

Forever Mine

by Shug

His actions were driven not by hate but by love. He loved the Dark Arts. He loved Lily Evans and he loved another. A retelling of the life of Severus Snape.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 2

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September 1970

"Severus, dear do you feel like running an errand for mummy?" Eileen Snape asked, as she rummaged through her purse and pulled out a few balled-up bills.

"Not really, no," the ten-year-old Severus replied, looking in his mirror, combing his hair.

Eileen pursed her lips. "And where are you off to?" his mother asked. Severus rolled his eyes. His hair was getting a bit shaggy; he wondered if he should cut it.

"I'm going out to play with Lily," he grumbled.

"Good. I need you to go to the shop; it's on your way," Eileen said, ignoring his sullen attitude. "There're a few potions I want you to get for me."

Now she had his attention. His father didn't know what they were and Severus yearned for any bits of magic he could get his hands on. "Oh, very well, mother. Make a list and do try to write legibly."

Eileen smiled inwardly; sometimes it was easy to forget that Severus was not a forty-five year old man. She hastily wrote down everything she needed and handed him the few crumpled notes.

"The shop is called Olu's in bright red letters; it's right down the lane and around the bend. There's no missing it." Eileen guided Severus out of the house while she talked. "Take your time dear, but do hurry."

Before he could retort, his mother gave him a gentle nudge out of the door.

Severus went along his way, not really thinking about anything at all. Then it hit him quite suddenly. He'd forgotten to go to Lily's. Surely, she'd like to see this place as well. Though halfway to his destination, he turned around and headed to his friend's home. As he walked to the Evans' house, Severus idly began to touch his nose. From the most part he looked like his mother, but dear God, the more he touched it, the more his nose felt like his father's. Lost in his thoughts, he missed the Evans' residence.

As he walked to the door, he noticed the new flowers Mrs. Evans had planted. The flowers were a mixture of dark colours: arrays of burgundies, purples and deep oranges. Severus tentatively pressed the doorbell. He waited. He hated waiting. It made him feel awkward. He just happened to glance to the left and saw the curtains of the neighbouring house rustle. Severus frowned to himself. Were they spying on him? He must look out of place here. These nice neat lawns, perfectly symmetrical placement of mailboxes and even the cars seemed to be parked on the same mark in each drive way. The only variation as far as he could tell were the colours of the houses, but that was limited to blue, grey, yellow and white.

"Oh, hello." Finally an answer. This woman had to be Mrs. Evans. She looked just like Petunia or rather a nicer version. Yet like Lily, she had the same lovely emerald eyes. "How can I help you?" she asked, smiling at him. Rarely did strangers smile at him.

"Can Lily come out?" he asked softly.

"Oh dear, I'm sorry." Severus could tell, she did seem sorry. "But Lily is at school at the moment. She won't be home until half past three. Then she has to do her homework of course. If she's done at a decent time, she can come out and play with you." Severus looked absolutely crestfallen.

"Yes... well, thank you." Severus murmured. With that, he turned to leave. What else was he to do with his day? It would be yet another day of reading over his mother's old school books. She'd mostly been able to salvage a few from her final years. His favourites were Defense Against The Dark Arts, but the easiest was Potions. Even though he didn't have the foundation to build upon, he found it simple enough to understand. With a swat to his forehead, he remembered. His mother wanted him to go to get some potions for her. It should be interesting, and it would preoccupy him until he could see Lily again. With a bit of purpose, Severus went about his task.

The shop wasn't far from his home at all. Severus was not very sure what he expected to see, but certainly not this. He imagined dusty wooden shelves with translucent vials which might contain fingers or newts. But this place...it was very white and sterile, like a normal pharmacy. The few aisles had headings of each type of medication it held. The right wall was almost entirely 'pick and mix'. Severus had never seen so much candy in his life. He perused the first aisle gingerly. Everything seemed so ordinary. Severus sighed. Maybe his mother was wrong or had given him inaccurate directions. As he rounded the next aisle something caught his foot and before Severus could stop himself, he fell onto the white tile floor.

"My bloody knee!" a voice exclaimed. Severus gathered himself and stared at the reason for his tumble. It was a girl. She was wearing a lilac jumper with a white blouse and stockings with purple shoes. Her skin was likened to hot cocoa, but what really caught his eye was her hair. He'd never seen anything like it. It was massive, bigger than even her head, a halo with dense tight curls. "I'm... er..." He started to apologize but stopped himself. "Why were you sitting on the floor?"

"Studying obviously," she answered, reaching out her hand to Severus. She waited. He just stared at her, unsure what to do. "Well, help me up, boy." He quickly obeyed, and as she dusted herself off he noticed the books and papers at her feet. He saw drawings of various animals; the most common were foxes and antelope. Of the books, one title he could clearly make out was *What Your Animagus Form Says About You* by Conrad Blitzer.

"What's all this then?" a deep voice boomed behind Severus. This had to be the single most enormous person he had ever seen in his life. Surely, this man was seven feet tall. He looked, for the most part, like this girl, only a shade darker, and he didn't have as much hair. He was wearing a doctor's smock over jeans, and a t-shirt. Severus couldn't make out much of the man's face. Most of it was covered in a thick curly beard and his dark brown eyes were framed by grey tinted glasses.

"Daddy, this man accosted me," the girl said, as she latched on to the man's legs. Severus looked horror stricken.

"Is that so?" the great man asked, leaning down and staring right into Severus' eyes.

"N... n... no... I... um," the young Severus stammered. The man broke into a broad smile.

"Just joking lad." He patted Severus on the shoulder. "Nothing like falsely accusing customers of molestation, eh Kemmy?"

The girl peeked smiled at Severus. "Introduce us, girl." She stepped to Severus and held out her hand. "This is my father, Chiwetelu Oludotun Edochie Benjamin Okafor, but he goes by Ayo and I'm Kem Okafor." They smiled at Severus. He shook Kem's hand.

"Right," he began slowly, "I'm Severus Snape." He nodded to both of them.

"What can we do for you young Mister Snape?" Ayo asked.

Severus cautiously handed the list to Ayo, who took off his glasses and scanned over the list carefully. "Kem, show young Severus around the wizarding supplies." Kem handed her materials to her father. She grabbed Severus by the hand and led him to the back of the store. They came to an ordinary red door, which she opened for Severus. "After you," she said, smiling at him.

This part of the store was vastly different. There was the same neatness and starkness of a hospital, but the products were something else entirely. There were actually vials with fingers, newts, eyeballs and other things inside them that Severus could not quite recognize. At hand was a table of plants. Some of them were moving, as if dancing. In a corner, there was a cluster of plants; instead of flowers with round bulb-like heads, they had what appeared to be a face which seemed to be contorted. Kem went around collecting the items for Severus. He happened to come across a selection of books. *Hogwarts, A History* the spine read. His mother told him very little about Hogwarts. He wanted to know more.

"Here's everything on your list," Kem said as she handed him the basket. She once again took him by the hand and led him off. "And how will you be paying sir? Pounds or galleons?" Severus gave her the money, still in awe of the shop. He took his purchase and slowly made his way out of the shop.

"What are you going to do now?" the girl asked, following closely behind him. They walked through the Muggle part of the pharmacy, along the wall of pick and mix candies. Kem stuck her hand in random candies, grabbing as much as she could, stuffing them in a plastic bag.

"I'm going home to read," Severus replied. They passed Ayo, who was stocking hemorrhoid creams onto a shelf. "I'm going out to play with strangers," Kem called to her father as they exited.

"Have a good time, love." Her father waved, almost dismissively.

Severus decided to take the long way home, but all the same Kem followed, in silence.

"Do you want to do some magic?" she inquired after a while.

"What makes you think I can do magic?" Severus retorted.

"Why else would you come to our apothecary?" She yet again took him by the hand and led him off. They walked for what seemed like ages to Severus and finally they came to an unfinished subdivision. Severus remembered, years ago, his parents had been excited about this place. His father worked on construction and would have been able to get a discount on a home. They would have a proper house, his mother used to say. But, the project was abandoned and they were still at Spinner's End.

Kem took him into a small coral house with no doors or windows. She pulled out something akin to a baton and swept it over the area of the living room. She muttered something Severus could not make out, and all of the debris and dust scattered to the perimeter of the room. Once clean, Kem sat on the floor and motioned for Severus to do the same. "Take off your jacket," she stated. Severus was going to question her, but he was curious so he submitted. She pointed the stick at the coat and made it dance. It moved as if doing the flamenco. It shimmied, jerked and spun. Severus had never been so impressed in his life.

"*Scourgify!*" Kem shouted. Severus looked over carefully. The stains from his coat were all gone. Severus sat in a stunned silence. His mother talked about magic, but she had not performed any for him. Any magic he or Lily could do was infrequent and tame.

"Who is that redhead you're always with?" Kem questioned. "Is she your girlfriend?" Severus, deep in his own thoughts, barely registered what she said.

"What? No!" he cried ardently. "We're just friends. Best... friends..." He trailed off.

Kem pulled the bag of candy from her pocket. "Would you like some?" she asked, as she presented the sweets to him. He took an assorted handful and smiled gratefully at her. Kem took a few and muttered a spell; the candies hovered in a circle and twirled around her head. Then one by one they fell into her mouth.

"I suspect you haven't started Hogwarts yet. Want me to teach you a spell?" Kem asked. Severus nodded eagerly, more than he wanted to. "Here, hold the wand firmly and point." She stood away from him with a lollipop in her palm. "Swish and flick and say, "*Wingardium Leviosa!*" He did as she instructed; at first it only jumped a bit in her hand.

"That's a good start," she smiled. "It's supposed to float. Keep trying!" she urged. For the next half hour or so Severus kept at it. The most he'd managed was to get the lollipop about three inches above her palm. "You're good. It took me a few days. It should be about tea time now. Care for a bite?" Severus wanted to do more but he had to admit, he was feeling a bit peckish.

They left the unfinished subdivision and headed back to Olu's. Closer to their destination, they saw a drunkard in the distance. As they got a bit closer, Severus could see that it was his own father. He groaned and looked away in shame. He stayed as far to the opposite side of the street as he could, hoping to avoid Tobias Snape. He eyed his father as they passed and breathed a sigh of relief as he went by unnoticed.

"Ayo, Ayo, Ayo," Kem repeated as they walked into the store. "Ayo, Ayo, Ayo." Patrons looked at the children who went about the store.

"Yes, love of my life, light of my eye, fruit of my..." he called out from behind a counter, sorting prescriptions.

"We're hungry," Kem interrupted.

"There is shepherd's pie and egusi leftovers," he replied.

Once again Severus was led through the red door. On a shelf, there was a spare tentacle, squirming of its own accord. It fell on to Kem's foot. She calmly picked it up and set it back to its original place. They went up a small iron spiral staircase that somehow Severus had not noticed on his first visit. The stairs led them to a flat. Severus had never been inside anyone else's home. The sitting room was cosy and well-ordered, with a plain dark brown sofa set with a telly and coffee table. The kitchen was small but tidy. She motioned for him to sit at the little white table, which only had room for two people. She began pulling different food from the cupboards and placing it in front of Severus.

"Would you like the shepherd's pie or egusi? Egusi is a Nigerian dish; it's really, really, really good." Severus guessed that it must be her favourite, and he'd never tried it so why not?

"Ok, I'll taste it," he shrugged. Kem sent the shepherd's pie back into the cupboards. She ladled the strange looking soup into a bowl in front of him. Severus was no longer so sure of his choice. He saw bits of fish and beef, a lot of spinach in a tomato base, and it looked like there was also tapioca in the mix. Next to the soup sat a bowl of what looked like bread dough.

"*Fervensio*," She muttered over their plates and steam rose from the food. "You take a piece of the white stuff, that's fufu or pounded yam and dip it in the egusi," she explained. He did as instructed and hesitantly took the first bite. Yet again, Severus was surprised. This egusi was absolutely delicious.

"What are these grainy bits?" he asked. Covering her full mouth she answered, "That's the egusi, it's ground melon seeds."

Severus concluded that he liked egusi. They ate in an amicable silence. Every so often Kem would dance in her seat, as if she could hear some music that Severus couldn't. Suddenly there was a tapping at the window near Kem. It was a small white and golden brown owl with a heart-shaped face. Kem opened the window for it and it flew in and sat comfortably on her shoulder. In its beak was a rolled up piece of parchment, which the owl dropped into her lap.

"Thank you, Bobert." She picked through her egusi and fed Bobert a bit of meat. "Who's writing to daddy today?" she asked herself. "Hmm... Mr.Malfoy." She balled up the letter and threw it on the kitchen counter. "Where are my manners? Severus, this is Bobert, Bobert this is Severus." Bobert's black beady eyes stared directly at Severus; it made Severus uncomfortable. Bobert hopped up and nestled in Kem's hair.

"Would you like some cake and tea?" Kem asked, as she went to the cupboards again and pulled down a giant chocolate cake before Severus could respond. He nodded his head even though she couldn't see. She cleared away the dirty dishes and placed the cake, mugs and tea onto the table. She used a heating spell to warm the water in the teapot. While Severus ate and sipped, Kem made sandwiches, eight of them to be exact. Kem was about the same size as Lily, and she was going to eat all that? She tossed a bit of roast beef in the air, which Bobert caught in her beak. Two of the sandwiches she set aside and wrapped in wax paper.

"Would you like to watch some telly? Robin Hood is about to come on." She gestured towards the sofa. She walked over to the television and turned the dial. In her hair, Bobert sat, still staring at Severus. He wasn't sure if the little owl turned its whole body or just its head around to look at him. The owl unnerved him. They watched several shows. They didn't talk much but that didn't bother Severus. With Lily, he felt like he always had to do something to keep her attention. Even though they'd only known each other a few hours, Severus felt like Kem accepted him as he was.

"Zounds!" Ayo cried, walking into the flat. "I could eat a hippogriff." He sat at the small table and immediately Kem went about placing food in front of him. She gave him six of the sandwiches, a slice of chocolate cake and poured him a large mug of beer. She handed the wand to her father. She started to leave him and re-join Severus when he grabbed her and placed her on his lap and engulfed her in a bear hug.

"My sweet, sweet girl. Always looking after her papa." Kem struggled in his arms.

"Gah, don't be such an idiot." Catching him off guard, she escaped his grasp. Ayo looked offended.

"If loving my precious child means I'm an idiot... then go away." Ayo said, going back to his food and leaving the children to watch their shows. After a while Ayo spoke.

"Young Snape, it's almost sun down. I'm sure my lovely daughter has enjoyed your company, but don't you have to be home soon?" Severus looked out the window; the sun was setting.

"Um... yes." Severus replied, quickly getting to his feet. "Thank you for your hospitality." Kem stood with him.

"I'll walk him home." Ayo tossed Kem his wand and shoed her away. Kem gently nudged him out of the flat before he protested.

Severus walked slowly, absorbing all the different and strange items on the shelves. He might have lingered a bit too long, for one of the plants with mouths to send a tendril which wrapped around his wrist. Without having the opportunity to panic, Kem walloped the plant on its "head" and it let go of Severus. They left the wizarding part and crossed the Muggle pharmacy, Kem once again grabbing candies from the pick and mix wall.

They strolled down the lane, Kem whistling a tune. Severus began to feel awkward. He didn't want Kem to see his home or his parents. "Do you want to get back? It's getting dark and you shouldn't be out alone."

Kem shrugged. "I have Ayo's wand and he taught me a stunning spell."

They were getting closer to Spinner's End and Severus could swear he felt a bead of sweat slide down his nose. "Um...er..." Kem looked at him, waiting for his words to come. "My mum doesn't really like having strangers over... so..."

Kem nodded. "Right, well maybe you could introduce us later. Have a nice evening, Severus."

She turned away from him and began to make the trek back to her home.

She didn't seem offended but Severus felt bad. Severus reached his home and entered as stealthily as possible. Luckily, his father was passed out cold in his favourite chair. Severus made his way to his room and went to examine the items he had bought for his mother. To his surprise, there were extra articles inside the bag. There was a clear plastic bag with candies and two sandwiches wrapped in wax paper. A small note was taped to the front of one of the sandwiches.

These sandwiches have a preservation spell on them. No need to refrigerate. Enjoy at your leisure.

-Kem

He put the food in his dresser under a shirt. He looked at the note for a long time. Kem had the most terrible writing he had ever seen. Even the round smiley face was crooked. Then Severus wondered when she had managed to sneak these things into his bag. His thoughts were interrupted by a knock at his door. He hurriedly shoved the note into his pocket.

"Severus," his mother whispered. "Did you get those things I asked for?" He opened the door and handed everything over to her. Eileen rummaged through the bag, making sure everything was there. "Did you have a good time with your little friend?" Severus thought on it for barely a second. "Yes... I did," he replied earnestly.

Two days later, Severus woke early as he always did and hurried out the house. He went to Lily's first. Mrs. Evans kindly replied each time that she was at school. Severus decided not to try again until the weekend; he didn't want Mrs. Evans to think he was obsessed with Lily. For the rest of the week, he spent his time with Kem. He helped Kem stock the shelves and clean. They played at the abandoned house and did bits of magic with Ayo's wand.

He enjoyed lunches with Kem and Ayo and sometimes Bobert. Kem and Ayo had an unusual relationship, Severus thought. He'd never been inside Lily's home, and his own home life was not a great example. He wasn't sure how parents and children were supposed to act. Kem and Ayo teased each other horribly; Ayo smacked Kem on the head and Kem punched him in the stomach, and they were extremely competitive at games. Severus could tell that Ayo went easy on Kem.

"Where is this Lily of yours? I'd like to meet her," Kem asked, as they sat at the register of the Muggle part of the store. "Welcome to Olu's," she chimed as a customer walked in.

"She's at school and won't be free until the weekend," Severus answered. He sounded somewhat put out about it.

"It's Saturday, Sevvie. Let's go seek her out." Severus groaned. Kem's one fault, so far, was the alias she had assigned to him. She did, however, make sure to only call him that when they were alone.

"Daddy, we're going ginger hunting!" Kem yelled out. A few patrons, those with red hair, looked her way.

"Catch and release, love," Ayo responded somewhere out of sight.

Kem followed Severus to the park first, in case she was there with Petunia. Lily was nowhere in sight; they walked the streets for a while until lastly checking her home. Severus rang the bell, and as expected, Mrs. Evans answered.

"Oh, hello Severus. The girls are out in the back garden." Mrs. Evans motioned for him to come in.

"I have a friend with me; is it alright if she comes through?" Severus asked politely.

Mrs. Evans looked past Severus and at the picket fence where Kem was stood, running her fingers along the trim of her dress. She smiled broadly at Severus. "You too, love, come along," Mrs. Evans called out to Kem.

"Hello missus. I'm Kem Okafor; my father owns the pharmacy Olu's," Kem introduced herself.

"Why, yes. Olu's is quite nice. I've been there a number of times. I'm Judith Evans." Mrs. Evans shook Kem's hand. She led them through the orderly home and outside to the back garden. This was the first time Severus had been invited in, even though he'd known Lily for months now.

"Girls, you have guests," their mother called out. Lily and Petunia were on the grass playing with dolls and a tea set. Severus quickly whispered to Kem, "Petunia can't do magic; she hates it."

Kem nodded and stayed close to Severus. As they got closer to the sisters, Kem saw Lily smile and Petunia frown.

"Hello, I'm Kem. And you must be Lily, Severus told me all about you." Severus looked at the ground, finding a single blade of grass immensely interesting.

"Yes, that's right. This is my older sister Petunia," Lily said, smiling as she pulled Petunia closer towards Kem.

"And what did he tell you about me?" Petunia asked, glaring at Severus, "Nothing good I'd wager." Lily was about to speak to diffuse the tension.

"Not much at all, you'd think he'd mention that his friend Lily had such a pretty big sister. Severus must be shy. You know how boys are," Kem finished with a giggle. Severus looked appalled; Lily was the pretty one, not Petunia!

"That must be so. We're having a tea party. Severus can be the butler, we have more dolls, I'll go get them," Petunia stated before she rushed off into the house.

"That was ace, Kem. And Severus," Lily hugged him, "It's been ages. You're looking well." Severus was looking well. He'd eaten most meals with the Okafors, and some way or another, Kem would sneak tiny food packages into his pockets. When he pulled them out they grew to their regular size. He was still on the thin side, but he was looking healthier.

He also looked slightly less sullen. Severus reluctantly let go of Lily as she eased from the embrace.

Kem made herself comfortable at the frilly laced table. Severus and Lily joined her as Petunia rejoined them with extra dolls. When Mrs. Evans brought out more biscuits, Severus didn't protest to serving the girls. Kem did notice that Lily's tea never went empty, and she always received the best looking snack

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 2

To Diagon Alley

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June 1971

Severus swept the front of the shop. He'd helped Kem so much around the shop that Ayo had made him an honorary employee. He was happy about that. Ayo showed him, and Kem, how to perform a few simple spells.

"Severus, tea time." Kem's head poked out of the shop door. He followed her up to the flat. On the small window sill, Bobert tapped at the window, almost as if teasing an annoyed great horned owl. Kem flicked Bobert on the head and let in the foreign owl. It didn't belong to any of the regular customers, and it wasn't that stuck-up eagle owl of Abraxas Malfoy. The owl presented its leg bound with two minute letters. Kem took the letters as the owls sized each other up.

"Sevvie, there's a letter here for you." The two opened their letters at the same time. The owls circled each other; Bobert threw faux pecks at the much larger owl. Severus read his letter over and over again. Here it was, concrete proof: he was going to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. He'd assumed so. But now he knew for certain.

"Hogwarts is a bit late," Kem muttered, "Mahoutokoro and Beauxbatons sent their letters ages ago."

"Let's go and see Lily to see if she has received her letter," Severus added. Lily just had to have her letter as well. The duo dashed out the flat and the shop.

"Mind the store, father," Kem yelled over her shoulder.

"Yes, boss," Ayo nodded before carrying on building a small pyramid of vaginal itch relief creams.

As they approached the Evans, an old man in business attire made his way out of the front door. Instead of waiting until the man had left like Severus, Kem strolled right up to him.

"I know you," she spoke in an accusatory tone. He raised a surprised eyebrow.

"Do you, now?" he asked good-naturedly. "I've seen you in photos," she began, "with my grandfather."

"And your grandfather is?" he inquired.

"Ogonna Uchenna Darlington Okafor."

"And," he questioned on, "which of his many children is your parent?"

"Chiwetelu Oludotun Edochie Benjamin Okafor," Kem stated.

"Ah yes, Ayo. He did very well in Potions and Transfiguration if I'm not mistaken. And what might your name be?"

"Kem."

The man chuckled to himself. "Decided to keep it simple, did he? You must excuse me, tight schedule. I'm sure we'll see more of each other at the start of term." He gave Kem a wink and tipped his hat to Severus as went on his way. Kem glared at the man's disappearing figure. Severus made his way to Kem, about to ring the Evans' door.

"How do you know him?"

"I don't really, but I don't care much for any of my grandfather's associates."

Mr. Evans opened the door in a hurried fashion. "Sorry, loves, the girls won't be coming out today."

"I KNEW IT!" They heard Petunia screech. "She's a little freak!"

"Petunia, darling, you don't mean that," Mrs. Evans said from a distance. A crash of porcelain rang out, maybe a plate or a vase, and then came the sound of feet stomping up the stairs. "Maybe tomorrow, yeah?" Mr. Evans asked before he closed the door gently.

Ayo held the door as Severus and Kem walked into the Leaky Cauldron. Severus stayed very close to Kem, but not so close to make her think he was frightened.

"Hello, Tommy," Ayo called out to the young man, barely out of his teens, wiping down a table. "Did you enjoy your summer?"

"Not really," the young man replied, "I had to spend my entire holiday here at this bloody tavern."

"Come now, who doesn't want to spend their days catering to a room full of slouched wizards?"

"Such is my lot," Tom sighed. He looked at Ayo's little companions. "And who might they be?" Ayo chuckled and ruffled Severus's hair, which caused the boy to scowl.

"This boy's mine, can't you see the resemblance? The girl? Don't know where she came from; turned around one day and there she was." Kem rolled her eyes, tugging her father's sleeve with impatience.

"We best be off; tell your father to save me a bottle of that special firewhisky of his." Ayo winked at Tom before leading the children to the alley.

"Okay, you two, what's our first stop?" Ayo asked. Kem carried with her a clip board and a long list of every item they would need as first years. Severus followed as Kem instructed him and Ayo. At every shop Ayo paid for Severus's supplies, stating that his mother had given him the funds in private. His father had been furious when he had found out that Severus was a wizard. Tobias barely spoke to his wife, and when he did, it was to argue. He scarcely acknowledged his son. Which was why Severus accompanied Ayo and Kem.

"All that's left are our robes and wands," Kem said after checking items off her list. Severus could not believe this was the world where his mother was raised.

Why on earth had she chosen to live a life without magic, he wondered.

"Severus! Kem!" The two turned to find Lily rushing towards them. The girls clasped one another with great force. Lily hugged Severus, as well, who froze at the embrace.

A short distance after Lily, a woman with dark blonde hair and a semi stern look on her face walked briskly towards them.

"Ms. Evans, we mustn't dawdle," she said, placing a hand on Lily's shoulder.

"Oh my days!" Ayo exclaimed, approaching the woman. "Minerva McGonagall, is that you?"

"Good heavens, you're a sight for sore eyes." McGonagall let herself be engulfed by the big man.

"How did you come about escorting little Lily?" Ayo asked.

"I've taught at Hogwarts for four years now; I assist the Muggle-born students to get situated."

"Took over Herbology, did you?"

"Heavens no," McGonagall tittered.

The adults seemed to completely forget about the children as they became reacquainted.

"Isn't this wonderful? The three of us will be in Hogwarts together!" Lily was visibly excited. She reached into her pocket and pulled out her wand for Severus and Kem to see. When it was Kem's turn, she aimed the wand at her father, sending yellow sparks at his backside.

"Little bugger!" Ayo shouted. Kem quickly gave the wand back to Lily.

"You're being rude daddy; introduce us to your friend." Kem pouted as Ayo rolled his eyes.

"If you must know, dear child, this is the woman who was almost your mother." He winked at McGonagall.

"Don't fill the children's heads up with nonsense, Okafor. Head Girl and a Slytherin first year, what would people say?" she chided with mock sternness.

"It could have happened if you had given me the time of day," Ayo replied cheekily.

"Well, we really must be getting back to our group," McGonagall said, dismissing Ayo.

Lily gave a quick hug to her friends. "I'll see you both at home." The children made their farewells and departed.

"Right, you two, all that's left now are your wands," Ayo said, looking over Kem's shoulder to the clipboard.

Diagon Alley proved to be quite the labyrinth to Severus's eyes. The streets, lanes, and corridors appeared so muddled and unplanned.

"Here we are children, Ollivanders!" Ayo exclaimed with a touch of grandeur as he ushered them into the shop.

A man was standing before them, his wide, pale eyes shining like moons through the gloom of the shop. He welcomed them in.

"Why, Okafor, Yew and Kneazle whiskers. 13 and 5/8th inches." His eyebrows rising to his sandy grey hair.

"Right to the last Knut," Ayo nodded.

"First years, I assume?"

"Yes, sir, my daughter, Kem, and her friend, Severus Snape."

Mr. Ollivander picked a random wand from the shelf and handed it to Severus. Severus looked to Ayo and Kem, unsure what to do with it.

"Is this one for me?" he asked Mr. Ollivander.

"That's for the wand to decide. Give it a swish." With a jerky movement, Severus tried the wand. Nothing happened.

"The right one will come to you. Try another." Mr. Ollivander guided Severus around the shop testing numerous wands to no avail.

Kem, with idle hands, roamed the shop on her own. She looked at a couple of wands, but none interested her. She eventually found her way to a door marked 'employees only'. She turned to rejoin the others when she heard a small tapping at the door. She peered over her shoulder, cautiously turning the door knob. Barely an inch ajar, a wand slipped through landing on Kem's foot. Holding the wand, it felt as if it slightly quivered in her grasp. Wand in hand, she ran through the shop to rejoin the others.

"Daddy!" she yelled with excitement, "this one came to me!"

Mr. Ollivander glanced at the wand for a mere second. "Vinewood and stalk of Dittany. 10 and a 1/4 inches. You might have a future Healer on your hands, Okafor."

Kem spun herself around, shooting jets of stars and sparks. Severus pursed his lips, testing yet another wand.

"Let me help you, Severus." She pulled down several wands from the shelves. She tossed away shorter, lighter and flexible wands, Ayo tidying up after her. Mr. Ollivander frowned at her carelessness. She took one particular wand, holding it next to Severus's face. The wand was as dark as his jet black hair and equally as firm as his face.

"Give it a go," Kem encouraged. The instant Severus took hold of the wand, he felt warmth in his palm. Severus flicked the wand as if cracking a whip; a thin string of fire emerged from the tip, singeing his shoelaces.

"Let's see here. Wood from the rare Black Birch tree. Dragon heartstring from an Ukrainian Ironbelly. 15 inches even. Very good for dueling, I imagine." Mr. Ollivander eyed the wand slowly.

"I'll wrap things up with Mr. Ollivander, and then how about some lunch?" Ayo asked. Kem nodded to her father and, gently prodding Severus with her new wand, guided him out of the shop.

Once they were outside the shop, Kem grabbed Severus firmly by his wrists and spun them both at a dizzying speed. Less than a minute of spinning and Severus began to feel sick; he wedged himself from Kem, which caused her to fall on her backside. She returned to her feet quickly smiling.

"That was fun, Severus. Why don't you ever laugh?"

"That wasn't the least bit fun. And I do laugh sometimes," he replied.

"Only when Lily is around, I wager."

"Yes, well you aren't Lily."

Kem inhaled sharply, adopting the look of a smug pug. At that moment Ayo stepped from the shop. He took one look at his daughter and then Severus.

"I know that face," Ayo chuckled to himself. "Come on, you two. Food fixes everything."

A bewildered Severus fell in step beside Ayo.

Throughout lunch, Kem made a point to not speak directly to Severus, and whenever her father tried to talk to him, she interrupted.

"Daddy, I'm going to the loo," she stated, stomping off before he could acknowledge her.

"Merlin's pants, that girl of mine. Now, Severus," Ayo turned to Severus, placing a hand on his shoulder, "there are a couple of things I wanted to talk to you about."

Severus nodded simply. He rarely had private conversations with Ayo. If ever.

"I notice you spend a great deal of time with Kem and Lily. Well, son," Ayo paused trying to find the best words. "Boys play very differently, especially young wizards. I'd like to teach you a few... tricks and spells to even the field, so to speak."

Severus nodded again; he wasn't sure what Ayo meant, but if it somehow gave him an advantage over others, he was glad for the help.

"And now for more pressing matters." Ayo waved his wand, and a yellow rose landed on the table.

"If you ever see that weird up-turned expression on Kem, just apologize."

"Why should I apologize?" Severus asked, "What have I done?"

Ayo shook his head almost somberly. "As a man, you will never know."

Kem returned to them, eyeing them both suspiciously.

"Look dear, a woman, came with flowers, and Severus bought this for you."

Severus quickly handed Kem the bright rose, pricking himself in the process.

"Sorry about before." He winced, even though he didn't know what 'before' was. Kem licked her thumb and brushed it over Severus's minor wound. She hugged his neck and whispered a 'thank you' in his ear, causing Severus to turn slightly pink.

"So what's for dessert? Mango sorbet would be ace," Kem said, smiling as she placed the rose in her hair.