

When Good Potions Go Bad

by phoenix

*****Winner - Multifaceted Rd 6 for Devotion***** An accident with a potion upends the comfortable relationship Remus and Severus have had in the three years following the end of the war. How well do two middle-aged men react to change? This is meant as a humorous look at the Male Pregnancy cliché.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 5

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A/N: Thanks to all that voted for this story in the Multifaceted Awards (Round 6). Thanks to your support, this story won in the Devotion (Slash G PG-13) category. I'm truly honored.

Okay, I know that I have never marketed myself as a fan of slash and have tried to understand the popularity of the genre to no avail, but here I am, writing slash. Why, you ask? I got into a discussion on my LJ about slash and the topic of MPREG came up. We talked about how absurd the concept is in humans, and that only parody/humorous looks at it are readable, and I thought I would have some fun with it. JenKM1216 has a lot to do with this, too, as she really encouraged my muses.

I have tried my hardest to keep the characters in character as much as possible while still playing with all the pregnancy stereotypes. You still get your Snarky!Snape and Compassionate!Lupin, but there will be some breaks from normal due to stress. This fic is most definitely not to be taken seriously.

On the note of not to be taken too seriously, I will say ahead of time that this story will not include a detailed birth. I tried to keep this story as much in the realm of physical possibility as one can when dealing with MPREG, and there's not really much interesting story-wise about a caesarean section, so if that is your major turnoff to MPREG, you can safely read this story.

I would like to thank nota and sullacat for their work as my beta readers.

Chapter 1

Remus heard the door slam. He could tell it was going to be another one of those days. Severus had been incredibly moody lately, much more so than normal. He was surprised when Severus didn't join him in the kitchen. Taking a break from preparing dinner, he decided to see what Severus was doing.

He grew concerned when he realized his partner was nowhere in sight. "Severus?" He heard the toilet flush.

"Can't a man go to the bathroom in peace?" snapped Severus.

Yes, it was definitely going to be one of those days. "I was just wondering where you were. Dinner is almost ready."

Severus sat down and picked up the paper. "I'm not hungry."

"You don't even know what it is."

"I said that I'm not hungry," Severus growled.

"Just because you've had a shitty day doesn't mean you have to take it out on me," Remus retorted. This had been happening more and more often lately.

Severus sighed, "I'm sorry. I had an exhausting day, and I'd just like to relax."

Remus moved behind him and started rubbing his shoulders. "You haven't been eating much lately, and I'm getting concerned. Are you sure you aren't sick or anything?"

Severus moderated his tone. "No, I'm fine. I'm just having a hard time finalizing the fertility potion. You know how I get."

Leaning forward to place a kiss on his lover's cheek, Remus replied, "I do. But it's not healthy for you not to eat. Perhaps we can do something to work up your appetite?" He hoped to entice Severus to the bedroom. It had been several weeks since their last encounter.

"Not, tonight. I'm too tired. Perhaps tomorrow, since I have the day off."

Remus tried to hide his disappointment at the realization that it would be another night of self-stimulation. Releasing Severus' shoulders, he moved around and sat in the chair diagonal from Severus. "Are we all right?" He wondered if Severus was tired of him and pushing him away. He had never been so happy as when Severus had accepted him after the war, but that was nearly three years ago. A lot could change in that amount of time. Even though he still loved Severus deeply, he couldn't help but wonder if his lover's feelings had changed.

Severus gave Remus a reassuring smile and reached for his hand. "We're fine. I'm just in a bit of a rough patch on this potion. It's similar to when you have writer's block, that's all. It'll pass."

Remus knelt before Severus and began to rub his thigh, saying in an alluring voice, "Maybe we should take another vacation? I know it helped me last time. You know I wrote *Forbidden Destiny* in the fortnight after we returned. Maybe a little change would rejuvenate you?" He hoped that Severus would agree. The week they had spent on the Greek Isle had been magical. He could feel himself hardening at the memory of what they had done.

"I'll think about it." Setting down the paper, he announced, "I think I'll turn in. I just can't seem to keep my eyes open."

Remus rose and closed for a kiss. "Sleep well." As he kissed Severus, he tried to deepen the show of affection, show his lover how he was feeling, but he was rebuffed. He tried not to let the hurt show in his expression when they broke off. "I'll see you in the morning."

Once back in the kitchen, Remus kicked the wastebasket to vent his frustration. He knew that Severus was a difficult man and that their relationship would never be easy, but it had been nearly a month and Severus had shown no interest in him.

After eating dinner, he decided to work out his frustration by writing. It was well past midnight when he crawled into bed with a snoring Severus. After ten minutes, he realized he wasn't going to be able to sleep with the racket, and he moved to the guest room.

Remus was up earlier than usual the following morning. He hadn't slept well as he had kept waking up in the middle of erotic dreams. Hoping his lover would be in a better mood now, he slipped into bed behind Severus, began caressing the other man's body, and showering his neck and shoulders with kisses. "I need you," he whispered hoarsely before nipping at his lover's ear.

Severus shifted, pushed against Remus and moaned.

Encouraged, Remus let his hand slide up Severus's chest and gently twisted his nipple.

"Ouch!" Severus cried out and pulled away.

"What the bloody hell?" Remus was beyond frustration.

"You don't have to twist them off," snapped Severus.

"I didn't do anything I don't normally do. What's wrong with you?"

"I could ask you the same question."

Not wanting to start the day in a foul mood, Remus decided to make peace. Placing his hand on Severus' cheek, he said, "I'm sorry. Perhaps I was a little over-exuberant this morning?" Scooting closer to Severus, he started gently kissing his lover, hoping to restore the mood.

Rather than returning his affection, Severus pulled away and hurried to the bathroom, slamming the door.

Frustrated and hurt, Remus slammed his fist against the bed. When he heard Severus retching, he rose and knocked on the bathroom door. "Severus, are you all right?"

In between heaves, Severus replied, "I'll be fine. Must have eaten something disagreeable yesterday."

Not wanting to listen to his lover vomit, Remus decided to leave the room.

Joining Remus in the kitchen, Severus saw him setting out food for breakfast and felt his stomach turn again. "Ugh. No bacon this morning, please." He still didn't feel completely normal, and just the thought of having to smell bacon made his stomach begin to turn again. Of course, he could say that about most meat products lately.

Remus returned the bacon to the icebox. "All right then, what would you like?"

"Just some porridge. Something simple."

Remus sat across from him and grasped his hands. "Are you sure there's nothing wrong with you?"

Severus could see the love and concern in the other man's eyes and gave him a reassuring squeeze of his hands. "I'm sure. I'm just under a lot of stress. I'm at a critical juncture of my research, but I just can't get past a block. I think I'm getting close. It'll get better once I solve the problem." Stress had caused him to lose his appetite before. Besides, it was not like he was losing weight and wasting away.

"Why don't we go to a play tonight? Perhaps the change of scenery will improve my mood." He just wanted Remus to stop worrying about him. He hated it when the man's mothering instinct kicked in.

The play did not improve Severus's mood. He had gotten up three times during the performance to use the lavatory. Even more irritating was the fact that Remus kept asking him if he was all right. Why would the man not listen? They had not spoken to each other since they returned home, and that suited Severus's mood perfectly. At least he was not being asked about his well-being every five minutes.

After the second time he got up from bed to go to the bathroom that night, Remus reached over and touched him. "I think you should go to St. Mungo's tomorrow."

Severus replied irritably, "I told you that I'm fine. I've just been drinking too much water."

"Severus, please. I'm worried."

Irritated, Severus grabbed his pillow. "Would you quit mothering me?" He then stormed across the hall to the guest room. Other than a small touch of nausea, he felt fine. There was no need to waste his time going to St. Mungo's.

Remus was glad to see that Severus's appetite had finally returned. He supposed it had just been stress as Severus had announced two weeks ago that he was nearly finished with the potion, and that it was ready for testing. About that same time, Severus had regained his appetite. He watched Severus sop up the last of the gravy on his plate with his roll.

"Is there more?"

"Plenty." He couldn't remember ever seeing Severus with such a hearty appetite. His plate was still half full.

"Excellent job on dinner. You really are quite a good cook," Severus called from the kitchen.

"Thank you." He tried not to look surprised when Severus returned with a second heaping plate and devoured the food with relish. This had been going on for the last two weeks. At first, Remus had merely assumed that Severus's body was compensating for the lack of food the preceding months, but he couldn't help noticing that it was starting to go to Severus's waist. Starting tomorrow, he would begin preparing healthier meals with smaller portions.

"Hungry?" Remus finally asked, unable to refrain from comment.

Wiping away the crumbs, Severus replied, "I was starving. That pub near the lab is closed for renovation, and I couldn't find anyplace decent to eat." After another bite, he met Remus's eyes. "You wouldn't mind if I started coming home for lunch, would you? I don't want to disturb your writing."

This would actually work to Remus's advantage. "Of course not. I'd love to have you home for lunch. I think the distraction might help my creativity." He gave Severus a sly grin. When Severus's appetite had returned, so had his libido, something Remus was extremely grateful for.

"A little mid-day action? I like that idea. I wonder why I never thought of it before."

Remus saw the glint in Severus's eyes. "I think dishes can wait until morning, don't you?"

"Definitely."

The next day, Severus sat down to lunch and saw a salad on his plate. "What's this?"

"I thought we'd have something healthier for a change."

Deciding that he could pick up something to eat on the way back to work, perhaps from that Thai place he'd recently developed an unexplainable craving for Thai food he dug into his salad. It wasn't at all satisfying, but it would make Remus happy.

When they finished lunch, he said, "I might be home a little late tonight. The next step of the potion is very time consuming, but I should be in around suppertime."

"I'll make it something simple, then. Let me know if you'll be too late?"

"I'll do my best." After kissing Remus goodbye, he headed to a little Thai restaurant on Diagon Alley and placed a rather large order to quell the rumbling of his stomach. He then returned to his office and quickly inhaled his food so that he could get back to work. When he was finished, he looked at the empty containers and couldn't believe he had eaten everything.

That evening, much to his disappointment, dinner consisted of more salad, a very small piece of baked chicken and steamed vegetables. While it was delicious, it did not satisfy his hunger. After he finished eating, he carried his plate to the kitchen and opened the icebox.

Remus joined him and asked, "Looking for anything in particular?"

"I thought we had some ice cream?"

"It's in the back," replied Remus as he charmed the dishes.

Severus scooped out two large helpings of ice cream and then went to the pantry in search of something to top it off. For some unexplained reason, he reached for the crisps and crumbled a couple of handfuls over the ice cream. He took a bite and savored the mix of sweet and salty flavors. This was exactly what he was looking for.

"What are you doing?" asked Remus curiously.

"Is there something wrong with eating ice cream?" Severus asked defensively.

"When you put crisps on it, there is." Remus had a look of disgust on his face.

"It's quite good. Did you want to try a bite?"

"I'll pass."

Severus shrugged and decided to take his bowl out the living room where he could listen to the Wireless. He wondered why he had never tried this combination before. It was heavenly.

They turned in early, and, as usual, Remus fell fast asleep after sex. Severus could feel the rumbling in his stomach, and knew that he would never get any sleep if he didn't get something to eat. Quietly, he slipped out of bed and headed to the kitchen. After eating a large sandwich, he patted his stomach, feeling much better. If Remus was going to feed him rabbit food, perhaps coming home for lunch was not such a good idea after all. He decided to cap his evening off with another helping of ice cream and crisps.

While he was getting dressed the following morning, he found himself having difficulty buttoning his trousers. They had been feeling a bit snug the last few days, but he had told himself that Remus must have been doing something different with the wash.

Remus noticed the struggle. "Severus, there's something I've been meaning to talk to you about."

After inhaling deeply, he was able to finally button his trousers, though they became uncomfortably tight when he released the breath. He would have to purchase some new ones on the way home from work. "What about?"

Remus moved behind Severus and wrapped his arms around his lover, placing his hands on Severus's stomach. "It's about your appetite. While I'm glad to see you're eating again, I think you might be overdoing it a bit," he said gently.

Severus stiffened and became defensive. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Remus took in a deep breath. "It means that you're putting on a little weight. You could barely button your trousers this morning."

Severus pulled away, stung by Remus's words. "So you only love me when I'm thin."

In a placating tone, Remus answered, "No, not in the least. I'll always love you; I always have." He hugged Severus tightly. "I just want to make sure you aren't doing anything to endanger your health."

"I am forty years old, and unlike you, I don't suffer from a disease that keeps me thin. Middle-aged men do put on weight, you know." He knew his words might be a little harsh, but what Remus had said had really hurt. Sure, he had put on a few pounds lately, but it wasn't like he was turning into Horace Slughorn.

Remus had flinched when Severus verbally slapped him. "I know that. It's just that it's been so sudden. That's why I served the meals I did yesterday. I just think we should be more careful about what we eat, that's all. I love you, and I want to take care of you." He noticed tears glistening on Severus's cheek. "Are you crying?"

Severus turned his back on the other man. "Of course I'm not," he replied defensively, even though he knew that he was. The worst part was the fact that he couldn't stop.

Remus once again wrapped his arms around Severus. "I'm sorry I was so blunt. I didn't want to hurt you. I know you've been under a lot of stress lately. How about we take that vacation? We can get in four days before I have to start my Wolfsbane regimen. I think the trip will do us both good."

"A completely relaxing vacation?" Severus asked tentatively. The food the villa house-elves had made had been some of the best he had ever eaten, and the sea air had done wonders for his appetite.

"Completely relaxing. It'll just be the two of us. We can make love the whole time, whatever you want." He nibbled at Severus's neck.

Severus found himself responding to his lover's touch. "Sounds marvelous." Turning to face Remus, he reached down and found that Remus was quite aroused. "I really should get in to work," he said, but he didn't really mean it.

"Would they miss you if you were an hour late?" Remus asked slyly.

"Only an hour?" Suddenly, Severus didn't feel very much like going into work at all. "How about we start our vacation now?"

"I'll Floo Lydia later." Remus struggled to unbutton Severus's trousers and eventually just ripped the button off.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 5

*****Winner - Multifaceted Rd 6 for Devotion***** An accident with a potion upends the comfortable relationship Remus and Severus have had in the three years following the end of the war. How well do two middle-aged men react to change? This is meant as a humorous look at the Male Pregnancy cliché.

Chapter 2

Severus rolled over and started snuggling against Remus, trying to wake him. "Remus, darling," he said softly. Over the last few days, he had found that he could generally get Remus to indulge him if he was affectionate.

Remus muttered, "Not now."

Severus had just awoken from the most erotic dream and wanted to re-enact said dream. Reaching his hand down, he stroked Remus. "Don't you love me?"

Remus tried to hide his irritation. "I do, but I do need some rest, you know."

"We'll lie in tomorrow." He licked Remus's ear in a way that he knew aroused his lover.

Remus tried to push him away. "Would you stop?" he asked playfully.

Pleased that he had Remus's attention, he continued teasing the other man, gently fondling him and showering him with kisses.

Remus laughed softly. "And we can get some sleep after I indulge you?"

"It may take a while. I'm feeling quite randy. Though...it seems you are, too." He gave Remus a gentle squeeze.

When they finally crawled out of bed, it was nearly time to leave. Severus had been the first one in the shower, wanting to get dressed before Remus could see his naked body outside of their bed. He found that he could no longer button his trousers, and instead had to resort to some very creative magic. The house-elves had been more than happy to indulge his culinary creativity. He had made it a nightly ritual to completely exhaust Remus with sex and then have the house-elves whip up a sumptuous meal. They had given him some questioning looks when he made requests for things like peanut butter and pickle sandwiches, but they always brightened up when he praised them for the wonderful food.

Remus was in the shower now and Severus stood before the full-length mirror in the bedroom, examining himself. He was developing a little bit of a paunch, but he didn't see anything wrong with that. The rest of him was filling out a bit, too. While in the service of the Dark Lord and Dumbledore, he had always been painfully thin due to the stress of his dual service. And he most definitely did not look like Slughorn. He was just finally achieving a healthy weight.

Hearing Remus turn off the shower, he quickly dressed, not wanting Remus to see the creative magical tie he was using to hold up his trousers. He would definitely have to purchase new ones upon their return. It should be early enough when they got back that he could run out and take care of this errand as soon as they got home.

When Remus emerged from the bath, he said, "Good, you're dressed. Is everything all packed up?"

"Just waiting for you," Severus teased.

"Hey, now, you're the one who insisted on showering first," he replied playfully. "I'm glad we did this. I think we both needed it."

Severus had to agree. Between the uninterrupted sex and the wonderful food, this had been a truly wonderful vacation. He thought that they should do this more often. "That we did. I love you."

Remus returned the kiss. "And I love you, too. Once more?"

"How about after we get home? Then we won't have to get dressed again."

"Much better idea. See you there," Remus said and Disapparated.

Severus buttoned his nearly new trousers and was dismayed that they were getting a little snug. He had only purchased them a few weeks ago, and he had been sure to get them a little loose. "I'm not eating that much, am I?" he whispered to himself and looked down at his softly rounded stomach and patted it gently. It looked like he would have to make another shopping trip before Remus started questioning his inability to button his trousers again. Feeling a flutter in his stomach, he began to wish that he hadn't stopped at the Thai place on his way home. While he enjoyed the food, it hadn't been sitting well with him lately. Which was odd, since he rarely reacted to food like this. Just another thing to chalk up to aging, he lamented.

Severus had convinced Remus to go out to dinner, which for him was a blessing, since Remus had been serving small portions since their return from vacation. He knew that Remus was doing this for his own good. However, he was increasingly finding that if he didn't eat, he would feel faint, so he had been sneaking extra meals on the way home. And he was still having the oddest cravings, ones that he kept hidden from Remus as they were even stranger than ice cream and crisps.

Straightening his robes, he headed down the hall to meet Remus.

"You look good, Severus," Remus said, a large smile on his face.

"Thank you. Are you ready?"

At dinner, Severus ordered a large meal, one that earned a raised eyebrow from Remus. As he finished the meal, he began to realize how snug his trousers really were. He was trying to discreetly shift the waistband of his trousers a little lower, when he felt a large flutter in his stomach and automatically flinched.

Remus asked, "Is something wrong?"

"It's nothing. Just a little indigestion." He rubbed his stomach trying to alleviate some of the discomfort.

"I'm not surprised, given everything you ate."

"What's that supposed to mean?" he snapped.

Remus sighed. "Nothing. If you aren't feeling well, why don't you head home, and I'll get the check settled. I'll be along shortly."

Severus couldn't help but feel hurt and stormed out of the restaurant. Since he knew there was neither ice cream nor crisps in the house, he stopped at the store on the way home. As soon as he slammed the door, he summoned a spoon from the kitchen and sat down on the couch to dig into his ice cream. Stupid, insensitive, Remus. Why do I put up with him? He continued to drown his sorrows in his ice cream.

He didn't even look up when he heard the door open.

Remus sat down next to him on the couch. "Severus."

"Go away!"

Remus placed his hand on Severus's to stop him from eating another bite. "Severus, please. We need to talk."

He stabbed the spoon into the ice cream and slammed it on the table. Crossing his arms defensively, he spat, "Why? So I can listen to you insult me again?"

Remus didn't try to hide the pain those words caused. "I'm not trying to insult you."

"Oh, no? You could have fooled me."

Remus tried to wrap his arm around Severus. "I'm worried about you. You've been acting very oddly, gaining weight, hiding things from me."

Severus shoved him away. "I'm not hiding anything from you."

"Please don't lie to me. I know that you've been sneaking food when I'm not around." He leaned his forehead against Severus's. "I know that you purchased new trousers because your old ones were too tight, and I know that you are outgrowing those, too. Something's wrong with you, and I'm afraid I might lose you. It's not like you to lose self control like this." He gestured at the ice cream. "Why did you buy that?"

Severus opened his mouth to answer and found he didn't have one. He had just wanted it. Pulling away from Remus, he snapped, "Nothing's wrong with me. I'm fine."

"No, you're not fine. A person does not just put on that much weight so quickly." He paused. "I'm...finding you less attractive."

Severus pulled back. "I would have thought you would be the last person to be concerned with appearances."

Remus nervously ran his hand through his hair. "It's not that, per se. It's just... You're developing breasts," he finished quietly.

"You're as shallow as everyone else," Severus swept out of the room. He slammed the bedroom door and threw himself onto the bed. The tears came unbidden as he cursed Remus. When he realized he was crying, he cursed himself for being so weak.

After several minutes, he managed to regain some degree of control, and rose from their bed to stand before the mirror. It was hard to examine his body through his robes, so he stripped down. As he stood in his boxer shorts, which were also getting to be too tight, contemplating his reflection, he heard a knock at the door.

"Severus, would you please let me in," Remus called.

"Go away. I don't want to talk to you."

"Please? I'm sorry I hurt your feelings."

He decided not to answer. Remus knocked again and pleaded a little while longer before giving up and going away, which pleased Severus. He frowned as he stared at his reflection. His potbelly was growing, though oddly he was not also developing love handles. He had expected to suffer from the normal middle-aged spread, not something

like this. Patting his belly, he admitted to himself that Remus was right, that he was putting on too much weight. Shifting his attention to his chest, he noticed that his breasts were getting a bit flabby, but strangely, they weren't saggy like he had seen in other older men. On the contrary, they were almost perky. Tentatively, he cupped them and was surprised by just how firm they were. As he kneaded them, he was surprised by how sensitive they had become. He quickly pulled his hands away, ashamed that he was taking pleasure in fondling his breasts.

Tired of looking at his reflection, he crawled back into bed, deciding he had better get some sleep. He found he had a hard time getting comfortable, and every time he did, it wasn't long before his indigestion kicked back in. If it hadn't meant leaving the room, he would have taken something for it, but he had no interest in talking to Remus right now.

Remus was pleased that Severus had taken up his offer of going on evening walks to get some exercise. Unfortunately, it didn't seem to be doing much good. They had been doing this for nearly a month, and Severus was still putting on weight, but Remus was loath to bring that up again. Severus was still very touchy, and he had reacted quite poorly when Remus had suggested seeing a Healer two weeks ago. That was the last time Remus had decided to bring that up.

Severus reached back and rubbed his lower back. "Can we go back? My back is killing me."

They hadn't gone as far as Remus would have liked, but something was better than nothing. "Sure." As they walked back, he couldn't help but notice that Severus kept rubbing his back. "Did you hurt yourself?"

"No, just working too long over the cauldron. Nothing to worry about."

Remus didn't believe him. He thought that it probably had something to do with the excess weight Severus was carrying around, but he kept silent.

That night, he snuggled against Severus, wrapping his arm around his lover, wishing he could convince Severus to see a Healer. His hand was resting on Severus's stomach and he was almost asleep when he felt something...move. "Severus?"

"Mmm," mumbled Severus.

"What was that?" It happened again and Remus pressed his hand more firmly on Severus's stomach. "That! Your stomach moved!"

"Indigestion."

Remus was now wide-awake. He quickly lit the lamp and crawled over Severus so he could look him in the eyes. "That was not indigestion." He had placed his hand back on Severus's stomach, trying to catch the movement again. "Something's moving in there!" His mind started processing information at a fantastic pace. He was reminded of a discussion he had had the other day with Hermione, who was six months pregnant with her first child. The blood drained from his face.

Severus saw Remus pale and asked, "Remus? Are you all right?"

It all suddenly started making sense. The nausea, breast tenderness, and food aversions for a couple of months that gave way to a hearty appetite, increased libido, and weight gain but only in the stomach area. "Er..." He got up from the bed and started pacing, trying to determine how he could present this to Severus, who obviously still suspected nothing.

Severus was now quite concerned and was sitting up. "Remus? What is it?"

Remus ran his hands through his hair. "You remember how shortly after we came back from Greece, that was the first time that you lost your appetite? And it lasted for a couple of months?"

"I was under a lot of stress."

Remus continued pacing. "Then about three months after we got back, you started to feel better. In fact, your appetite improved. Rather spectacularly, as a matter of fact. That's about the time I noticed you were putting on a little weight."

"If you have a point, make it. It's the middle of the night," Severus said snidely.

Turning to face Severus, Remus crossed his arms and started chewing on his finger. "How long have you been suffering from indigestion?"

"I don't know. Off and on for the last two or three weeks, I guess."

"That sounds about right," Remus said quietly, almost to himself.

"About right for what?" Severus asked, the frustration clear in his voice.

Remus sat on the bed and held Severus's hand. "Hermione was over the other day telling me how she's been feeling." He could tell that Severus was growing incredibly impatient. He placed his hand on his lover's stomach. "Severus, my love, you have shown the same progression of symptoms that she has."

Severus was beyond shocked. "But she's pregnant! Surely you aren't saying...?"

"It all fits."

"Aside from the fact that I'm male, and I don't have eggs. You are completely insane." He pulled away from Remus and turned away from him.

Remus placed his chin on Severus's shoulder and wrapped his arm around his lover. "We both know that strange things happen in the wizarding world. And you were working on a fertility potion."

"I'm not even going to entertain this idiocy."

Remus could feel the movement in Severus's stomach again, and he placed the other man's hand over the movement. "Hermione let me feel her baby kicking today. This is *exactly* what it felt like."

"It's still not possible," Severus said, but a note of doubt was beginning to creep into his voice.

"See a Healer and find out for sure."

Severus pulled away and rose to start pacing himself. "I will not be a medical oddity."

Remus sighed. "But if it is true, we need to know. I mean, I know you don't have female organs, so you'll need medical intervention to give birth."

"I'm not giving birth!" Severus said defiantly.

Crossing the room, he wrapped his arms around Severus to stop the other man's pacing. "Severus, this could be a wonderful time for us. I had never thought that I would have a family, yet we have possibly been given the most wonderful gift."

"Wonderful? You think what I've been going through is wonderful? You are repulsed by my appearance!"

Remus would not let him pull away. "That's when I thought you weren't taking care of yourself."

"You are such a hypocrite. So now that you think I am...pregnant, I look good to you again?"

Realizing the quandary he was in, Remus began, "It's not like that. I can't explain it. I've always been attracted to you and putting on a few pounds didn't change that. I just... Damn, there's no good way to explain this. I love you now and always." He nipped Severus's ear, hoping to calm the situation.

"Don't do that."

"Why not?" Remus asked as he continued playing with Severus's ear. He also let his hands drift up to fondle his lover's breasts, hoping that if his other symptom's mirrored Hermione's, this one would, too. She had told him how sensitive hers had become and how arousing it was to have Harry fondle them.

"Because you know that I can't...think straight when you do that." Severus shuddered at the sensations coursing through his body.

"Good." Remus led him back over to the bed, pleased to have changed the subject.

Severus found he had a hard time concentrating at work. Remus's hypothesis kept invading his thoughts. Unfortunately, he didn't know much about pregnancy or how it manifested itself, and why should he? As a gay man, it was not something he thought he would ever have to worry about. And it was not like he could just ask someone. They would want to know why. Throughout the day, he found himself rubbing his belly every time he felt something 'move'. *Is it a child, as preposterous as that sounds? And if it is, now what?*

As he returned home, he steeled himself for another round of listening to Remus plead with him to see a Healer. He had been assaulted with that plea at least a half-dozen times at breakfast.

He froze when he entered the living room and saw Hermione sitting with Remus. "What is she doing here?"

"Good evening, to you, too, Severus," she said sarcastically.

"Does she know?"

"Severus, you are refusing to see a Healer. Hermione will be completely discreet. And if it turns out to be nothing, we'll know, and I'll quit pestering you."

Realizing this could shut Remus up once and for all, he said, "What do I need to do?"

Hermione rose from the chair. "I'll need you to lie down, and I'll cast a quick diagnostic spell. You won't feel a thing."

Severus positioned himself on the sofa and waited. Hermione waved her wand over him once, furrowed her brow and did it a second time, and then a third. "Well?" he asked, clearly irritated.

"Congratulations?" she asked as she looked back and forth between the two of them. She addressed Remus. "Even though you told me what you suspected, I still didn't think you could possibly be right."

"Of course he can't be right!" Severus shouted as he struggled to a sitting position. "Men do not get pregnant!"

A/N: First off, thanks to sullacat and nota for being wonderful beta readers and assuring me that I was not insane for writing this story. Second, thanks to those that have taken the time to review. A foray into slash was a very big step for me. New chapters should be posted rather quickly as I have the entire story back now.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 of 5

*****Winner - Multifaceted Rd 6 for Devotion***** An accident with a potion upends the comfortable relationship Remus and Severus have had in the three years following the end of the war. How well do two middle-aged men react to change? This is meant as a humorous look at the Male Pregnancy cliché.

Chapter 3

Hermione crossed her arms. "Under normal circumstances, no, they can't, but there have been rare occasions when it has happened. The last case was about thirty years ago when an unsuspecting wizard crossed the wrong hag. Of course, that turned out to be a magical transference between him and his wife... I'm not sure how to explain your case. None of the other cases I was able to research involved two men."

"Thus, you are wrong," said Severus.

"Severus, you were working on that fertility potion, one that you hoped would guarantee infertile couples could conceive," said Remus.

"Yes, a man and a woman. I do not have eggs!" Severus insisted.

Hermione asked, "Is there any way that you could recreate that phase of your research? I'd like to analyze it; see if I can determine how this happened."

"I can do that myself. I don't need your help," he replied defensively.

"All right, be that way. But I *do* recommend that you seek appropriate medical care, especially since you cannot give birth in the normal manner," Hermione said coldly. She then pulled Remus aside and said softly, "Please, look after him. He's in denial now, and I suspect he just needs time to come to terms with the truth. And make sure he sees a Healer." She gave him a hug and a kiss on the cheek before leaving.

Remus sat next to Severus and squeezed his hand. "How are you feeling?"

"I think that I don't need to listen to this drivel anymore. If that was meant to be a joke, it wasn't humorous. Yes, I've put on weight, but that was cruel, something I would have expected from Potter or Black, but not from you." He pulled his hand away and fought back the tears.

Remus placed his hand on Severus's stomach. "It wasn't..."

Severus smacked Remus's hand away. "And you can just stop that now." Rising from the couch, he decided to lock himself in his room to regain his emotional composure and get away from that meddling werewolf.

As he paced the bedroom, he mumbled to himself, "It's just not possible. Men do not get pregnant." The kicking no, it wasn't kicking, never kicking fluttering in his stomach quickened. "Would you stop that?" After realizing what he had done, he muttered, "Wonderful, now I'm talking to myself." Heading to the bathroom, he decided to see if he had any more antacid.

An hour passed, and Remus had still not knocked on the door. He figured it was a new tactic, one he would not fall for. How could someone he thought he knew, someone who was normally quite rational, possibly believe that he could be pregnant? In addition to the fluttering, his stomach was now growling quite loudly. He was contemplating unlocking the door to get something to eat when he heard a small pop and saw that a tray of food had been delivered. Investigating, he saw that it was not the salad and steamed vegetables he was expecting, but a rather hearty and delicious smelling meal. Unable to resist his hunger, he dove into his food.

As he lay in bed trying to get back to sleep, he began to wonder why Remus had not knocked on the door and tried to talk to him again. Was it all part of this extraordinarily cruel joke? Pulling on his dressing gown, he went in search of his lover. He found Remus in his office. This was how important he was. He wasn't worth fighting for anymore. Remus had decided his work was more important than their relationship. "So? I'm not good enough for you anymore?"

Remus looked up from his work, setting his quill down. "No, not at all. I just...thought you might need some time. That and I'm sick of getting yelled at."

"You getting yelled at? You have been doing nothing but pestering me for weeks on end. I think I have every right to be irritated with you."

Remus rubbed his temples. "I don't want to get into another argument."

"You don't want to get into anything with me. All you care about is your precious writing. You don't really care about me," he snapped.

Remus rose and placed his hand on Severus's shoulder. "That's not true and you know it. I've only ever wanted you."

"Then why go through this elaborate ruse to drive me away?" Severus did his best to hang onto his anger, knowing that it was the only thing keeping him from breaking down into tears.

"I'm not trying to drive you away. I sent you dinner. Hermione and I talked about this..."

"And set it all up," Severus interrupted.

"No! Listen to me. I would never play a joke on you, especially not one like this. We've been together long enough that you should know better. I know that it's completely implausible, but somehow it has happened. You know I was never any good at Potions, so I can't even begin to comprehend how it happened. I just know it did, and that now we have to accept it." He wrapped his arms around Severus and caressed his lover. He whispered, "I want you, and I want this baby."

"So Hermione wasn't joking?" Severus asked as he turned to face Remus.

Remus shook his head. "Not at all. In a few short months, we're going to be parents." He smiled warmly.

Severus stiffened. That meant that there would be a crying, smelly baby in the house. "Just because I'm carrying this...child, don't expect me to feel an overwhelming desire to care for it."

Remus laughed softly. "Don't worry about that. But I think you may feel differently when it's all done. I know most mothers are quite fond of their babies once they've given birth."

"Why you incorrigible..." Severus couldn't keep the smile off his face as he pulled Remus tight for a kiss.

Severus flipped through his notes again. The answer had to be here. He felt that he was very close to unraveling it all. Sitting up straight, he rubbed his back. He had no idea how women did this. It seemed so unnatural that pregnancy would lead to so much discomfort. He felt that he was slowly being crippled.

To add to his discomfort, the *child* started vigorously kicking him in the ribs. There was no longer any question that he was really was pregnant, as impossible as it seemed.

Pressing his hand against his stomach in a vain attempt to quiet the child, he turned his attention back to his notes. The potion he had been brewing was a multipurpose potion to be taken by the woman. It was designed to stimulate egg production and to help the sperm find and fertilize the egg. But that didn't do anything to explain how he had become pregnant.

He returned his attention to analyzing the interaction of the various ingredients. He had already deduced that the part of the potion that aided the sperm in finding the egg is what had caused Remus's sperm to fertilize the egg, but he was, as yet, unable to determine how he had come to have an egg inside him.

"Severus?" said Hermione cautiously from the door.

"What do you want?" he asked shortly.

She swept into the room, not caring if she was welcome or not. "I came to see how you are doing. You haven't been to St. Mungo's yet."

"And I'm not going."

She pulled up a chair next to him. "You can't ignore your health like this, or that of the baby. I have arranged for you to see Healer Weiss. She will be completely discreet. You have an appointment tomorrow at five."

"Remus put you up to this, didn't he?"

She picked up a page of his notes. "Yes, he did. He's worried about you. This is not a normal condition for a wizard, and he doesn't want to lose you or the baby."

He snatched the page out of her hands and snorted. "He's a meddler."

She crossed her arms. "Severus, I know that you are a stubborn man, and I have no idea what he sees in you, but I respect the fact that he loves you. His worry is justified. Even in women, pregnancy can be a life-threatening condition. I am not an obstetric Healer. All I did was confirm that you are indeed pregnant. You now need to see a specialist. Remus knows that you have this appointment, and we will both ensure that you are there."

Realizing that he had lost, he snapped, "Fine. I'll go to this appointment."

She sighed. "Thank you. Have you made any progress in discovering how it happened?"

He really wanted to tell her to go away, but he knew that she was a potions researcher at St. Mungo's and might have insight that he did not. His declarations that she was a know-it-all had been condescending, but they had been based in truth. She was the only one that knew of his condition who had any hope of helping him unraveling the mystery. "Some. I know how Remus's sperm impregnated the egg, but I have no idea how I came to have an egg." He leaned back in his chair, giving her free access to his notes.

Absentmindedly, he rubbed his stomach as he watched her reading through his work. The baby seemed to be settling down some, for which he was very grateful.

"Oh. You used red clover," she said quietly.

"Why wouldn't I?"

"Well, I think that's your problem. We've learned it does strange things."

"What sort of strange things? Everything I saw shows that it has been an effective treatment for female infertility for decades."

"Well, yes, but we've been doing some research on how it works. It doesn't just stimulate egg production, especially not when combined with some other herbs. There are certain combinations that have allowed post-menopausal women to conceive. It is possible that it can create eggs."

When she stopped abruptly, he said, "Let me guess, I have managed to use that combination."

She set the parchment down on the desk. "I'm afraid so. The irony is, had you been a straight man, there would have been no danger in you handling this potion."

"Of course. That would be my luck," he replied dryly.

"Well, as engaging as this conversation is, I do need to get home. Remember, five o'clock tomorrow. Remus and I will make sure you are there."

"Something tells me I won't be allowed to forget," he quipped.

"Good evening, Severus," she said cheerfully, before leaving his office.

Now that the mystery of how he had become pregnant had been solved, he found that he didn't much feel like working. Of course, he didn't much feel like going home and listening to Remus telling him the importance of attending tomorrow's appointment either. Knowing that heading to the pub was out of the question, he settled for unproductively shuffling paperwork until it was late enough to go home.

Remus was finishing up his breakfast as he checked the clock on the wall. After months of work, he was nearly finished with his next novel, and he was looking forward to having some peace and quiet so he could put in some writing time. While he enjoyed the very active sex life he was having, he still had work he needed to get done, and he wanted to finish this project soon. "Don't you need to leave for the lab?"

"I've placed Edward in charge for the time being," Severus replied as he sipped his tea.

"For the time being?" Remus asked cautiously.

Severus shifted in his chair, trying to get comfortable as the baby was obviously letting its presence be known. "Since I cannot hide my condition under my robes anymore, I thought it best that I take a leave of absence."

Remus was not sure about having Severus around all day, every day. He really needed to be able to concentrate. Severus's sex drive had become nearly insatiable of late, and he thought the odds of him being able to get anything done with Severus around were quite slim. He had promised his publisher the first draft in two weeks and there was still nearly two months until their child was born. "I see."

"Is there something wrong with that?"

Remus knew that he was on the verge of yet another misunderstanding. "No, nothing at all. Will you be doing some work here?"

Severus unconsciously rubbed his heavily swollen stomach. "Some, but as you know, the Healers have limited the potions ingredients I can work with. Besides, I find that working at a cauldron is not really comfortable."

Remus tried to smile pleasantly, but wasn't sure he was succeeding. "Of course. Well, you'll excuse me if I lock myself in my office to do some writing, won't you?"

"Of course," replied Severus.

Remus could hear the hurt in Severus's voice, but he tried to ignore it. He knew that nothing good could come of getting into a discussion about this. Shutting the office door behind him, he seriously considered locking it, but decided to give Severus the benefit of the doubt. After rereading through the last few pages he had written and consulting his outline, he put quill to parchment and began writing.

After an hour, he was immersed in the story, setting the mood for the seduction and ensuing love scene. The words were flowing freely; the dialogue was some of the best he had ever written. Then, his train of thought was abruptly interrupted by an insistent knocking at the door.

"I thought you might want a spot of tea?" Severus offered.

Remus took a deep calming breath. "Thank you. If you just set it down, I'll get to it in a few minutes." Reading back a few sentences, he tried to regain his momentum. He had only penned a few more sentences when Severus spoke again.

"Perhaps after tea I could provide you with some inspiration?" He rubbed Remus's shoulders.

While Remus was quite aroused, he knew he had to finish what he was doing. Stepping away from a scene like this and coming back to it later never worked out quite as well. "As soon as I finish this chapter, I'll come over and spend some time with you. I really need to be able to concentrate on what I'm writing. If you could just give me another hour, two at the most?" He hoped against hope that this would not hurt Severus's overly sensitive feelings too badly.

Extremely put out, Severus reached over and picked up a completed page. After scanning it a few seconds, he threw it back on the desk. "Is that what you want? Some voluptuous young woman? Is that why you are ignoring me? My breasts aren't good enough for you?" He cupped his swollen breasts.

Remus had been doing anything but ignoring Severus. They were having sex two or three times a day, and had, in fact, made love that very morning before breakfast. Quite frankly, Remus was ready for a bit of a break. Trying to make his expression as affectionate as possible, he rose and turned to face Severus. "Most definitely not. You know I'm not interested in women."

"You sure do a good enough job writing it. If that's what you really want, fine." He turned his back on Remus.

He insisted, "I would never ignore you. I love you more than words can say. Those pages are merely how I make my living. They don't reflect my desires, they reflect what my readers want." He caressed Severus's arm, hoping to cheer his partner up a bit.

Severus's voice quavered as he asked, "It's because you find me fat and unattractive, isn't it?"

Remus sighed because they'd had this discussion far too many times for him to count. "I have already told you that's not it. I find the idea of you carrying our child very sexy." It wasn't quite entirely true, but this was one lie it was best to tell. Knowing that Severus's breasts had become quite sensitive, he moved his hands to cup them and gently massage his nipples. "I have a deadline, that's all. I just need to be able to work during the day. Evenings are all yours. Well, I do have a late afternoon meeting today, but I'll be home well before dinner." Leaning in to kiss Severus's neck and ears, he purred, "Now, why don't you let me finish this chapter, and I'll come find you when I'm done?"

Severus sniffed back the tears. "I suppose that will have to do."

Remus could tell that Severus was still not happy, but he did have work he needed to get done, and it wasn't going to happen with Severus around. Perhaps he would have to look into finding someplace else to write until he had finished the book. After giving Severus a kiss, he said, "Thank you. And I promise, I'll see you very soon."

As Remus left for his afternoon meeting, he had to listen to another round of Severus whining about being abandoned even though they had just spent the last hour and a half in bed together. He really wasn't sure how much more of this he could take. These wildly oscillating emotions were definitely trying his patience and his sanity. He knew that he had less than two months to go, but he wasn't sure he could last that long. Especially since Severus was going to be home all the time.

Walking up to the Burrow, he hoped that Arthur was home. He had tried to determine whom he could talk to, and Arthur seemed the most likely to be able to both offer advice and keep the news quiet at the same time. "Good afternoon, Molly. I was wondering if Arthur was around, and if I might borrow him for an hour or so?"

"Remus, so good to see you. How's your latest book coming?" she asked eagerly.

"Nearly finished, though the last bit is coming a bit more slowly than I would like." He thought it best not to elaborate too much.

"I'm sure it'll be splendid. He just got in a few minutes ago." Turning her head toward the stairs, she called out, "Arthur! Remus is here for you."

"Down in a minute, dear," he called back.

Remus took a seat in the living room and let Molly get back to her dinner preparations. He didn't want her to start asking too many questions.

"Remus, it's been a while. How are things?" Arthur said as he came down the stairs.

"Quite well. I wonder if you wanted to pop down to the pub for a pint?" He hoped that Arthur would pick up on the hint and agree.

"Of course, let me just throw on a jumper."

Remus knew they would stand out a bit at the local Muggle pub, but he really didn't want anyone to overhear what they were talking about at a wizarding establishment either.

Arthur was back downstairs rather quickly. They stopped through the kitchen on the way out. "We're going down to the pub, but I'll be back for dinner." He gave her a quick kiss on the cheek.

"All right, dear. Don't be too late."

Once they were away from the house, Arthur asked, "So what is it that you didn't want to talk about in front of Molly?"

Remus had been trying to determine the best way to explain his predicament all afternoon. He wasn't sure there was a best way, so he decided to start at the beginning. "Several months ago, Severus began working on a new fertility potion to help witches who couldn't conceive. At one point during the development, he had a bit of a lab accident. It's left the two of us in a rather improbable predicament." He stopped when he noticed Arthur had frozen in his tracks.

"What sort of predicament?" Arthur asked cautiously.

"Well, somehow, and I still don't really understand how, he became pregnant about seven months ago."

"I see," Arthur said quietly. After several long seconds of silence, he asked, "And why are you telling me?"

They started walking again. Remus sighed, "Well, you've been through this six times. I was hoping you could provide some advice. He's driving me batty."

Arthur laughed and placed his arm around Remus's shoulder. "You have definitely come to the right place for that. Don't breathe a word of this to Molly, but she was nearly unbearable to be around. I'll do my best to offer you advice. I'll warn you though, I never did seem to get it quite right."

"Thanks, Arthur. I think for the purpose of our discussion, it might work best if we referred to Severus as 'she', though. We don't need to scare any pub patrons."

Arthur laughed softly. "No, we most definitely do not."

Over the next hour and a half, Remus and Arthur enjoyed several pints while they shared humorous anecdotes. Remus did receive some advice, but he could tell it would not be smooth sailing over the next couple of months no matter what he did. Arthur didn't really have any advice to offer about Severus's sex drive. His solution to Molly's insatiability had been to work longer hours, but that wasn't really an option for Remus, who worked from home.

Checking his watch, Remus saw that their conversation had gone on longer than he had intended. "I really need to get going. Thanks for the advice."

"No problem. If you have questions about anything, just let me know. I like to think I've learned a thing or two about child-rearing."

"I'll do that."

"So, when are the two of you going to share the secret."

Remus grimaced. "I'd love to, but she doesn't want to tell everyone."

"It's not a secret you can keep forever, you know."

"I know. I've tried explaining that, but well, you know." He shrugged his shoulders.

"I do. Good luck, and if you need a guys' night out, let me know."

"Thanks. I'm sure I'll take you up on that since she's on maternity leave already. I just hope I can get my book finished on schedule."

"Hang in there. It'll get better. Goodnight, Remus."

"Goodnight, Arthur." A part of him dreaded going home. He knew that it was just about dinnertime, and he could expect Severus to be irate. After all, he had indicated that he would be home much earlier than this. Not to mention the fact that he had alcohol on his breath. He reminded himself that at least part of Severus's behavior was hormonal.

A/N: Thanks again to nota and sullacat for their assistance as beta readers. This was a really fun story for me to write and I hope that you are enjoying it.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 of 5

*****Winner - Multifaceted Rd 6 for Devotion***** An accident with a potion upends the comfortable relationship Remus and Severus have had in the three years following the end of the war. How well do two middle-aged men react to change? This is meant as a humorous look at the Male Pregnancy cliché.

Chapter 4

As Remus put the finishing touches on the final chapter, he was pleased that he had met his deadline with a day to spare. Then the sense of dread set in. He now had nothing to occupy his days. After several arguments with Severus, he had been able to convince his lover to allow him to work in his office during the day. Now, he would have to spend his days with an increasingly cranky Severus. Well, he only had about five weeks to go, and it was likely he would get his draft back in the next two or three, which would give him another excuse for time alone.

The rest of the afternoon went better than he expected. Strangely, Severus was reading one of his books. He had always gotten the impression that Severus didn't quite approve of the fact that he wrote romance novels. This was the first time he could recall seeing Severus read one.

The first week passed rather uneventfully, stress levels having been dramatically reduced by the completion of the first draft of the novel. Once again, they were enjoying each other's company.

After dinner, they were listening to the Wizarding Wireless when an owl scratched at the window. Remus let it in, and after retrieving the letter, he watched it fly over to the owl perch. Reading the front of the letter, he saw that it was from Hermione.

"Hermione and Harry have invited us to dinner Friday," he announced. Long ago, he had learned that it was best to mention Harry's name second.

"I am not going out like this," Severus insisted as he pointed at his protruding belly.

Remus sighed. "You haven't been out of the house for weeks. It would be good for you to get out. This is a dinner to celebrate the fact I've finished the draft of the book. Besides, it's not like they don't know."

"She would tell Potter, wouldn't she?" Severus sneered.

Remus moved so that he could rub Severus's shoulders. "It'll be good for you. I'm going to let them know we'll be there."

"I'm not going," Severus said defiantly.

Remus smiled slyly. "Of course you aren't." He pulled a piece of parchment from the small writing desk and penned a quick reply letting them know that he and Severus would be there.

Friday evening Severus was still grouching about not going.

"Severus, this is a momentous occasion for me. You know we always have a celebratory dinner when I finish a novel. It's a tradition I don't want to change now. It's a private, quiet dinner at their house. I'm not asking you to go out in public. Though, if you want to stay here, you'll be on your own for dinner, and I don't think there's much to eat in the house." He had done that on purpose, knowing that if there were no food, it would help pressure Severus into coming. "And we won't stay late. Hermione won't want to be up late either."

Severus snorted and crossed his arms. "Don't expect me to carry the conversation."

Remus smiled warmly and gave Severus a kiss. "Of course not. I expect you to be your usual, surly self. You know, if you let yourself, I'm sure you could have a rather pleasant evening."

"Not likely at any event that Potter attends," he said dryly.

Remus sighed. "Have it your way, but it's time for us to go."

Severus struggled to his feet. "Two hours. We leave at nine, and hopefully I can get some sleep tonight. This...infernally child won't stop kicking."

That was a fact that Remus was very well acquainted with, since Severus did not seem to believe that Remus should be allowed a full night's rest either.

When they arrived at the Potters' house, Remus rang the bell. Hermione answered the door, and he greeted her with a small hug and a kiss on the cheek. "Hermione, you look wonderful."

She patted her expansive stomach. "Down to the homestretch." She smiled warmly at Severus. "Good to see you, too, Severus. How are you feeling?" She stood aside to let them into the house.

"Adequate," he replied gruffly.

Remus chuckled softly and placed his arm around Severus. "As you can see, some things just don't change. Where's Harry?"

"He's out back. It's a nice enough day that we decided to eat out in the garden." She led them through the house and out the back door.

As they walked through the door, there was a loud chorus of "Congratulations!"

Remus watched the color drain from his partner's face. All of the author's close friends were there. Arthur and Molly Weasley, Minerva McGonagall, Neville and Luna Longbottom, Fred and George. He stopped looking around as Severus gripped his arm tightly. He could tell that Severus wanted nothing more than to leave. "Smile, love," he whispered.

Molly stepped up and hugged them both. "Congratulations. I hope you don't mind, but I pulled the news out of Arthur, and I just had to throw a shower for the two of you. Come now, Severus, this is a happy occasion."

Severus whispered hoarsely, "We're leaving."

"No. We're not. Our friends went through a lot of trouble to be here, and you are going to enjoy yourself."

"Your friends, not mine," muttered Severus.

Remus ignored the comment as he led Severus over to his chair. Molly almost immediately brought them each some pumpkin juice. Severus did not look at all pleased.

Remus smiled reassuringly at Molly. "He'll come around as this gets going. I think he secretly enjoys parties." He winked.

Molly replied, "This is such wonderful news. I wish you had told us earlier. I'm more than happy to help out."

"It's a bit of a touchy subject," Remus replied evasively.

"Well, let's liven this up a bit, shall we?" Turning to face everyone, Molly announced, "Now that our guest of honor is here, it's time to play a few games before we eat."

Severus leaned over and whispered apprehensively, "Games?"

Remus shrugged. "I've never been to one of these before."

Molly held out a ball of yarn. "Now, our first game will be 'Guess the Girth'. For those who don't know, we each cut a length of yarn, and whoever guesses closest, wins."

Remus realized that Severus looked absolutely mortified. "Severus, it's all in fun. Please, try to relax and enjoy yourself."

"You had better win this," Severus growled. He watched as each person rolled out a length of string. He saw Hermione wrapping hers around her waist. "She's cheating!" he accused as he pointed at her.

Molly laughed softly. "There's no rule against that, dear. It's all for fun anyway."

Remus took longer than anyone else. If anyone should have an advantage, it should be him. After he finally cut his length of yarn, he handed the ball to Severus, who looked decidedly unhappy about having to stand up.

Once Severus had cut his own piece, Molly took it and compared it to hers. She was several inches too short. Fred and George were slightly closer, but still too short. Remus was surprised to see they had each chosen exactly the same length of yarn. When Hermione's was measured as several inches too long, he saw a smug smile emerge on Severus's face, and he placed his hand on his partner's leg.

When it was Remus's turn, the twins were still the closest. He noticed Severus watching him intently. His yarn was a little long, but unfortunately, the twins were just a little bit closer.

"I can't believe you didn't get that right," Severus said dryly.

Remus chuckled softly. "Well, maybe I'll do better in the next one."

Molly seemed as surprised as everyone else that Fred and George had won. "Well, I think the two of you got lucky this time. Let's see how well you two do on the next one." She grinned mischievously. "For the next challenge, timed diapering. Since we have people here that haven't had experience yet, current parents will go first. Arthur, if you please."

Severus leaned over and whispered, "Diapering a doll?"

"It's a skill that you will have to learn at some point. Why not now?" Remus asked jovially. He was thoroughly enjoying himself and hoped that some of his good mood would rub off onto Severus. As everyone took their turns diapering, Remus continued sneaking glances at Severus. It was obvious that he was taking enjoyment in watching those with no diapering experience attempt the task. An actual smile broke out in his face when Molly thought that Fred was doing entirely too well and animated the doll with a flick of her wand, so that he was now faced with a doll that wriggled itself right out of the diaper.

"Aw, Mum, that wasn't fair," he complained.

"Since when have you believed in fair?" she countered.

"She's got a point," George chimed in.

"Why you..." Fred said as he lunged at his brother.

"Boys!" Molly shouted, and both of them froze where they were and regained their seats. "Remus, let's see how you do," she said once order was restored.

Remus rolled up his sleeves and stood over the doll, waiting for her to say 'go'. He worked quickly, but as he was fastening the last safety pin, he poked his finger and stuck it in his mouth to stop the bleeding.

"Well, at least you didn't poke the baby," Molly said as she glanced at Hermione, who flushed bright red.

"Severus? Care to give it a go?" Molly asked.

While he might have been inclined to beg off, everyone was cheering him on, and the festive mood was contagious. "I'm sure that I can do a better job than Remus," he said arrogantly.

Remus moved out of the way, sweeping his hand toward the changing table. "Be my guest." He then stood just to the side, crossed his arms and smiled smugly.

"Are you going to sit down?" Severus asked shortly.

"I want to see how the master does it," Remus replied glibly.

"Take notes," Severus replied while waiting for his cue to start.

Remus watched as Severus quickly and deftly diapered the doll. He handled the pins smoothly, with fingers that were used to doing intricate work with sharp instruments. When finished, Severus smiled smugly at Remus.

"Oh, Severus, that was very close, but not quite. The best of the first timers, though, and still better than Arthur," Molly said sarcastically as she shot a look of disappointment at her husband.

"I'm out of practice. It's been twenty years since we had children in diapers, and you have not let me near the grandchildren."

"Well, that's about to change. Dinner should be ready by now, so why don't we all get something to eat, and then I have some special entertainment planned." With a wave of her wand, various dishes flew through the back door and alighted on the table.

"What sort of special entertainment?" Severus asked Remus.

"I have no idea. Remember, I wasn't consulted on this party. You do seem to be enjoying yourself."

"I can think of more enjoyable ways to spend an evening, but this is not completely intolerable."

Remus couldn't help but smile. He knew this was as close as Severus would come to admitting he was having a good time. Since dinner was more of a buffet, Remus mingled with everyone who had shown up, catching up with people he hadn't seen for a while. He noticed that Hermione and Fleur were sitting on either side of Severus, keeping him from feeling lonely and presumably offering advice. When he saw that even Severus was not immune to Fleur's charms, it brought a broad grin to his face. Severus's expression softened as he spoke with the two young women.

After they had finished eating the marvelous meal that Molly and Hermione had prepared and opening gifts, Arthur pulled out a Muggle contraption.

"Now then, it took me ages to charm this to work, but I think it's worth it. The Muggles call it karaoke, and it works a bit like the Wireless, except we'll be the ones singing along."

Remus noticed that Severus looked horrified.

"I've managed to get it to play nursery rhymes, many thanks to Hermione for helping out with that. So, I'll get started first." He gave the monitor a tap of his wand, and the whole thing flashed to life. With a little help from Hermione, he was able to pull up a song.

The karaoke was easily the most entertaining part of the evening. It turned out that Neville and Fleur were the only ones truly capable of carrying a tune, though Remus was sure that Fred and George had been horrible on purpose. Fleur had done a beautiful rendition of *Alouette* that brought a tear or two to the eyes of a few guests. As for the other selections, they left everyone laughing and having a good time, even Severus.

"Do you want to give it a go?" Remus asked.

"Me? Sing?" Severus was aghast.

Remus leaned over and gave him a kiss. "You have such a wonderful singing voice in the shower," he teased. "Come on, I'll perform a duet with you," he said playfully.

Severus was in far too good a mood to put up any real objection. Remus was feeling especially playful and mischievous, so he selected *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*. "We'll swap off on the verses and do the refrain together. I'll go first."

"Super-what?" Severus asked.

"Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, just follow my lead." He started the song before Severus could object.

By the time they finished the song, everyone was laughing so hard they were crying. Despite his best efforts, Severus had been unable to pronounce the word smoothly.

Once Remus had regained his poise, he said to everyone, "Molly, Hermione, Arthur, everyone, thank you very much for a wonderful evening. We've both had a wonderful time, but we really must be going now." They had to endure one final round of congratulations before they were allowed to leave, and Arthur promised that he would bring the gifts by tomorrow.

When they arrived home, Remus still had a broad grin on his face. "Tell me that you didn't enjoy yourself?" he dared.

Severus opened his mouth as though to reply that he hadn't, but then he closed it. Deciding not to answer, he instead gave Remus a passionate kiss. "Not as much as that," he replied. Shoving Remus toward the bedroom, he said, "Now, tell me again that you had nothing to do with that."

"Not one blessed thing. I can't help it if Arthur can't keep a secret."

"Evidently, neither can you," Severus retorted.

Remus let his hands caress his lover's body. "Not about this. You can't tell me you aren't ecstatic about having this child. About having a little bit of you continue on in the world."

"Does there really need to be more of me in the world?"

Remus ripped into Severus's robes. "Absolutely. The world would be boring without people like you."

A week of relative peace came to an end as Remus got the draft of his novel back from his editor. Going through the changes recommended by his editor always required a great deal of concentration. Unfortunately, he was not able to concentrate.

With only a couple of weeks to go, Severus was quite miserable. The Healers were insisting that he carry the child to term. Due to his heavily swollen stomach, he was now having a hard time getting up from his chair, which meant that anytime he was hungry or thirsty, Remus was called to get a snack from the kitchen for him. When he had to go to the bathroom, which was quite frequently, Remus had to help him. Add to that the fact that Severus was not sleeping through the night due to his discomfort, which meant that Remus was not sleeping through the night either, and all of this was leading to a great deal of tension.

"Remus!" Severus called from the living room for the eighth time that morning.

He slammed his quill onto the desk. Storming into the living room, he asked angrily, "What? What could you possibly want now? You've just returned from the bathroom, and your glass of water is still half full."

Severus looked as though he had been slapped. "Why are you yelling at me?"

"Because I can't get anything done. I haven't slept properly in days. In short, you are driving me insane," he snapped. At this point, he did not care that he was hurting Severus's feelings. After all of the inconvenience he had been through, perhaps this was what the man needed to realize how idiotic he was acting.

"Oh, it's all my fault, is it? You did this to me! This is as much your fault as mine," Severus retorted.

"No, it's not. You did this to yourself with your experimenting with those fertility potions. All you saw was the fame and glory you would gain by being the one to perfect them. I've seen how you brew potions; you take shortcuts."

"Are you calling me careless?"

"Call it what you will, but this is your own damn fault. Now, since I actually have work to do, I'm going out, and I don't know when I'll be back." He stormed back into his office, collected his manuscript and headed out the front door. He could hear Severus calling his name, but he did not care. All he knew was that if he did not get out of the house for a while, he was going to lose his mind. He went to the one place where he knew he would be guaranteed quiet, the Wizarding Library in Diagon Alley.

After he had worked on the manuscript for three straight hours, he decided to take a break. As he was walking through the stacks, he remembered that full moon was the day after tomorrow, and that he needed to go home for his potion. He knew that he should not have gone off on Severus like that, but he had not been able to contain himself any longer. Since Severus was guaranteed to be angry with him, he decided to work until the library closed, and then he would pick up something for dinner on the way home.

When he entered the house, it was quiet and dark. "Severus?" he asked cautiously.

"What do you want?" came the terse reply.

With a wave of his wand, he lit the lamps. "I'm sorry about my outburst earlier. I shouldn't have said those things to you. I really do love you, and I know that this has been very hard for you."

"You don't know how it's been for me. You don't know what it's like to have no control over what's happening to your body, to go through an unwanted change."

Remus could tell that Severus was crying and placed his hand on his lover's shoulder for comfort. He replied softly, "As a matter of fact, I do. I just don't have to live with those changes for such a long stretch at once."

Severus's gaze softened momentarily before he shoved Remus's hand away. "You're just here for your bloody Potion."

"Severus, love, that's not why I'm here. I'm here because you need me... Because I need you. We are family and family sticks together, especially when times are tough." He wrapped his arm around Severus. When there was no retort, he said, "I picked up something for dinner. A peace offering."

"What is it?" asked Severus curiously.

"Chinese."

"Well, I suppose we shouldn't let it go to waste."

Remus rose and helped Severus to his feet. "No, we shouldn't."

"Your potion is in the lab."

"Thank you," Remus replied softly. While they ate, he asked, "Have you thought about names?"

"Names?"

"It is a good idea to name a child when it's born," Remus quipped.

"You decide. It doesn't matter to me."

Remus got lost in thought a few moments. "I've been thinking... What about Hubert?"

Severus stopped mid-chew. "Surely you jest."

Remus laughed softly. "I do. I just wanted to get a reaction out of you. See? You do care about the name."

"Fine. I do care. So what?"

Remus reached over and took hold of Severus's hand. "You'll make a fine mother."

A/N: Once again, I would like to thank nota and sullacat for their assistance in betaing this story. Now, I had intended on ending it here, but I'm sure that my readers will cry out that I must write an Epilogue, so I guess I will take a look at that.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 of 5

*****Winner - Multifaceted Rd 6 for Devotion***** An accident with a potion upends the comfortable relationship Remus and Severus have had in the three years following the end of the war. How well do two middle-aged men react to change? This is meant as a humorous look at the Male Pregnancy cliché.

Chapter 5

"Are you ready to go to the hospital?" Remus asked.

"I have been ready for several weeks, but those infernal Healers have insisted that I have to wait. I'm bloody well ready to have this thing out." The fact that Remus was now grinning like a fool infuriated him even more. "And wipe that ridiculous smile off your face."

"Sorry. It's just an exciting day." He helped Severus to his feet. "How do you want to do this: Floo or Apparition?"

Severus weighed his options. They were both equally disorienting, but at least through Apparition, he wouldn't have to worry about climbing into or out of a fireplace. "Apparition." He did not care for Side-Along Apparition, but he was not willing to risk Splinching himself and being discovered. When they arrived in the private room at the hospital, he lost his balance and nearly dragged Remus down with him.

A junior Healer soon arrived in their room. "Welcome, Mr. Snape. If you could change into the hospital gown, the senior Healer will be here shortly."

Remus helped him out of his clothes as he muttered about how glad he would be when it was all finally over. "And quit smiling!" he snapped. Once he was in the hospital gown, he somewhat clumsily maneuvered himself onto the bed.

"The happy day is here," said the senior Healer as she entered the room. "How are you feeling?"

"I will feel much better once you cut this leech out of me," he replied as the Healer examined him.

She scowled at him. "Hopefully you'll feel differently afterwards."

"Don't mind him. He's been exceptionally cranky these last few weeks."

"Because you infernal people insisted I carry this child to full term. I know for a fact that this child could have been safely removed three weeks ago, at least. How much longer is this going to take?"

Remus squeezed Severus's hand. "Just relax. Getting upset won't do you any good. It will all be over soon."

"No, it won't. If your blood pressure is too high, I can't operate. Take a few minutes to calm down. I'll be back in a little while."

"Back in a little while," Severus muttered. "Infernal woman just likes to see me suffer."

Remus rubbed Severus's shoulders. "If you don't relax, this will only take longer. Just think, very soon we are going to be parents. We'll be able to hold the life that we created, our son or daughter."

"It's your responsibility. I don't want anything to do with a smelly, crying baby."

Remus leaned over and brushed Severus's cheek with his lips. "So you've said."

"And I mean it."

"I believe you," Remus replied in a voice that meant he didn't believe his lover's words at all. "Just relax and it'll be over soon."

Severus felt more like himself than he had in months. The pressure and the kicking were finally gone from his abdomen. It was still distended and he had put on some weight overall, but his body was once again his.

Remus was grinning like an idiot, sitting in the rocking chair holding their daughter. Let him deal with her. At least she had finally calmed down. He had not thought that something so small could make that much noise.

Remus rose from the chair, crossed the room and sat on the edge of the bed. "I think you should hold her."

"Not particularly."

"Now, darling, you know the Healer said that breast milk is best for her."

"I am *not* breast feeding her," he replied coldly.

Remus gently pulled back the blanket that was covering her, revealing fine, dark hair. He then set her against Severus's chest. "Well, you can at least hold her for a little while. I need to use the loo."

"Remus! Don't leave her with me." He was irritated that Remus walked away without looking back. She started squirming, and he cradled her to keep her from rolling off his chest. Looking down into her face, he examined her features. This was the first good look he had had of her. She had his dark hair. For now, she had a dainty nose, and he hoped that she had not also inherited that from him. Gently, he brushed the dark hair, surprised at how soft it was. As he traced his finger down past her tiny ear, she reached up and grabbed his finger and tried to suckle it.

When she didn't get anything from his finger, she started to fuss.

"Don't do that," he said softly, but she didn't listen to him. Her fussing became more urgent, and he was alone in the room. He thought that she was hungry, but there was no way he was going to breast-feed her. It had been bad enough that he had been forced to carry her.

Realizing the only way he was going to get peace was to feed her, he lowered the gown and offered her his breast as the Healer had showed him earlier. "Come on. Take it," he urged. She was obviously hungry, and he couldn't understand why she wouldn't suckle. Finally, she latched on.

Remus peered into the room and grinned broadly at the sight of Severus taking care of their daughter.

When Remus thought enough time had passed, he returned to the room and leaned against the doorway watching Severus and their daughter. He smiled softly at the two of them. He had suspected this was all it would take for Severus to fall in love with her. He knew that when he held her for the first time it had been one of the most glorious feelings of his life. "What do you think we should name her?" he asked as he finally entered the room.

"That's entirely up to you."

Remus could tell that Severus was trying to maintain his gruff exterior. "I was thinking about Persephone."

"Persephone?" Snape arched an eyebrow.

Remus gently brushed her hair. "I thought it would be a good name for her. The goddess of Spring and of the Underworld. I think it's very fitting, don't you?"

"Are you implying something?"

"That you are dark and moody, but then, I wouldn't want you any other way." He leaned down and kissed Severus.

"Persephone what?"

"I hadn't thought about it too much. I thought you might like to have some input, too."

"You're much better at names than I am."

"How about Persephone Aurora Snape?"

"After the dawn. Very touching."

Remus smiled brightly that there was no sarcasm in Severus's voice. "I thought so. I saw how she makes your face light up."

"You're imagining things."

"Of course. Let me get a cloth to burp her."

"You were right. Persephone is a good name for her."

Remus handed Severus the cloth. "I'm glad you approve." He wrapped his arm around Severus. "And I'm glad that you had that potions accident. I love you."

Remus was pleasantly surprised that Severus took time off from work after Persephone's birth. While he had said it was to fully recover, Remus thought it was because Severus was becoming quite attached to their daughter, even though his partner steadfastly denied it.

Remus had known that once their child was born, Severus would feel differently. And he had been correct. Some nights when he was working late on his new novel, he would find Severus reading to Persephone. Granted, he was reading her articles out of his Potions journal, but his tone of voice was very soothing. And when Severus didn't think he was watching, he would sometimes catch sight of a very warm smile, a smile that even he didn't get. But he didn't mind. He knew the love for a child was completely different from any other sort of love.

Of course, Severus could not completely stay away from his potions, not that Remus minded. He enjoyed the time he had with Persephone. Even now, he could tell that she was going to take after Severus. And in more than just appearance. Her hair was filling in quickly, but she was also a fussy baby, at least for him. She definitely seemed to prefer Severus. There seemed to be this bond...

A couple of weeks after Persephone's birth, they received word that Hermione and Harry's baby had also been born. The two of them had a boy, who they named James Allen. When Remus suggested that this was a good thing, that Persephone would have a playmate growing up, Severus gave him a rather dirty look. He knew it would take time for Severus to get used to the idea, but he had faith Severus would warm to the idea in his own good time. After all, Severus has spent years hating him, but had finally come to realize how idiotic that grudge had been.

After six weeks, Severus finally returned to work, though he took every Wednesday off. For the remaining days of the week, Remus and Hermione would switch off babysitting duties. Severus had not been pleased when broached with the subject, but recalling his own lonely childhood, he relented, realizing the importance of Persephone socializing. Even if it was with a Potter. Especially one named James. Later, he would ensure that she socialized with the proper sort of children.

He did have to admit that it wasn't all bad being a parent. Here was a child that he could mold from the beginning, teach to be a proper witch, one accepted in society, one who would be Slytherin through and through. Oh, he was positive that Remus would instill in her all those idealistic Gryffindor principles, but he knew how to ensure that she would be properly sorted.

From watching her, he could tell she was a bright child, but then, it was only to be expected. He had been the brightest student in his year, even if that overbearing James Potter had been the teacher's pet and had been given Head Boy because he was both a good student and star Quidditch player. Not to mention that Remus had been no academic slouch. There was no doubt in his mind that Persephone was destined for greatness. He just had to ensure that she associated with the right wizards. He was sure this would be a sticking point with Remus, but he had no doubt that he could convince his lover of the wisdom of this course of action.

Everything was looking up. He was well-respected in his field, finally appreciated after years of toiling in forced obscurity. Most of the wizarding world turned a blind eye to his past, focusing instead on the beneficial work he had done the last few years. Remus was finally accepted in society, though few knew the true nature of his profession, which was probably for the best. And now, they had a daughter. She was a true joy in his life, though he would admit that to very few. After all, he did still have a reputation to maintain.

As he walked to his office, he realized this was the life he had always wanted, but never thought he would attain. He truly was a lucky man

~The End~

A/N: Okay, folks, that ends this installment. I have had ideas for a future set fiction. I had thought of making it part of this one, but I didn't want to skip way ahead in time. I think it will be better set as a new fic. I hope that you have enjoyed this story and will be patient for me to write the follow-on to this. I have several other projects ahead of this one.

As always, thanks to nota for all her wonderful suggestions. She helps put the finishing touches on all my chapters. Also, thanks to JenKM1216 for spawning this idea. The fic turned out better than I thought it would.

Additionally, shameless self-promotion coming up: this fiction is nominated in the Multifaceted Awards for Devotion and Laughter. Voting opens 5 July and I hope that you will consider this story. Also, *Beholden to No Man* is nominated in Aphrodisia and Identity. <http://multifaceted.creative-musings.com/main.htm>