

99 Bottles

by stgulik

When hunting for Veela hair, have a back-up plan.

A drabble in five parts

Chapter 1 of 1

When hunting for Veela hair, have a back-up plan.

For wand core hunters, the quest for Veela hair was not without its professional hazards.

Hermione awoke and groggily peered around the dimly-lit cellar. She gave a few experimental tugs, but the magical rope binding her to her partner, back-to-back on the cold dirt floor, held them fast. "Snape," she hissed. "You awake?"

"Huurgh."

"Wake *up*." Severus shifted, causing her arms to twist. "Ow! Stay still. Please don't break my wrist."

"Granger, 's tha' you?"

"Who else?"

"Somethin's hugging my arm."

"It's just the floor."

"I think it likes me."

"They must have given you an extra zap," she muttered.

-oOo-

"I'm drunk, Granger," declared Severus cheerfully.

"You're just hexed. Is that knife still in your boot?"

"Pissed as a newt. Hey! Les' sing a drinking song."

"No!"

"Ninety-nine bottles of beer on the wall, ninety-nine bottles of beer..."

"Will you *shut up*?" She aimed a kick at his hamstring but he rolled over until she was lying on his back, helpless.

"Take one down, pass it aroun'..."

"Snape! Help me get at that knife *now*."

"Not unless you sing wi' me," he replied decidedly, his voice muffled against the dirt floor.

She huffed. "No bounty is worth this."

"*Sing, Granger.*"

-oOo-

She sang. "Ninety-eight bottles of beer on the wall..."

"Ninety-eight bottles of beer..."

"You lift your foot, I grab for the knife, ninety-seven bottles of beer on the wall."

"Granger, those are not the words," he informed her pedantically.

"You don't say." She placed her feet flat on the floor and flexed her lower back painfully. "If we get out of this fix, I'm quitting the business."

"You always say that."

"This time I mean it."

"But I couldn't do without you."

"*You always say that.*"

"Granger," said Severus, "if we get out of this fix, will you marry me?"

-oOo-

Hermione stared at the ceiling. "Are—are you still hexed?" she whispered.

His fingers fumbled for hers, then clasped them tightly. "I'm sober, and I'm serious. Marry me?"

Tears trickled into Hermione's ears. "Of course I will, you daft man."

They nuzzled heads together a moment before they remembered their predicament. "Here." Severus flexed his right leg between her knees. The pant cuff fell away, revealing the gleaming knife handle.

"Can you shake your foot a little?"

He did, and the knife fell to the floor.

"I'll take that." A Veela guard nudged it away with her foot. "Thank you."

-oOo-

Freed from their bonds at last, Severus and Hermione warily rose and brushed themselves off. The Veela authorities looked much friendlier than before, when they had leveled mind-altering hexes at them both.

"Normally, Veela never sell their hair to wizards," said the leader. "But perhaps we could reach a trade?"

"What on earth do we have that you want?" asked Hermione.

"Tell us more about this 'drinking song.' Whatever happened to those ninety-nine bottles of beer on the wall?"

"Allow us to illustrate." Severus waved his wand. Several cases of Rosmerta's finest appeared.

Ninety-nine bottles later, the trade concluded amicably.

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Written for the GS100 "99 Challenge." Reviews welcome!