

Lemon Squeezy

by TeddyRadiator

Millie Bulstrode learned the hard facts of life early. If you weren't pretty, rich, or played Quidditch, you were in for it. A story of friendship, love and the definition of beauty.

I am very proud that this fic was chosen as one of the February 2013 Lumos Featured Stories here on TPP.

Chapter One

Chapter 1 of 3

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This is my first foray into this pairing, and my first real slash, so be gentle with me.

I would like to thank my wonderful beta, stgulik, for her stellar work, and encouragement, and DMuse, for giving me the story and not allowing me to rest until I wrote it.

The week before Millicent Bulstrode boarded the Hogwarts Express for the first time, she was summoned by her paternal grandmother, Odessa Bulstrode the sane one. Her mother's mother, Falysal Booker, of the Wolverhampton Bookers, was as mad as a stick, and her family avoided going to visit her unless absolutely necessary. She kept cats, and was like as not to mention a few going missing whenever she made stew.

Odessa had invited Millie for tea, and as Millie sat on one of her grandmother's slick horsehair chairs and tried valiantly not to slide off, Odessa began with, "So. Hogwarts."

"Yes, Nan," she'd answered, and took another sip of tea. "Hogwarts."

The old woman blew over her cup to cool her brew. In her dry voice, redolent with Lancastrian undertones, she said, "I'm not going to lie to you, Millicent. You're the spitting image of your mother, child. And your mother was born with face like a smacked arse and the years did nothing to improve her situation. I'm afraid as you mature, you'll be just as repugnant to the opposite sex as she. Why your father married her is still a mystery even the great Merlin himself couldn't solve."

Millie slipped slightly on the chair, and pushed herself back upright, levering herself by pressing a dirty boot on the leg of her lace bloomers and smearing them with mud in the process. Her grandmother watched her with thinly veiled disappointment.

"And you're ungraceful and awkward and fat. But you have lovely hair," Odessa continued with a smile, as if that made up for everything.

"Thanks," Millie answered, swallowing, wishing the tea and biscuits didn't taste like ash in her mouth. She idly fingered a tight braid. She was looking forward to going to

Hogwarts, if only so she could wear her hair down and not have daily headaches from her braids. Her mother always braided them so tightly they actually bent.

"But none of that matters, my dear."

Millie squinted her small, dark eyes. "Then why did you bring it up?"

The old bat looked at her granddaughter slyly. "Because you are a witch, and a damn good one. You levitated yourself when you were two year old. Two! That's very good. Worthy of your father's bloodline. But there's summat else."

Millie waited, hoping that it wasn't against the law to hex old ladies once she had a proper wand.

Odessa continued, "There will always be those who will exploit your ugliness, who, in the guise of charity, will pretend to befriend or be enamoured of you. Do. Not. Trust. Them."

Millie rolled her eyes. She was eight stone already and a year older than most of her peers. She wasn't stupid. "I won't."

"Good." Odessa sat back with a satisfied air. "Because one day they will need you, and you can tell them to fuck off."

Millie nodded. She knew all about *that*, too.

"But there will be the rare ones, the very rare ones, who will care for you regardless poor creatures though they will be - and those, my dear, will be worth cherishing, even keeping."

Millie watched as her grandmother popped another digestive in her mouth. "Nan, how will I know the difference?"

Odessa regarded the young girl so hard that Millie began to feel uncomfortable. She looked down at her muddy dress, her wrinkled pinafore, the bedraggled ends of her tight, black braids, and her chubby, awkward hands. "How will I know who to trust, Nan?" she asked again.

Odessa put her tea cup down. "You won't. You'll just have to bumble about until the others screw you over, and the ones who don't, well, them's the ones to rely on."

On the evening everyone arrived at school and was sorted (Millie had known she'd be in Slytherin; she had told the Sorting Hat that's where she wanted to go, and if he said some other poxy House, she would rip him a new arsehole), Millie sat down at the Slytherin table beside Draco Malfoy. She didn't have to be told who he was; everyone knew the Malfoys. He introduced her to Vincent Crabbe and Gregory Goyle. Goyle was an ugly scrote, with a head like a root vegetable and the dumbest laugh she'd ever heard. Vince Crabbe was her distant cousin and had all but forgotten she knew him. That side of the family was thicker than shit, her dad always said.

"Alright, Lemon Squeezy?" he said, with a guffaw.

"Yeah, Vince, you poxy lamebrain," she replied, and helped herself to corn.

"Why does he call you Lemon Squeezy?" asked a girl sitting across from her. She had been identified as Pansy something-or-other, and she was one of those pretty, vain girls who liked to befriend plug uglies like Millie to make themselves look even prettier by comparison.

Crabbe laughed his dull-witted bark again, and pulled the corners of his eyes to make them slant. "Millie's mum always braids her pigtails so tight, her eyes look oriental. It's rhyming slang."

Everyone laughed at her expense, and she gave the two fingers. "Oh yeah? And who gave you that pudding bowl haircut? The orderlies at St Mungo's?"

"Oi, you lot, use your pie holes for eating," growled a sixth-year Prefect named Marcus, and the rest of them went back to their meal, but they kept looking at her and giggling.

"Easy peasy," Goyle whispered, behind his drumstick.

"Lemon squeezy," Pansy giggled, and almost, but not quite laughed bubbles into her pumpkin juice.

"Hands and kneezy," Draco smirked, leaning back like a big shot.

"Japanezy!" Crabbe crowed, and they all burst into *haw-haw-haw* laughter that made Millie want to punch their lights out. She was rising from her chair when-

"I said shut it!" Marcus growled. "Snape's already staring daggers at you lot. You don't want him leaving his dinner to come down here, believe me. You'll have plenty enough opportunities to piss him off as it is."

Of all of them, Draco was the least impressed. "Snape doesn't have any real power. He and my father are good friends. He knows which side his bread is buttered on."

Marcus looked at Draco with a sneer. He, like Millie, was one of the ugly ones. "I'm looking forward to hearing you tell Snape that, Malfoy."

Severus Snape was just imposing enough for Millie to feel intimidated. He had an ugliness about him that seemed planned, almost pre-ordained. He was tall and thin as a shadow, all cut-glass cheekbones and prison pallour. He had large hands with long fingers and his nose was big enough for two. His black hair was the same colour as hers, but it didn't half need a good washing.

When he walked into the Slytherin Common Room that first night, he stood in the doorway, his black eyes sweeping over the lot, his head twitching as it swiveled around the room, like a gear with rusty cogs.

"Welcome back, Slytherin upper classes," he said, his tone just this side of mocking. He had a deep voice like a pipe organ, and Millie could hear a Northern drawl beneath that posh rumble. "I'm sure your summer has been adequately long enough for you to have forgotten most of what you learned last year. If not, then I expect a better performance overall academically from you this term."

"As for first years." His eyes slid over to where they were, all huddled in a corner of the common room near the exit, the only place the upper classmen would relinquish. "This is your family. The other houses place great importance on loyalty, scholarship and bravery. This house values all those attributes. For itself. Your loyalty is to your House. Your grades reflect your House. I don't give a toss how brave you are as long as you don't. Disgrace. Your. House."

He inspected them carefully. "No doubt some of you will experience homesickness, and may long for your mums. This isn't anything to be ashamed of. Your upper classmen will help you to adjust. But they're not going to baby you, so you must learn to rely on yourself. If you need to have a little cry, go ahead, but never let the other Houses catch you. This is the only place at Hogwarts that will give you succor."

He drew the long sleeves of his robe around him like the wings of a bat. "Now. One final word. If I hear of anyone, boy or girl, bullying another in this House, you'll be out on your arse faster than you can say Salazar Slytherin. There will be NO bullying in this House," he snarled, like he was already angry at them.

"And that goes for you girls as much as you boys. Boys: No bugging in the shower. That is rape, and I will have you on the first train home. Girls, that applies to you as well. Any girl who thinks she can get away with it will wear that plunger until it has to be surgically removed." He looked over to a rough group of older girls who were

giggling and gossiping. They were short-haired girls with fags in their purses and broader shoulders than many of the males.

Snape eyed one in particular, a tall girl with dead ordinary brown hair that frizzled around her head. It reminded Millie of her mum's rusty pan scrubber. "Do I make myself clear, Adelaide Shwinner, Veronica Saltgrass?"

"Yes, sir," the brown-haired girl, Adelaide Swinner replied. Her voice was almost as deep as Snape's. The other girl, a prettier thing with vapid blue eyes, nodded impatiently.

"Fine," he replied, and gave them all one last glance. "My office hours are from three o'clock to half-past four, Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. If you need me at any other time, find a Prefect. I don't expect to be bothered otherwise regarding any complaints on your behaviour. If you get caught, you deserve what you get.

"Now, get to bed and don't be late for class tomorrow. Anyone losing House points on the first day of school gets a week's detention with Filch."

As he prepared to go, a prefect cornered him, asking a question about Quidditch, and Millie headed for her dorm. As she passed Adelaide, the older girl deliberately shouldered her, causing Millie to stagger sideways into Snape. "Watch where you're going, Bulstrode!" the girl snarled, showing off for her friends.

Millie's wand was in her hand and Adelaide's nose was bleeding before she could take another step. Adelaide howled in pain and anger. Snape whirled around. "What the hell is wrong with you, Schwinner?"

Clutching her bloody nose, the fourth-year pointed in Millie's direction. "She attacked me for no good reason. I wad dood nufink!" she snarled, as her voice grew more nasal and clogged.

Professor Snape frowned at Millie. "Causing trouble already, Miss Bulstrode?"

Pissed off, Millie glowered at Adelaide. "If it comes looking for me, it'll find it."

Snape looked at her a moment, then repaired Adelaide's nose with a flick of his wand. "Get to your room, Schwinner. We'll discuss this later."

"But she attacked me! Veronica, tell him-"

"If you make trouble, Adelaide, someone will find it. It looks like someone has, so suck it up and get to your dorm room. You're lucky I've just made a bet with Professor McGonagall that Slytherin will win the House Cup this year, or I'd take away ten points for picking a fight. And don't come the cowboy with me, Sonny Jim," he quipped, as she started to protest. "I'm not stupid and I'm not blind. Get to bed."

Adelaide walked away, but not before aiming a look at Millie that any fool could have translated. Feeling persecuted and sorry for herself, Millie stumbled past Snape toward her own dorm. His hand shot out and landed on her shoulder. "A word, Miss Bulstrode."

She slumped and turned to face him. He was about eight feet tall next to her. She stared hard in the vicinity of his navel.

"You're Derrick Bulstrode's girl, aren't you?"

When Millie nodded, Snape added, "Del and I were in the same year together."

"He told me," she said lowly, wondering when he was going to assign her detention.

"Miss Bulstrode," Snape said, and she glanced up at him. He was gazing forward, eyes squinting slightly, as if looking at something he didn't want to see. "Hogwarts likes its normality. Deviation from the routine, from the normal, whether in talent, behaviour or physical appearance, isn't especially appreciated here. You'll find out very quickly that money and prestige and beauty are the preferred currency."

"Aren't they always?" she quipped, and to her surprise, he almost smiled.

"I cannot disagree with you there. Anomaly is not encouraged, nor is it desirable. And forgiveness is hard to come by. Do you understand?"

She looked at him, hard. Sullenly, she replied, "Yeah. If you're not a Malfoy or a Quidditch player or pretty, you don't stand a chance." She sneered at him. "I'm ugly, I'm not stupid."

To her surprise, he bowed slightly and made an almost courtly gesture in the direction of her dormitory. "It never occurred to me to call you either." He nodded to himself as if his mind were made up about something. "Good. You'll do well as long as you keep that attitude. You might even thrive here."

He turned on his heel and swept out of the room, his voluminous robes billowing behind. Millie watched him go, then rolled her eyes. Her dad always said Snape was a bit of a pillock.

A year later, she was spending an evening scrubbing toilets with Filch. "Who says there's no contact in dueling?" she grumbled, trying not to think about what she was removing from the inside of the toilet.

Snape had put her in detention for, as he put it, 'brawling with a Gryffindor like a common Muggle.' It hadn't done any good to explain that Granger was a common Muggle, and that's why she had had her in a headlock and was winning.

"Stupid Duelling Club. What's the point of fighting if you can't fight dirty? How else can you be sure you'll win?"

"I guess you need to make sure no one's looking next time," Filch muttered, as he dipped a squeegee into one of the toilets, then began cleaning the mirrors with it. He'd explained that this discouraged the older girls from putting on their lipstick and then kissing the mirrors. Once they learned how he cleaned them, the mirrors were surprisingly free of this particularly female brand of graffiti. "What were you doing, biffing around that Granger girl anywrote? She don't seem like all that bad a sort."

Millie shrugged and pulled the chain. The toilet gurgled, burped, then flushed. She heard a low moan. "Sorry, Myrt," she said, and was rewarded with a large backsplash that soaked her robe clear through. "Mardy bum," she muttered, wiping water from her face.

She backed out of the stall and opened the door to the next one. "I don't really have nothing against her, it's just we were dueling. It seems like to me that the point is to win. Well," she shrugged, "I was winning, until Snape said-"

"That's Professor Snape, Millie," Filch corrected, his voice mild. He tapped on the door jamb of the stall. "Here, that's enough. You'll get so tired you won't be fit to study." He took the brush from her, and she leapt up to sit on the table near the door, her stumpy legs dangling.

Filch made quick work of scrubbing out the last three toilets while Millie watched. He often did this when she got detention, which was more often than she felt she deserved, but not as often as she had expected. It was just that Millie hated to be told to do something pointless, just to be doing it. She hated to be ordered about unless it was for a good cause, and saw no reason to be polite to someone who was a dick, even if he was a professor.

"That poof Lockhart gave me the detention," she groused, "but *Professor* Snape assigned it."

Filch's laughter always sounded like a rusty hinge, little used and on the verge of breaking. "You've got the measure of Lockhart, that's for sure. Him poncin' about; it sticks

right in me clack." He dropped the scrubber into the bucket and rose with a groan. "But Professor Snape put you wi' me, 'cause you've got a pop quiz in Charms tomorrow. He wants you to study hard and make a good grade."

He finished the last stall, flushed, then pulled out a battered pocket watch. It was the colour of old brass and as big as a salad plate. He peered at it hard, as if half-expecting to catch it lying about the time. "There we are. You've got about fifteen minutes before dinner's done. Run get your tea, then go and study."

Millie looked at him with mistrustful eyes. She slid off the table, and grabbed her bookbag. "Here. Why're you being so nice to me?"

Filch looked at her hard. "Who says I'm being nice? You've had to scrub three floors of toilets and barely got to eat. I've not been nice, lass. I've bee*OW!* *Filch.*" He gave her a look that said, *work out what I'm trying to get through your thick skull, lass*

When she didn't reply, he lowered his head. "Besides, Madam Pomfrey told me you've been visiting Mrs. Norris." He sniffed and pulled at his nose. "She says you sit with her and give her a stroke or two, and brush her." His lip trembled. "She likes that, the brush. She can be bad for sheddin'."

Millie ducked her head as well, abashed as always to get caught at a tenderness. She shrugged. "I like cats. And the hair comes off easy enough. It was just too bad what happened. I just figured she might feel it, even if she *is*, you know, petrified."

"Yeah, well," he cleared his throat. "I'm appreciative of the gesture. Not many would think of it."

She nodded, feeling a blush stealing into her face. Gruffly, she said, "Don't worry, Mr. Filch. Everyone will know what a hard case you are."

He cleared his throat again and nodded approvingly. "And don't you forget it, missy."

The last day of school in Millie's third year, Adelaide Schwinner and Veronica Saltgrass cornered her in that self-same lav. She was having a shower, after a particularly dirty final Herbology lesson. Normally she showered in the evening, when no one was about to laugh at her chubby legs, her overly-developed bosom. At fourteen, Millie had taken on a growth spurt in every direction, and was at a loss as to what to do with her voluminous breasts, the crinkly black hair between her legs, the strange dreams she had at night that left her feeling sweaty and distinctly crampy.

That day, however, she had walked into the showers just as the last Quidditch practice had ended, and there they were: the tall, strong girls that had made her Hogwarts life a misery every time she passed them in the common room or deliberately shouldered her out of their way to breakfast.

It had bothered her for the past three years that she let them get away with it. She was more than happy to put that Granger bint in a headlock and pound her into the ground, but something about biffing your own House mates made her feel like she was doing something wrong. Something that Snape would be disappointed about.

The subtle bullying she could take: bang, bang, back to your neutral corner. But lately, they had gotten a little more aggressive. With the end of their seven years at Hogwarts imminent, they seemed to be of a mind to push Millie's buttons. And she had so many for them to push: her looks, her intelligence, her lack of grace. So each day, the snide remarks got a little more pointed, the bumps and the pushes a little harder.

The previous week, they had knocked her down the stairs. One outstretched foot as she went racing toward Potions, and she went flying, books everywhere, her robe landing over her head, revealing her less-than-pristine old knickers. She could hear the peals of laughter, and wanted to smash their smug faces in so bad-

She looked up into the frowning face of Professor Snape. His expression was one of profound disapproval. "Miss Bulstrode-"

"Fell," she panted, gathering her books, ignoring the giggles from the Gryffindors, the fiery pain in her lacerated knees. "I fell."

"Indeed," he replied, his voice dark. "You lot, get to your classes! Go!" he barked, and the others scattered like leaves, leaving Millie huffing and seeing red.

"Get to the Infirmary, Bullstrode. Have Madam Pomfrey check your wounds."

"I'm fine. Just let me sit down," she had begged through gritted teeth. "Don't single me out any more than I am, okay?"

He sighed. "Very well. See me after class for some Dittany."

It was the last sodding day of school; she should have known better, but when she tried to back out of the shower room, she was spotted before she could walk away.

"Well look who's here, Ronnie," Adelaide drawled. She turned toward Millie, proudly displaying her hard, Quidditch-toned body, all tight breasts and lean muscles and broad shoulders. Her voice took on a nasal, exaggerated Northern drawl. "It's Millie Squeezy."

Millie sighed and stomped off toward the changing room, where she put her bathrobe and toiletries in a locker, sealing it with a personalised locking charm. She went into one of the toilet cubicles and sat, waiting for them to leave. She could hear their low voices as she waited.

Finally, the water was shut off, and the two girls chatted about summer and plans and other things Millie didn't give a toss about, as they padded around, drying off and getting dressed. The shower room door opened with a squeak, and their voices disappeared through it as it closed behind them.

Relieved, Millie quickly ducked into the shower room and started scrubbing. The fertiliser Sprout had made them use stank like shite and stuck like glue, and Millie was busy scrubbing her legs when she was tackled from behind.

A large hand clapped over her mouth, and she was dragged down onto the cold tiles. "You lost me my graduation present, you squealing little pig," a low voice snarled, close to her ear. "Snape sent a Howler to my folks after you blabbed about falling down the stairs."

"I didn't say anything!" Millie cried out, gasping as Adelaide pulled and twisted Millie's hair. Tears spurted from her eyes, and she tried to claw her way free.

"Shut up! I was getting the new Nimbus Excelsior Broom for graduation, but thanks to you, Mum says I'll have to work over the summer to earn it. I think you need a lesson in House loyalty, Lemon Squeezy," Adelaide growled in her ear. "What do you say, Ronnie? Think she needs to be taught a lesson?"

Veronica giggled. "Yeah, Addy." She pinched Millie's face, hard. "I think you're a rotten, stinking little snitch. You even smell like one."

The two girls laughed as Millie struggled; she managed to push the hand from her mouth. "I didn't tell him anything, you stupid bint!" she snapped back, trying to get purchase on the slippery floor. A hard hand slapped her face, and she saw stars.

"Aren't you a little spitfire, Squeezy? I bet you told Snape because you're a boot-licking little toady. Like he cares what happens to an ugly little shoat like you."

Millie fought as they slapped her and pinched her nipples and pulled her hair. A hand went between her legs, and Millie roared in fear and anger as the two older and bigger girls held her down. "Gerrof me!" she screamed, fighting, but they were too strong, too determined.

A fist on the side of her head rocked it back against the wet floor, and she fell back, dazed. Her legs were forced apart, and Adelaide pushed between them, holding a plunger in her hand. Millie watched in growing fear as Adelaide pulled the black rubber plunger from the stick and tossed it aside.

"I think Squeezy deserves a little punishment herself, don't you, Ronnie?" she said, blazing with angry lust.

"Yeah, yeah, Addy. Give it to her," Veronica giggled. She was kneeling on Millie's chest, making it hard for her to breathe. Millie began to whine as she felt the cold stick forced between her-

"Squeezy, meet Johnny," Adelaide said, her eyes glittering with hate. "Here's his stick, and there's his rubber. You might say that he services all the ugly girls in Slytherin. And let's face it: he's about as close to a boy as a slag like you is ever gonna get."

"What in the name of Merlin do you think you're doing?" A cold female voice rang through the shower room over the patter of the water still falling from the nozzle.

Millie looked up to see Professor Sinistra throw Adelaide and Veronica off her with a spell so powerful the two older girls flew across the room like rubbish on the breeze. Millie jumped up and dashed into the locker room. She didn't bother to dry herself; it was difficult dragging her bathrobe over her damp skin, but she had to get out of there. Finally, she retrieved her things and ran for the door.

She would be damned if she let them see her cry.

"Miss Bulstrode, stay where you are. You two, come with me now." Sinistra's normally quiet voice was cold and flinty with anger. "You are going to explain to Professor Snape and Professor Dumbledore why you tried to sexually assault Miss Bulstrode."

"Assault?" Adelaide scoffed. "Huh. She was asking-"

"Don't *even* attempt to insult me by saying Miss Bulstrode asked you to do it. I saw you both. You make me ashamed to be a Slytherin. Come with me now."

As she herded the two older girls out of the shower room, she turned back to Millie. "Miss Bulstrode, go to the Infirmary immediately. That is not a suggestion. That is a direct order from your Head of House."

Feeling sick with mortification, Millie dragged herself to the Infirmary, where Madam Pomfrey fussed and prodded. Satisfied that Millie was suffering from nothing more than a few slaps and pinches, Madam Pomfrey let her go back to her dormitory with a Pain Potion and a Calming Draught. Millie took neither.

Chapter Two

Chapter 2 of 3

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Millie scuttled into her room and sat down on her bed. Everyone else was either outside enjoying the weather or heading to the Great Hall to socialise before the Leaving Feast. She was grateful for that, at least.

Once she sat down, Millie began to shake. She was furious; furious with herself for getting jumped, furious that she had to put up with this Adelaide and Veronica shite just because they were Housemates and bigger than her. Anyone else and she would have hexed their tits off. As it was, she would have to face them on the train tomorrow, and Merlin knew they would tell everyone and-

There was a knock on the door. "Who is it?" she asked, dashing the tears from her eyes and pulling her bathrobe tighter.

"Miss Bulstrode, may I enter?"

She sagged. "Give me a minute, Professor Snape."

"Very well. I'd like a word."

Millie grabbed the first robe in her packed trunk and threw it on. It was tight around the bust; she had outgrown it during the course of the year, but she couldn't be arsed to dig down in the trunk to find her better robes. "I'm decent," she said, feeling anything but.

After a minute pause, Snape walked in, looking grim. "Misses Schwinner and Saltgrass' parents have come to take them home in disgrace. They have been denied their N.E.W.T.s and will have to re-sit them. Assault charges are pending. I thought you would like to know you will not have to face them either at the Leaving Feast or tomorrow on the train." When she slumped a little in relief, he added, "Are you alright? Madam Pomfrey said Professor Sinistra had stopped them before they had a chance to-"

"Yes," she whispered, horrified that he knew what they'd tried to do. After a heartbeat, Millie nodded. "I'm alright. No harm done." She shuddered. It was lie, and she knew Snape hated a lie almost as much as he hated bullies.

He stood by her bed and crossed his arms. "I'm planning on pressing charges on your behalf."

"Let them go."

Snape's eyebrows shot up almost to his hairline. "Excuse me?"

Millie shook her head. "I don't want to press charges. They're leaving school. That's enough. I won't have to put up with them anymore."

Snape pursed his lips. In a quiet voice, he said, "Miss Bulstrode, you were nearly raped today. Do you honestly mean to tell me that you don't want to see your attackers punished?"

Millie stared stonily at her hands. "You've sent them home in disgrace. What's done is done. They didn't actually do it, thanks to Professor Sinistra."

Uncomfortably, Snape replied, "Yes, well, Mr. Filch overheard the girls talking about exacting vengeance for that Howler I sent to their parents last week. He in turn told me, and I sent the first female teacher I could find to check on you, in case they tried to harm you. Luckily Professor Sinistra was nearby..."

Something in Millie's expression must have tipped him off to how angry she was. Snape gave another long-suffering sigh, the kind he was wont to do when forced to suffer fools. He sighed a lot. "I know they tripped you down the stairs, girl. I know they've been pestering you. I confronted them and demanded to know why they felt it necessary to bully a younger classmate of their own House."

Millie looked up at him in surprise. It never occurred to her to wonder why. She just imagined that anyone like her was up for sport. Snape shrugged. "Why do people bully? Because they can, Miss Bulstrode. What I never understood was why you tolerated it so? You are more than capable of defending yourself."

Millie could tell by his silence he expected an answer. Finally, she said tightly, "Slytherins don't grass on their own."

"They don't rape their own, either," he shot back, his voice tight and cutting. "Loyalty is admirable, Miss Bulstrode, but there comes a time-"

"Look, sir," Millie interrupted. "I know what people think about me. I'm ugly and crude and I'm not going to change. I'm not going to put up with too much shite from anyone else, but I'm not going to lose points for my House just because I don't have a thick enough skin."

"Those House points were not yours to lose, Miss Bulstrode," he replied, a tone of exasperation in his voice. When she did not reply, he sighed again, and Millie felt worse for making him sigh than for almost being raped.

"Millicent," he said, and she looked up in surprise. He almost never called anyone by their first name. He looked concerned, and, now that she looked at him carefully, like shit. He had a bruise on his cheek, and his eyes were sunk in his head like a dead man. Snape was no oil painting on a good day, but he truly looked awful, like he'd been in a fight himself.

Tentatively, she asked, "Is something wrong, sir? You don't look so well at all."

That almost-smile *almost* made an appearance. "My welfare is not the subject here, Millicent. Yours is. I urge you to learn the difference between loyalty and allowing oneself to be taken advantage of. What you've been subject to today was harassment and abuse." He looked at her keenly. "Have they been doing this long?"

She shook her head. She could not bring herself to admit they'd picked on her since she'd bloodied Adelaide's nose her first day at Hogwarts. Snape would hold himself responsible for not noticing, and it looked like he had enough troubles without adding that one to the pile.

He crouched down by her bedside, and ran a weary hand over his face. He looked like he hadn't slept in a month. In quiet, brittle tone, hard by its very softness, he said, "They're not worth it, girl. The pretty ones, the rich ones, the ones who were born with a silver wand in their hand."

He shook his head. She could smell cloves on his breath. "They're not worth our loyalty. They're not worthy of the hearts they break and the misery they inflict. They'll pat you on the back, but only because they're looking for the softest, best place to stick the knife. House or not, loyalty or not, they need to be punished, because if they don't, they'll just keep on preying on the weaker ones for the rest of their lives."

"I'm not weak."

"I know that, girl."

Millie looked into his strained face, and at that moment she wondered if he was actually talking about her at all. "At least they won't hurt me anymore, Professor."

He shook his head. "Some will always try to hurt you, Millicent. Say the word."

"No. They're gone." She squared her shoulder. "But if I ever see them again outside Hogwarts, I'll kick their arses."

His mouth twitched. "You know you can't use magic outside Hogwarts."

She smiled. "Don't have to. I've been working on my headlock." She lifted her chin proudly. "I had Greg Goyle whining like a gurl the other day. Made him give me a sickle before I let him go."

Snape glowered, and for a moment Millie thought she was about to get a lecture of her own about bullying. Then his lips twitched. "I thought he sounded a little hoarse. A sickle, you say?"

"Yep."

Snape stood. "Ask for two next time. Miss Bulstrode, you can catch the Leaving Feast if you go now. I bid you a good summer." He paused at the door. "There's a lesson in this, Millicent. You're a bright girl. Learn from it."

The door hardly made a sound as it closed. Millie thought carefully. She'd learned a lesson, all right. She'd learned to always take her wand with her everywhere she went, even into the shower.

Eighteen months later, Millie lost her virginity, in the normal way. Except for him playing with her tits, which she found quite pleasant, it mostly hurt like crap and she didn't see the big deal about it at all. It certainly weren't the crash, bang wallop her classmates were always whittering on about. She tried a couple of times with a couple of different boys in case the first was a fluke, but it really wasn't all *that*. She'd sooner have a fag and a lie in.

"I cannot believe you have done something so foolish. You, of all witches!" he thundered, bearing down on her like a bolt of retributory lightning.

"I thought you'd be pleased!" she said, gaping at his reaction, his stultifying anger.

Snape stopped and favoured her with a sneer that was solely designed to piss her off. "Oh, yes, of course I'm pleased. Pleased that you've joined up with Dolores bloody Umbridge to prowl the school like a pile of dunderheaded trolls doing her bidding? You call that intelligent? This is the most stupid thing I've ever heard of. Why on earth did you join this idiotic Inquisitorial Squad of hers?"

Millie blinked. She had seen Snape angry before. It was primarily his default setting most of the time, especially in the past six months. She was used to it. But she had skirted the fringes of Hogwarts for almost five years now, and ready for a change. She had kept her head down, kept her grades up, kept her mouth shut. What happened with Millie in Slytherin, stayed with Millie in Slytherin - that was the saying. She never exacted bribes for secrecy, never grassed. She'd toed the Slytherin line. Where had it gotten her? She was still ugly, crude, gauche Millie Bulstrode. Being a good Slytherin had made her a good confidante, but it hadn't made her a lot of friends.

Then that Potter git started blabbing about You-Know-Who coming back to life, and school had become a mess. When Professor Umbridge moved in, new broom and all, Millie had been confused. She didn't really understand who was in charge. When Dolores Umbridge had summoned Millie into her office and offered her tea and nice biscuits and told her what an asset Millie would make to the Inquisitorial Squad, how good it would look on her CV when she left school and how only the most desirable and powerful wizards and witches were asked to join, Millie didn't know up from down and in from orange.

And it felt good to be wanted for once.

When she told Snape this, he snorted. He actually snorted, a sound that trumpeted through his massive nose like a horse whinnying. "And you believed that toadying pink nightmare? Where's your head, Bulstrode? What have I been trying to teach you for the last five years?"

"You said we have to stick together!" she fumed. "You said House is what matters. Everyone in our class is on the Squad. What was I supposed to do, say no and be the biggest berk in Slytherin?"

"You were supposed to remember that shits like Umbridge love to use people like you and me, Bulstrode!" he shouted. "They use you up and spit you out and woe betide if things go tits up, because you'll be the one in the chair telling the Wizengamot why you sabotaged Umbridge's good work!"

"It's not like that!" she argued, trying to explain. She held up her hands as if to draw him a picture. "Don't you see? Joining the Squad's made me feel like I belong. For the first time in my life, I don't feel like a misfit."

Snape recoiled as if she'd struck him. Shaking his head, he blinked furiously. In a deadly quiet voice, he said, "Just because it feels like they've accepted you, doesn't mean they have. And just because it feels good to belong, doesn't make it good. You have to trust me on this one, Millicent."

Millie stubbornly held her ground, even though she had never seen Snape so worked up. His face was red underneath his sallow complexion, his eyes were blazing fire. "Do you have any idea how foolish this is?"

"Look, I talked to Mr. Filch about it. He thought it was a good idea-"

"Oh aye," he said, exaggerating his own northern inflections. "Filch has been bamboozled by this hideous bint as well." He huffed and shook his head. "I expected better of you."

"Well I expected better, full stop," Millie shot back. "Sometimes it's better to make a friend out of someone, because you can't afford for them to be your enemy."

Snape's black eyes widened, then shut. "And sometimes it's better to stand up for what is right. You know this Inquisitorial Squad is bollocks, Bullstrode! You lot are nothing more than her barrow boys, and when Dumbledore returns-"

"She's sent him packing-"

"WHEN Dumbledore returns, and he *will*, you will be vilified, Millie, along with the others."

Millie stared at him, resentfully. "Why can't you support us? We're part of your House! We're important here!"

Snape looked at her, breathing rapidly. "Millie," he began, and his voice sounded resigned, and frightened. "Terrible things are brewing. You don't want to be part of them. I don't want anyone in my House to suffer."

When she didn't reply, his lips twisted into a parody of a hard smile. "I didn't make a dent, did I? You're going to follow her, and she's going to lead you to ruin."

He turned on his heel, and left her standing there. Millie watched him go, and almost ran after him. Instead, she pinned her Inquisitorial Squad badge to her chest, and left to join the others.

Millie was running, running as fast as her squatty legs would go; running through the quiet halls, where chaos and madness and fear and death had roamed hours before. Her destination was a small chamber of rooms on the South end of the dungeons.

Breathless, she burst into the room, calling for Filch, her voice sounding high pitch and queer in her own ears. "Filch! Filch! Where are you, man?"

The grizzled caretaker appeared from his parlour, his face grave and flushed. He had been crying. Millie ran to him, and without thought, threw her arms around his stocky waist.

"It's not true," she sobbed, gasping and sweating. "It's not true. I know it's not true."

A large hand patted her back in a loose hug. Filch was trembling. "I only wish it weren't, lass."

Millie looked up at the older man. "He couldn't have killed him! Snape wouldn't have done it!"

Filch was weeping as well. "I don't know, Millie love. I don't know what to think."

He gently disengaged Millie from his waist and stumped over to a small kitchen area. "You should be with the others."

"What for?" she asked, feeling sick and parched from her long run. "I can't bear to hear what they're saying about him. They're calling him a murderer! That Potter gobshite said he saw him do it! He said he heard him cast the Killing Curse! Why would Snape kill Dumbledore? It don't make no sense."

"No, it don't." Filch poured a generous splash of whisky into two grubby glasses. "Here. This'll steady you. But sip. I'll not be having decent whisky coming back up so soon after its going down."

Millie took a sip of the amber liquid, and winced as it harshly slid down her throat, burning out her panic as it went. For several moments, the two sat in silence, drinking. It was several minutes before Filch spoke.

"He was always kind to me. Never judged be because I were a Squib, never let the students prank me. He looked after his own. People thought he were a right bastard, but he'd had a hard row to hoe here. Life's been hard for that lad; I don't blame him for being hard to meet it."

Millie looked at Filch with dull, exhausted eyes. "You're talking about Snape like he's dead or something."

Filch's face creased in sorrow. "He is, lass. After what he's done, he is dead to us."

Millie cried. "I trusted him," she wept. "I thought he was one of the few at Hogwarts that was worth a shit."

Filch sat down heavily beside her. "He was, lass. He is. Say what you will about him, but he weren't bad. I don't understand it either. Maybe one day we'll know the truth, but..." He sniffed and wiped his eyes. "I feel like two men have died tonight. I feel like I've lost my best friend."

Millie wiped her nose with the back of her hand. "So can I stay here, for just a little while? I can't bear it up there. It's like everyone's gone mad."

"If you like," Filch said diffidently. He stood, and pulled out a blue bandana handkerchief from his back pocket. "I have a job to do."

"What?"

Filch blew his nose and placed the handkerchief back in his pocket. He sniffed. "I have to stop all the clocks. I have to seal his rooms, and I have made preparations for the funeral."

Millie looked at him carefully. "But what are we going to do about Snape?"

Filch began to weep again. "I *am* talking about him."

Millie finished the contents of her glass in one gulp. She coughed, but held her gorge. "I'm coming with you."

He looked at her suspiciously. "There no need."

She wiped her eyes. "I can help you. Come on. Let's do this, before they start ransacking his room and desecrate it. Dumbledore's got enough arse lickers to see to him. What's Snape's got? You and me." She took his arm. "Let's make sure the poor bastard has something left to take with him to Azkaban."

Her parents were dead, slaughtered by Death Eaters for not paying the tribute the Dark Lord had thought due him by all Pureblood families. Millie had been at school; Headmaster Snape had broken the news to her. He had tried to send her away to relatives in Eastern Europe, but she refused to go. Instead, she spent her spare time with Filch, helping him. She cleaned, she scrubbed. She went to class and kept schtum, begging Snape not to mention it.

Of course, everyone knew because the Carrows had triumphantly used The Bulstrodes as an example of what happened when the Dark Lord was displeased, but Millie had grimly held on. Now that the final battle was raging, she prayed that this Potter would pull his finger out and kill that bastard once and for all. He had destroyed everything she held dear; there was nothing left, but she could live with that, if nothing were left of him as well.

The sound of You-Know-Who's voice demanding Potter died down through the corridors, and Millie walked out of the Infirmary like a sleepwalker. She had been with the rest of the Slytherins when all hell had broken loose and the Death Eaters attacked the school, and now it was just mindless death and chaos all around her. She made her way toward the Great Hall, not knowing what to do, as students and teachers and Order members and Merlin knew who else dashed past her, knocking her about like a toy boat in the middle of a storm at sea.

A figure came flying toward her; a banshee with wild, streaming hair. "Millie!" the banshee cried, and grabbed her arm.

"You shouldn't be here," Millie said, wondering how someone who was supposed to be so clever could be so daft as to have come back to Hogwarts to die. "Granger, you just heard him. Potter's as good as dead, and so are you! Why did you come back here?"

"Listen to me!" Hermione Granger said, imploringly. "Voldemort-" Millie winced. "Oh, for fuck's sake! Voldemort attacked Professor Snape in the Shrieking Shack! We saw it!"

Millie felt her heart stop. "He's not dead." It was a statement. He couldn't be dead. Not after all this.

Hermione shook her head. For all that she was covered in dirt and blood and shit, she looked battle ready and terrified. "I don't know! Look, would you please go and check on him? They'll let you leave." She looked so sad. "It was awful, what that monster did to him! At least see if you can recover his body. No one should be left like that. Look, I have things I have to do, or I'd go with you-"

"Go on then, do you what you have to," Millie said, shivering. "I'll get his body."

She found Filch in the Infirmary, tending to several wounded. The place was hell on earth. Millie would never forget the smells and sounds of the place as long as she lived. She grabbed his arm, tugging. "Come on. We have to get Snape."

She explained on the way out of the castle. "So the bastard's killed him?" Filch said, his voice trembling.

"I don't know," Millie huffed, as they ran toward the Whomping Willow. "Granger wasn't sure, but she thought he was dead."

He was alive, alright, but a right mess. Millie Dillilusioned the three of them, and she and Filch took Snape to his quarters. He had the faintest of heartbeats, and judging from the piles of tiny bottles they'd found littered around his body when they arrived, he'd dosed himself up but good, hoping someone might come back and find him in time. When Millie learned later than Granger had survived, she went up and hugged her old nemesis.

This was after she had returned to Filch's quarters with half the Infirmary's potions supply and a very exhausted Madam Pomfrey.

It took two weeks before Snape could breathe on his own. Millie stayed with him, spelling Filch, who divided his time between helping to get the school repaired and caring for the former Headmaster. It was two months before Snape regained consciousness, and it was then they realised that Nagini's venom had paralysed his vocal chords. He could whisper, but his beautiful pipe-organ voice was gone. Madam Pomfrey could not say if it would ever return.

Eight months later, both Millie and Filch, along with an army of witnesses testified at Snape's trial, and when he was pronounced innocent of all charges save the death of Albus Dumbledore, Millie clutched his hand. Snape clutched back. When the charge of death by misadventure was pronounced, Snape lowered his head and wept.

Millie and Filch couldn't get him back to Filch's quarters quickly enough.

Chapter Three

Chapter 3 of 3

Millie Bulstrode learned the hard facts of life early. If you weren't pretty, rich, or played Quidditch, you were in for it. A story of friendship, love and the definition of beauty.

I am very proud that this fic was chosen as one of the February 2013 Lumos Featured Stories here on TPP.

□

Special thanks to stgulik, for her sterling beta work. As always, I own nothing you read here, but if I did, these three would be getting up to all sorts of highjinks.

This chapter contains explicit sexual content and slash.

"No, you witless dingbat, you have to secure them shutters first, or you'll have a broken head before you know it! Not that you wouldn't deserve it," Argus added, muttering to himself about the folly of amateurs doing work best left to the professionals.

Millie wasn't impressed. "Leave over, Argus. You're sounding like a right gonad. It's not Arithmancy, you know, fixing these windows."

She was on a stupidly high ladder, repairing the top-most stained glass windows of the Great Hall. Argus was directly under, holding onto the ladder for dear life, angry he was not fit enough to climb the eighty steps up to the top to work on the windows, terrified Millie would lose her balance and fall. They'd been cautioned to use as little personal magic as possible in the room as they cleaned and shined and repaired, so there was nothing for it but so shinny up the ladders and do it themselves.

The overall damage to Hogwarts during the final battle had been originally assessed as Severe. The following week, it had been upgraded to Oh Shit, We've Had It. Because the castle had sustained such intensive structural damage, its magic had to be recalibrated.

Swarms of Repairwizards and witches had volunteered for the disaster relief programme to restore the castle. Headmistress McGonagall had originally asked Millie to stay on when Argus injured his leg. He had suffered a bad fall while mending the moving stairs, putting him behind schedule. School could not reconvene until most of the repairs had been met, so Millie stepped in. It never occurred to her not to. Having nowhere else to go except some poxy fifth cousin's hovel in Hungary, Millie had decided to stay on at Hogwarts to assist Argus.

At first, it had troubled the old man, as if they all thought he wasn't fit for the job anymore. Snape eventually talked him round. Well, whispered him round. After almost a year, his voice had not returned; it was now a hoarse whisper that soon became as recognisable as his former bass tones.

Millie and Argus fell into an easy work routine, one often anticipating the other's moves and working well in tandem. Millie liked the old caretaker; he was good for a nasty laugh and a drink, and sometimes in the evenings Snape, back to living in his old dungeon rooms down the hall, would join them.

After a particularly productive day, they all sat around talking of old times, and drinking to absent friends. Argus raised his glass to Mrs. Norris, of course. She had been killed in the battle, but not before blinding a Death Eater with her claws. She was buried in the Garden of Remembrance, along with all the owls, familiars and house-elves who had died in the battle. Millie remembered the old cat fondly, though Argus never could be persuaded to tell them what happened to Mr. Norris.

"To Mrs. Norris," Argus announced, holding his glass high. "May she be sitting on a cloud in heaven, eating caviar and sardines and chasing mice." Tears floated in his pale eyes. "And may him that did her be roasting in hell right now with an incontinent seeing-eye dog as his eternal companion."

"Mrs. Norris," Snape and Millie repeated in unison, and they all drank deep, because deep pain required a deep drink.

Millie talked about her folks, and how her Nan Odessa warned her about those who would use her. "I guess we were all used by someone or another," she would say, thinking of Adelaide and Veronica. Adelaide had become a Death Eater, which had not surprised Millie. She had been killed in the battle as well. Veronica was missing, presumed fled. Millie had spent many a night wondering if Adelaide had been the one who killed her parents, but as Snape had reminded her, the dead were all blameless. Millie talked about her folks, and Snape told her stories about her dad, when they were in school together. They raised their glasses to her family. Their ashes were also in the Garden.

Snape, in turn, also whispered of his regrets. He told them the complete story of Lily Potter, not the one he pegged together to give Potter when he thought he was dying. They listened raptly as he told them about the overheard conversation at the door of a pub hotel room. It was amazing to Millie that this one simple act had started an unbroken chain of events which eventually led to the final battle.

"I didn't intend to survive," Snape said, his eyes sorrowful. "I'm not even supposed to be here. Sometimes I think it was a mistake to survive."

"Aw, Snape, don't be a lamebrain!" Millie said, trying to humour him. "We don't think you're a mistake. You're supposed to be here. If you weren't, I'd have to put up with Filch all on me own."

Argus made a rasping sound of mock indignation. Snape recognised their efforts to cheer him, but remained a bit wistful. His eyes met Millie's and she hurt for him. Without his voice, his eyes had become even more expressive, sometimes saying more than words could ever convey. Now they were at once accusing and forgiving. "In any case, sometimes I wish I'd hexed the pair of you for rescuing me."

"Well, the next time you're feeling so inclined, hex Granger," Millie said, saluting him with her glass. "She's the one who told me to go and find you. Although I doubt you could make her feel any more miserable than she already does. Married to that Weasley oik these six months and already pregnant." She grimaced and shook her head. "My dad always said those Weasleys didn't have babies, they had litters."

The two men chuckled. They toasted Granger anyway, reasoning that she needed it more than they did. As they filled their glasses, Argus regarded Millie. "You don't fancy having a little 'un then, Millie love?"

Millie shrugged. "I don't know, really. Truth is, I don't so much hate the idea of having babies as I do passing down my ugly mug. It's no fun going through life looking like me, you know," she said. With sudden clarity she added, "I used to hate to look in the mirror, but I don't really feel too down about it anymore, come to think on it. It's just a fact of life, like being left-handed or having a crooked toe. But I'd still hate to inflict it on my kid."

Snape nodded. "I've felt the same, I'll not deny it. But in this case, I really think you've always sold yourself short, Millicent."

She snorted. "Oh, ha ha. Funny as him-what-tells-jokes-on-t'Wizarding-Wireless-who's-so-funny-I-can't-remember-his-name."

Snape looked at her levelly, those eyes of his soft and reproachful. "Beauty is as beauty does, Millie." He stood up and drained his glass. "After a few jars, I sometimes think we're three of the most beautiful people I know."

Even Argus laughed. "I think that snake affected your eyesight instead of your voice, and you've been faking us. You mind my words, Millie. He'll be singing a bit of Don Giovanni when he goes back to his rooms."

Snape gave Argus his almost-smile, and put his hand on the older man's shoulder. "Good night, old friend. Good night, Millie." He pinched her cheek softly, then left them, his tall, proud bearing all the more touching in its dignity.

When the two of them were alone, Millie sighed. "I'd best be on my way as well. Getting back to the Broomsticks. Did I tell you? I'm thinking of maybe renting a small house in Hogsmeade. Nothing fancy, mind, but it would certainly be cheaper than giving all my money to Madam Rosemerta."

After Millie's house and family were destroyed, she couldn't bear returning to Barnsley. While helping with the repairs to the castle, she'd taken a room on long-term lease at the Three Broomsticks. It was cozy enough, but she knew it was eating into her savings faster than she'd like.

"Why don't you, Millie love?" Argus asked pleasantly. "You could rent to own, have you own place nearby." He frowned in his whisky. "Now that I'm used to having you around, I'd hate for you to go live further afield."

"You would?" Millie asked, pleased. "I don't like the idea of going anywhere, either," she added. She thought for a moment. "But if I get my own house, and that's a big if, what would I do with myself when this job's over? What if there's nowt to do, and I'm stuck in a house I can't sell in a place I can get no work?"

Argus waved his hand dismissively. "Bollocks! You can work here." He studied the contents of his glass. "If you aren't sure you want to get your own place, you could stay here for awhile. Plenty of room. You'd save money."

"Here with you?"

"I wouldn't mind."

"But what would I do here?" Millie asked. "I mean, it's a kind offer, but once I got here and the job was done, what would I do to stay on?"

"You could be the new DADA teacher."

Millie laughed. "Like they'd give me a job teaching! You're daft!"

Argus considered. "They might. You're a good fighter. And there's no one in this school that protects as fierce as you do, Millie Bulstrode. Like a momma bear with her cubs, you are."

"Pftt. Give over!"

"I mean it," Argus said solemnly. "I were there. I saw you, fighting that last night." His hard face softened. "You were like an avenging angel, you were. None could withstand your attack. You put yourself between death and many an innocent, you did."

He shook his head in remembrance. "I were terrified going to that Shack to go after himself," Argus said, nodding his head in the direction of Snape's quarters. He smiled. "But not you, oh no, not our Millie. You walked out there, bold as brass, darin' 'em to keep you from him. Oh, lass," he said with a smile. "I'll not live to forget that night. You were," he paused, and gently touched her cheek, "you were beautiful."

Millie looked down, unsure what to say. "The thing is," she said, "I believe you. I felt right and good, and knowing I'd done the right thing. Beautiful is as beautiful does."

"You know, you and Snape are the only two people I know who've ever called me beautiful. And you're the only two people I know who are actually beautiful to me," she said slowly, as if not understanding her own words, only knowing they had to be said.

"He is beautiful, isn't he?" Argus said quietly, and Millie nodded. "I love that boy." He looked at her. "I love you and all. I've not had cause to say it much in my life, but I love you both. You're both special, and you don't know it."

Millie nodded, and thought a little more. "Here, are you two doing it? Sexual, I mean."

Argus laughed. He had long since grown immune to her bluntness. He nodded, looking off in the distance. "About six months ago, yeah. Never before," he added hastily, as if that was somehow important. "He came here one night, feeling low. He said he didn't have one good thing to look forward to. I think he were, well, contemplating things. Bad things. Suicide things."

"Well, I hated seeing him so down, and just put me arms around him, friendly-like, and held him. And then, I were stroking him. I felt odd at first, like he were gonna hex me or summat, but he lay still, and I kept touching him, and then suddenly he opened his robe and he was so beautiful, and he pulled me close, and then I had m' hand on his cock. Ah, lass, it were so hard and velvet and lovely, and I had to put m' mouth on't. "

Millie held her breath as Argus spoke, his voice soft with wonder and far away with the memory. She felt the saddle between her legs grow hot and begin to ache a little. She licked her lips, willing him to continue.

"He tasted so sweet, innocent-like, and he were hungry for it. Well, I just licked and I sucked at him until he were wild and passionate with it. He were like beauty, dark beauty. I'd never thought of him in that way before. But I couldn't stop until he was coming in m' mouth. He just bucked and moaned in that way he has of speaking now, and I couldn't get enough. He cried afterward, poor thing; he'd never really been touched with love, and it nearly broke him again. He'd never been with a man before either, you see. Always with women; prossies mostly. But he's a passionate man, and loving in his way."

In the suffocating silence, Millie stared at him so hard her eyes almost fell out. He seemed to come back to himself. "I won't bugger him, no. He's too delicate for that. And we don't go at it like rabbits, lest you think we're a couple of randy old farts slobbering over each other."

Millie blinked. Her eyes were dry from staring. "Does he bugger you then?" she asked, then blushed. "Sorry, it's none of my business."

He chuckled. "No, he doesn't. And I'll not let him suck me either." His voice was sincere with concern. "I don't want to risk damaging his throat again. I carry hope his voice'll return."

Millie grinned. "You don't want to risk damaging his throat? Is that a delicate way of bragging, Argus?"

He frowned. "You what? Oh!" His eyes flew open, and then he laughed. "Cheeky saucebox! No, I'm just saying."

"I know," Millie said, feeling absurdly happy. "I know what you mean, you randy old bugger. Or not."

He shook his head, laughing. "You take the ginger biscuit, you do." They laughed and took another drink. "No. He brings me off by hand, but I don't ask for it. If he's willing, I'll not say no."

Millie looked at him. She saw Argus every day. He was spry for his age, whatever that was. He wasn't ugly, really, just severe. He was strong. He was, as Snape had said, beautiful in his way. "If I were willing, Argus," she asked softly, "would you say no?"

He looked up at her his eyes wide and stunned. Then, as it sank in, he closed his eyes. "I've been waiting a long time to say 'yes' to you, Millie love."

She licked her lips again. "I don't know if I'm any good at it or not," she said, feeling suddenly huge and clumsy and self-conscious. "I've never had a proper orgasm, what they call coming." She blushed. "I've never done it. I mean, I've done it lots, but I never got there, you see--"

Argus cut her off with the gentlest of kisses. "Take off your clothes, lass."

Millie undressed quickly, not wanting to prolong any disappointment she saw in his face. She turned back, feeling defensive and almost wishing she hadn't said anything, when Argus reached for her and pulled her onto his lap to straddle his hips. His large, worn hands were on her large breasts immediately.

"Gods, you're beautiful," Argus said, as if it were the most obvious statement on earth. He kneaded and jiggled her breasts a little to watch them bounce. "A man could spend many a lovely hour playing with these." He leaned down and sucked her nipple into his mouth and rolled his tongue and teeth over it, making her pussy hot and wet. She gasped and moaned as he sucked, thinking about what he'd done to Snape's cock, what he was doing to her tit.

As he suckled her, he reached between her legs and parted her pussy lips with his fingers and slipped them in, moaning around her nipple as he found her dripping wet and ready. He released her nipple and looked up. "Spread you legs a little more... ah, yes, that's so wet," he slurred, as if she'd made him drunk with her body.

His finger found a little part of her and he rubbed it with the callused tip of his finger. A shockwave went through her that was so intense she thought the room itself was moving. "What's that?" she gasped, looking at him. "And when are you going to touch it again?"

He gave her another kiss. "That, Millie love, is what we needed to find to bring you that orgasm you've been looking for. Now, undo my trousers, love, and get it out. I'm ready fit to burst for you, lass."

She slid down on Argus' cock, breathing hard as it filled her. He was not a big man, but his cock felt huge within her, and they both gasped as she settled down on him. "That's good," he breathed, and nodded.

"Yeah," she said, marveling. It did feel good; it felt fantastic. It wasn't so small she felt like a cathedral, and not so huge she felt like she was being sawed in half. He felt like home. She tentatively rocked against him slowly, finding her rhythm. He grasped her hips with surprising confidence and moved her the way he wanted, and she closed her

eyes as they fucked slowly, their heavy breathing the only sound in the room.

A gentle hand clasped the back of her head, and Millie started. She looked up to see Snape standing over her. He was gazing down at her with luminous eyes, his mouth parted slightly. "I leave you two five minutes, and you start without me. There's gratitude for you."

There was none of the sarky disdain in his face; he looked real, like she was seeing him for the first time. He looked a little sad, and yearning. She had a ridiculous desire to cuddle him while Argus fucked her.

Argus looked up and smiled. Snape had a hand on his shoulder as well. Argus murmured quietly, "I hoped you'd come. You can join in, if you like." Millie looked at Argus, who glanced up at Snape. "He's a good lad. He'll not hurt you. And he's lovely to look at underneath them robes. Aren't you, lad?"

"Show me," Millie said, and grasped Snape's robe and pulled him down toward her. His kiss was warm, his lips soft, but hungry. Millie undulated on Argus' cock as Snape kissed her forehead, her cheeks, then plunged into her mouth, his tongue soft and slippery, twining with hers like a snake. He cupped her cheek to hold her still while he dipped his tongue in and out of her mouth, nipping at her bottom lip, then gently suckling back into her mouth.

His hands slid down her throat until they were kneading her heavy breasts. He dragged his palms against her dark nipples, making them stand out hard and needy. He tweaked them and pinched them with slender, strong fingers, making Millie even hotter. She sucked on his tongue, and he played with her breasts, squeezing them almost to the point of pain, but never quite hurting her.

Argus stroked Snape's black head affectionately. "I told you, didn't I? You'll not tire of them. Suck 'em, lad. They're soft as sin," Argus whispered, and Millie tightened around his cock, making him moan. "Wicked girl," he said, with a soft, barking laugh.

Obediently, Snape set to her nipples, licking and sucking them until they were wet and shiny and Millie was hissing in pleasure. He stroked her rounded belly as he sucked on her tits, and Millie felt the beginnings of something deep between her legs, something she'd always heard about, but never experienced, even with all the blokes she'd fucked.

Snape was kneeling on the sofa beside the lovers, kissing down toward the juncture where she and Argus were joined. The thought of that slick tongue between her legs, maybe even licking Argus, made that something grow and take on an urgent ache in her pussy.

Before he could go there, Argus stopped him. "Take off your clothes, boy. You're such a handsome man. I want Millie to see that pretty cock o' yours."

Again, Snape obeyed as if under an Imperius, and Millie stilled as she watched her former Head of House rise from the sofa and remove his robes, his boots and pants.

He was as pale as Millie was dusky, his old scars a map of his life and the shit he'd put himself through. The wound at his neck had faded, but still looked dangerous. His skin almost glowed in the candlelight; black hair dusted over his chest and pointed an arrow toward his crotch, where it finished in a thick nest of black wiry hair. His cock was pretty. It was long and perfect, and hard as blue steel. Mrs. Norris couldn't scratch *that*, Millie thought.

Argus was looking at Snape with fond desire. "Oh, he's a lovely thing, isn't he, Millie?"

"Yeah, he is," she said, trembling, the something between her legs growing hot as she watched Argus watch Snape. "I wanna suck it," she breathed, her nose full of the scent of Snape, warm and woodsy and green like clean musk.

Argus gently cupped Snape's heavy balls, and Millie's cunt clenched as Snape gasped and put his hand on her shoulder, as if his legs didn't want to support him.

"Lick it with me, Millie. Come and taste for yourself what a sweet cock it is," Argus whispered, and together they leaned forward, and Millie felt Snape's hand move from her shoulder to the back of her head. Snape smelled delicious, clean, even his pubic hair, and when she took her first lick of his shaft, she hummed. He was sweet.

Snape made a silent chuffing sound and clutched the back of her head as she and Argus worked Snape like a lolly, licking from the base. They nipped and licked and sucked against Snape's flesh, which was incredibly hard beneath the silky skin. Argus delicately peeled Snape's foreskin back, and Millie couldn't help but smile at the bead of salty pre-cum sitting like a prize on the head, which was round and red and shining like an apple.

When they reached the tip, by some unspoken design, they kissed one another, the head of Snape's cock between them, catching their stray licks and nibbles as their lips met around the head. Snape was gasping incessantly, whispering words Millie couldn't hear, but the something roared between her legs as if to answer him.

She broke from the kiss. "Could I-" She couldn't believe she was going to ask. "Could I put my finger up your arse? Would you like that?"

Both men laughed. Snape stroked her hair. "Gently," he answered.

Argus smiled, and from his discarded jacket produced a small pot of something that looked like jelly. "Give us your finger then," he commanded, and Millie watched as he coated her middle finger with the slick substance.

Snape, above them, sighed, and grew very still. Argus said quietly, "Now, Millie girl, be easy. It's sensitive, but made to feel pleasure just as much as your own sweet place." He took Snape's balls in hand and gave them another gentle squeeze. "Spread your legs, lad, and allow Millie to insert her finger in your little hole. Yes, that's a good lad," he praised, as Snape opened his stance. "Just relax. Our girl won't hurt you. Good... good." Millie felt Snape's tiny rectum unfurl for her, and she tried to be gentle, even as Snape hissed and threw his head back.

He uttered a juicy curse as she imbedded her finger to the hilt. "Press down now, and you'll feel a little bump," Argus instructed. "That's what you call his prostate. Rub it if you can; it'll make him feel even better."

Millie did as Argus said, until Snape's grip on her hair tightened and he whispered, *Fuck!* Unable to help herself, Millie looked up at the man standing beside them, naked, his balls in Argus' palm, his pucker opened to her. Snape was beautiful. Head kicked back, mouth opened, helpless with pleasure, he was as lovely a man as she had ever seen. And she was making him that way.

"That's it. Well done, Millie love. He knows you'll not be hurting him here," Argus said, his raspy voice assuring and warm. "Now, come on, Severus. Be a good boy and give of Argus your sweet cock." He leaned forward, and Snape gave a hoarse, helpless cry as his cock slid into Argus' waiting mouth. Argus didn't move his head; instead, he made Snape come to him.

Millie watched enraptured as Snape's long white cock slid in and out of Argus' mouth. Her finger moved in his rectum in counterpoint. She began to fuck Argus again, wringing a moan from his mouth, which in turn made Snape cry out. The three of them were an unbroken current, from Millie to Argus to Snape to Millie again, and the something building in her pussy grew as Snape's cock eased in and out of Argus' welcoming mouth.

Snape made a sound, like a whispered cry, rocking from Argus to Millie and back, moaning helpless words like *please* and *yes* and *fuck* and soon Millie was moaning them too, her pussy quivering around Argus' cock and her finger pulsing in Snape's arse and she cried out, understanding.

"Oh, fuck, I think I'm coming," she whined, and her body pulled inward like the tide withdrawing from the shore. Snape pulled her hair *hard* and hoarsely ordered her to *Come with me, Millie!* and the wave crashed back, throwing Millie forward and making her scream over and over like a banshee. Her eyes were clamped so tightly shut she was almost blinded and Snape's arse tightened over her finger and he rasped a silent shout of release at the same time. Millie clenched around Argus' cock over and over, the pleasure painfully intense, and Snape thrust and thrust and thrust, until Millie could see the milky come coating the softening shaft as it slipped from Argus' mouth.

Millie came back into herself as her finger slipped from Snape's body, and he staggered back on the sofa. Argus caught Millie and pulled her into an embrace. "Good girl.

You came; you came hard," he panted, licking his lips. He smiled crookedly at Snape, and pulled the younger man close as well, until Snape's head was resting on Argus' shoulder. "I'll tell you, this one did as well. That finger did the trick, didn't it, sweet?" Argus kissed Snape's mouth softly, but the younger man was almost too dazed to notice. Snape's eyes were locked onto Millie, and he said a thousand things with them that Millie had thought only pretty girls would hear.

"Yeah I did," Millie said, feeling sated and exhausted. She was inches away from Snape's face as she lay against Argus' broad chest, and Snape's touched her cheek and kissed her with tentative gratitude.

Argus was delighted. "Good girl." He glanced down at Snape. "That were her first orgasm, lad. Poor girl has never had a proper one, and look how much she enjoyed it."

As the spent couple panted and shivered, Argus laid his head back against the sofa, looking pleased. "It were good, watching you both come off at the same time." He gave Millie a soft kiss on her swollen, parched mouth. "Come on, lass, bring me off as well. Be a good girl and fuck me home."

Millie gladly moved against Argus, as much as her shaking legs would allow. As Argus began to thrust upward, Snape rose from the sofa and knelt on the floor behind Millie. "Lie back against me," he whispered gently, and gratefully Millie leaned back against him, letting him support her weight.

As she and Argus moved together, Snape played with her breasts, lifting them, presenting them to Argus like gifts, and Argus tugged and twisted her nipples until another orgasm started to brew again, deep inside her.

Argus' thrusts grew erratic; he was on the verge. "I'm so close," she whispered back to Snape, and Snape kissed her shoulder and reached between her legs and played with her clit with surprising expertise.

"That's it," Argus moaned, as Snape's fingers teased Millie higher. "Come wi' me as well, lass..."

"Come, you succulent little morsel," Snape whispered in her ear. He licked the pink shell. "Come and I'll lick your pussy till you scream."

Millie raced Argus to the end, and they landed at the same, blissful time, both crying out in unison, and Millie thought she was going to faint. She sagged back against Snape, who held her up, even as she drifted off.

She woke in a huge bed, between the two men. They were both naked. Argus had his back to her, mildish snores emitting from him as his body moved with his breathing. Snape was spooned against her tightly, his erection nestled between her arse cheeks.

Millie thought about how the three of them had stumbled into this bed, the things they had done. She felt a pleasant ache between her legs; both men had been as enthusiastic about getting her off as they had one another. For a girl who had never managed an orgasm in her life, she'd certainly made up for it last night between these two randy Northern gits. The thought made her smile.

Funny thing was, Argus seemed to be the ringleader, the master of ceremonies, but he never tried to be the top all that much. Sure, he'd rogered her stupid, horny old goat that he was, but true to his word he never buggered Snape. In fact, he was actually gentler with Snape than with her; as if he thought she was strong enough to take what he had to give, and Snape was more delicate.

That thought filled her with pride, especially when she crawled on top of Argus as he lay on his back and sank onto his cock; she felt Snape gently open her up and fill her arse with that pretty cock of his. She had nearly screamed the place down. It had hurt a little, but it was a good hurt, and they were gentle and slow with her. The three of them fit together like they had been fashioned that way.

Now Snape was awake and teasing her breasts. She turned her head around. She'd never really been this close up to him, and she could see every old acne scar and beard stubble on his gaunt, sallow face. His eyes were large and lovely in the dawn light. There was heat and hope and almost painful longing in them. As she stared back, they crinkled at the edges as he gave her one of his almost-smiles, and Millie thought he might be thinking about giving her another orgasm to go along with it. The two men seemed of a mind to see who could give her more.

She smiled ruefully. "You randy old bugger," she said, and stretched back for a kiss. He laughed in his silent way, and lifted her leg. He slid into her with a contented sigh, and peppered her shoulder and arm with kisses. His fingers tugged at her nipples with each thrust, and his breathing soon grew ragged. It felt warm and comfortable and good, like some vital food she needed to get going, like a cup of coffee every morning.

Argus stretched suddenly and rolled on his back, sporting an impressive morning wand himself. He turned his head, saw the couple, and pinched Millie's nipples. "Up and at 'em, eh? Well, you young folk have more energy in the morning than a broken down old thing like me." He rose with a grunt. "I'll be back wi' breakfast." He stumped off, scratching his arse and mumbling about where his trousers had been thrown.

By then, Millie was too close to coming again to really do more than nod. Snape had found his rhythm, and damn if it wasn't a good one. He turned them over until he was behind her, and he took her doggy style, rolling his hips and making her head light up.

He was urgent and playfully rough, and when he wrapped his long arms around her and found her clit, she knew she was going to come like the Hogwarts Express. His thrusts grew faster, less precise, less controlled, and with a mighty surge he hit *something* inside her, and Millie threw her head back and howled like a dog. She came with fecking bells on, as Snape plowed her into the bed.

In the main room, the door swung open, then clapped closed. They ignored it, until Snape stiffened suddenly, then started fucking her as if he would earn House points for it. Millie glanced over her shoulder to see Argus bending over Snape; she grinned when she heard the lapping sounds as Argus rimmed Snape's lovely naked arse. With a thrust that nearly catapulted them both through the headboard, Snape pumped her so full she looked like a ruddy geyser when he was finished.

Argus watched the tangle of limbs collapse on his bed, and laughed. He said, "I've brought breakfast if you're interested. Come on if you're coming." He stumped into the kitchen, leaving them to recover, laughing at his own joke.

When she could string more than three words together without gasping, she called after Argus, "Gis a minute, eh?" Millie could feel Snape's warm, plentiful release seeping from her as he slid out of her. Her fanny was buzzing like bees were inside it.

"Come and cast a Warming charm, one of you," Argus replied, but didn't sound too worried about it.

Snape pressed her shoulders until she realised he wanted her to roll over. He lay against her, using her ample breasts for a pillow. It made Millie feel at once safe and protective, as if he needed her comfort as well as her body.

After awhile, he gently kneaded her breasts. "I love these," he said, and even his whisper sounded raunchy somehow. "I have to say it: you must indulge me in a tit wank after breakfast."

"Oh yeah? And what's one of those, then?" she asked.

He raised his head from his downy pillow. "You've never let anyone have a tit wank? With these luscious boobs?"

She laughed. The mere idea of Snape saying 'boobs' was hilarious enough. "No. I've got a good idea what it is, but I've never done it."

He lay back onto her breast with a contented sigh. "Then I am in for a rare treat, indeed."

After a beat, she said, "Do you and Filch do this often? Fuck each other with someone else?"

She felt him shake his head. "We've never done this." He sighed and ran his long fingers through her hair. He continued, "I've only ever been with him three or four times, to be honest."

Millie frowned. "So are you straight or bent?"

His chest hitched in silent laughter. "Gods, woman, you really are the coarsest witch I know. Not that I'm complaining. It's one of the reasons I put up with you."

He was silent for a moment. In his hoarse whisper, he said, "You know what I've learned about almost dying?" When she shook her head, he continued, "I've learned that it's not about whether you've got a cock or a cunt, it's whether or not you act like one. Argus has been my friend for most of my life, but I never even *considered* him a bed partner until about six months ago." He traced a mystic symbol over her belly. "It's not about him having a cock or you having a pussy. It's about you being Millie and him being Argus."

She nodded, understanding, and pulled him closer, feeling as protective as that momma bear Argus had called her.

He idly fondled her nipple. "I don't know why I survived, Millie. I don't have a future to speak of, literally. I don't know if I'll ever get my voice back, or what I'll do even if it comes back."

Millie listened, and even though he was whispering, she could hear the sadness in his tone. It made her feel bad for him. Who the hell knew Millie Bulstrode had a heart?

She looked back at him. "You don't worry about all that shite. Eat breakfast. Get your strength back. Work on fixing your voice. That's all you have to do."

His eyes, once so full of bitterness it was hard to look at them, now held sad resignation. "And then?"

Millie growled in her throat. "And then life goes on. You and me and Filch will work, and eat, and fuck in the evenings, and get on one another's nerves and tell the world to leave us alone. That's what we'll do. And if we don't hex each other to hell and back, we'll do alright, I reckon."

Snape looked at her a long time. "So you think you'll stay awhile, then?" There was so much hope in his expression that it made Millie's eyes water.

She shrugged. "My old Nan once said that after you rid yourself of all them what fucked you over, the one's left are the ones you rely on." She frowned. "You know, I always thought she was talking about the ones *I* could rely on, but I think she meant it the other way round and I was just too young to get it."

Snape pulled her closer. "It's good that you're here, Millie Bulstrode. I won't be too much of a burden, I can promise you that."

"You're not one now." Millie rose. "Be right back." As she rose, she smiled down at Snape. All that Death Eater shite had never bothered her. As far as she was concerned, he was just a man with a lot of baggage. She was strong enough to help him toss that baggage right into hell, if that's where he wanted it to go. If not, well, she'd help him carry it. It wasn't that big a burden.

She padded into the kitchen naked, her large breasts swaying. Argus oogled her appraisingly. "You look pleased with y'self," he said, and Millie watched as the bulge in his trousers grew.

She placed a Warming charm on the food. "Come on back to bed. The food can wait." She took his hand. "Did you mean what you said about me moving in here?"

He stopped. "Wouldn't 'a said it otherwise."

"Well, I think we ought to make a go of it. You, me and Snape."

He smiled at her, then put his arms around her. "You're a fine woman, Millie."

"Yeah, well, don't spread the word around. I got a reputation for being a hard case. Besides, you and me have a job to do. We've got to get him in there-" she pointed to the bedroom, "-speaking again. I think he can do it. He just needs a reason to. I figure if we keep on fucking like that, he's gonna want to make some suggestions of his own. He'll need to be heard," she replied with a wry smile.

Argus looked at her, then grinned. "Like that, is it?"

"Yeah."

He nodded, and put his arm around her shoulders. "Come on, then. Let's all have a cuddle, then we'll make some plans."