

In the Waxing Moonlight

by *dolefully desired*

Jealousy can't be concealed for long between friends and colleagues. Snape/Sinistra, one-shot.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Okay, confession time: I don't actually ship SS/HG ultimately. I actually prefer SS/OC, but good stories seem to be in deplorably short supply compared to the wealth of SS/HG stories out there. Not too long ago I compromised and read a Snape/Sinistra; I quickly fell in love with the idea of the two of them together. A friend kept nagging me to write my own take on their relationship, since she considered it abstract and far-fetched at best. Two months ago I did just that, and I finally had the opportunity to finish it up. I'm attempting to embarrass her utterly and prove her wrong, since I'm thoughtful like that.

So if you hate this ship, fine. It was simply an experiment. Try not to *hate*me, at least.

Aurora sipped at her wine. She could almost feel her eyes glazing over, an unbearable combination of anxiety and bored detachment having long since gained control of her body. The Minister's home was filled far beyond capacity, and the sheer noise of the party was making her head ache.

Setting aside her wine glass, she began to prowl the perimeter of the room, scanning for familiar faces. It still quite escaped her why she'd promised Severus she would attend for the evening. He hadn't paid her any real attention in ages; since the school year had begun, their previously strong friendship had been strained at best.

Minerva McGonagall, now officially Headmistress of Hogwarts, stood to one side, chatting idly with Minister Scrimgeour. Aurora felt the hatred automatically welling in her chest and wondered, not for the first time, how different their lives at Hogwarts would have been if Scrimgeour had been granted his request. He'd battled the Wizengamot for weeks on end...opposing, oddly enough, the aggravating ghost of Albus Dumbledore...to secure Severus' freedom. Scrimgeour would sooner have seen him thrown in Azkaban permanently, but even in such highly unorthodox circumstances, it was clear the public sided wholly with the beloved old wizard.

Severus himself was nowhere to be found, she noted with a disgusted sigh. Aurora was fast approaching the point of becoming livid. As she was not herself an Order member and had played no particularly integral part in the climax against Voldemort the summer previously, her presence at the Minister's ball had not been mandatory. She would have much preferred to spend the evening on her sofa accompanied by a book and some dessert.

Tugging self-consciously at her Muggle-style gown, she privately admitted defeat. After weeks of alternately threatening and cajoling her because he despised the idea of an evening spent in the Minister's presence, Severus...now considered somewhat of a war hero...had stood her up. She wasn't entirely certain if his failure to show could be termed thus, as it hadn't really been a *date*, but she was profoundly disappointed and hurt nonetheless.

She'd longed for it to *really* be a date, hadn't she? Feeling the first hint of tears pricking at her eyes, she ducked out onto the wide terrace overlooking the manor's back lawn. It had been lavishly decorated by the Minister's staff, looking like precisely the dreamy landscape one would have expected for Cinderella's ball.

The top of her dress was beginning to slip again. Annoyed, Aurora moved forward and leaned against the balustrade, staring balefully down at her own form. She'd spent hours agonizing over what dress to Transfigure, how to style her hair, and whether or not she ought to dress in the formal Wizarding style or follow her Muggle instincts. In the end, it had been her mother...a witch, oddly enough...who had suggested the Muggle style, wisely observing that a dress would be cooler and more comfortable garb on a hot July evening.

She tugged at the bands encircling her hair and let it fall free. All the charms in the world hadn't been able to contain the thickness of her hair. She'd even flirted with the idea of cutting it beforehand, but the thought of her estranged father, whom she still loved and missed dearly, had weighed heavily upon her. A Muggle, an Italian immigrant who had spent her early childhood lamenting for his beloved country, he'd always told her that her hair was her most beautiful asset. He'd promised his lonely young daughter, an outcast amongst her peers both magical and Muggle, that one day the long, curly black mass would captivate men.

Smiling wryly, she ran a hand through it. There were few men around for her hair, or any other part of her, to captivate these days. She'd spent so much of her life at Hogwarts, both as a student and an instructor, that the castle and its inhabitants now comprised her world. Her excursions were rare, and lately, when they *did* occur, they didn't seem to be adventures she especially favored.

Severus was one of the people who made Hogwarts bearable for her. Though she found it ironic, Aurora was forced to admit, and not infrequently, that his friendship kept her sane. She adored her students with the same passion she felt for her subject, and she longed to capture their interest and imagination, but each year their eyes seemed to be more lackluster than the year preceding. Until she and Severus had begun conversing regularly, she'd often wondered if the younger generation was simply becoming more and more apathetic regarding their own education or if it was an overreaction on her part. Nowadays she spent far more time hauling apart kissing teenagers and disciplining rambunctious twelve-year-olds than she did sharing her love for astronomy.

Severus was a precious friend to her, and she was hurt by the distance he'd displayed over the course of the past year. She'd been thrilled for him when his status amongst the members of the community had improved so drastically; she, like any of their colleagues at Hogwarts, knew him to be a gifted Potions master and an intelligent and competent instructor, even if his methods left something to be desired. She knew of his reconnaissance activities for the Order, though he hadn't been entirely honest with her as to the capacity in which he'd served until after Lord Voldemort's downfall. Even his open admission of his past as a Death Eater, one who had voluntarily joined Lord Voldemort's ranks at the age of nineteen, had failed to dampen the admiration she felt for him as a fellow academic and a coworker.

So why was he so distant suddenly? She'd always flattered herself...and teased him a bit, too, for that matter...that he needed her support as much as she needed his sarcastic commentary to get them through the day. He made the snide jokes; she proffered the open ears and an utter lack of judgment, something with which few of their other colleagues would gift him. Aurora permitted him to express his frustration and disgust, and he in turn offered his wholehearted understanding of her frequent and overwhelming disappointment in many of their students.

It had been a challenging year for him, she supposed. After two decades of stigmatized isolation, he was famous, insofar as he had been publicly outed as a spy and an ex-Death Eater but one who had sacrificed his own safety on many occasions. The community's burgeoning appreciation of his service had led to a bevy of interviews, magazine articles, and increased speculation as to his lifestyle post-Voldemort. People neither she nor Severus had ever met were sending him letters of gratitude, many of them women evincing an abrupt and completely unexpected attraction for him. She hadn't allowed herself to admit that she was jealous, but the more zealous and passionate the letters became, the more Aurora found herself avoiding meeting his eyes over the breakfast table when the owl post was delivered.

He'd said little of the diametric change in his status other than a few cutting jokes at the expense of the ridiculous women who shamed themselves by admiring him via owl post. She, however, had found herself discovering an odd sense of kinship with these women, who professed time and again their inability to get him out of their minds. They extolled his intelligence, and she couldn't have agreed more. They insisted that he was a very attractive man, and while she and Severus had shared a good laugh over the comments, she'd sobered immediately afterward, realizing that she agreed with them. She always had. Yet suddenly every brush of his leg against hers during mealtimes had led her to glance surreptitiously in his direction, noticing the nuances of his profile that she'd never before considered.

He was attractive. But what his many admirers never seemed to perceive was that he was completely oblivious to his own appeal, and that odd underlying humility was quite possibly the sexiest thing about him.

A much-appreciated breeze fanned the curtain of her hair. Aurora sighed, staring at the darkening day. It was fast approaching ten o'clock, and the light was fading into a spectacular sunset, shadows coursing and writhing across the manor's impressive grounds. She wondered how long her ridiculous desire to gain his attention would keep her loitering around the party. Her behavior was no more dignified than that of his blithering admirers, really.

"Sinistra."

She stiffened instinctively and turned, finding him standing in the faint dusky light, staring at her intently. Outwardly he looked like the same Severus Snape she'd known for years, but there was the barest suggestion of increased confidence in his stance. Perhaps the attentions of the public were beginning to rub off on him after all.

"Where the devil have you been?"

She raised a challenging eyebrow. "Pardon me? I was under the impression that you've kept *me* waiting all evening."

A muscle twitched in his jaw, the subtlest sign of his displeasure. "I couldn't seem to find an escape," he muttered darkly. She tried to ignore the confused and almost hurt look that passed through his usually inscrutable eyes when she failed to offer her typical compassionate response.

Turning back toward the landscape, she gave as casual and diffident a shrug as she could manage. "Just give them what they want, Snape. They'll leave you alone eventually." That she spoke of the women at the party did not need to be specified. It had been broadcast in every magical media outlet across Britain that all living Order members would be in attendance; undoubtedly they'd traveled from far and wide to catch a glimpse of him.

"And that would be what?" he demanded.

"Your attention," she snapped, whirling around again. She assumed she must have imagined the flinch that seemed to ripple through his body. Severus Snape did not flinch or withdraw. "They'll stop twittering at you if you'd just stand there and *listen* to them for once. And how are they supposed to know you're not interested if you don't tell them that?"

"I wasn't aware I owed them any explanation when I haven't given them reason to assume I was interested in the first place," he shot back, the strain in his tone an equal match for hers. Feeling stung by his remark though she knew it hadn't pertained to her, Aurora turned away from him again and pursed her lips resolutely.

"I came out here because they want the Order members to dance." He took a step in her direction, the formal boots he wore thudding against the stone. Again she felt torn between growling and crying. It was her own fault for being so susceptible to him, really, but she'd never given him any indication of how deeply he'd begun to affect her over the past year. He spoke in the same quiet, smooth voice he'd always used in her presence, not entirely unguarded but devoid of hostility, and somehow it stirred feelings in her stomach that made her want to hide from him.

"I'm not an Order member. I fail to see how that concerns me." If I smoked, she thought to herself, this would be an ideal time to light up. She fidgeted, her fingers tapping lightly across the stone against which she leaned. It was beginning to scratch unpleasantly, marring her bare nails with faint lines.

"I require a partner. Do you intend to have me beg?"

As if he would have, even had she wanted it. "I doubt you'll have difficulty finding a woman," she replied archly, drawing up her skirts and heading for the marble staircase to her right, which led directly onto the Minister's lawn. She was faintly aware of Severus following her, but with every step she took across the damp grass, she grew more frantic.

Her previously endless list of excuses, which she'd employed on an increasingly regular basis, had run dry months ago. She couldn't continue to deny an overwhelming

attraction to a man who was both a good friend and a coworker. The stress imposed upon both of them by their careers, their daily lives, and Severus' sudden celebrity had taken its toll. Aurora couldn't live with the thought that her own uncontrollable feelings would be responsible for the final ending of their friendship.

The sun had set completely. It was in the waxing moonlight that she entered the Minister's labyrinth, a forceful reminder of the final Triwizard Tournament task that had precipitated Severus' return to his master years before. Turning sharply to the right, Aurora lengthened her strides into a light jog, taking the winding turns at her whim.

She paused alongside a tangled rosebush, absently noting that it was nearly her height, an impressive stance for both a woman and a rosebush. Carefully avoiding pricking herself against its thorns, she leaned over to inhale the fragrance, wanting to eradicate the faint traces of Severus' scent. She could recognize it now before he even entered the room. The fact that she considered the pungent aroma of the soap he used to wash away traces of potion ingredients an aphrodisiac had been a terrifying thought indeed. It was shortly after that particular discovery that she'd developed a habit of retreating for very long walks in the Forbidden Forest and avoiding him assiduously directly after he'd been brewing.

There was no doubt in her mind that he had followed her. She could barely distinguish the distant sound of his footfalls. Finally they grew quiet, and she wondered if he'd retreated. Wandering a few steps back in the direction from which she'd come, she rose onto the tips of her Muggle heels, seeking any hint of him.

"Aurora!"

Her stomach plummeted to her knees. They'd never openly called one another by their given names; it was a tacit understanding between the two of them that to do so would cross some boundary of propriety and security that Severus couldn't handle. They'd certainly never forbidden each other outright, but she'd always silently understood that she couldn't refer to him as Severus.

He was not going to turn back, she realized almost dazedly. She had succeeded in either concerning or annoying him so greatly that he was now fully intent on tracking her through the maze of bushes and boulders, and she rather suspected it was the latter.

While she was ruminating on whether to continue fleeing or to simply face him, he turned the corner directly in front of her. Aurora was shocked to find that he was breathing rather heavily and had an almost wild look in his eyes. The stiffness in his stance was enough to confirm that he was furious with her. "What is the meaning of this?" he hissed angrily. "You *agreed* to attend this damnable party, yet when I require a partner, you flee like an animal!"

"I didn't agree to attend to be at your beck and call, Snape," she retorted icily. "I came here tonight because a good friend asked me to, but he spent the entire evening virtually ignoring me."

"I did not ignore you," he growled. "I told you I was hindered by..."

She burst out laughing almost cruelly. "Yes, yes, the many women hurling themselves at your boots have been such a heavy burden for you." The unreasonable malice in her tone seemed to swell up from another personal entirety. She'd never known herself to be so vile, but the many visions of him surrounded by his admirers were making her nauseous. "Well, allow me make that burden a little easier." She tightened her dress around her body, preparing to Disapparate. "You know where my office is. Stop by for a cup of tea when you're ready to be a friend again. How does that sound?"

He latched onto her upper arm just before she pivoted, entangling the two of them in a dangerously unbalanced attempt at Disapparation. In the incremental span of time that followed, she could feel their bodies pushing and opposing one another while flying through space. Frantically she wondered if his mistake had been fatal and whether the two of them would survive to see the other end of whatever skewed trajectory his rash movement had set.

They landed on muddy ground with a thump, Severus trapped firmly beneath her. Aurora rose to her feet, trembling violently, and noted with immense relief that while they were both exceptionally shaken and dirty, neither had been seriously injured. They were within twenty feet of her intended destination, a remarkable feat indeed.

"What were you *thinking*?" she screamed at him, amazed that her voice was capable of growing so shrill. It was necessary to forcefully resist the urge to kick at his prone form. He rose slowly, supporting himself on his forearms, and glowered at her.

"You just snatched me when I was trying to Apparate!"

"I wouldn't have had to do so if you'd finished our conversation, as courtesy would dictate!"

"Fuck you," she snapped, hauling out her wand and casting a cleansing charm as she made her way to the house. Her mother had made plans months ago to spend the week at a friend's, and Aurora had been relying heavily upon the idea of a weekend in her mother's cottage to herself, reveling in the promise of solitude. Only for Severus had she been willing to forgo such a luxury.

No longer would she offer him every concession, she promised herself, murmuring the spells that would unlock the door and permit her entry. Severus followed, predictably, but she ignored him, setting her wand on the kitchen table and beginning to prepare herself a cup of tea. She did not inquire if he desired one as well.

He stood in the door, watching her with hawkish intensity as she lit a fire in the fireplace and began to slowly strip off her dress, still soiled despite the powerful cleansing charms. She expected him to remark snidely about her lack of propriety when there was a man present in the house, but remarkably, he said nothing. Aurora peeled off the dress, static electricity causing it to cling to the revealing, flimsy Muggle camisole and slip underneath, both of which were blessedly unmarked by the mud outside. Sighing in relief, she tossed the dress into the waste basket and poured the tea, kicking off her heels as she did so.

"Are you quite finished ignoring me?" Severus' voice was eerily quiet. Even in the thick silence of the house, she had difficulty discerning his words.

Continuing to ignore him, she sank gratefully into one of the kitchen chairs and propped her dirty feet up on the table. Wickedly she wondered how many of his rather uncompromisingly old-fashioned sensibilities she'd already managed to thoroughly violate. "When I'm done ignoring you, you'll know it," she replied breezily, drinking her tea.

He sat down across from her. She was unsure how to feel about the way his gaze took in her feet and legs and crept upward toward her chest. The camisole was transparent, she knew, what little skin the fabric covered still easily visible in even the dimmest light. There was no denying that the fire cast sufficient illumination for him to distinguish the clear outline of her breasts and stomach, to say nothing of the fact that the slip had pooled between her legs and bared the majority of her thighs.

They sat in silence for the next ten minutes, Aurora consciously avoiding his gaze. She didn't want to know if it still lingered on her body, but she knew that somehow it would smart even more if it didn't. Perhaps he'd seen enough of women lately to satiate him, what with the many risqué photographs his female admirers included in their letters of devotion. She was no fool. Countless moving, tempting images of beautiful twenty-something witches were certainly a more satisfying sight than her draped across her mother's kitchen chair.

When she'd finished her tea, Severus cleared his throat and stared pointedly at her. She didn't even bother to raise an eyebrow.

"What do you want, Snape?" she asked finally, her voice betraying her exhaustion. "You're missing the remainder of the ball."

He said nothing but picked up her tea cup from the table and carried it to the sink. Puzzled, she followed his movements almost nervously as he cleaned the cup and set it aside.

"This is my mother's home," she continued, noting that the awkwardness she'd felt since their arrival was beginning to seep traitorously into her tone. "I had planned to spend the weekend here before you asked me to go to Scrimgeour's party. Since I'm done, I'm staying here the rest of the weekend." She stood, examining the repulsive sight of dirt and grass stains streaked across her feet and calves. "You can show yourself out."

She had to pass by him to exit the room, and he was prepared for her. Once again his long fingers laced around her bicep, almost completely gripping its circumference. She caught her breath, steeling herself to protest, but was unable to formulate a thought when their eyes met.

His clothes were haphazardly askew from their pathetic Side-Along Apparition, the robe he'd worn half off his shoulders and his dark green dress shirt just as dirty as her dress had been. He hadn't bothered to cast a cleansing charm. Without the additional height afforded by her heels, his advantage frightened her.

"You are jealous."

She hadn't expected that. She'd thought he would scold or deride her, perhaps even threaten to speak to Minerva about her inappropriate and disrespectful behavior towards a colleague, but she definitely hadn't expected the shrewd look in his eyes as he seemed to read her thoughts.

By the time she had managed to open her lips, it was too late. Snapping her mouth shut, she knew that her window of opportunity had passed. There was no denying it now: she was jealous of the many younger women who had been vying for his attention and not strictly because she missed his friendship or professional presence. She wanted him, simply and completely, and he was reading it in her eyes as easily as if she'd voluntarily written it on her own forehead.

Severus' grip tightened, his eyes darkening. She realized fleetingly that he was either phenomenally angry or very aroused, and she wasn't confident she had the ability to differentiate the two.

"Let me go." She lifted her other arm and scrabbled her fingers against his hand.

"No."

"*Let me go.*" She began to push against him, but he was immovable. The more forcefully she pushed the more he would resist, until, with a single fluid movement, he pressed her against the wooden pantry door. The mingled scent of wine and soap he exuded was bizarrely intoxicating.

"Do you deny it?"

She averted her eyes, knowing there was still no point. Backtracking now would only mortify her further.

"Are you quite finished humiliating me?" she whispered in perfect imitation of his own expression earlier. His hand began to travel up her arm, curling around her shoulder. Startled, not daring to hope for continued contact, Aurora looked up.

"I've only begun, my dear."

His kiss crushed her against the pantry door. She moaned, wrapping her arms around his neck and panting when they finally parted. She couldn't find his eyes in the dark planes and hollows of his face.

"Severus..."

Later she would have little recollection of what transpired next. She only remembered scaling his body, wrapping her legs around his waist as he moved against her. "Do you want me?" he whispered, his fingers darting between her legs and running along her thighs. The wooden door bit painfully into her spine as she threw her head back.

"Yes."

He continued murmuring, his fingers deftly removing her slip and scaling her ribs. She answered him breathlessly, incoherently, as his beautiful voice skillfully dragged out of her every deliciously lascivious thing she'd ever wanted from him, ever fantasized about. His fingers traveled down her stomach and between her legs, circling dizzily against her until she came, digging her hands deeply into his shoulders and gasping wildly.

He drew his lips down her throat, pausing over her breasts. He seemed to enjoy the strained material of her camisole failing to cover her evident arousal. "Remove your shirt," he instructed almost boredly, and she complied, whispering the charm that would divest her of her only remaining piece of clothing. He groaned deeply and appreciatively when she thrust into him, offering him more skin to be tasted and laved.

Aurora fumbled with the clasp of his trousers, finally managing to unzip them and free his hips from the material. He thrust against her once, hard, and she bit down on her lower lip to fight back a scream. He was murmuring against her stomach, his words inaudible over the rush of pleasure still ringing through her head.

Just as her hands closed around him, eagerly beginning to stroke, he pulled away. She slipped down to the floor, her back slick against the wooden door. He kissed her, a more tender motion than before, his lips lingering along her jawline before he paused to breathe lightly against the sensitive skin beneath her ear.

"Tell me"...his voice was almost gravelly with emotion, its habitual smoothness long since gone..."if this is really what you want."

"Yes." She pulled his face against hers and kissed him desperately. He curled both hands possessively around her waist and pulled her against him, his breathing becoming ragged. Aurora became immediately enchanted with the heat of his chest against her own, running her hands over the exquisite silk of his shirt.

"Then I suggest you direct me to the nearest bedroom."

He moved deliberately, almost stalking as he followed her lead, but she had none of his grace. She stumbled, trying in vain to maintain any contact of their skin as they progressed down the narrow hallway. After what seemed like an eternity apart from his body, they collapsed onto her bed, the sole object of furniture remaining in the tiny room she'd had as a young girl. She moaned at the contact of the cool sheets against her skin as Severus stood above her, intoning a spell that expanded the bed rapidly.

He loomed over her, his lips and breath making every hair stand on end as he worked his way along her body. When finally she managed to gain a hold of his arms, she brought him insistently against her, lifting her legs and wrapping them around his to draw him in.

The groan he gave when he sank into her was more powerful than any movement of his hips. He was whispering her name as he kissed her shoulders, the hollow of her collarbone, and the damp skin of her chest. Aurora ran her fingers over every inch of his body, memorizing the slender breadth of his rib cage and the wiry strength of his arms as they curled around her, supporting her gently. She was aware of nothing save the sound of his breathing and the friction of his movements until he shuddered in her arms, his final thrust shattering the last vestiges of her control.

Gripping his arms, she kissed him deeply, rolling their bodies onto the side so she could stare into his eyes. For the first time since she'd known him, his expression was completely open and unfettered by anger or irritation. His eyelids fell closed, the impossibly long black lashes and flush appearance of his pale skin lending him a sudden youthfulness that she found breathtaking.

He said nothing but drew her closer, tucking her head beneath his chin and burying his face in her hair. Still panting contentedly, Aurora lightly traced a pattern against his stomach with the tip of her fingernail, enjoying the contraction of his muscles and the slight shiver that ran through his frame.

She fell asleep to the slow, methodical coursing of his fingers through her hair, wondering if it wasn't capable of captivating a man's attention after all.