

Scratching the Itch

by StormySkize

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This story was written in answer to the "Sex Ed Challenge" at Potter Place. Guidelines for the challenge are at the end of the story.

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Special thanks go to my beta, JuJuJenn. She keeps me on my toes by never allowing me to get away with writing crap. You're the best, honey.

"This is the ninth case this week, Minerva," Poppy Pomfrey said as she paced in front of the Headmistress's desk. "We have to do something!"

"You're treating the students that come to you, aren't you?" Minerva asked.

"Of course, I am!" Poppy said, affronted that Minerva would even ask such a question.

"Then I fail to understand..."

"That is very obvious," Poppy said.

"There's no need to get snippy, Poppy," Minerva said, glaring at the mediwitch over the top of her spectacles.

"I don't mean to be snippy, but I don't think you understand the gravity of the situation."

"Perhaps you could explain it to me, then in a reasonable tone."

"If I've had nine students come to the infirmary, there are probably dozens more who haven't come."

"I'm sure you are exaggerating," Minerva said.

"We are facing an epidemic," Poppy said with vehemence.

"I hardly think that nine students constitute an epidemic," Minerva said.

"Nine this week ... and it's only Wednesday. I had five last week," Poppy explained.

"Which Houses are affected?"

"I've had six students from Ravenclaw, four from Hufflepuff, three from Gryffindor, and one from Slytherin," the mediwitch replied.

"So the ... problem ... has crossed House lines," Minerva said thoughtfully.

"I'm inclined to believe that the origin of the problem is probably in Ravenclaw, but, yes, the entire school is affected," Poppy confirmed.

"How do you propose we resolve the issue?" Minerva asked.

"As with most problems, the answer is education and information," Poppy said.

"Now, Poppy..." Minerva began.

"Don't you, 'Now, Poppy,' me, Minerva McGonagall!" Poppy said. "I've been telling you for years and I told Albus for years, as well this school needs a mandatory course in sex education."

"You know we were opposed to such an addition to the curriculum. Albus and I both agreed that it is the responsibility of the ~~parents~~ to educate their children in such matters."

"It is a responsibility that many parents seem to have abnegated," Poppy declared. "And in my capacity as Matron of this school, I have advised the Board of Governors of my concerns."

"Poppy, you didn't!" Minerva said, truly shocked.

"Yes, I did. I'm sure you'll be hearing from them soon."

Poppy turned and headed to the door.

"Good day, Headmistress," Poppy said with quiet dignity as she swept out of the room.

Poppy's prediction proved correct. The next morning at breakfast, Minerva received an owl from the Board of Governors. It seemed they had held an emergency meeting the previous evening, after being advised by the school Matron that there was, apparently, some sort of medical crisis at Hogwarts. Said crisis being the direct result of the lack of a comprehensive sex education course at the school, the Board of Governors, in a surprisingly unanimous decision, had decreed that the aforementioned lack should be swiftly remedied. The Headmistress was therefore instructed to "immediately implement" a mandatory class to be called *Practicum for the Prophylaxis of Pregnancy and Pathosis*. The missive went on to outline the required topics for the course, which included an explanation of conception and childbirth and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, with an emphasis on abstinence as the favoured means of preventing both pregnancy and disease. All students were required to attend. The course content was to be adjusted to accommodate students from all years, though how this was to be accomplished was not outlined. The Headmistress was advised to seek volunteers among the faculty as instructors.

Minerva groaned when she read that. She very nearly had to threaten bodily harm to get the faculty to supervise Hogsmeade weekends or chaperone the occasional after-hours social event. Getting anyone to volunteer to teach sex education would be tantamount to getting someone to volunteer to receive a dose of the Cruciatus.

Since the Board of Governors insisted that she "immediately implement" the required course, Minerva sent word up and down the High Table that there would be an emergency faculty meeting right after breakfast, and that attendance was mandatory.

There was cheering among the students when she announced that the first class of the day had been cancelled. She instructed the Prefects to escort all students back to their common rooms. She pointed out that most students, if not all, could certainly use the extra ninety minutes of study time.

As she left the High Table, Minerva leaned down and whispered into Poppy's ear, "I'll expect you to attend the meeting as well."

Ten minutes later, Minerva was doing a mental attendance check list. Everyone, with the exception of Binns and Firenze, was present. She had seen little point in including Binns at this meeting. As a ghost, he was immune to the current epidemic; besides, he was so far removed from the physical plane that she doubted he even remembered what sex was. She didn't believe he would be able to try to explain it to a room full of overly-hormonal teenagers. As for Firenze, he wasn't even *human*. Best not even contemplate his sex life.

Rather than read the edict from the Board of Governors out loud, Minerva made magical copies of the parchment and handed them out.

There were whispers and head shakes among the staff as they read the parchments.

"And what has precipitated the Board of Governors' sudden concern for the sexual health of our student population?" drawled Severus Snape from his usual chair in the far corner. "They usually *ignore* the one or two witches who find themselves enceinte each year."

The revelation of Snape's role in helping Harry Potter to defeat Voldemort five years previously, his exoneration for the death of Albus Dumbledore, and even his receipt of the Order of Merlin (First Class), had done little to sweeten his disposition. He was still a surly, sarcastic bastard. He was feared and despised by most of his students, and, while he had the respect of his colleagues, he wasn't really friendly with any of them. There was, however, a dearth of Potions masters in the wizarding world, and as disagreeable as Snape was, personally, there was no question as to his abilities with potions.

Minerva sighed. Snape's question, no matter how sarcastically framed, was a legitimate one.

"Why don't *you* explain the current crisis, Poppy?" Minerva said, turning to the mediwitch.

Poppy stood up and went to stand next to the headmistress.

"Last week, I had five students come to the infirmary complaining of itching and burning in their genital areas."

There were gasps from a couple of the teachers, notably Madam Sprout and timid little Professor Flitwick, but Poppy ignored them and continued speaking in a matter-of-fact tone.

"This week, I have had nine students come to the infirmary with the same symptoms. I ran tests on all of them. The results for each were the same. All fourteen students were suffering from *Pediculosis pubis*."

There was a general shaking of heads and some muttering. Professor Flitwick raised his hand, almost apologetically.

"What, exactly," he squeaked out, after Poppy nodded to him, "is ... ped ... pedi ... what you said?"

There was a snort from the far corner.

"Crabs," Snape said with a scowl.

"They are allergic to seafood?" Pomona Sprout said in a puzzled tone. "Did they all visit Hogsmeade recently? I don't think crab has ever been served here at Hogwarts."

"And why would the Board of Governors insist on a sex education class because a few students are allergic to crabs?" asked Jasper Jones, the slightly absent-minded wizard who taught Ancient Runes.

"Not crabs, the crustaceans," Snape sneered. "Crabs, as in *pubic lice*. Is that not correct, Poppy?"

Under his breath, he muttered, "Dolts."

Remus Lupin, who was sitting closest to Snape overheard the remark and chuckled. Remus had returned to Hogwarts after the war to teach Defence Against the Dark Arts. He and Snape had apparently put their differences behind them; at least they could be in the same room without Snape making a cutting remark. Or rather, the remarks he made to Lupin weren't any worse than the ones he made to the rest of the staff.

"Severus is correct," Poppy confirmed. "It appears that there is an outbreak of pubic lice rampant in Hogwarts."

"Which House is infected?" Pomona Sprout asked.

"Every house has at least one case; there were six students from Ravenclaw, four from Hufflepuff, three from Gryffindor, and one from Slytherin."

"How could this happen?" Professor Flitwick wanted to know.

Snape rolled his eyes. "In the *usual* way, Filius," he said. "We have a school full of teenagers with raging hormones. When they begin scratching the itch those hormones produce, *problems* develop."

"The Board of Governors is entirely correct in insisting upon a sex education course. There should have been one in place for decades, though I doubt that emphasising abstinence is the most realistic approach to take."

"Well," said Poppy, "I'm glad to see that at least *one* staff member is forward-thinking enough to recognise the importance of the issue before us."

"Severus," Minerva broke in, "since you seem to have a handle on the situation, as it were, perhaps you would be interested in..."

"Only if you use the Imperius," he snarled.

"Really, Severus..."

"No."

Minerva looked around the room, but none of the teachers would meet her eye.

"Very well," she said, "since there are no volunteers, the fairest way to do it is to draw lots."

She waved her wand and a small slip of parchment hovered in front of each of the teachers.

"Write your names down on these slips," Minerva instructed. "Drop them in my hat as it passes in front of you. Ladies first."

Another wave of her wand had her hat floating across the room.

The teachers dutifully scribbled their names on the pieces of parchment and dropped the slips into Minerva's hat as it passed by.

"I'll be drawing three names," Minerva explained. "The first person whose name I call will be responsible for the first- through third-year girls, the second person for the fourth- and fifth-year girls, and the last person for the sixth- and seventh-year girls."

Minerva reached into her hat, which was now hanging patiently in the air before her.

"The instructor for the first- through third-year girls is Rolanda Hooch."

Rolanda swore under her breath.

Minerva reached into her hat a second time.

"The instructor for the fourth- and fifth-year girls is Pomona Sprout."

Madam Sprout moaned and dropped her head into her hands.

Minerva pulled a final slip from her hat.

"The instructor for sixth- and seventh-year girls is Septima Vector."

Professor Vector merely nodded, apparently resigned to her fate.

Minerva vanished the remaining slips from her hat and the other female teachers breathed a sigh of relief.

"Now, it's time for the gentlemen," she said as she sent her hat around once again.

When the hat returned to hover in front of her, she reached in and pulled out the first slip.

"The instructor for the first- through third-year boys is Rubeus Hagrid."

Hagrid went red.

Minerva pulled another slip from her hat.

"The instructor for the fourth- and fifth-year boys is Jasper Jones."

"Oh, my," said Professor Jones.

Minerva reached into her hat for the final name.

She glanced at the slip she held in her hand. Then she looked out across the wizards seated before her. Filius Flitwick had his eyes closed and was mumbling under his breath. Minerva suspected he was praying. Remus Lupin was looking at her with a small smile. Snape was glaring.

Minerva was tempted to cheat and assign the class to Remus Lupin. He seemed the one least likely to complain, but her innate honesty forced her to read the name that was written on the slip in her hand.

"The instructor for the sixth- and seventh-year boys is Severus Snape."

Snape swore loudly and inventively, not bothering to try to keep his displeasure hidden.

"Bloody hell! If it were a week-end off, my name would be the last one drawn. Merlin's balls in a basket! But something like this ... oh, yes, the fucking parchment practically *leaps* out of the hat."

"Language, Severus!" Minerva spoke sharply.

"Fuck my language," Snape shouted. "I *refuse* to be a part of this, Minerva!"

"You *can't* refuse, as you very well know," Minerva responded. "Your contract allows me to assign your duties as I see fit."

"Do you really believe that I have the proper attitude, or even the proper *inclination*, to be instructing a bunch of randy teenagers on the finer points of sex?" he sneered.

There were a few titters at this remark. Snape's sexual orientation had been the subject of much speculation over the years. Now, whether he realised it or not, he had practically come out and admitted he was gay.

"Your sexual habits are not the issue here," Minerva insisted.

"Bollocks," he muttered at last, realising the futility of further protests. "Very well, Minerva. Seeing as I have no choice, I will teach your ruddy class. But don't expect me to be happy about it!"

"When are you ever happy about *anything*?" Rolanda chimed in.

"Go shag a broom, Rolanda," Snape growled.

"Oh, go shag one yourself, Severus," Rolanda retorted. "Seems that's what you like anyway!"

"That's enough!" Minerva spoke sharply, before Snape could reply and escalate the confrontation.

Rolanda and Snape glared at her, and at each other, but both settled back down in their seats.

"It won't be so bad, Severus," Remus piped in. "Teaching the older students has to be easier than teaching the younger ones. At least the older kids already know where babies come from."

"Indeed they do, Lupin," Snape said as he scowled at the werewolf. "The problem will be trying to keep them from *putting* the babies where they come from."

"Our first priority," Minerva said, drawing everyone's attention back to her, "is getting the *medical* problem under control."

Snape knew that Minerva was right. All the sex education classes in the world wouldn't help alleviate the problem of the scabrous little parasites cavorting happily through the more delicate areas of the students' bodies.

"I can make a potion," Snape said, in what was, for him, a reasonable tone. "Everyone in the castle will need to be dosed each night for three nights."

"Everyone, Severus?" Madam Sprout asked. "Surely, you don't mean *us*, as well!"

"*Everyone*," Snape repeated. "All students, all staff, even the house-elves must take the potion. In addition, all bedding, towels, and clothes must be washed in the potion to insure that all the little buggers, and their nits, are killed. Every toilet and bathtub must be cleaned, as well. If we don't follow these procedures strictly, re-infestation is bound to occur."

"Severus is right," Poppy said. "I've treated the students who have come to me, but I'm sure there are many who are infected who've been too embarrassed, or too uninformed, to visit the infirmary. Treating clothing and bedding is absolutely necessary. And, although infection rarely comes from toilet seats or bathtubs, cleaning them with the potion is a wise precaution."

"Some of the parents may object," Professor Vector said.

"I have the authority to declare a medical emergency," Minerva stated. "I will send letters to all the parents doing just that. I will also institute a temporary quarantine to keep the problem from spreading."

"I'm going to cancel regular classes for the next three days," Minerva said. "I'll have to call the house-elves together to coordinate the cleaning and washing. It will take three full days, and nights, to get everything done. We'll all have to pitch in and help. The task is far too great for the house-elves to accomplish by themselves. I'm sure I can depend on the cooperation of every person here."

"That goes without saying, Minerva," Remus said. There was a general nodding of heads and affirmative murmurs.

"How long will it take to make the potion, Severus?" Minerva asked.

"I'll have the first dose ready for this evening. It's not difficult to brew, but it will take several hours to prepare such a large quantity. I'll need to make a fresh batch each day."

"And will we be tellin' the students what they're bein' dosed fer?" Hagrid asked.

"I think it would be better to give out that information during the classes themselves," Snape said. "It will be easier to address student concerns and answer questions in the smaller groups."

"I agree," Poppy said.

"Since *all* the cases you've treated have been from sixth- and seventh-year students, do you think it's really *necessary* to go into so much detail with the lower-form students?" Rolanda asked.

Hagrid was nodding enthusiastically, agreeing with Madam Hooch, and hoping against hope that he wouldn't have to try to explain pubic lice to a bunch of eleven- and twelve-year-olds. He wasn't sure he understood them himself, after all.

"They'll all find out anyway," Snape said. "Most of the older students have siblings, friends, or *significant others* in the lower-forms."

"Severus is right again," Poppy said. "Every student needs to be told what the potion is for and why it is imperative that strict sanitary measures be taken."

"That's what we'll do, then," Minerva decided. "The first mandatory classes will take place right after dinner tonight. The students can receive their first dose of the potion during the class."

"It will be ready by then, won't it, Severus?" Minerva asked.

"If I begin brewing within the next hour, yes," Snape said.

"The students will need a place to sleep for the next two nights, at least," Poppy said. "Even the mattresses need to be treated."

"We can have everyone sleep in the Great Hall," Minerva said. "We've done that before."

"As soon as the potion is done, I'll begin treating hospital gowns," Poppy said. "Since the students will have to surrender all their clothing to be treated, they'll need something to wear in the meantime."

"What are we going to do with the students for the next three days?" Filius Flitwick wanted to know.

"Put them to work," Snape suggested. "The house-elves and staff will be over-extended. Scrubbing toilets and washing down bed frames will keep the students busy and, hopefully, out of mischief whilst our attention is otherwise engaged."

"Excellent idea, Severus," Rolanda said, forgetting the earlier acrimony between them.

"Septima?" Minerva said, turning to the Arithmancy professor.

"Yes, Headmistress?"

"Can you work out a schedule for the students? I also think it's an excellent idea to get them involved. It will keep them busy, plus it may have the added advantage of impressing upon them some of the consequences of their *carelessness*."

Snape gave a snort, but made no further comment.

"The only other thing we need to discuss is the structure of the classes themselves," Minerva said.

"I will not follow the ridiculous, and completely useless, outline provided by the Board of Governors," Snape said with vehemence. "If *must* participate in this exercise in futility, I will approach the subject in my own way."

"Frankly, Severus, I don't care if you teach it while spouting pig Latin, as long as you satisfy the requirements of the course outline. The Board of Governors requires that the course include an explanation of conception and childbirth, and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. *How* these subjects are broached is at the discretion of the instructor."

Having received the concession he was looking for, Snape got to his feet. "In that case, Headmistress, I'd best get to my lab and begin the potion."

During every class that day, a notice was read informing the students that there would be a mandatory class after dinner that evening. Students from each year were instructed where to go for their class.

There was much speculation among the student population as to the nature of the class. A few of the older students, some of them surreptitiously scratching, had an idea, but none of them volunteered to share their thoughts on the matter.

Snape stood at the entrance to the Potions classroom, checking off names on a list as the sixth and seventh-years boys filed into the room.

After all the students were checked in and sitting down, Snape moved to the front of the classroom.

"I'm sure most of you know why you are here this evening," Snape began. "For those of you who don't, I will explain."

He waved his wand at the blackboard set up in front of his desk. A rather grotesque drawing appeared.

"This," Snape said, gesturing to the drawing, "is a rather exaggerated representation of a creature that is, at this very moment, stalking the halls of Hogwarts. Can anyone tell me what it is?"

"A giant scorpion?" said a voice from the back of the room. There was a small burst of laughter.

"A giant wood tick?" said another. More laughter followed that remark.

Snape glared at the students, and the laughter stopped immediately.

"It's not a giant anything," Snape said. "As a matter of fact, its actual size is only about one and a half millimetres."

"This is a louse. In particular, it is a pubic louse. As its name suggests, the pubic louse is at home in the pubic, or genital, area of its host."

There were a few "Eeews," and "Yucks," from the students, but for the most part, they were paying attention.

"And I do not use the term, 'its host,' lightly," Snape continued, "for the pubic louse, like all lice, is a parasite. It feeds on the blood of its host."

"Gross!"

"Indeed, Mr. Beauchamp, it is quite gross," Snape agreed. "Unchecked, an infestation of pubic lice can spread to the inner thigh, the armpits, the chest, especially on hirsute males, and even to the eyebrows and eyelashes. The pruritus, or itching, caused by irritation leads to scratching, and the scratching can lead to infection. Any infection can be life-threatening if not properly treated."

"You said they're stalking the halls," said a Hufflepuff in the third row.

"I was speaking metaphorically, Mr. Smythe-Wells," Snape said. "Madam Pomfrey has treated a number of students in the past week for *Pediculosis Pubis*, which is the medical term for pubic lice."

"You mean people have these things crawling around in their crotch?" a sixth-year Gryffindor asked.

"That is correct," Snape said. "The Headmistress, with the express authority of the Board of Governors, has implemented action to bring the epidemic under control. At the end of this class, each of you will be given a dose of a potion that will eliminate the parasites, and insure that they will not return. The dose will be repeated twice more. All

clothing, bedding, and towels will also be treated to prevent re-infection. All students will sleep in the Great Hall tonight and tomorrow night while the house-elves and the faculty oversee the cleaning of all areas that may be harbouring these unwelcome *guests*."

There was a great hubbub of voices as the students began talking among themselves.

A hand was raised in the second row.

"Yes, Mr. Ackerley?"

"How did these bugs get on us ... on those that have them, that is," he said with a blush.

"Pubic lice are considered a sexually transmitted disease. As that term implies, therefore, the parasites are spread through sexual contact."

"Is that the only way to get them?" a Ravenclaw student asked.

"While it is *possible* to get them in other ways, such as sharing a bed, though not necessarily having sex, or by sharing linens, or even by wearing another person's clothing, the most likely way the infestation spreads is through close, intimate contact."

Snape waved his wand at the blackboard and the drawing of the pubic louse disappeared to be replaced by two drawings that detailed male and female reproductive anatomy.

"Silence!" Snape said sharply, and the voices that had filled the classroom died down.

"Now that I have everyone's attention, we will continue. Can everyone see these illustrations?" Snape asked.

There were a flurry of nodding heads and a few murmured, "Yes, sirs."

"The Board of Governors has decreed that all students must be apprised of the 'facts of life.'" He imbued the words with all the sarcasm he could muster; a not inconsiderable amount.

"Although I'm quite sure that everyone in this room knows the basic mechanics of the sexual act, we are required to present an overview."

There were a few titters, but Snape quelled them with a single glare.

Snape went on to explain, in very dry terms, the process of sexual maturation in both males and females. He also explained the process of conception and childbirth.

"I realise that all these medical terms are boring and may be difficult to understand. Once I've satisfied the requirements of the Board of Governors' edict, I will answer any questions you may have in terms more easily understood.

"However, before I can do that, I must also address the topic of sexually transmitted diseases, or STDs for short."

Snape then went on to talk about things like syphilis, gonorrhoea, herpes, the current infestation of pubic lice, and AIDS.

"As some of you have *sopainfully* discovered, being a wizard offers no immunity to these afflictions.

"This brings us to the final requirement handed down by the Board of Governors. I am obliged to inform you that total abstinence from all sexual activity is the only way to protect yourselves from both pregnancy and STDs. And in this, the Board of Governors is correct."

There was a general groan from the students at those words.

Snape held up a hand to silence them.

"The Board of Governors is *correct*," Snape repeated, "but since the average age of the Governors is approximately eighty-eight, they are, perhaps, a bit removed from the reality of raging hormones."

There was a burst of nervous laughter at this comment.

"Now that we have fulfilled the requirements of the edict, I am free to approach the subject with a bit more common sense."

To everyone's surprise, Snape then removed his teaching robes, throwing them over the back of his desk chair, and sat casually on the corner of his desk with his legs crossed.

"As sixth- and seventh-years, all of you are near to being adults. In fact, a goodly number of you have already had your seventeenth birthday ~~and~~ are considered adults in the wizarding world. As such, I would like to speak to you as adults and not as children."

The students were sitting up straighter now and paying rapt attention to what Snape was saying.

"It is unfortunate that it took an outbreak such as this to get the Board of Governors to realise the importance of sex education in this school. Had a program been in place prior to this event, the event itself might have been avoided.

"It is also unfortunate that the Board of Governors has decreed such an unrealistic approach to the subject. Even the name of the course *Practicum for the Prophylaxis of Pregnancy and Pathosis* is ridiculous.

"Fortunately, the edict made no restrictions as to any *additional* information or advice I could provide. Therefore, I am free to answer any questions you may have. There are no strictures as to content. I will answer every question as openly and as honestly as I can. If I do not know an answer, I will table the question until our next meeting tomorrow night, I will research the question, and I will answer it then.

"Does everyone understand?" Snape asked.

"We can ask about *anything*?"

"Anything at all," Snape assured the young man from Hufflepuff.

"Will you go blabbing to our parents?" This question came from a Gryffindor sitting in the last row.

"Whatever is discussed in this room will be considered confidential, Mr. Kittery. The only exception would be if you, or anyone for that matter, revealed a behaviour that I considered might put you, or someone else, in danger."

"Now, does anyone have a question?" he asked.

There was no movement for a few moments, and then a hand in the second row rose tentatively into the air.

"Yes, Mr. Yardley?"

"This is sort of embarrassing," the young man said.

"There's no need to be embarrassed," said Snape. "I'd be willing to wager that if you have a question about something, at least half of your fellow students would like to know the answer to the question as well.

"Be a trendsetter, Mr. Yardley," Snape said.

"Well ... I just wondered ... I mean, I've heard that you can damage yourself if you ... if you wank off." He was blushing furiously.

"A very good question, although it wasn't exactly posed as a question," Snape said. "Auto-eroticism, or masturbation, either of which is the correct, technical term for 'wanking off,' is a normal, natural activity. Even animals have been observed engaging in auto-erotic behaviour.

"It's something nearly everyone does," Snape added.

"Do you do it, sir?"

There was a collective gasp.

Snape glared at the boy; after all, he did have a reputation to maintain. And then he shrugged.

"Not nearly as often as I used to," he finally said with a smirk.

"So we won't go blind?" called out a voice from the back of the room.

Snape actually smiled a bit at that.

"Only if your hand slips off and you poke yourself in the eye," he said.

There was a burst of laughter.

After that, it was easier. The questions came fast and furious.

Snape answered them all, from the silly to the serious.

Remus, who had slipped into the back of the room carrying the pile of hospital gowns, watched and listened as Snape answered the questions.

The session ran late ... almost till curfew, as a matter of fact.

When Snape finally called a halt, stating that he still had to hand out the doses of potion, there was a groan of disappointment from the assemblage.

"Can we talk some more tomorrow?" Mr. Ackerley asked.

"I will be here after dinner tomorrow to administer the second dose of potion. Should any of you still have questions, you may remain behind to ask them," he said.

"I see Professor Lupin has arrived with your new wardrobes," he said, gesturing toward the door where Remus was standing.

Snape waved his wand, and a large screen appeared at the back of the room.

"I know that this is an inconvenience," Snape said. "And it really is quite unfair to the majority of students who *don't* have a problem, but, I assure you, it is absolutely necessary."

He paused a moment before he continued. "If it's any consolation, even the teachers will be taking the potion and sleeping in the Great Hall tonight."

"All right, let's get this done," Remus said, speaking for the first time. "Professor Snape will hand each of you your dose of potion; and he will watch as you take it. You will then pass behind the screen, strip off all your clothing and drop it into the baskets that have been provided. Then you will put on these hospital gowns and proceed to the Great Hall."

"When you get to the Great Hall, one of the other teachers will be there to assign you a cot to sleep on," Snape concluded.

Yardley was the first in line. He took the small vial that Snape handed him and downed the potion in one gulp.

"Tastes like dragon piss," he said, as he shuddered.

"And how would you know *that*?" Snape said, casting a baleful look on him. "And mind your language, Yardley. My good humour will only stretch so far."

"Yes, sir," Yardley said as he stepped behind the screen. When he stuck his hand out, Remus dropped the hospital gown onto it.

A moment later, Yardley stepped out, clutching the gown closed. "Blimey," he said, "do I have to walk through the castle with my arse hanging out?"

"Indeed not, Mr. Yardley," Snape replied smoothly. "You can turn the gown around and walk through the castle with your dangly-bits hanging out, instead."

Yardley blushed and Remus chuckled.

"Come here, Conner," Remus said to the boy in a kindly tone. Remus ran his wand down the back of the gown and it closed completely. It now resembled a nightshirt rather than a traditional hospital gown.

"Excellent idea, Lupin," Snape said. He waved his wand over the pile of gowns. "They'll all be more modest now. And I won't have to walk through the castle with ~~my~~ arse hanging out, either."

The rest of the boys filed past Snape to get their potion and then ducked behind the screen to change into the hospital gowns.

When the last student had left the room, Remus turned to Snape.

"For someone who didn't want to do this, you did an excellent job, Severus," he said.

"Tell me, Lupin," Snape said, "were you paying attention when Poppy was talking about the number of cases she had treated and from which Houses the students came?"

Remus looked a bit puzzled by Snape's question, but tried to remember.

"I think it was fourteen cases. I seem to recall that the majority were from Ravenclaw. I'm not sure of the exact numbers for each House, however," he admitted.

"Well, I *am*," Snape said with a smirk. "There were six students from Ravenclaw, four from Hufflepuff, three from Gryffindor, and *done* from Slytherin."

Remus didn't comment.

"Doesn't it seem odd that Slytherin House, which has a reputation for being sexually precocious and even, perhaps *promiscuous*, should be the House with the fewest number of cases of a sexually transmitted disease?"

"Now that you mention it, it does seem a bit peculiar," Remus agreed.

"And did you notice, once you entered the classroom, that very few questions were asked by the students of my House?"

"I did notice that," Remus admitted.

"Why do you suppose that was?"

Remus thought about the way Snape had answered the students' questions. He'd been able to answer just about every question. He'd even joked with them to relax them and show them they had no reason to be embarrassed. He'd been approachable something that could seldom be said about him.

Remus smiled as he realised the answer to the puzzle.

"You've talked to your students before. This was *not* the first sex education class you've conducted."

"Five points to Gryffindor, Lupin," Snape said with a smirk.

"I've been providing a class like this for my students for years. The Board of Governors, and even Albus and Minerva, were adamantly opposed to having formal sex education classes. I argued vociferously and was rebuffed repeatedly. I decided to do it on my own."

"You risked being censured, or even terminated, if word got out," Remus said.

"There are some things more important than the fear of censure or even termination," Snape said. He had a look on his face that Remus had never seen.

"I agree. I'm just surprised to learn that you feel this is one of them."

"I didn't always feel this way," Snape said. He went to his desk and unlocked a deep drawer. Then he pulled out a bottle of Firewhisky and two glasses.

"Drink?" Snape said, holding up the bottle. "Merlin knows, I could use one."

"Sure," Remus replied.

Snape poured three fingers of liquor into each glass and handed one of them to Lupin. Then he dropped to his chair and lifted his feet to rest on the desk.

"Pull up a seat, Lupin and I'll tell you a story," Snape said and then he took a sip of his drink.

Lupin grabbed one of the student chairs and dragged it to the side of Snape's desk. He slouched into it and raised his own glass to his lips.

"When I first started teaching, I didn't give a damn about sex education. Oh, I broke up the fornicating couples when I found them on my rounds, but other than that, I took a laissez faire attitude toward their sexual activities. After all, what harm did it do, right?"

He paused and took another sip from his glass.

"What happened to change your mind?" Remus asked.

"A witch named Dierdre Dorny happened. It was during my sixth year of teaching. She was twelve. She was a shy, withdrawn, mousy-looking girl; didn't seem to have any friends at all. I happened upon her one evening down by the lake. She was crying. Instead of asking her what the matter was, I chided her for being out of bounds and deducted points."

He stopped speaking and drained his glass. He refilled it, gesturing with the bottle towards Remus. Remus shook his head.

"What happened?" Remus prompted.

"When she failed to appear at breakfast the next morning, no one was very concerned. When she missed her first class, however, one of her dorm mates was sent to check on her. The girl came screaming back into class, saying that Dierdre was dead.

"Poppy was summoned, of course. The girl was lying in a pool of blood, but she was still alive, barely.

"When she was out of danger, we found out that she had brewed and taken an abortifacient potion."

"She was pregnant? At *twelve*?" The usually unflappable man looked shocked.

"No, she wasn't pregnant. She had begun her menses. Apparently, her mother had never spoken to her about it. She didn't know what was happening. She had very little bleeding, but she was having severe cramps. She worked up the courage to speak to one of the other girls about it.

"That girl thought it would be great fun to play a joke on the poor, ignorant young witch. She told Dierdre that she must be pregnant."

"Oh, no," Remus said.

"Oh, yes. The poor girl was so naïve, she believed it. She found the formula for an abortifacient and actually managed to brew it without anyone knowing. She had no inkling of the dosage, however. She took about five times as much as she would have needed had she actually been pregnant."

"The overdose caused internal bleeding," Remus surmised.

"Indeed. Poppy managed to save her life, but she was rendered sterile in the process," Snape added.

"I was appalled by the extent of the girl's ignorance. I was also appalled by the apparent indifference of most of the staff. Although they acknowledged that the girl's plight could have been avoided if she'd had even the barest minimum of information about the changes taking place in her own body, they did not believe it was up to us to provide such information. I strongly disagreed."

He took another sip of the Firewhisky.

"You took it upon yourself, then?" Remus asked.

"Unfortunately, I could only influence those in my own House. I could invoke a little-used House secrecy vow to keep the students from saying anything about our talks

outside the Slytherin common room, which is where I usually held my sessions."

"So, why all that cursing and carrying on in the staff room when your name was called?" Remus wanted to know.

"Oh, just living down to expectations, Lupin," Snape said.

"Then you weren't really upset to have been selected for this duty."

Snape waited until Remus had taken a sip of his drink before he replied.

"I *arranged* to be selected for the sixth- and seventh-years," Snape said with a smirk.

Remus nearly choked. Then he started laughing.

"You sly, devious Slytherin," Remus said when he'd regained his composure. "How did you manage that?"

"I charmed the piece of parchment I wrote my name on, of course."

"You might have been selected for one of the lower-form classes," Remus said.

"Really, Lupin," Snape said, sending the other man a withering look.

"Sorry, Severus, I didn't mean to insult your abilities."

"No offence taken," Snape said with a small smile.

"Why did you want the older boys, specifically?" Remus asked.

"Although it's important for all of them to have a good, basic understanding of the physical and emotional changes puberty brings, I've learned that it's the older ones who need the most guidance in sexual matters. I've had years to learn how to get the students to open up and ask the important questions. I know how to impart the knowledge they need to know without resorting to talking down to them. The students in *my* House know how to enjoy their sexuality and still remain safe.

"While I'm not exactly *thrilled* about the current crisis, I am pleased that it has precipitated the institution of a sex education course; even if it is the ridiculous one mandated by the Board of Governors."

"Do you think that once the crisis has passed, the Board of Governors will revoke its decision?"

"I will fight to keep a program in place. I have kept some rough statistics over the years. For instance, in the last ten years, there have been thirteen pregnancies among students. *None* of the students have been from Slytherin House, not even counting the thirteen pregnancies as involving twenty-six students, which they didn't, because at least four of the fathers were from outside the school. The witches in *my* House know enough to use a contraceptive potion. The wizards in my House insist that their partners take such a potion. There are fewer cases of STDs in my House as well. This outbreak of pubic lice is a case in point. I know who the affected Slytherin student is. He came to me, even before he went to Poppy. He'd been in a 'relationship' with a Ravenclaw boy for several months. They both used condoms, at my student's insistence, but, of course, a condom isn't going to prevent the spread of pubic lice.

"He was disgusted when he discovered he'd been infected. He fancied himself in love with the other boy, and here was proof positive that his lover had been with someone else.

"Another budding romance withers on the vine," Snape added with a sneer.

"It must have been a shock when he discovered that the person he loved, and whom he thought loved him, had been unfaithful to him."

"Oh, please. In six months these *children*, who fancy themselves so much in *love*, will barely remember the other's name."

"You're such a cynic, Severus," Remus said.

"I'm a realist, Lupin," Severus replied. "Do you still remember the name of the first person you thought you loved?"

"As a matter of fact, I do," Lupin said with an enigmatic smile. "Don't you?"

Snape remained silent for a moment, finishing off the Firewhisky in his glass. Then he looked at Remus and said, "I've never caught that particular disease."

"You've never been in love?" Remus seemed genuinely shocked.

"I've had more important things to concern myself with. I've had to settle for occasionally being in lust," Snape said, suddenly uncomfortable with the turn the conversation had taken.

"We'd best take our own doses of the potion and get to the Great Hall," Snape said as he swung his feet down off the desk and stood up. "Minerva will be wondering where we are."

Remus stood as well. He handed his empty glass to Severus and let his fingers brush over the other man's hand.

"When this is all over," Remus said, leaning toward Snape, 'would you like to have dinner with me some night?"

"Are you propositioning me, Lupin?" Snape asked with a scowl.

"Will you hex me if I answer in the affirmative?" Remus asked.

"I didn't know you were gay," Snape said. "That must have been quite a shock for Nymphadora."

"Nymphadora and I had no problems in the bedroom, I assure you. Our relationship ended for other reasons," Remus said.

"I'm not gay; at least I'm not *exclusively* gay," he continued. "I'm bisexual, though I've not had many opportunities to be sexual with anyone, of either gender, of late."

"Tell me about it. Ten months out of the year trapped in this isolated fortress. The pickings are rather slim, to say the least. Is that what accounts for your sudden interest in *me*?" Snape asked with a sneer.

"Until the staff meeting today, I didn't know you were gay. I never approached you because I never suspected there was a possibility you'd welcome my advances. You've kept yourself quite firmly in the closet till now," Remus said.

"Yes, well, that sort of slipped out," Snape said.

Remus laughed. "Oh, please, Severus. You were a spy for twenty years. Your life often depended on your ability to keep a secret. You'd ~~never~~ let *anything* 'slip.'"

"You're far too discerning, Lupin," Snape said. "You'd be better served to leave me with my illusions."

"I think I'm going to like the reality a lot better," Remus replied.

"Now ... when this crisis has passed, would you like to have dinner with me?"

"As a matter of fact," Snape replied, arching a brow at Lupin, "I would."

The End (or is it?)

A/N: This story was written in response to the Sex Ed Challenge at Potter Place. Challenge highlights follow:

THE SEX ED CHALLENGE

Premise:

Parents in the Wizarding world have traditionally told their children about 'the birds and the bees' in their own time. But this is causing problems at Hogwarts (gee, problems with sex at a coeducational boarding school where the age range runs from the beginning of puberty to full hormonal fever pitch? Who could have guessed?)

The exact nature of the crisis is up to you; but whatever the triggering event or series of events, the Ministry of Magic and/or the Board of Governors has decreed that once a year, a class on 'reproductive health' (or your favourite euphemism) will be taught.

Since we monkeys issuing the challenge aren't interested in the educational quality of the class per se, the only absolute requirement for course content in your version of 'Sex Ed at Hogwarts' is that the little monsters must be told where babies come from. You decide how much detail you wish to go into, and which other topics to cover.

Naturally, no teacher will voluntarily touch that class with the proverbial ten-foot wand, so you decide which professor(s) draw the short straw.

Additional information:

- 1) Challenge commences July 7th and concludes August 12th (just in time for back to school frenzy to start kicking in!)
- 2) Length: 2,000 to whatever you can write within the time limit. No extensions, but if you go multi-chapter and haven't finished it by the deadline, what you have up to that point can be submitted for voting. Any rating/category.
- 3) No 'pairing' requirements. You can have any or none. If you opt for 'any,' please keep everybody legal (if not ethical.)
- 4) Oh, and set it whenever you like...AU is fine; if you can shoehorn it into canon (pre- or post- HBP), also fine!
- 5) Post on TPP (The Petulant Poetess)
- 6) Voting will commence on Potter Place August 14th-ish

Optional Shenanigans:

You don't need to incorporate any of the following features...they are just suggestions to get you in the right frame of mind! ;-)

--Someone is revealed to have an interesting kink or fetish as a result of the course. How public the revelation is up to the author.

--The topic of sexual injuries is brought up, to the extreme psychological trauma of every male within listening distance.

--The topic of menstruation is broached, and people are badly squicked.

--Someone (it matters not whom) asks the question (of anyone), "What was losing your virginity like?"

The answer is either

"None of your business" (at which the conclusion is reached, either correctly or incorrectly, that the respondee is still a virgin)

or

"Which time?" (you're on your own for a follow up if you choose to use THAT answer!)

--Make up really freaky Wizarding STDs and/or discuss how wizards deal with those from the Muggle world.

Winners will receive the undying adulation of the issuers of the challenge, namely SS Lupin and dracontia (or the unbridled jealousy thereof, depending on how thoroughly you whip our behinds when it comes time for the voting).

Oh, and an excellent, drool-worthy, hyper-sexy yet still somehow tasteful, bragging rights banner from that Grand Poobah of Potter Place, maven of HP FanFic in general, and really rockin' banners in particular, *drumroll* Sunshine the Southern Witch! Yay!