

Sharing a Drink

by JackieJLH

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Chapter 1 of 1

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When he was released from Azkaban, Snape planned on nothing more than drinking himself into a stupor for the first time in *æ*ry long time. He had so many things that he had to do, too many responsibilities that had been left unattended for so long, and he knew that they should be his first priority. And yet all he really wanted, once his wand had been returned to him, was to Apparate to the Hog's Head and get completely and thoroughly pissed.

Life, however, is often unfair, he realized as he stepped into the bar and his eyes fell upon the only empty seat and the man sitting beside it—Remus Lupin. Lupin had either been thinking too much or drinking too much because he looked like hell. Snape refused to let the man's presence keep him from his intended inebriation, and so he made his way into the room.

'Sulking, Lupin?' he said, a look of disgust flashing across his face. 'Undoubtedly you had been looking forward to seeing me Kissed.'

'What are *you* doing here?' Remus asked wearily. He'd gone to the bar to try and clear his head, to think, and while the alcohol seemed to be having the exact opposite affect on him, he still, at least, had been hoping for an uneventful night.

'Celebrating my release with my *many* supporters,' Snape answered with a self-derisive snort.

Remus let out a short, harsh laugh, not looking up as Severus eased past and sunk onto the empty stool beside him. Without either of them saying a word, drinks slid into their hands, and Aberforth nodded at the two men as he ambled past. They sat in silence, watching the smoke from the Firewhisky curl and twist in the air as it rose towards the ceiling.

'Was it really all plotted out like that?' Lupin asked after a few moments, resting his arms on the bar and turning his head only enough to see Snape's slow nod out of the corner of his eye.

'I never thought that one person could keep so many secrets without losing their mind. It doesn't seem possible.'

This time, Snape only rolled his eyes.

'Harry said during your trial that the Defence job is cursed.... Do you think that's true?' The question had been on Remus's mind all night, and he couldn't help but ask, despite Snape's irritated glare.

'I wouldn't be surprised. The Dar—*Voldemort* was never one to take rejection well.'

'Dumbledore never told me.... When I took the position, he didn't say a word.'

'He never told me either,' Severus reminded him, sipping at his drink and wondering how he'd ever thought this could be a good idea. He'd wanted to relax, for Merlin's sake, and now he was listening to the self-pitying whines of a loathsome half-breed, and the only thing that he could surmise from this turn of events was that if there was a god, he must have done something to offend it.

'Yes, but you were *planning* on leaving at the end of the year, weren't you?' Lupin pressed on. 'There was no need for the curse to affect you. I was supposed to return the following year. I could have been killed.'

'Well,' Snape muttered into his glass, growing more and more annoyed with each passing moment, 'perhaps Albus had finally realized what I've always known: you're expendable.'

Without warning, Remus picked up his drink and, with a flick of his wrist, threw the searing Firewhisky in the other man's face. Standing and placing his glass on the bar, he turned to leave. 'You know,' he said bitterly as he looked back, watching as Snape wiped the steaming liquid off his face with his sleeve, 'the Wizengamot may be foolish enough to think you innocent, but I know you, Snape. You'll never change.'

Snape knew better than to attack a well-known Order member on the very day of his release from Azkaban; most of the wizarding world wouldn't hesitate to kill him, even now, and even if they left him alive, he refused to go back to prison. Instead, feeling cheated of a wonderful opportunity to test out his wand after being separated from it for so long, he settled for glaring through his whisky-soaked hair and wiping his hands angrily on his robes. But as he watched the door begin to shut, he couldn't keep himself from shouting, 'I'd expect nothing better from a werewolf!' at Lupin's back, smirking as all eyes in the room flew to the door.

Lupin's shocked, murderous face was the last thing he saw before the door swung shut completely, and that made being soaked and scalded almost seem worth it. Feeling vaguely satisfied, Snape settled back onto his stool, licked the whisky from his lips, and waited for Aberforth to bring him another drink.

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