really must get acquainted, dear. What's your name?'

'Snape. Um... Severus Snape.'

The woman let out a peal of laughter that should have shattered the windows. Those which had escaped her awful singing, that was. 'What a funny name, dear!' Her gaze narrowed. 'You're not foreign, are you?' she asked sharply.

'Er... no. My parents were from the Midlands.'

'Oh, dear. Working class, I suppose. Still, never mind, dear. I shall make it my personal project to integrate you into civilised society.'

Merlin help him.

Through the haze of horror, he realised, dimly, that she was still talking.

'What do you do, dear?' A cup of tea had appeared on the table beside him. A bone china cup and a plate of carefully arranged biscuits. With a doily.

Numbly, Snape picked up the teacup. 'I'm a teacher. At... er... a private school.' Horrified, he realised he was trying to impress her. This awful woman was sapping his spirit, his wits, and his will to live.

'Oh, that's wonderful, dear. I always say to Violet – that's my sister, *the one with the Mercedes, sauna and room for a pony*– the comprehensive school system is what will take the "Great" out of Great Britain! Of course, Richard and I sent our son, Sheridan, to private school. Such a gifted boy. You wait there, dear, and I'll fetch Sheridan's school photographs!

She clapped him on the shoulder, hard, and Snape jumped and dropped his teacup.

The woman tutted and bustled around him, wiping up the spill with a damp dishcloth. 'Oh really, Severus, dear, you are clumsy! All over my score of *The Mikado*, too!' She suddenly stopped, and gave him that unnerving, assessing look again. 'Do you sing, dear? Do pop and see Emmet next door. He's the musical director of the Operatic Society. Tell him Hyacinth says you'd make a wonderful Pooh Bah!

Snape stared at her in horror. 'Er... no, I don't sing. Excuse me. I have an urgent telephone call to make!' He bolted, feeling like he'd only just got out of there with his life.

First thing tomorrow morning, he was going to call Messers Blotwell & Binns, and find out if there was any way he could buy Spinner's End back.

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A/N: From an old prompt by peppermint: Snape's just bought a new house, only he moved in next door to Hyacinth Bucket (that's BOO-KAY) from Keeping Up Appearances. What does he do when Hyacinth asks him round to tea?

Yes, I know 'Indian Love Call' isn't from 'The Mikado'. It was just the best song for Hyacinth to caterwaul, and the idea of Snape as Pooh Bah was too good to pass up!

'Bouquet of Barbed Wire' is the title of a novel by Andrea Newman.