

Mister Mom

by zambonigirl

When Hermione goes to a Charms Symposium, Snape must deal with their three children, and one of them is just as Slytherin as he is!

Ain't No Sunshine When She's Gone

Chapter 1 of 5

When Hermione goes to a Charms Symposium, Snape must deal with their three children, and one of them is just as Slytherin as he is!

An: This is in response to a challenge issued by SaSS, where Snape is forced to look after his children while Hermione goes out of town. There are guidelines, but I won't bore all of you with them, as they are rather long. I promise, I'm sticking to them.

Big thanks to Michmak and all the SaSSy girls for their encouragement, but mostly for Michmak, who helped me find names for the kids.

Fortuna Snape was the only girl in her family, sandwiched between two obnoxious, yet lovable brothers. Being the only girl, and far more mature than her rowdy brothers, she took her duties rather seriously and made sure to keep her parents apprised of everything that was happening in their house.

"Mummy, Tiberius just made a mess in the bathroom," she said conversationally as she draped herself across her parent's bed.

Hermione Snape looked up from the small bag she was packing. "Fortuna, I do not want to have to tell you again to stop tattling on your brothers! I'm going to be gone for the entire weekend, and I need you to try and help Daddy, not drive him up a wall."

Fortuna looked down at the design in the patchwork quilt she was currently laying on. "I'm sorry for tattling, Mummy, but I hafta pee, and I can't 'cause Tiberius peed all over the seat."

Hermione sighed. "Severus! Go check the bathroom!" she called into the hallway. "Fortuna, go and use my loo."

Fortuna walked primly into her mother's bathroom and listened, for she knew it was inevitable that Tiberius would come running in to defend himself.

"Mummy," the four-year-old cried, "Daddy just yelled at me!"

Fortuna smiled smugly to herself and finished her business, then washed her hands and exited the bathroom primly.

"It's all 'er fault, too," Tiberius cried, holding onto Hermione's leg. "She's a tattletale, Mummy!"

"You just tattled on me," Fortuna retorted.

Hermione threw her hands in the air and sighed in exasperation. "Both of you stop it this instant! Fortuna, go to your room and try to keep from tattling on someone for at least a half hour. Tiberius, go help Daddy clean the bathroom!"

Fortuna could not believe what she was hearing. "Go to my room, Mummy? Why? I didn't do anything!" It was her job to keep an eye on the boys. Her daddy had told her that on more than one occasion. He always told her, "Hold your brother's hand, Fortuna. Don't let go."

"Yes, Fortuna. Go to your room. I'll call you when dinner is ready."

Fortuna thought of a million retorts, but was cut short from saying them when her mother pulled out her wand.

"Now, Fortuna, or I'll have to levitate you."

Feeling very hurt and put-upon, Fortuna turned and stalked off towards her room, tears falling down her cheeks. She passed her daddy in the hall, and didn't even say anything to him. She knew he would take her mummy's side. He always took her side.

"I know why Tiberius is crying," Severus said when he walked into his bedroom. "But why is Fortuna crying?"

Hermione gave him an exasperated look. "She's turned into the most frightful tattletale, Severus! I don't know where she got the idea that she's the Prefect of the house, but she needs to be sorted."

Severus did not like to hear criticisms of his daughter, not even from her mother. She was a bright, intelligent young girl who needed to be nurtured, not stifled. She could be the greatest witch of her age, and he knew it.

"It doesn't help that you spoil her every whim," Hermione continued.

"I do no such thing!" Severus replied hotly. "She is not spoiled-she's precocious. Naturally, you would know nothing about that, would you?" He often had to remind his wife that she once used to be exactly like their daughter. And, as he often said in the next breath before she could hex him, she turned out just fine. Whenever she argued with him too much, he would take them all on a trip to London to visit Gram and Gramps Granger, who would exclaim for at least an hour that Fortuna was a copy of Hermione at that age, which was now six.

Hermione fixed him with a steely glare and continued to meticulously fold clothes and lay them gently in her bag.

"Mum, when's dinner?" Augustus their eldest, asked, standing in the doorway, his finger up his nose.

"Augustus!" Hermione exclaimed, grabbing her handkerchief from her pocket. "I insist that you stop picking your nose! What happened to your handkerchief?"

Augustus blew his nose. "Fortuna asked if she could have it for a doll blanket."

Snape could tell that his wife was at the end of her rope with the children, and led Augustus out of the room. "Come along, let's go check on dinner."

"Dad? Why does Mum always get mad when I pick my nose?"

Snape sighed. "It's disgusting, Augustus. I can never see an excusable reason as to why you, or anyone for that matter, would insert their finger into their nostril."

"It itches," was his eldest son's reason.

"Handkerchief, Augustus. Now wash your hands before we sort dinner."

Snape was dreading the next two days. He would be all alone with his children, being that his wife would be attending a Charms Convention in Latvia. She was the new Charms Mistress at Hogwarts. It was a weekend, so there was no daycare to send the children to, and he could not remember the last time he had all three children with him at once without Hermione. He reflected that it was because he never had been responsible for all three of them at the same time before. He and Hermione always split the load after Tiberius was born. She would usually take the boys leaving him with Fortuna. It was an arrangement that worked well, as Fortuna was too much like her mother and Augustus was far too much like his father. Tiberius was the only one that they all got along with, well, aside from Fortuna, who Ginny Potter insisted was simply trying to find her niche in the family now that she was the middle child after two blissful years as the baby.

The weekend would be hard on all of them, he was sure. As much as the children drove Hermione crazy, she loved them all fiercely and being separated from them was something she had never had to do before. He knew that she would worry about them at night. He was slightly offended when she had confessed to him the night before that she hoped they would all be all right, and that she would only be a floo away if he needed her. He was determined that it would all go well.

Perhaps he could even talk Augustus into staying over at the Potter's house one night. He and James were good friends, even though James looked almost exactly like his namesake, and Augustus was the copy of his father.

Fortuna lay in her room, upset that her daddy hadn't come in to rescue her yet. She knew that her mummy had told him that she had been a tattletale. Her parents always got cross with her when Tiberius did something wrong, like the time when he spilled his soup on the table, or the time that he dumped out an entire pitcher of milk onto the floor. They yelled at her for not telling them, yet when she did tell them, they yelled at her. She always got yelled at. Augustus and Tiberius never got yelled at like she did. She knew it was because she was the girl.

She also suspected that her mummy hated her. Anytime they went to the shops, her mummy always sent her with her daddy to buy clothes and toys and books. Her mummy always took the boys. Her mummy loved the boys best. She probably wished that Fortuna had been born a boy, or maybe that she had never been born. She turned on her side and hugged her teddy bear to her, crying sadly.

She was still crying when her door opened, the light from the hallway spilling into her darkening room.

"Fortuna, love," her daddy called, "time for dinner. Come along."

She started crying even harder. Her mummy would make her daddy start to hate her, too!

"Fortuna?" he asked, walking over to the bed, his large boots echoing against the wooden floors. "Fortuna, why are you crying?"

He lifted her into his arms, and she grabbed onto him tightly. "Mummy...hates me..." she wailed.

She heard her daddy laugh, his chest jiggling under her face. She started crying even harder. He was happy that her mummy hated her!

"Oh, Fortuna...Fortuna," he whispered, his hands smoothing through her dampened black curls. "Mummy doesn't hate you, my love. Mummy loves you very much. I do, too."

"Mummy wishes I was a boy," Fortuna insisted, rubbing her nose against her daddy's robe.

"Mummy already has two boys, what would she want with three? That would leave her short a little girl."

"She wouldn't care." Her tears were stopping slowly, and she tried hard to snuffle convincingly. In her daddy's arms, she knew he was right. She knew her mummy didn't hate her.

"She would care very much, Fortuna. I would as well." He pushed her back a bit and took her face in his large hand. "We love you, Fortuna. You're our little girl, and we think you're special. Mummy just has a lot on her mind right now, and she really doesn't want to leave you for the weekend."

Fortuna sniffled again. The last time her mummy went away, she came home with Tiberius. She wondered if babies came from Lautia or wherever it was that her mummy was going to.

"Daddy, where do babies come from?"

Snape felt himself freeze in place. Wasn't six a little young to wonder about such a thing? And where did that thought come from, anyway? He was sure that he had just recently been assuring his daughter that her mother did not, under any circumstances, hate her, and suddenly the child was asking about babies? He sat down, deciding that this was a conversation best handled in that position, and settled Fortuna on his lap.

"Babies come from their mummies, love. What brought that question on?"

His daughter's black eyes were shining with tears and something else that he couldn't quite read. "How do they come from their mummies?"

Snape was sure that Hermione should be the one answering this question. "Well...do you remember how we planted those flowers at the beginning of the summer?"

Fortuna nodded.

"Well, that's sort of how babies are born. The daddy plants a seed in the mummies' stomach, and when the baby is ready, it comes out."

He could tell that he just confused his daughter. "Is that how Tiberius was born?"

"It's how all of you were born."

"He didn't come from Lautia?"

Lautia? "Oh, Latvia. No, darling, they don't come from Latvia."

Her eyebrows knitted together, making her look like a black-haired version of her mother. "Are you going to plant any more seeds in Mummy?"

Snape latched onto the first explanation he could find for that question and took Fortuna's hands. "I don't think so, love. Why? Were you hoping for a little sister to play with? Tired of the boys?"

The look that Fortuna gave him reminded him of himself when he was in a particularly cranky mood. "No more babies," she muttered.

Ah, so that was it. He had a feeling that life was a little hard for Fortuna, especially since her brothers were constantly teasing her, and she really didn't seem to have a sense of humor. Plus, she was the only girl, and he could imagine what it would be like for himself if he was the only boy in a family of girls. There were also no other girls in the neighborhood to play with. The Potters lived just down the way, in walking distance now that Augustus was eight, and just across the road lived a friend of Tiberius's. Though her friends were only a floo away, Snape and Hermione both knew that she did not share the same ease with her friends as her brothers did with their neighbors. The boys would play in the yard and be joined by their friends, leaving Fortuna to her own devices.

Snape stood and lifted his daughter into his arms and snuggled her against his chest. "Come along, let's go eat dinner and say goodbye to Mummy."

TBC

The Circle Game

Chapter 2 of 5

Hermione is now gone, and Snape thinks he can simply kick back and await for her return until a Potter throws a monkey wrench into his plans.

"Daddy! I'm done! Come wipe my butt!"

Snape sighed and gritted his teeth. Tiberius refused to handle toilet paper at all, except to unroll it and throw it around the bathroom, particularly if he had just gotten out of the bath. The effects of bathwater on a roll of toilet paper were actually quite fascinating to Tiberius, or so it seemed. Severus and Hermione both had taken to hiding all rolls of toilet paper before Tiberius's bath time, but he still seemed to find a roll at least once a week.

Dropping an armful of toys into a large chest, Snape stalked to the bathroom to take care of his son.

"Daddy, can I sweep wif you tonight since Mummy's gone?"

Snape pulled his son's jeans up and buttoned them, then lifted him into his arms. "I suppose so." He would be surprised if all three children weren't in his bed that night.

"Good. 'Cause I don' wanna sweep awone if Mummy isn't 'ere."

Snape didn't either, if it came to that.

Snape was glad that Tiberius didn't shy away from his kisses like Augustus did lately. He knew that Augustus was getting a little old for such things, but Snape had gotten very few kisses as a child, and never wanted his children to feel left out or unloved.

"Fortuna, we're going to sweep wif Daddy tonight!" Tiberius called to his sister as Snape carried him into the living room.

Fortuna turned and glared at her brother. "I'm sleeping with Daddy tonight, not you!"

"If you two continue bickering, then everyone will be sleeping in their own beds tonight-alone."

"We can all sleep with Dad tonight," Augustus said, walking into the living room with a bowl filled with far too much ice cream.

In a flash, Snape had the bowl in his hand and shook his head at his son. "Not if you continue eating this much. Has everyone else had their pudding?"

Fortuna and Tiberius both shook their heads.

"Very well, I'll split this between all of us."

He walked into the kitchen, wondering how long he would have to split the ice cream four ways before his children turned on each other. He didn't know why they always bickered so. Certainly the Weasley's never had this trouble. In fact, the Weasley's always went out of their way to protect each other-especially during the war. It was the only way that all of them came out of it alive. He wondered if his children would ever form a bond, or if having two parents who were bookworms and socially inept, not to mention only children, would keep all of them from forming bonds. He hoped not.

As he walked back into the sitting room, he saw that all three of his children were occupied; Augustus was reading-he had been given The Chronicles of Narnia for his birthday and was slowly making his way through them. Fortuna sat quietly coloring, her crayons worn down almost to nubs, the papers protecting them long forgotten. Snape made a mental note to buy her some more when he was next near the shops. Tiberius was the one who always made him wonder. The boy sat on the sofa, watching as a large spider spun its web in the corner of the ceiling.

"Ice cream," Snape said to them, sending the bowls over to the coffee table.

Fortuna looked down at her bowl of ice cream, and continued to formulate her plans. As far as she could tell, she had her daddy all to herself for the entire weekend save for two minor inconveniences. Her brothers, however, could be disposed of easily she was sure. Normally, Fortuna was fiery and always ready for a fight so that when her brothers picked on her, she would challenge them back. This behavior garnered little sympathy from her parents, and she often found herself on the wrong end of a discussion that started with "But you're older than Tiberius" or, "Augustus is just trying to get you in a temper. Just ignore him."

This time, she was determined that her brothers would not steal her daddy from her. Without her mummy present, she was sure that her daddy would side with her, and he would make it so that the boys were in trouble and sleeping in their own rooms while she had him all to herself. She mulled over her options and decided that Tiberius would be the first brother she would eliminate. If Tiberius was banished to his room, Augustus would undoubtedly be forced to sleep in his regular bed in their shared room to keep Tiberius company.

Ever so carefully, Fortuna allowed a brown crayon to roll towards Tiberius. The next page in her book was that of a hippogriff, and she knew that Tiberius would not be able to resist coloring it in. He loved hippogriffs.

"I was thinking, Augustus," her daddy said, distracting her momentarily. "Why don't you go and see your friend James tomorrow night. I'm sure that I can arrange it with his father and mother."

Augustus marked his place in his book. "Can I really? Even on a Saturday night?"

Saturday nights were family nights, according to Fortuna's mummy.

"Mum has gone off, so we don't need to have family night tomorrow. Just this once."

Fortuna felt that her luck was looking up. With Augustus gone, then she would only have Tiberius to contend with, and she could easily push him out of the bed. Any time he began to fall, his magic always caught him, so he wouldn't even wake up!

She turned back to her colors with new determination, only to let out a scream of dismay. Tiberius had not used the brown crayon to color in the hippogriff on the opposite page that she had been working on, but he used it to color in the face of the jarvey that she had been coloring herself! Worse than that, she had been coloring it for her daddy especially! And then Tiberius went and ruined it! She was so mad, she could just punch him!

What stopped Fortuna from causing bodily harm to her brother was the sudden influx of her power that she could feel coursing through her. She managed to grasp ahold of her emotions quick enough to see that Tiberius looked absolutely petrified, and the gratification she felt at that helped her with her plan as she threw herself across her daddy's lap and began to cry pitifully.

"Fortuna, what is it, love?" her daddy asked in a very soft voice as he lifted her up to cradle her against his shoulder.

"Tiberius colored the picture...I wanted to color it for you, Daddy!" she sniffled several times and made her breath very shaky like it was when she really cried hard.

Snape was at a complete loss as to what was wrong with his daughter. He had never seen her cry so much or so often at such very odd things. First she got the idea that Hermione hated her, and now she was overwrought because her brother had colored on her picture? It wasn't like Fortuna at all. She would get angry, like he and Hermione always did. Her temper was so erratic that he and his wife often found themselves issuing counter-curses for hours. Instead of unleashing her holy anger, however, here she was in tears. Anger he could easily contend with. But tears? Over a drawing?

"Here, my love, I'll fix it so that you can color it yourself."

"It's too late now," she whimpered. "I wanted it to be a *surprise*. It isn't any more..."

"I'm sowwy, Fo'tuna," Tiberius whispered, looking down at the floor, the brown crayon held out in his palm, as though he were giving a carrot to a Thestral.

Fortuna cried even harder into Snape's shoulder.

"All right, all right," he said soothingly, attempting to hide his frustration. Merlin, but the child could bawl if she wanted! "That's enough now, Fortuna. Tiberius is very sorry."

"Yes I am," Tiberius whispered.

"You need to *punish* him!" Fortuna insisted.

Snape repositioned his daughter so that she was no longer attached to his neck, and sitting calmly on his lap. "Fortuna, it would be very wrong of me to punish your brother for something that he did without malice. He thought he was helping you. Now, I will fix the picture so that you can continue to color it for me. It will still be a surprise, as I do not know which colors you will use."

Merlin, he was starting to talk like Hermione! He needed to get Augustus out of the house quickly. Perhaps Tiberius as well.

"While you color, I'm going to go Floo Mrs. Potter to see if Augustus can stay with them." Tonight, hopefully, as well as the rest of the weekend.

Thanks, Dad!" Augustus said, picking up his sister's discarded bowl of ice cream. Snape shook his head and walked back into the kitchen where the Floo Network was set up.

He called out the directions, but before he could put his head through, he heard the voice of Ginny call out that he should stay away.

"What is it?" he asked, concerned.

"Severus...James has a horrible case of Dragon Pox!"

Dragon Pox were highly contagious among minors, but could be passed on to adults very easily, if the adult had never been infected.

"I've had them already, Ginny," Snape insisted. "Is there anything I can do for you? A potion, perhaps?"

Good grief. Not only was he now saddled with all three children all weekend, but he was offering to put himself out, as well!

"No, we're all ready for the worst. But Severus-you should know that Gus has been exposed to the Pox. They lie dormant for over a week, you know. Gus has been here almost every day for the past month!"

Snape rocked back on his heels. This was not something he had considered quite yet.

"Oh dear," he whispered.

"Is there anything I can get *you*?" Ginny asked with a laugh.

Fortuna looked up as her daddy stalked back into the living room, his face looking hard. She knew in that instant that Augustus was not going to his friend's house. She was not, however, expecting her daddy to insist that Augustus lift his shirt off.

"Why?" Augustus argued.

"Just do it."

Her daddy sounded very tired, and he was pinching his nose like he did when he was really upset. Fortuna hoped that her brother had done something bad to Jimmy Potter, because then she could still find a way to sleep all alone with her daddy.

Augustus lifted his shirt, revealing his long, pale, thin chest. He had a spot of something just below his nipple, and Tiberius reached out and touched it.

"You haf a wed fweckle," he giggled.

Augustus looked down at his chest. "It's just a rash," he shrugged. "I have more on my thighs."

Tiberius turned to Fortuna and lifted his shirt. "I want wed fweckles," he said wistfully.

Their daddy pinched his nose again. "How do you feel, Augustus? Tired? Sore? Sick?"

Augustus shrugged. "I'm fine. Just hungry."

Fortuna lifted her dress and looked down at her tummy, and promptly screamed. "Augustus gave me his red freckles!"

"That's not fair!" Tiberius yelled, scratching the back of his right thigh.

Fortuna's daddy grabbed Tiberius and pulled down his shorts.

"Ha! You've got 'em on your arse!" Augustus hollered. "Happy now?"

"Yup," Tiberius decided with a smile.

Fortuna heard her daddy sigh. "All right...everyone in the bathtub!"

TBC

You Picked A Fine Time To Leave Me, Lucille

Chapter 3 of 5

Now that Snape has three sick children on his hands, he must either ask Hermione to come home, or ask for help from someone he'd rather not. Wich will he choose?

Snape's bed was a tangle of stuffed animals, kicked off bedroom slippers, blankets, and pillows. Not to mention three children. He didn't see how he could fit himself in, even beside Fortuna who would immediately cuddle around him, so he pulled a chair up close to the bed and transfigured it into a smaller bed at level height with his.

"Daddy," Fortuna mumbled sleepily. He had put a calming draught into the bathtub in order to keep the itch away, but it also served to settle the children down. He was surprised that his daughter could still move.

"Go to sleep, my love," he whispered as he reached out a hand to rub her back.

"No...No, I want to sleep with you, Daddy."

"I'm right here, Fortuna. Go to sleep."

She shook her head violently before rolling over onto his makeshift bed, smacking him in the face with her plush bunny as she did so. Snape pushed the bunny aside and pulled Fortuna into his arms, resting her head against his chest. Her curls felt different than her mother's; they were silkier and finer where Hermione's were coarse and very thick. He would always feel awed by the fact that he and Hermione had made three children that were almost an exact mix of the two of them, especially in looks.

He would look at them sometimes, and look back on his life as a Death-Eater. He swore at least twice a week that if anyone ever tried to hurt his children, he would do worse than simply kill them. He knew that it was irrational, and his love for his trio always frightened him a little in its intensity, but he could not help himself. It was what love felt like, Hermione always told him.

Feeling weary and a little lovesick for his wife, Snape cuddled Fortuna closer to him and fell asleep.

Fortuna awoke happily ensconced in her daddy's arms. The happiness was short-lasting, however, as her red freckles began to itch her horribly, and when she itched them, they hurt!

"Daddy? Daddy, wake up!"

Her daddy opened his eyes and ruffled her hair. "Good morning, Fortuna."

"Daddy, my red freckles itch."

Her daddy took her arm in his hand and rubbed it lightly. "I have a potion we can put on your tummy. I'm sure that Augustus and Tiberius itch as well."

Fortuna didn't think that Augustus should be allowed to use the potion, since he was the one who gave her and Tiberius the red freckles, but she didn't tell her daddy that.

"I need my *own* potion, Daddy, because I'm a *girl*."

He smiled at her and rubbed her nose with his. "The potion is the same for boys and girls, Fortuna."

"But they're going to *touch* it, and they never wash their hands."

"I will be the only one touching the potion, and I always wash my hands. Come, I'll put some on you."

Fortuna settled into her daddy's arms as he carried her off to his bathroom. He had a large circle-shaped mark on his shoulder, and the skin was very soft on the mark. When she touched it, the skin would move along with her finger, and it fascinated her. She had asked him about it many times, but he always told her that it was just a scar from before she was born. He had other scars like it, but the one on his shoulder was her favorite. When she grew up, she wanted one just like it.

She had told him that once, but he only kissed her and told her to finish her bath.

Fortuna's daddy set her on the toilet seat and pulled a vial from the cupboard. "Take off your nightgown, Fortuna," he said as he poured liquid onto his hands.

Fortuna did as she was told, and let out a cry of dismay. She had even more red freckles than the night before! And some of them were puffy like her daddy's scar, but they weren't soft, they were hard.

"I have more!" she cried.

Her daddy looked a little sad and nodded his head. "You'll be getting many more as well. I'm afraid that the Dragon Pox are not a pleasant illness. Hold out your arms now, so I can rub this on you."

Snape was mentally writing out a letter to his wife.

Dear Hermione

We all miss you horribly, of course, but are content in the knowledge that you will be coming home on Monday afternoon. Oh-by the way, what do you think has happened? It appears that James Potter is The Offspring Who Infects His Friends With Dragon Pox. That's right-all three children ill at once! Who would have thought it?

Well, must dash, I have more anti-itch potion to bottle.

Yours ever, Severus

Snape washed his hands while Fortuna put her nightgown back on, and reflected that Hermione would never go for a letter like that. First of all, he'd never get past writing the first sentence for fear of dancing fairies come to sing him to sleep, but it would be like waving a green cape at a charging manticore. Hermione would Portkey herself back home in a Quidditch minute, and he would go down in the history of the family as the Failure Father Who Couldn't Even Take Care Of Three Sick Children While Their Mother Was Out Of Town.

No, the letter must be written skillfully, masterfully. Deviously. He must make light of the children's illness, and assure her that he was indeed Wizard Enough for the challenge.

There was always the possibility, too, that Hermione could catch the Pox. As professors, both he and she took inoculations every year for minor yet infectious inconveniences such as Dragon Pox, Piker's Scurvy, and Golenden Rash. Still, every few years or so, one of the professors came down with a childhood ailment, if the strain was strong enough.

He brushed out Fortuna's hair and plaited it as Hermione had taught him to do, and led her back to the bed. The boys were standing on it, naked, inspecting each other's bodies.

"Look, Dad! Tiberius has spots on his tackle!"

"And Gus has them on his nose!"

Then a thought struck Snape dumb. What if Fortuna got pox on her bits? And how was he going to apply the potion to all those places on his children? He'd be arrested and thrown into Azkaban before you could say Longbottom.

Fortuna turned her nose up at her brothers and crawled back onto the bed that her daddy had made for them.

"Both of you into the bathroom," her daddy said crossly. "And take your clothes with you. Fortuna, here, let's get you covered up." He tucked her in quite well. "Stay covered, and keep your feet warm," he said before he followed her brothers into the bathroom.

Fortuna smiled and snuggled under the covers, happy that her daddy seemed upset with her brothers, and concerned about her. And then he would come back, and they would cuddle some more, and maybe he'd even read to her from her favorite book.

She was very disappointed when her daddy tucked the boys into the big bed after cleaning it up first with his wand, and then he left the room.

"Daddy's making us bwekfast," Tiberius said happily. "You has to sit next to me now, Fo'tuna. Daddy said so."

"No he didn't," Fortuna said, picking up her book. "He tucked me in here, this *is* our bed. That's *your* bed."

Augustus laughed at her. "You think that you're married to Dad, don't you?"

"Daddy's her *boyfriend*," Tiberius said, giggling.

Fortuna frowned and continued to read her book, though the words were too big for her to make out. She at least knew all the letters, and the pictures were so pretty. She could almost block her brothers out of her mind while she concentrated.

She had gotten to the third page when her daddy walked in with trays elevated before him.

"Oooh...it's Fortuna's *boyfriend*," Augustus teased. Tiberius made kissy faces at her.

Fortuna's daddy frowned. "That's quite enough, boys."

He sent the trays to the large bed, and went and picked Fortuna up.

"I need you in the big bed, Fortuna," he said as she grasped onto him.

"No, Daddy, I don't want to be with the boys."

"I'm sorry, love, but it can't be helped, unless you want to be in your own bed in your own room."

Fortuna started to cry. "I just want to be with you, Daddy! I don't feel good!"

It was the truth. Her bones hurt like she had just taken Skelo-gro, and her skin itched, and the boys were teasing her, and the only way she felt good was when her daddy held her because he made her skin feel good when he touched her arm and her back, and she knew that her daddy could fix anything.

"Can't you just wave your wand?" she asked.

Snape could feel the feverish heat from Fortuna's body. A look at his sons confirmed that they all must be running high fevers. Augustus particularly looked bad, his sallow cheeks were flushed, and his dark eyes were glazed over. Neither of them looked particularly interested in the toast and tea on their trays, and Tiberius was crying quietly while hugging himself.

"I don't feew good, too, Daddy," he moaned pitifully.

Snape banished the food trays from the room and managed to gather all three children into his arms as he cuddled them on the bed.

In listing his assets and liabilities, he realized that he had three sick children who would all require individual attention at some point during the next two days. There was only one of him, and he was unwilling to call Hermione from her conference. Not only would it hurt her vocation, it would prove that he was not Wizard Enough to handle the three children. Of course, calling for reinforcements wouldn't help his image one iota. Besides, Hermione loved him for his weaknesses more than his strengths, she always said.

But admitting that one could not take care of one's children...that was more than just a weakness, that was a failing.

Either way, he could not deny that he needed someone. Molly Weasley would no doubt be with her grandson before she went to spread the disease onto her other grandchildren. The potters were with Molly's aforementioned grandson, and therefore no help to him. Dumbledore and McGonagall were immediately ruled out, for though not infirm, they were certainly over the safe age to be around children with Dragon Pox. Shackbolt would more than likely frighten the children, and he didn't want that. He especially didn't want them to see their reflections in his scalp.

No, as far as he could see, he only had two choices, and out of those two, he would have to find the lesser of the two evils.

But first, he would need to write a letter to his wife. He knew that there was always the probability of not writing at all, but when Hermione came home and found her children covered in pox, she would be livid. She'd be livid regardless, however, so it was just a matter of deciding which livid was better, and that was the Hermione who received a letter from her husband, apprising her of the situation.

Snape thought over his decisions, and revised only one. He would ask for help first. His children had fallen back to sleep while he thought, so he extracted himself from the bed carefully and tiptoed to the Floo in the kitchen.

"Nymphadora Tonks," he said as he threw Floo Powder onto the grate.

TBC

Crunchy Granola Suite

Chapter 4 of 5

When Hermione goes to a Charms Symposium, Snape must deal with their three children, and one of them is just as Slytherin as he is!

I just realized this morning that I had never uploaded this chapter to TPP. It's over a year old, so you may have read it (if you're following the story), so nothing new. But I am working on more!

Enjoy.

~*~*~*~

When Fortuna opened her eyes, it was Tonks that she saw in her daddy's chair, and she was confused.

"Hello, Miss Tonks."

The woman set her book down and smiled brightly. "Hiya, Fortuna. How you feeling, hon?"

Fortuna felt a little better, but she thought it was best to keep that information to herself for the time being. "I feel hungry. Where's my daddy? Did he leave me?"

Tonks was out of her chair and kneeling before Fortuna in an instant. "Oh, no, of course not! He just asked me to come and help him out for the next day or two, until your mummy comes home. Right now, your daddy and Remus are putting clean sheets on you and your brother's beds."

Fortuna wrinkled her nose. "Remus, too?"

Tonks shrugged. "He was at my place when your daddy called me. Now don't look that way, Remus thinks the world of you and your brothers."

Fortuna didn't like Remus very much. She heard her daddy tell her mummy once a long time ago that he was still trying to forgive Remus, and if he had to forgive him, then

Remus must have done something very nasty. Her mummy, instead of *making* her daddy forgive Remus as she always did with Fortuna and her brothers when they got into fights, only told her daddy that she understood, and that she wouldn't press him. Fortuna knew then that Remus must have done something really bad to her daddy, and she decided that she wouldn't forgive him, either.

She did admit, though, during rare brunches, that Remus made the best waffles, and she hoped out loud that he'd make some while he stayed.

"I bet he will," Tonks said brightly. "Especially if you ask him nicely."

Tiberius woke up next, and Tonks ruffled his curly hair with her long fingers.

"That feels good, Miss Tonks," Tiberius said, yawning. "My head itches."

"Mine too," Augustus said. "And I'm hungry. Is Remus really going to make us waffles?"

"I think it's a good idea myself," Tonks said. "We'll see what Remus says. In the meantime, let's get your slippers on you lot, and get you all in your right beds."

Snape flicked his wand over Augustus's bed to turn down the covers when Tonks ushered the two boys in.

"Fortuna's in her bed, and Remus- I think the kids are all pretty unanimous on waffles for lunch."

"They didn't eat a stitch of breakfast," Snape murmured as he lifted Tiberius onto his bed.

"I was too itchy to eat breakfast, Daddy," Tiberius said. "Now I'm hungry, and I want waffles!"

"I'll make you waffles," Remus promised, ruffling the boy's hair.

Snape had only one curly-haired son, and he noticed that people couldn't help but touch Tiberius's curls. Augustus had the same unfortunate hair and nose as his father, and his look of perpetual scowl was off-putting to most people until they got to know him. Snape felt grateful when Remus turned and gave the older boy the same attention, and Snape remarked to himself how fair Lupin could be if he so chose.

He knew of Fortuna's dislike for the werewolf. He heard her talking to her doll about it the year prior, and he had felt a great surge of love and pride for his daughter that he knew was wrong, yet he couldn't help but want someone on his side. Hermione would not press him to make amends with Remus, but she would not let go of her trust and love of him, either.

The adult part of Snape, the daddy part of himself knew that he needed to set an example for his children of forgiveness for past wrongs. The child in him always told the adult in him to bugger off, and the adult always did so, because the adult hated Remus as much as the child did.

He found Fortuna in her room, but instead of being in bed, she was standing on the chair of her child-sized vanity table, looking at her naked body in the mirror. He knew that the spots unnerved her, and they unnerved him as well. He felt powerless to help her, and he hoped that she and her brothers were ignorant to his feelings.

"You need to be in bed, my love, and you should have socks on your feet."

Fortuna turned to him and dropped her nightgown. "Why do I have spots, Daddy?"

Snape helped her into bed and took a pair of socks from her drawer, making sure to choose soft ones that would not irritate her skin more. "It's part of the illness. They'll go away after a while."

Fortuna seemed to accept this, so he sat back and took on the task of writing to his wife.

Fortuna ate her waffles while her daddy wrote a letter. She loved to watch him use his magic wand, when he summoned things. She wished she could perform spells as seamlessly as he and her mummy did, but all she ever did, even when she tried, was blow things up (like Augustus's fish), or set things on fire (Tiberius's hair). Things even sometimes hurled themselves at people she was angry at (she was rarely allowed in the kitchen when Mummy or Daddy were chopping things, and never allowed in Daddy's laboratory), but she had never actually managed to *make* something come or go when she wasn't in a temper. Her daddy always said that she would learn those things when she got her letter from Hogwarts, but that seemed like so far away.

"What are you writing, daddy?"

He didn't look up. "I'm writing to your mother about the three of you."

Fortuna frowned. "Will she come home from Latidah?"

"Latvia, darling. And no, not until Monday." He looked up and gave her a slight smile. "I know you want her here, but she needs to be where she is right now. I promise that Tonks and Lupin and I will all take good care of you."

Fortuna gave a pout. She didn't want Remus or Tonks to take care of her, she wanted her daddy. But then again, her daddy didn't read aloud quite as well as her mummy did. Daddy always got too involved in the book and would begin to read silently, as though he had forgotten about her. Her mummy always made sure that she could see the pictures, and she would hold her close while she read, and Mummy always smelled good. Sometimes Daddy would smell like the smoke from his laboratory, and she didn't like that smell. He especially smelled bad after he made Remus's potion that kept him from being dangerous.

She hoped it tasted bad and made Remus feel horrible after he took it.

"When is Monday, Daddy?"

"The day after tomorrow."

"Is Mummy coming back in the morning, or in the night time?"

"In the morning, I hope."

Fortuna hoped so, too.

~*~*~*~

Snape stared at his ceiling, counting his good fortune. The children were fine, and though a little cranky from being forced to stay in bed, they seemed content. Hermione had answered his urgent owl with a note saying that she would stay where she was, and he congratulated himself on his sly wording. He had written a letter that told her the facts while glossing over the bad parts, and he made her seem missed and needed, without making her feel as though she would have to rush home the next minute. The best part, though, was that she seemed to think that he had called upon Lupin out of necessity, rather than him being simply a tag-along to Tonks.

Most importantly, Fortuna seemed to be missing her mother a bit. She had commented that Lupin did not fix spaghetti quite the right way, and that her mummy made the best meatballs. It was a small victory in the scheme of things, but Snape felt good about it.

"Daddy?"

He turned to see his youngest, eyes wide and innocent looking, standing next to his bed.

"Are you all right, Tiberius?" He lifted the boy up with him.

"I can't sweep, Daddy."

"Why not? Too itchy?"

Tiberius shook his head against Snape's chest. "Wemus and Tonks are praying weally loud, and I can't sweep."

"Daddy, Remus is *killing* Tonks," Fortuna said, coming into the room, and climbing on the bed.

The pieces started to fall into place.

"They're praying," Tiberius said. "That's why they keep saying, 'Oh God, oh God' and 'Pwease, God, pwease, don't stop!'"

Fortuna shook her head. "Tonks keeps screaming. Remus is hurting her, he hurts people like that when Daddy doesn't give him his potion."

Snape pushed Tiberius off of him and went into the hallway. He could hear the lovers clearly and shook his head in disgust. Clearly, not living with children made even a seasoned Auror like Tonks forgetful of silencing charms. What's more was that it was nearly one in the morning, and the children should all be asleep, and that grated on Snape. He gave them points for timing, but subtracted all of them and more for not being more careful.

He stopped at the door to the guest room and pounded hard before walking in without an invitation. The sight that met his eyes was almost exactly what he expected, and he sneered evilly.

"Were you aware, Lupin," he said conversationally, leaning against the doorjamb, "that as a wizard, you are able to cast a silencing charm on your room? Indeed, on yourself, if needed?"

Lupin stared at him, dumbfounded.

"Tonks, tell me, do you know what children think when they hear two adults copulating in the middle of the night?"

Tonks's eyes grew wide.

"No? Well, if you're Tiberius, you automatically think that the adults are praying. No harm there. If you're Fortuna, you think that the two adults are attempting to kill each other. Either way, if I were in your...*position*, I would certainly think up a very good excuse before the morning, as you will most likely be asked for one. Good evening."

Not waiting for a reply, he turned on his heel and shut the door.

Hermione was going to kill him.

TBC

Folsom Prison Blues

Chapter 5 of 5

When Hermione goes to a Charms Symposium, Snape must deal with their three children, and one of them is just as Slytherin as he is!

Fortuna opened her eyes slowly, realizing that she was with Tiberius, safely ensconced in her parent's bed, and she could hear her daddy taking a shower in the bathroom. From the kitchen, she could hear the sounds of breakfast being made and smiled as she snuggled against her daddy's pillow. Any minute, her mummy would come in and join them in bed with a tray of food, and Augustus would come too...

Fortuna sat up suddenly, remembering that her mummy had gone to La-tee-va, but not to bring back another brother, for another reason, and she had red spots all over because of Augustus. To make matters worse, Remus was the one cooking in the kitchen, banging her mummy's pots and pans around. Fortuna frowned and stood up in bed, then made her way into the kitchen, hugging her doll tightly to her chest.

Remus was standing by the stove, wearing pajamas. He was cooking in Fortuna's mummy's pans, and using a metal spatula, even though her mummy always got mad at her daddy for using metal.

"You're doing it wrong," she said.

Remus turned to Fortuna and gave a little grimace. That made her happy. "What am I doing wrong?"

"You can't use metal in that pan, it hurts the teff-oh-lawn."

Remus had the nerve to smile at her. "It's all right, I put a spell on the spatula to protect the Teflon. I promise, I won't scratch your mummy's pans."

He put a spell on the stove, and the food began to cook itself. Remus then took Fortuna by the hand and led her to the table where he sat her in one of the chairs, and pulled another up close before sitting in it himself.

"Fortuna, I need to apologize to you."

"Why?" If her daddy didn't have to accept his apologies, she didn't either.

"Because last night, Tonks and I were being noisy, and you got confused."

Fortuna suddenly remembered why she was in her daddy's room when she woke up. "You were hurting her! Where is she?" Fortuna jumped up and started racing off

down the hall to find Tonks.

"Fortuna, I didn't hurt her..." his voice trailed off as she opened the guest room door.

Tonks was just pulling on a jumper, looking perfectly fine. "Good morning, Fortuna!" she said brightly as Fortuna threw herself at her. "Goodness, look at you!"

Fortuna didn't know what Miss Tonks meant until she picked her up and held one of her arms in her hand. Fortuna immediately began to scream bloody murder.

Snape was enjoying a leisurely shower, something he would not be permitted had Tonks and Lupin not agreed to help him out. They might have made a mistake the night before, but they seemed more than repentant about it. Tonks had even mentioned that they had been trying to conceive (being the reason for their obvious oversight of discretion as well as their need for each other at a friend's house), and that any advice regarding child rearing that he might have to give would be most gratefully accepted. Snape felt that she might have divulged a bit too much about her personal life, but he shrugged off his feelings of embarrassment long enough to deliver an appropriately scathing retort that left Tonks red-eyed and shaky.

More importantly, if they could just get through the day, Hermione would be back the next morning. She would fill in all of the holes that he could never seem to fill for his children, she would comfort them much better than he could, and they would be easier. This he knew.

He had just started to relax when he heard Fortuna screaming at the top of her lungs about something. At first, he thought it was simply one of her tantrums, but as the screams grew more frantic and hysterical, he left the shower quickly and belted a black dressing gown around himself as he drew close to the screaming.

Fortuna was being held by Tonks, who looked very white, particularly white since Fortuna herself was green. Her skin also appeared to be thicker than normal and very knobby, and her eyes looked bloodshot. Tiberius and Augustus followed him into the room.

"Daddy!" she cried, holding her arms out to him.

Snape lifted her and held her close. "It's the final stage of the illness, that's all. Your skin will go back to normal in a few weeks."

"Weeks!" She shrieked. "I want mummy! Mummy-e-eeeeeee!"

"I wants mummy too," Tiberius sobbed, grabbing Snape's leg.

"Yeah, me too," Augustus mumbled, crushing Tiberius against Snape's leg as he leaned against his father as well, wrapping his arms around his chest. Snape sighed.

Fortuna sat in her parent's large bathtub, which was filled with a really thick and yucky-smelling potion, with her brothers. Her daddy was smoothing the potion over their faces and necks and scalps as they soaked. He had said that the potions would help their skin keep from feeling too tight and itchy, but she didn't think it was working. She itched worse than ever, and her head was really stuffy. She really didn't like sitting down in the bathtub, either. Her bottom felt really lumpy. What was worse was that there were only a few small places where she didn't have dragon skin-the back of her neck, a spot on her lower back, and her palms and the bottoms of her feet. That skin was still smooth and pink, though her neck and back had a smattering of the red freckles that Augustus had given them.

She didn't think she would ever forgive Augustus for giving her and Tiberius his red freckles. She wondered if he had caught them from Rene Weasley, one of Jimmy Potter's cousins. Rene seemed to have freckles all over his face, and they matched his red hair.

"Are you feeling any better?" her daddy asked, sounding tired. He hadn't even gotten dressed yet, and Fortuna was beginning to worry that he was upset with her and her brothers for getting sick. Tiberius also felt that way, he had told her so when their daddy left the room for a minute.

"I want out now, Daddy," Tiberius whined. "I wants to go back to bed now, and Remus can give me something to eat because my tummy is growling."

"All right, let's get you rinsed off," their daddy mumbled as he magically emptied the tub of potion, and then he switched on the shower head.

Tonks came in and rubbed thick lotion all over Fortuna while Snape did the same thing to the boys, and then Tonks took Fortuna to her bed and tucked her in well.

"Here's a 'kerchief, lover," she murmured as she set different stuffed animals around Fortuna. "And if you feel like it, here's a brand-new coloring book and crayons that your daddy ordered special for you last night."

Fortuna felt too miserable to enjoy her new gifts. Instead, she snuggled under the covers and took a nap. Her mummy always said that everything looks better after a good nap and a nice cup of tea. Maybe Tonks would get her a cup later.

The following morning found Snape snuggled between Fortuna and Tiberius, and Augustus was once again pressing his little brother into Snape's side as he cuddled against him. The master bed was a tangle of green limbs and blankets, and Augustus was snoring lightly. The rest of the house was perfectly still in that early-morning way, just before the sun peeks over the horizon. He could feel the anticipation of dawn in the air, or was it just the anticipation of Hermione returning home?

Unable to continue sleeping, even though he was bone-tired, Snape disentangled himself from his children and stepped out into the kitchen, stretching as he went. At his back, floor embers crackled merrily in the pre-dawn chill, and as he poured himself a cup of coffee, they sprang to life, and he turned just in time to see Hermione spinning madly in the ashes.

"Severus!" she breathed as she ran into his arms. "I took the first Portkey to London from the Latvian Ministry, I couldn't stay away another second!"

As Snape folded her into his embrace, he felt all of his tension ebb away as though she were absorbing it from him.

"Ah, Hermione," he murmured against her sooty hair. There were so many things he could have told her at the moment-how much he loved her, how magnificent she felt against him, how wonderful she smelled, but he could not quite make the words form, so he settled on a long, passionate kiss that made her melt against him and fist her hands in his nightshirt.

"Missed me, did you?" she murmured when he released her.

"Just a little."

"Where are Remus and Tonks?"

"Probably having a shag in their room. You do realize that we will be forced to burn their sheets?"

"Of course, darling," she muttered in a distracted way, nuzzling her nose into his shirt.

"Possibly the Guest Bed as well."

"Whatever you say, my love."

"We might as well re-do the entire room. Maybe have some decorators in and have it done up properly."

Hermione smiled and kissed him once more. "Where are the children? In our bed?"

He nodded, and taking her by the hand, led her to their room.

The children could have looked like little cherubs, were it not for their green bespeckled skin.

"They look monstrous!" Hermione whispered.

"You should see how yellow and sharp their teeth have gotten. And they can't stop drooling."

They stood together for several long moments, drinking in the sight of the children, Hermione's face pressed to Snape's chest. All would be well again. He could stop worrying actively about the children, and let his wife spend her energy with that. He could once again be a voice of reason when she started fussing over them. Mr. Mom no more, he mused.

"Oh, Severus, I just don't know how to tell you this," Hermione said before his peace-of-mind had been fully restored.

All of his tension returned. "Are you sick as well?"

Hermione paused too long for his liking. "Well, no, I'm not ill. I went to see the on-call Mediwitch at the convention as soon as you contacted me Friday night, and, well...she said that I don't have the dragon pox."

"What do you have?" A cold feeling settled into the pit of his stomach. Was it serious? Was it curable?

"I'm going to have another baby. I'm pregnant again."

It took a full five minutes for her news to settle in. Not terminal. Nothing to cure. Pregnant. Pregnant. Something in the back of his gobsmacked mind began to tickle a bit. "But you're on the potion..."

"Yes, well, it's not exact, is it? I mean, we have three when we were supposed to stop at two." She paused and worried her hands. "You're angry, I can tell. Severus, I promise, I've taken the potion faithfully. After Tiberius was born, I had my Healer make the potion stronger. What can I say? You're just...virile. Nothing can stop you or me."

"You wanted another one, though, didn't you? The potion has a hard time working against your desire."

Tears filled her eyes, and he felt ashamed for a brief moment. "Perhaps you should start taking one as well."

"Perhaps I should," he agreed, distracted.

"Are you really that angry about it?"

He thought for a moment, and then pulled her close. "No, no, of course I'm not angry," he muttered. It wasn't exactly a lie. Disappointed? No, not really. Confused? Definitely, and maybe just a little hurt. After all, they had agreed to no more, hadn't they? But then, the laws of physics state that it does in fact take two to tango. Still, four? Children already outnumbered parents in the house, what would it be like with one more? Would they really be worse off? Could it be better?

She smiled at him and squeezed his hands before going to the bed and gathering the children against her.

Snape just stared at them. Four children. "Bloody Weasley's shouldn't have a corner on the market," he muttered before joining his family and settling in to a deep sleep, the first he had in three days.

The End

AN: I based the looks of the children on the Wizard of the Month at JKR's site-Chauncey Oldridge-First Recorded Case of Dragon Pox: <http://www.hp-lexicon.org/images/wizcards/wom/oldridge-cut.gif>. The incubation period, red spots on white skin, etc., actually comes from the Muggle affliction chicken pox (as you've probably already guessed). I have no idea if they start out the same, but I think that a lot of Muggle-born wee wizards have been afflicted, but were whisked off to St. Mungo's before their parents could catch wise. At least, that's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Sorry for ending so abruptly, but I've already given the kids a disease, made Snape invite Remus Lupin into his house, and terrorized the children with sounds of adults shagging next door. There's not a whole lot else I could do, unless Augustus starts breathing fire and sets his bedcurtains ablaze. Which actually is a really good idea, but I don't really want to go into that.

Big thanks to anyone that's taken the time to read, and even more thanks to those who have reviewed.

Also, special thanks to Geek6 for her unfailing Britpicking abilities, and for always telling me that she likes it, even though it's crap! I love you, Geekus Maximus!

~Zambi