

Here Comes the Snake

by expected aberrance

The third true prophecy of Sybill Trelawney, and the worst day of Severus Snape's life...

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 2

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Here comes the Snake

Disclaimer: YES! HAHAAAA! THEY'RE ALL MINE!!! Reality check: not. Please don't sue. Title belongs to the Cherry Poppin' Daddies.

This was my attempt to write an in-character parody. Please drop me a line and tell me how I did.

Alternate titles for this were: "The Perils of Being Snapish" and "Paranoia: a Healthy Sense of Self-Preservation." Thanks, and enjoy the ride.

It was a perfectly ordinary morning, at least for a man accustomed to awakening to the cawing of a raven-shaped alarm clock. The sun was shining and the birds flitted nimbly about, emitting chirps of greeting with song interspersed, though mercifully not in the vicinity of Severus Snape, who would be unable to handle such a picturesque scene until at least noon. Nevertheless, he opened his eyes to the lovely dim of a dawn in the dungeons with a bit more enthusiasm than usual. Today was Friday, and that meant only eleven hours before the freedom of the weekend. Well, he still had hall duty tonight, but his evening after that promised to more than make up for the tiny sampling of hell vaguely resembling his Potions classes. He began his morning ritual by glaring at the offending clock-bird, a gift of Albus's on the one birthday he had not received socks from the man, and the beast returned his stare with one baleful eye. The battle of wills ended with the raven submitting in a petulant squawk, and Snape arose from bed assured of his unmatched skills in intimidation. He went about his routine of showering, teeth-cleaning (he had recently discovered that very excellent rewards came of this), and dressing with a chipper air that would dissipate immediately upon human contact. A mere half-hour from the croak of the raven later, he was swathed in black, sneer firmly in place and hair not yet greasy, ready to take on the hellspawn which masqueraded as Hogwarts students.

He made his way to the Great Hall with minimal student encounters, resulting in only twenty points from Hufflepuff for the offense of 'sickening cheerfulness at an ungodly hour.' He took his usual seat without glancing at the rest of the Head Table, needing the aid of a strong cup of coffee before dealing with his colleagues. This being the case, he did not notice the person in the seat to his left until she had the temerity to speak to him.

"The morn is dark, and its wind carries the Reaper over Hogwarts!"

Snape immediately turned to his right to ask Flitwick for the marmalade, of which he already had a large portion on his plate. Trelawney, completely missing the subtle request for less conversation, continued in her dramatic stage whisper.

"A strange feeling has drawn me hither out of the peace and quiet of my tower, for a task of great import."

Snape, never one for conversation in the morning, could stand the prattling no longer.

"Yes, I believe that particular sensation is commonly known as hunger. I've experienced it myself on rare occasion. It would vastly improve the aura of this table if you were to add to the silence instead of the noise."

"I sense a terrible danger in the future of one of the students!"

"Excellent. Perhaps your Inner Eye can help Potter if he happens to choke on his bacon. Why don't you bless him with your presence?"

His voice grew softer with every word, a warning apparent to everyone but the Seer.

"One will leave us before the morrow, for I have seen the cloud of despair in the wake of disaster. A painful passing into the world beyond awaits the unfortunate..."

"It will be you passing if you don't..."

"Ahem. Severus, please pass the dish of marmalade you have caught in a death grip. I rather doubt it deserves it. Sybill, I don't think Severus is quite up to discourse at the moment. Though I am very interested in your opinion on that clever Muggle invention, the Magic Eight Ball."

Dumbledore's pointed look in Snape's direction contained equal measure of reprimand and twinkle before he engaged the Divination Professor in passionate debate on the subject. Snape focused his attention once more on his breakfast, expecting no more interruption from any quarter. He was startled a few minutes later when two hands latched themselves on to his left arm, prompting him to growl.

"I swear to Merlin, Sybill..."

Her eyes had rolled until only the whites showed as she stared at him, and he could not remove himself from her grip. When she spoke, it was in a harsh tone quite unlike her usual blather.

"BEWARE O SERPENT; FOR THOU HAST SPENT THY SEED UNWISELY. THE SEAT OF THY PROGENY WILL BE TORN ASUNDER BY THE CLAW OF THE LIONESS BEFORE THE DARKEST HOUR IF THOU DOST NOT APPEASE HER."

The Great Hall had grown quiet from her outburst, and her final syllable echoed in the silence. The students gaped at the scene unfolding at the Head Table.

Snape was the first to recover his voice.

"Come off it, you old bat. And unhand me."

He noticed the collective stare of the entire hall focused on him and sneered in their general direction.

"Well? What are you looking at?"

Several hundred eyes suddenly found their plates fascinating.

Dumbledore, however, looked troubled.

"Do not discount her, Severus, for I believe that was a true prophecy."

"Amazing prediction, considering Voldemort's quite dead already. Get off me, woman!"

He managed to regain possession of his arm just as Trelawney seemed to become aware of her surroundings. She blinked in confusion.

"What? Where am I?"

"Clever joke indeed. Would you care to predict the former Dark Lord's rising as well?"

"Severus, by Serpent I think she meant you."

He looked at Dumbledore warily for any sign that the old man was putting him on.

"I'm sorry, young man, but from what I can decipher, your testicles are in grave peril."

Snape decided that all the sweets the codger consumed had finally rotted his brain to the point of delusion. He heard a giggle come from another part of the table and glared at the suspect. A snort escaped someone further down to his left, quickly followed by an all-out guffaw that triggered laughter from all occupants of the Head Table other than Dumbledore and Trelawney, the former looking somber and the latter busy gazing absently at her tea cup. Snape was about to retort with a scathing comment concerning the questionable sanity of his employer when his coffee cup, which had been sitting by his plate fairly innocuously up to this point, tipped over, spilling hot liquid rather forcefully in his direction. He scooted the chair backward in time, and was prepared to dismiss the event as an accident until the cup transfigured itself into an entire coffee pot and flew after him in an attempt to dump the scalding beverage in his lap. Two decades of experience spying and dealing with Lucius Malfoy had luckily honed his instincts to rapier-fine perfection, and he leapt back over his seat with speed rivaling an Olympic gymnast, drawing his wand in the same motion and blasting the possessed kitchenware into tiny pieces.

"Whoever was responsible for that will greatly regret it!"

He glared around the table looking for any hint of guilt. Finding nothing immediately suspicious besides the entire faculty attempting to stifle laughter, he expanded his search to the rest of the Hall. However, the majority of the students seemed to be carefully absorbed in their plates.

"It was fate, Severus. There's nothing you can do."

Dumbledore stared grimly at his plate for a few moments before the twinkle returned with a vengeance.

"Severus, as long as you're standing up, would you mind passing me the honey?"

"Albus, some bloody bastard just attacked me!"

"You cannot fight destiny, my son. Harry did not cower from his fate."

"Of course, Potter's was to destroy the greatest evil of our age, and I'm expected to meekly accept gelding! I will not follow your senile ramblings any longer!"

Snape was livid and fast approaching the spittle-coating stage of ire.

"The honey, please."

Snape's glower vacillated between the sickening mass of rainbow sprinkles, jelly, jam, preserves, chocolate sauce, caramel, marshmallow, whipped cream, butter, marmalade, maple syrup, pineapple, peanut butter, and, inexplicably, Tabasco, that formerly resembled chocolate-chip-blueberry-banana-cinnamon-raisin pancakes and the lunatic prepared to eat it. He violently grabbed the annoyingly cute plastic bear containing bee spittle from the table and hurled it (unintentionally, of course) at the Headmaster's head, off which it bounced, spewing copious amounts of the sticky substance all over Dumbledore and the plate in front of him.

"Thank you, Severus."

The younger man barely heard him as he stormed past, almost reaching the door before a chair adorned with long spikes bearing faint resemblance to thorns was thrust into his path with disemboweling force. He jumped aside just in time, feeling a sharp point scrape his outer hip.

"Oops, sorry there Pr'fessor. Felt like somethin' bit me toes."

The half-giant Gamekeeper survived the encounter only by the dint of Snape's self-control; he managed to point his wand at the chair rather than Hagrid before reducing his target to atoms. He exited the Great Hall with a wary glide, making subtle eye contact over the tables with the one individual not gaping at the completely nutty behavior of the Potions master.

Once outside, he was immediately beset upon by several suits of armor bearing longswords, spears, and an eggbeater. He took great pleasure in blasting all the furnishings in the hallway, including the paintings that had the audacity to laugh at him and the flower settings, which had irritated him ever since Flitwick redecorated. He took not a few deep, calming breaths before he deemed himself capable of making his way to his rooms, taking the quickest way with the least potential for injury. Upon arrival, he checked himself over with every curse-detecting spell he knew and, finding nothing, set about analyzing the threat against his person and those likely to be behind it in a detached and collected manner. He was a Slytherin, after all, and it would not do to go about it in a foolishly hot-headed way. The best poisons were both excruciatingly painful and undetectable.

His immediate guess as to the other player in the prophecy was certainly capable of all the incidents thus far and much, much more, a fact that he had previously been proud of. He shuddered as he considered just how talented she was and decided that an apology would be acceptable under the circumstances if he wanted to remain on the receiving end of her more enjoyable skills rather than neutered. However, he was completely mystified at what he could have done to her to merit such hostility. She had had no complaints that he knew of last night, and though things in that area had started off a bit slow in the beginning of their relationship, he hadn't noticed anything amiss recently. Perhaps if she was feeling merciful she would tell him, especially if he did the completely unexpected and groveled. When he reached the safety of his private office, he sat down at his desk and retrieved a small unlabeled book from the middle drawer. Quill in hand, he prepared himself for the humiliating but necessary task of actually apologizing for his behavior, whatever it may have been.

I am very sorry for whatever I have done to you and will never do it again. I promise that as soon as I figure out what it is, I will make it up to you however you see fit.

Hopefully, she had interpreted his earlier nonverbal message correctly and would be able to respond immediately, if she was still speaking to him. He was relieved to see neat script appear beneath his scrawl.

Thank you for the apology and the blank check, though I'm not sure why you are issuing them. Are you feeling well? What happened at breakfast?

He debated whether her response was meant as further torture or the truth. Gryffindor she may be, but a more brilliant witch could not be found in England. If she'd applied her considerable intellect to the realm of the devious, he could not consider anything beyond her. However, for the first time in his life, he'd found something in which to place trust and decided he wasn't going to give it up just yet.

Someone or something is bent on castrating me. Trelawney gave an apparently true prophecy. According to her, I have 'spent my seed unwisely' and will suffer the 'claw of the Lioness' unless I make amends for my actions. I was then assaulted by my coffee cup, Hagrid's chair, and several suits of armor. Do you have any idea of what's going on?

The pause before her reply concerned him slightly.

None whatsoever. Are you guilty of something I don't know about? And have you examined yourself for curses?

The answer to your first question appears to be yes, though I've no idea what it might be. The answer to the second is so obvious as to not require a response.

I'm just trying to help. Do you think Dumbledore's found out about us?

Possibly. He certainly is quite eager to see the prediction come true.

Damn, they've spotted me. I have to go. I'll see if I can find anything about this 'Lioness,' as it doesn't seem to be me.

Very well. I'll contact you during second period.

Stay safe, Severus.

I'll do my best.

He knew of only one other that fit the terms of the prophecy, and if it was indeed her, the urge to castrate him was a reasonable reaction to his offense, which he felt not the least bit guilty for, and in fact repeated as often as possible. Nevertheless, as prudence required a resolution to the situation that did not involve impotence by painful means, he made haste to the Transfiguration classroom. On the way, more than one of the suits of armor mysteriously lowered its mace or club as he passed by, forcing Snape to initiate maneuvers of emasculation avoidance that were quickly becoming second nature to him.

"Minerva?"

Both classroom and office appeared to be empty, which was unusual because McGonagall was in the habit of reserving the time just before her classes for student conferences.

"Minerva, I'm sure we can discuss whatever this is about as reasonable adults."

It was best not to give her more evidence than she already had, if any.

A movement from the corner of the classroom drew his eye, and (with his privates carefully guarded) he turned in time to see a tabby pad toward him from between one of the desks and the wall.

"There you are. As I was saying, we've had an adequate working relationship for more than a decade and a half. I believe that whatever issue you have with me or my behavior could be...Minerva?"

As she came closer, he noticed that she was paying peculiar attention to his midsection and had a strange glassy look in her eyes that he hadn't witnessed since...

"Oh bloody sodding hell!"

The glassy look had evolved into a wild expression of feline madness, and she pounced. He spun around the desk, eyeing the door in desperation as he searched for his wand in his robes. What in Merlin's name? He never dropped his wand.

"You are a witch, Minerva! Not a cat! Fight it!"

Man and woman-beast edged carefully around the desk in the ancient dance of predator and prey. Every move made by the one was inversely copied by the other, forward and back, right and left. Snape saw the cat tense for another attack, and as McGonagall leapt over the desk between them, Snape upended it, making a mad dash for the

egress in the process. Luck was on his side for the first time that day, as papers and an ink bottle left by an errant student interfered with the cat's planned trajectory, and he reached the door and managed to shut it before the irate Animagus caught him. He leaned against the door in relief, wincing in sympathy for the poor frame as it bore the wrath of the hissing, spitting feline.

Ruddy catnip! Someone, not likely to be Minerva, as she would never voluntarily subject herself to the substance, had spelled it onto his boxers. Very recently, in fact, because his underwear definitely had not been covered in the stuff when he dressed this morning. That eliminated his second suspect, unless this was some kind of conspiracy. In addition, he was now stuck at the opposite end of the castle, wandless. Snape was counting all the suits of armor he'd encounter on the way back to his quarters and spare wand when a most hated voice interrupted his musings.

"Severus, I see that you've been giving Minerva catnip again."

The headmaster stood in front of Snape, wearing an expression that roughly translated to: I know you've done something very very bad, causing me to be very very disappointed in you, and now you're going to tell me everything you've done wrong since the last time I looked at you like this. Snape just sneered.

"Yes, Albus. I decided that life as a eunuch has been a dream of mine all along, and that having Minerva do the deed under the influence of catnip would be the least painful and most efficient method."

"I'm so proud of you, my boy! But must it involve catnip? You know we won't be able to let her out of there until it passes through her system. I'll have to cancel her classes for the rest of the day now."

"Gods forbid Minerva or her students to be inconvenienced! I shall endeavor to find another mode of self-sterilization less burdensome for the inhabitants of Hogwarts."

"You're finally the man you were meant to be, Severus." Dumbledore sniffed, wiping at what may have been a tear, but was probably honey, as the droplet refused to budge from his cheek. "Well, so to speak."

Here comes the snake and he circles your leg

He's come to play and make your

body parts shake

He comes swervin' down your hall

It'll feel so good when he gives it his all

Did your God show you the door

Well, I'm here to eat your apple to the core

Here comes the snake

First part done!

A/N: This bout of foolishness was brought on by too much South Park and Reno 911. Thanks for reading, and please tip the muse with a review on the way out. Management would like to say that no Snapes were seriously harmed in this production. At least not irreparably. And I know I've read something about bloody bludger buggery before, so I hope whoever came up with it will forgive me.

Here Comes the Snake, Part II

Chapter 2 of 2

The third true prophecy of Sybill Trelawney, and the worst day of Severus Snape's life...

Here Comes the Snake, Part Two

Disclaimer: Last night I had this truly awesome dream where me, Robert DeNiro and a friend of mine tried to get struck by lightning in New York City, then he (DeNiro) started zapping pedestrians with this Tesla coil thingy and- what? No, I don't own them at all.

"Tried to hit me in the *balls*, but he missed."

-Gnocco, Thomas Harris's *Hannibal*

By midway through second period Potions, he was desperate. Despite the personal wards rivaling that of Gringotts that he'd erected, everything pointy and painful seemed to gravitate unerringly toward his doomed genitals. Furthermore, he was no closer to solving this sick mystery than before, as his contact in Gryffindor, the only logical haven of his assailant, had not found anyone who harbored the unholy wrath necessary for the horrifying attacks against him.

His first class had consisted of third-year Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs, a dangerous combination under the circumstances. The class was advanced enough to necessitate several hazardous ingredients and tools, and the students were either entirely too clever for their own well being or too incredibly dense to be trusted with such substances, despite what Dumbledore may insist.

There had been a particularly nasty incident involving a broken glass stirring rod and bubbling dragon bile that had left a burn on his upper hip midway through the period when he'd been foolish enough to make his usual rounds of the classroom. Octavianus Parker, a snot-nosed Ravenclaw cursed with Know-It-All syndrome of the Granger

variety without the benefit of genius, had actually disputed his expertise concerning the Aetus Intercapedo draught, distracting his attention from the Hufflepuff side of the classroom. His guard was down from the respite he'd been granted since the beginning of the class, so he was caught unprepared when the contents of half the cauldrons in the room exploded in his direction, deftly avoiding all the students while depositing boiling liquids containing Merlin knows what on the bottom half of his robes. He was able to spell the melting fabric off of himself before the toxic liquids soaked completely through his clothing, but a flask containing dragon bile and the disputed stirrer slipped under his defenses, shattering against Parker's desk and sending glass shards and hot acid toward him.

Snape had managed to avoid most of it, but the jagged broken edge of the glass rod sliced through layers of clothing before digging into his hip. The pain pushed him far beyond screaming stage, and his voice rasped from the effort of restraining himself from tearing his entire class limb from limb.

"A hundred points from Ravenclaw, and two hundred from Hufflepuff. You now owe me twelve feet of parchment on the correct method of brewing this potion. Parker, you have detention with Filch until you no longer have the urge to question my authority. Class dismissed!"

He'd hobbled over to his desk and collapsed in his chair, casting a room-wide "evanesco" before summoning an antidote to the bile and a bottle of firewhisky. He carefully extracted the glass, then applied the potion to his burnt skin. Subsequent to taking several large swigs of the whisky, he locked every ingredient and mildly risky implement out of student reach from the safety of his desk. When his next class entered, they were treated to the sight of a mildly sloshed Potions master ensconced behind his desk. He assigned them a review exercise that was nowhere near his usual standard (far too much of the class was able to complete it), and a relatively peaceful silence descended upon the classroom.

That is, until the sword from the lovely tableaux de morte paperweight Lucius had given him for his thirtieth birthday slid out of the authentic shrunken Aztec skull's eye socket and free of the conquistador's grip, hovering unnoticed in midair before hurtling downward. It is a little known fact, but through the protective Chinese practice of Tiew Bu Shan, one can train one's testicles to draw up into the abdomen. Snape accomplished this out of sheer panicked instinct. With no time to move or even push the chair back, his body reacted at a level deeper than conscious or even subconscious thought, a previously uncalled-upon Snape gene expressing itself in order to ensure its passage on to future offspring. He could only stare at the aftermath, at the quivering mini-weapon buried halfway to the hilt in the wood of his chair between his legs. His students carried on with their work, oblivious to the near-disaster. If any noticed the increased pall of their professor's features as he dismissed them at the end of the period, none gave visible indication.

"POTTER! Remove your wand from my person IMMEDIATELY before I detach the limb holding it from your body!"

"I NEVER LOVED YOU ANYWAY, YOU SELFISH BASTARD!"

A shower of sparks issued from the wand lodged in a very uncomfortable and already tender place on Snape's body. He refrained from yelping only because he was in the presence of a large group of Gryffindors and loathed the thought of their witnessing him in such a state of discomposure.

"GOOD, BECAUSE YOU WERE NOTHING MORE THAN A HALF-DECENT SHAG, YOU LYING, CHEATING SON OF A BITCH!"

Under other circumstances, the contrast between Malfoy's denial and hurt tone would have amused Snape, but he was a bit occupied trying to separate the two squabbling boys, once again without the aid of his wand. In addition, he was alone in the endeavor, for the entire hallway of Gryffindors were incapable of anything but staring, slack-jawed, as the Savior of the Wizarding World and the young Lord Malfoy leapt out of the closet together in the largest public dispute since Hagrid proposed opening a puppy farm for Canis Cerberus in the Astronomy Tower. He had a feeling venturing out of the dungeons for lunch was a mistake.

"I CHEATED ON YOU? I SAW YOU WITH THAT UGLY TART IN THE CHARMS CLASSROOM!"

"Potter--"

"THAT WAS MY COUSIN, YOU STUPID GIT!"

"MALFOY!"

He winced and bit back a howl as the blond Slytherin kicked viciously at what he presumably considered to be part of Potter, but instead hit Snape's right shin with an unhealthy crack, causing the unfortunate professor to double over and forcing the sparking wand further into his crotch. With the first blood drawn (albeit not from either of the main combatants), the battle commenced. All thoughts of magic forgotten, for Snape had managed to get a painful hold on their wands, the boys used every free appendage to rain down blows on each other and any flesh in between. Beneath the onslaught, Snape dropped both wands and kicked them to the corner of the room, then focused his attention on separating the two feuding lovers.

With Snape functioning as a buffer, neither really gained the upper hand. He'd pulled them an arm's length apart with Malfoy clinging to Potter's tie when he heard a female voice ring out behind him.

"*Petrifictus Totalus!*"

He found himself unable to move until the same voice uttered "*Finite Incantatem*," and he was finally able to extricate himself from the tangle of limbs, sighing in relief as he removed Potter's elbow from his stomach. He turned to see Hermione Granger pushing her way through the ring of dead-weight Gryffindors toward him. He tried walking away from the frozen couple, but a bolt of agony shot through his midsection with the first step, drawing him to his knees. She was at his side almost instantly, looking very concerned.

"Are you all right, sir?"

"Hardly, Ms. Granger. Where's my wand?"

"*Accio Snape's wand!*"

Nothing happened for a few seconds, and then small whistling noises could be heard from opposite ends of the castle, growing louder as the objects approached the Great Hall. Snape swore he heard a cat howl from the direction of one of them. Before long, both lost wands appeared, flying neatly into Hermione's outstretched hand. She promptly returned them to his care, then helped him shakily to his feet.

"Get me to the infirmary. Mr. Malfoy, Mr. Potter, you have earned yourselves detention for the rest of the year and the full academic careers of your children's children, however they may be conceived."

Without bothering to free the immobile duo, Snape limped off to the hospital wing with an arm gingerly placed across the Head Girl's shoulders. When they were out of sight of the still-gawking House of Gryffindor, his hold on her tightened as he pulled her into a hug in one of the alcoves off the hallway.

"Be merciful, and kill me now." His voice was muffled as he pressed his overly large nose into her neck.

"It won't be that horrible, Severus. Madam Pomfrey will help."

"This day will never end. Can we stay here instead?"

"Unfortunately, I have to be getting back to lunch, then Arithmancy, and you have at least two classes left today."

"I'm canceling them."

"From what I know of Dumbledore, he won't let you."

"Then they'll be writing essays. Perfectly harmless essays without scalding, biting, poking, stabbing, ripping, or piercing of any kind."

"That sounds reasonable. Now let's get you healed."

Snape grudgingly released her from the embrace, but kept an arm around her as they continued to the infirmary. Upon arrival, Pomfrey gave them both a disapproving glare before ushering Snape to one of the beds. He threw Hermione one last pleading look over his shoulder, which she answered with a reassuring smile. He held that vision of beauty in his mind as a happy place while the mediwitch prodded him with her wand and grumbled over his injuries.

"I don't know how you do this to yourself, Severus. It's hardly worth patching you up anymore, you just end up right back here before long. There, that should take care of the burning. Hold still, now. I need to reduce the swelling."

Snape was yanked forcefully back into the real world.

"Really, you needn't. There's no swelling at all."

"I have to make sure there's still four there."

"Four?" His voice broke as he tried inching away from his tormentor.

"Two. I meant two. Calm down, Severus, and I'll make this as painless as possible--"

"What did Albus tell you?!"

"It's a harmless medical procedure, and it's for the best. We're doing this for your benefit, Severus. You could be more appreciative."

"You're all bleeding mad!"

"You'll feel just a quick pinch--"

"No!" With the strength of the desperate, Snape flew off the cot, grabbed the nearest bedpan, and whacked the mediwitch over the head with it. After straightening his robes and resetting his personal shields, he fled to his classroom, forgoing lunch completely, as the experience had left him with no appetite. He taught his remaining classes barricaded behind his desk, vaporizing anything that came within three feet of him.

He was planning on locking himself in his rooms for the rest of the evening, teaching duties bedamned, when Dumbledore intercepted him.

"Severus, it has come to my attention that the Slytherin and Gryffindor Quidditch teams are playing a friendly match this afternoon to replace the one that was cancelled. They are in need of a referee to make sure nothing... drastic happens."

"Absolutely not! I'm not going anywhere near a Bludger today."

"Severus..."

Quite against his will and every instinct he possessed, Snape found himself outside next to the Quidditch pitch. He noticed Hooch standing a few paces in front of him, and decided to ask her for as many pieces of protective gear as he could wear at one time before embarking what was sure to be a painful endeavor.

"Rolanda, Albus informed me--"

Without warning, the Quidditch instructor let fly a furious back-kick which caught Snape just below the navel, felling him.

"We are over, Filius! I just can't do this any--Severus! What are you doing down there?"

"Enjoying the wonderful sensation your boot produced upon impact with my body."

The sarcasm in his voice would have been tangible if he weren't barely breathing.

"Oh! I'm sorry, Severus, I thought you were--why did you grab my bum?"

"I did no such thing! And what the bloody hell were you aiming at? Surely not Flitwick's other head? Or do you greet every prospective suitor with a swift kick in the balls? No wonder you have relationship issues."

A good quarter-hour later, after Hooch had reluctantly aided him in his request for protection before she stormed off to find Flitwick, Snape stood by the pitch, fully clad in Quidditch gear reinforced by shielding charms. Rechecking himself one last time, Snape took to the air, motioning for the teams to fly toward him. When they were suitably assembled, he scowled at each of the players in turn, particularly menacingly at Potter and Malfoy, who were not close to speaking despite a long lecture by Granger.

"I am not here by choice. The headmaster decided that you required chaperoning for this pointless event and, to my great regret, chose me to do so. I will not tolerate any misconduct by either team. Nor is there to be any personal grudges settled during this match. Furthermore, if anything, whether it be broom, Bludger, or human being, comes anywhere close to hitting me, I will not hesitate in implementing its swift and agonizing annihilation. Is this clear?"

At nods by both captains, though they were still attempting to kill each other by sight alone, he blew the whistle, starting the match. The game was fast and furious as the rival teams battled for Quidditch superiority. Snape was too occupied in tracking the potential fouls between the Chasers and Beaters on each team and ensuring that the Bludgers stayed far away from him to notice the tiny gold Snitch creep closer to him and attach itself to his belt. His only clue was a combined shout from Potter and Malfoy as they came hurtling toward him with matching deranged expressions of unforgiving determination, indicating a complete lack of concern for naught but victory, including possible harm to a professor's reproductive organs.

Snape flew like he never had before. The match ground to a halt as both teams goggled at the spectacle of the professor fleeing the two Seekers, weaving in and out of the stands in a display of flying ability worthy of most professional athletes. Twisting, diving, turning, and flipping, Snape tried to shake the boys, his plight worsened when the Bludgers and even the Quaffle joined the chase. He dove beneath a level of the stands, severing a support behind him and causing it to fall in front of his pursuers. He took advantage of the small breather and ripped his belt off, throwing it over his shoulder as he hastened to the ground. He didn't even glance behind him to determine whose voice had shouted victory, but leapt from his broom and stalked back to the castle with as much dignity as he could muster. Alas, but his liberation was not yet at hand, for Dumbledore again blocked safe passage to his rooms, waylaying him under the pretence of dinner. He was dragged to the Great Hall by the combined efforts of an idiotically cheerful Headmaster and exceedingly sour McGonagall, who, though fully restored to human sanity, remained none too happy with her co-worker in spite of his professed innocence. He tuned out Dumbledore's speech before the meal and concentrated on removing all potential weapons from his vicinity. Thus, he missed the Headmaster's gleeful announcement of the change in menu, and his complexion turned an impossible shade paler when he glanced down at his plate to find pieces of meat on skewers. He passed the threatening meal to Flitwick, and settled for soft bread and lukewarm pumpkin juice. He left the very second he was able, intending on making the evening as short as possible.

"Get that mangy bag of fleas AWAY from me before I harvest his internal organs!"

"But Pr'fessor, 'e's only trying to say 'ello."

Snape doubted that the giant dog greeted everyone by gnashing its teeth while slobbering at the greetee's groin with anticipation worthy of a giant slab of raw beef.

"Aren't ye, Fang? There's a good boy."

The allegedly friendly canine was dragging Hagrid forward in his enthusiasm to make better acquaintance with the flavor of Snape's bollocks. Snape backed away slowly, opening one of the secret passages, and proceeded with the quickest patrol of the castle in faculty history.

He reached his quarters intact, having to dodge several large glittering pieces of glass formerly part of a chandelier and one wooden stake that had appeared to have his name on it. He warded the entrances to his classroom, office and rooms with every spell he could remember, most of them Dark (including the one banishing the unfortunate person attempting entry to a particularly unsavory part of New Jersey), resisting the urge to nail them shut only when he remembered that he did have one welcome visitor who would certainly not appreciate it. He did, however, remove Dumbledore from the short list of people recognized as safe by his defenses in case the old loon took it to his head to fulfill the prophecy himself.

Secure in the knowledge that he was shielded from his mysterious aggressor, Snape was actually looking forward to the remainder of the evening and hoped he would be able to convince his lover to settle for nice safe-but-satisfying sex, leaving the whips, chains, and flammables for tomorrow morning, just in case. Considering the rather trying day he'd suffered through, he decided a bath would not be out of the question, especially considering the distinct possibility that he could be sharing it in the near future...

He put a bottle of wine from his private stock on ice before heading for his spacious bathroom. He'd stripped down to his boxers before he felt a presence in the room. As he was diving for his wand perched on the sink, something blunt and heavy hit him in the head, spinning him toward his attacker. He hit the floor on his back heavily, and immediately upon impact, pain exploded in his groin, doubling him over in agony. Through the haze of anguish, he heard a high, squeaky voice cry out.

"I's sorry professor, but Nilly can't be letting you hurt the Frizzy Miss ever again!"

He opened his eyes to witness a house-elf, presumably female from the bright pink and neon green dress-like garment she was wearing, armed with a murderous look and what appeared to be a dental drill. A wicked-looking wooden spoon floated in front of him, and it moved closer to the already painful part of his body when he tried making a move for his wand.

Hurt who? Frizzy- oh bloody buggering Bludger...

"No! I would never--"

A horrible whirring noise drowned out the rest of his plea as she started the drill and stalked toward him. He shuffled backward in a panic, looking for anything within reach to stop the terrible advance of the vengeful house-elf, but to no avail. He was trapped against the wall as she came closer, and he saw the determination in her enormous eyes despite the nervous twitching of her long, pointy ears.

He tried to attack as she neared striking distance, but she cast a binding spell on him, forcing him into a spread-eagle position against the wall. Snape cast one final prayer for the sparing of his testicles before shutting his eyes tightly and bracing himself for inevitable torture.

But the bite of the drill never came. He heard the voice of his savior shout a series of spells and felt the magical ropes holding him loosen. The whine of the drill died before he opened his eyes.

Standing behind the petrified elf with drawn wand was Hermione Granger, in full Gryffindor heroic splendor. Again. He would never live this down.

"Severus, are you all right?"

Curled up in the fetal position on the floor in his underwear, Severus Snape struck with the only weapon left to him: sarcasm.

"Wonderful, thank you. Although it would have been loads more fun if you'd made your grand entrance just a bit later. You'd have been just in time to help me sew them back on."

Deciding that snarky-ness was a sign of good health, Hermione turned her attention back to the elf, freeing her mouth to allow her to talk. The elf was close to tears.

"Nilly, can you explain to me why you attacked Professor Snape?"

"He was hurting you, Miss Hermione. When Nilly came to visit last night, you was screaming..."

Oh. That.

"I promise you that Severus has never harmed me in any way. And if he does, I'll remove his balls myself. Now if I release you, promise me that you won't try attacking him again."

"No, Miss. Nilly is so sorry!"

The house-elf began wailing hysterically and tried to slam her head against the bathtub while still confined by the spell.

"Nilly--Nilly! You may not hurt yourself either. Come on, it's all right now. I forgive you."

She made comforting noises and embraced the distraught elf after ending the spell.

"I bloody well don't!"

"Severus, quiet for one more minute, please. Nilly, I want you to come to me first before you think of doing something like this again."

"Yes, ma'am. But the book Miss gave said--"

"Nilly, please ask me if you're ever unsure about what you read. Now go see Dobby for some hot chocolate. It will make you feel better."

"Yes, Miss. Nilly is so sorry, Professor Snape!"

A muffled growl was the only answer he felt up to giving.

"Goodnight, Nilly."

"Goodnight, Miss, Professor."

The teary but smiling elf disappeared with a pop. Hermione walked over and knelt next to the prone figure, who was most certainly not whimpering, because Snapes never whimper.

"Severus, I can't imagine how horrible this is for you. I'm so sorry, but I didn't realize what Nilly had done until Dobby told me where she was."

She cradled his head to her chest, rubbing the back of his head gently after muttering a healing spell, and he nuzzled closer in relief.

"I've been to Hades. It's inhabited by house-elves with Muggle dental hardware. Voldemort would have won the war if he had employed Nilly as head torturer. See what happens when I give you the best orgasm of your life?"

"I don't regret it a bit. You're okay. It's all over."

"You're sure?"

"Positive. They'll have to get through me if they try anything. Besides, it'll be morning soon."

"I suppose this means Nilly fit the definition of 'the claw of the Lioness'?"

"Well, it's too vague to be of any use, and just accurate enough to warrant a smug 'I told you so' from the Seer, so I'd venture to agree."

"I hate prophecies. And fucking Divination. And Trelawney."

"Me too."

They sat on the floor of the bathroom for awhile longer as Snape regained his equilibrium nestled in the safety of Hermione's breasts.

"How did that blasted house-elf get it in her head to make my life a living hell?"

"I lent her my Stephen King collection. I guess I didn't explain it well enough before giving the books and movies to her. And then she walked in on us last night--"

"I'm making a decree. No more horror for house-elves. And they're never going into your bedroom again."

"We weren't in the bedroom."

"Immaterial."

"All right, but, Severus, unless you want to go to the infirmary, I think I should make sure she didn't do too much damage."

He reluctantly shifted so that he was lying on his back in her lap. She carefully checked the bump at the back of his head and his eyes for concussion. Finding nothing too serious, she reached for his boxers, but stopped when he froze.

"Are you sure about this?"

"Relax, I've done this before. Besides, I have a personal interest in this particular area."

He tensed even more.

"What do you mean, you've done this before?"

"A couple of months ago, Harry and Draco got a little... carried away. Harry didn't want to go to Madam Pomfrey, so they asked me for help."

"You've ministered to Potter's privates? Why haven't I heard about this--Aarghh! Did you make sure your hands resembled icicles before you put them there?"

"I should think that would ease the pain a bit. Hold still! And I didn't tell you because it wasn't necessary."

"I refuse to hold still while you insist on molesting me!"

"This never bothered you before." She smirked, and he ignored it.

"You can add any physical contact you happen to have with Potter's naked body to the list of topics requiring discussion."

"Nothing happened. Draco supervised the entire procedure, and he's even more of a possessive git than you."

"Nevertheless, I'm invoking the Circle of Trust, clause eighteen-point-five; from now on, any incident involving you and male genitalia not belonging to me necessitates disclosure. Likewise for me, as I hardly believe that you would be indifferent if I began giving spontaneous gynecological exams."

"Fine. Don't move. I'll be right back."

"What? Where are you going?" Snape's voice did not contain a hint of anxiety. Absolutely none whatsoever.

"As the resident Potions master, I presume you'd know that through that door lie several potions with the potential of healing you. Do you object to my retrieving some of them?"

"No. Hurry up."

"Yes, master."

He waited for her nervously, eyeing his surroundings for any sign of attack.

She returned with several potions he recognized as analgesics and a tissue- healing poultice.

"Here. Drink these."

He downed the concoctions and sighed as they quickly took effect, a cool healing wave passing through his aching body.

"Are you staying the night?"

"It's the least I could do. Come on, let's get you to bed."

He leaned on her as much as he could on the way to the bedroom and pulled her slowly down to lie beside him when they reached his bed. After applying the poultice to his nether regions, he curled up to her, his head again hugged to her chest.

"What would Hogwarts think if they knew Severus Snape liked to cuddle?"

"Do it and everyone will know how you really use that new quill."

"You gave that to me!"

"And your point is?"

"Just beyond your grasp, apparently."

"Is it?"

"Severus, stop tha--mmmmmmm... you need--oh--rest--"

"I am resting, thank you."

"Sev--oh gods--as good as that feels, you need to sleep now. I'll more than make it up to you in the morning."

"I'm counting on it. Good night, love."

"Good night."

"Hermione?"

"Hmmm?"

"Can I take your shirt off?"

"Mmm..."

Here comes the snake and he circles your leg

He's come to play and make your

body parts shake

He comes swervin' down your hall

It'll feel so good when he gives it his all

Did your God show you the door

Well, I'm here to eat your apple to the core

Here comes the snake

There, it's done. I hope you had half as much fun reading this as I did writing it. Please drop me a line, if only to tell me never to write again. Oh, and fifty points to your house if you pick up on the not-so-subtle X-Files reference. Thanks, and happy reading!