

# One Fine Birthday

*by veradee*

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## Chapter 1

*Chapter 1 of 1*

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Many thanks go to my beta, Beth Kennedy, for catching my mistakes and introducing me to the finer details of the English grammar.

### **One Fine Birthday**

A story by veradee

It was almost nine o'clock, and the alarm clock had already rung twice, but Severus Snape just rolled over and pulled the blanket higher.

He wouldn't mind staying in bed the whole day and ignoring the fact that it was his birthday. He hated his birthday. Most of his so-called special days over the past 37 years had been as unpleasant as they could be, but a few had turned out to be even worse than that.

He vividly remembered that when he had turned eleven a day he had been looking forward to as he would finally be old enough to attend Hogwarts his grandmother had just died on the preceding day, and everyone was naturally in mourning. For his fifteenth birthday, he had hoped to receive his very first kiss, but instead had to watch Decima Everard being kissed by Edgar Porpington. His 23rd birthday he had spent in limbo, not knowing what his future would be like, until the Wizengamot had cleared him of being a Death Eater three days later.

Eventually sitting up in his bed, Snape caught sight of the parcel that lay at his feet and suppressed a swear. He detested the Headmaster's antics at presenting the professors with their gifts as if they were still students at Hogwarts. Even more annoyingly, Dumbledore insisted on upholding this 'lovely tradition,' as he called it, not only at Christmas, but also on their birthdays.

Snape took another glimpse at the parcel and frowned. Like always, it was enclosed in green wrapping paper, but it didn't look like the usual box of sherbet lemons that Dumbledore always gave him for his birthday.

He leant forward and gingerly picked it up. It was light and soft. Grabbing for his wand on his nightstand, he cast a few spells on the parcel to make sure that it didn't contain anything dangerous. At last being content, he opened it and pulled out a pair of black socks.

Something was wrong. Dumbledore had never given him a sensible present before. Of course, the Headmaster thought that sherbet lemons made a sensible gift, but Snape usually threw them away without even opening the box. Sometimes he had kept a few of the sweets to crush and mix them into some healing potion after Madam Pomfrey had complained yet again that it tasted disgusting.

Snape had known the Headmaster for over 25 years. If Dumbledore varied on one of the traditions he loved so dearly, he always had a hidden agenda.

After some more fruitless pondering on his unexpected gift, Snape left his comfortable bed, took a hot shower, dressed in one of his usual black robes and went to join his colleagues at the breakfast table.

At the entrance to the Great Hall he met Minerva McGonagall, clad in a red and blue tartan robe.

"Happy Birthday, Severus," she said and gave him a smile.

It was small, but he knew that it was genuine. Of all his colleagues, she was the one he liked or rather respected the most. She was a good teacher, albeit much too lax when it came to fulfilling her duties as Head of House. But then Snape didn't really think there was a better Head of House than he.

"I think you mentioned this one some time ago," she said and handed him a parcel.

He freed it from its wrapping and held a copy of Amadeus Micklewhite's acclaimed work *Polynesian Poppy and Its Proper Use in Professional Potion-Making* in his hands.

He inclined his head. "Thank you very much. Indeed, I had planned to purchase it. It's already the second thoughtful gift that I have received today."

"You're welcome," Professor McGonagall said, the smile still playing on her lips, but then her eyes widened behind her square glasses. "The second? Since when do you consider Albus' sherbet lemons to be thoughtful?"

Snape shook his head and lifted his robe a little bit to reveal the Headmaster's present.

"Socks? He gave you socks?"

He nodded. "Yes, it's quite odd. He must be up to something."

His suspicion became more palpable the moment he and the Transfiguration teacher entered the Great Hall.

"Happy Birthday, Severus," Dumbledore said in a joyous voice, which echoed through the nearly empty room. His smile was even too cheery for someone as good-humoured as he generally was.

"Thank you, Headmaster. Also thank you for the socks," Snape replied, trying to avoid looking at Dumbledore so as not to be blinded by his robe that shone in a purple brighter than usual. "Have you run out of sweets?" Snape added, lacing his voice with an ironic undertone.

"No, I just thought it was time for a change," Dumbledore said, his smile becoming more pronounced, if such a thing were actually possible.

Snape frowned and turned to go to his seat only to be held back by the Headmaster.

"Severus, would you please come to my office after you have finished breakfast? I need to discuss something with you." Dumbledore suddenly sounded serious, and Snape gritted his teeth but nodded nevertheless.

"I knew it, I just knew it," he muttered under his breath as he went to his chair, almost overlooking the congratulations of his colleagues.

It didn't take him long to eat his scrambled eggs, baked beans and rasher of bacon. The tea was scalding hot, but still preoccupied with Dumbledore's request, he didn't even realise that he burnt his tongue.

'Better get it over with,' he thought, as he got up from the table only a few minutes later and left the Great Hall again.

Shortly after, he stood in front of the stone gargoyle that guarded the entrance to the Headmaster's office and spat out the password. "Bumblebee." The wall opened immediately, and Snape stepped onto the moving staircase.

When he entered Dumbledore's office, his suspicion became as solid a fact as one of Hagrid's rock cakes. Normally the former headmasters of Hogwarts, who inhabited the portraits on the wall, avoided his glance, because he had once hexed one of them in a moment of rage, but now they were staring at him with malicious grins.

"Come in," said Albus Dumbledore from behind his claw-footed desk as he waved his hand, inviting Snape to have a seat.

After Snape had settled, Dumbledore began to speak. "I have been thinking, Severus. With Voldemort's return and Harry having more dreams about him, I've come to the conclusion that Harry should learn Occlumency. While it's helpful that Harry can sense Voldemort's emotions, the reverse effect would be more than damaging to our cause."

Snape agreed, but couldn't help feeling that he wouldn't like what would come next. He looked at the Headmaster, waiting for him to continue.

"I would like you to go to the Order Headquarters the day after tomorrow to tell Harry about my plan."

Snape raised his eyebrows. "I don't understand. In three days, Potter will return to Hogwarts anyway."

"Yes, but I'd rather have him know before he comes back so that he has the chance to get used to the idea."

Snape smirked at the Headmaster's solicitude. "Oh, I'm sure he won't mind the lessons. Potter likes to brag, and they will give him a welcome opportunity to do so."

Dumbledore shot him a warning glance, and Snape wiped the smirk from his face.

"Harry won't say anything. I don't want too many people to know about the lessons, Severus."

"Of course," mumbled Snape, convinced that the brat would boast about it to his two friends anyway. "What would you want me to tell him as to when the lessons will start?"

"Whenever it suits you."

"Me?" Snape stared at Dumbledore, feeling as if he had been hit by a Bludger. "You want me to teach Potter Occlumency?" He heard his voice rise an octave, but he couldn't suppress his horror at hearing such an outrageous idea. His spittle had hit the desktop, and he wiped it away with the sleeve of his robe.

Dumbledore nodded.

"No."

"Severus, I haven't asked many things of you, but I insist on this one." For once Dumbledore's blue eyes weren't twinkling.

Snape leant forward, propping his elbows on the desk and boring his eyes into Dumbledore's. "I've always done your bidding, Headmaster," he said, softening his voice, "but you can't ask that of me. You know about my history with Potter."

"There's no other way. You will have to do it, Severus." Dumbledore stared back at him.

Snape felt his blood pressure rising and took a deep breath before he spoke. "Why don't you teach him yourself? You're as accomplished an Occlumens as I am, if not better." He struggled slightly with the last sentence, having never been very good at flattering people.

Dumbledore still didn't break the eye-contact. "I don't believe that would be a good idea. Voldemort would realise it's me who teaches Harry and might use Harry as a means to spy on me as long as Harry hasn't mastered Occlumency."

Snape frowned, leaning backwards again. "Maybe. But if I teach Potter, the Dark Lord might realise about it as well, and start to distrust me." This argument should finally dissuade Dumbledore from his ridiculous plan.

"But surely it wouldn't be difficult for you to convince Voldemort that, firstly, you only do it because I asked you to do so, and that, secondly, you are not teaching it properly?" The twinkle had returned to Dumbledore's eyes.

Snape swallowed his anger at Dumbledore's blatant attempt at turning the tables on him now. "Flattering me won't help you, Headmaster, and the Dark Lord isn't that easily fooled either."

"But, Severus, think about it. This might very well mean that you're going to rise in his ranks so that you can provide us with more information than before."

The Potions master closed his eyes in resignation as he realised that he had lost. He hated losing. He felt a nerve twitch on the side of his mouth. "The day after tomorrow, you said?"

Dumbledore's face broke into a smile. "Thank you, Severus. I knew I could rely on you."

"Of course," Snape snapped and got up from his chair. He had to get out of the Headmaster's office before he hexed him. Without another word, he left.

Snape was seething when he strode back to the dungeons. The few students who remained at Hogwarts during the holidays were lucky not to meet him on his way. Considering the mood he was in, even his Slytherins might else have lost a point or two.

Arriving in front of the door to his quarters, he hissed the password ("Sizzling Citric Acid") and stormed into his rooms.

The moment the door had closed behind him, he let go of all his restraint. He picked up the first item he saw and hurled it against the wall. The box with Gobstones, which his mother had given him when he was a child, flew open and the stones littered his floor. Some broke and their liquid spilled onto his carpet.

"Fuck!" he roared. Pulling out his wand, he waved it and snarled first, *Reparo*," and then, *Evanesco*," to restore the box and Gobstones and to remove the mess.

With a sigh, he slumped onto his couch, tossing his wand aside. He stared ahead but didn't really take in his surroundings. Normally his living-room, which was furnished in different shades of brown, soothed him after a day filled with teaching hordes of dunderheads, or an unpleasant meeting with the Dark Lord; but not this time.

He couldn't fathom how Dumbledore had managed to come up with such a harebrained idea. The Headmaster probably was right about the Dark Lord being pleased, but what was the point when either Snape himself or Potter wouldn't survive the Occlumency lessons? Sooner or later, one of them would hex the other with a fatal curse.

Just thinking of having to go to 12 Grimmauld Place to talk to Potter caused his blood pressure to rise again.

Snape's glance fell on the bottle of Ogden's Firewhisky on the sideboard, but he rarely felt like inebriating himself. He preferred to keep his wits about him. If at all, he would drink a glass in order to celebrate not that he often had a reason for celebrating.

He knew what would calm him. The only thing that ever could do so was brewing a potion. The monotonous but precise chopping and grinding always soled his mind. However, there wasn't any potion that needed to be prepared right now. Madam Pomfrey's shelves were fully stocked with healing potions, as was his own little apothecary.

His thoughts returned to that bloody Potter boy, and then the perfect idea hit him. He smirked.

He rose from his couch, crossed the room and entered his private workroom.

Squinting his eyes in the dim light cast by the winter sun, he regarded the myriad of herbs and other potion ingredients on the dark wood shelves to let himself be inspired.

Perhaps a Babbling Beverage? No, rather not. After all, Potter only knew how to utter nonsense anyway. And with Potter's hairstyle a Hair-Raising Potion was pointless as well.

'Let's see,' Snape thought, skimming the shelves once more after he had lit some candles with a flick of his wand. Asphodel, boomslang skin, powdered ivory...

"Of course," he muttered under his breath, and another smirk flitted over his lips.

He took the box with the powdered ivory and placed it on the worktable, which stood in the middle of the room. Then he gathered some Doxy eggs, fluxweed, valerian roots, sneezewort and a small Abyssinian shrivelfig. From another shelf he fetched cauldron, cutting board, knife, mortar and pestle and set them out on the table as well.

He himself had created the potion many years ago, inspired by the cartoon film *Jungle Book*, which his father had taken him to watch as a child. Originally, he had intended to use the potion on James Potter but had never had the opportunity to do so. Now he would give it to his equally obnoxious son instead.

He shivered, the winter sun and the candles not offering enough heat to warm him. He took his wand and pointed it at the fireplace. *Incendio*." Immediately, flames sprang to life. Satisfied, he returned to his task.

Carefully, he cracked the black Doxy eggs on the wooden tabletop and let their contents pour into the cauldron.

He picked up the shrivelfig, peeled it and reached for his knife. "Chop, chop, chop" went the knife on the cutting board as he was slicing the shrivelfig into tiny pieces, and in the same rhythm he muttered the words "useless boy" over and over again.

Which reminded him that he needed to think of an excuse why Potter would need to come to his office on a regular basis in the future. Obviously, no one could know about the real reason. With Potter being the recalcitrant boy he was, it was conceivable that he would earn a series of detentions. But there was no way for Snape to explain that Potter had weekly detentions always on the same night.

Lost in his thoughts, Snape traced his lips with his finger and pulled a face when he tasted the bitter sap of the shrivelfig. He shook his head at his carelessness. If he wasn't more cautious, he would end up being poisoned because of Potter.

He added the chopped shrivelfig to the Doxy eggs and began to cut the sneezewort.

Not that Potter himself was competent enough at brewing potions to ever create one that worked. The dunderhead would only poison people by accident.

For his Slytherins, Snape sometimes offered remedial Potions if a pupil actually was a promising potion brewer but struggled with a certain recipe or a technique.

Of course, this was it. He would inform Potter to tell everyone who asked that he had remedial Potions.

Snape grinned as he crushed the valerian roots with the pestle.

While the Slytherins were always flattered if he considered them worthy enough to receive extra lessons, he could already imagine Potter's furious reaction at having to pretend to attend remedial Potions. As much as Snape would hate teaching Potter Occlumency next week, he could at least have a little fun with the boy beforehand when he told him about the lessons.

Snape tipped the valerian roots from the mortar into the cauldron, added the sneezewort and gave the mixture a thorough stir.

He scowled when he remembered that he wouldn't only see Potter at Grimmauld Place in two days but inevitably also meet that flea-ridden dog Black. Snape loathed Black's cocky behaviour, and whenever they met, he still felt the urge to jinx him for every time Black had called him Snivellus when they had still been students.

He didn't like to admit it even to himself, but back then Snape often had lost against Black and his three friends when they had fought.

But now Snape had the upper hand. After all, Black was confined to the Order headquarters and couldn't really retaliate. It would be easy enough to rile him a bit or a bit more than that, even.

Snape measured out half an ounce of the powdered ivory, sprinkling it lightly over the concoction. After waiting for half a minute, he waved his wand and a small fire enflamed beneath the cauldron.

Yes, it would be easy, indeed, because Black wouldn't leave Potter alone. He would insist on being in the room in order to defend his precious godson while Snape spoke to Potter. Snape just needed to antagonise Potter and thereby provoke some reaction from Black.

He enjoyed baiting people, having heated arguments and battling wits. Of course, among Death Eaters one better not say too much anyway, and sadly most of his colleagues at Hogwarts and most of the Order members weren't really up to a good verbal sparring-match. Only Minerva McGonagall did engage with him in a fight of words once in a while.

As the last ingredient he added the fluxweed to the potion, which had begun to bubble merrily. Within seconds the brown mixture became almost translucent, and he put out the fire with his wand.

He bottled the still hot potion into a vial, grabbed a quill from a shelf and wrote 'proboscis potion' on the label. He smirked as he imagined Potter, sporting a trunk instead of his nose on his face.

But then he sighed. Of course, he would never give Potter the potion. Dumbledore would have his head if he did. But it was nice, indeed, to imagine Potter suffering from such an abnormal nose for a few days.

It really was a pity. But there were always other ways to take the self-absorbed brat down a peg or two, like deducting points or belittling him in class.

He took the vial and placed it on one of the shelves beside a vial labelled 'Mandrake Draught'. After all, even if he wouldn't give the proboscis potion to Potter, one could never know when there might be some use for it.

Perhaps he should take it with him to the Order headquarters, he wondered as he went back into his living-room. A dog with a trunk would be an unforgettable sight.

Quite content, he sank down onto his couch.

In the end, this year's birthday was turning out not to be so bad. He had got socks and a good book, and there was the prospective of annoying Potter as well as of pissing Black off royally. Snape grinned and rather found himself looking forward to going to Grimmauld Place in two days time.

He glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece. It was shortly after noon; still early in the day, but not too early for a drink. He got up again and went over to the sideboard, where he took the bottle of Firewhisky and filled a glass, before returning to his seat. He tossed back the drink, the liquid burning down his throat.

For once he had a reason to celebrate after all.

The End

Annotations:

As stated on J K Rowling's website, Snape's birthday is 9 January. To my knowledge, there isn't any definite information on whether Snape was born in 1958, 1959 or 1960. I decided on 1959 although that detail isn't important for the plot.

According to the Harry Potter Lexicon, Dumbledore sends Snape to Grimmauld Place on 11 January to inform Harry that he will have to attend Occlumency lessons with Snape. On 12 January, the students return to Hogwarts, and the term starts the next day with Harry having his first Occlumency lesson in the evening.

As for Snape being cleared of being a Death Eater by the Wizengamot, I don't think there's any evidence in the books when exactly this happened. I also checked a couple of HP timelines but couldn't find any details. Personally, I think it is more reasonable to assume that it happened after Voldemort's downfall on 31 October 1981 and not before that date. Therefore, I took the liberty and decided that he was cleared on 12 January 1982. Surely Dumbledore would vouch for someone he had hired as a teacher a few months before.

Proboscis is the Latin word for trunk.