

# Secrets

*by whimbley*

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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A huge note of thanks to my Beta, June. I really couldn't have done it without her. It was her wonderful and thoughtful suggestions that made this story work. And thanks to ancientgirl as well, for jokingly suggesting the premise of this story. I think she was surprised I carried through with it. :)

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Hermione crept silently into Severus's private potions lab. She looked nervously over her shoulder and let out a slow sigh. In the bedroom sleeping peacefully was her husband of two years, Severus Snape.

"Calm yourself, Hermione," she whispered to herself.

She struggled with her inner conscience. She knew what she was doing was for the best. She knew that eventually this time would come.

Harry had encouraged her in her decision. "You've given him two years, which is far more than the git deserves," Harry argued. "Surely he must trust you by now. I trust you to do the right thing." He had reluctantly aided in Snape's vindication after the final battle, but had never publicly endorsed the man's story.

Still, she didn't feel right about it. "It's for the best," she whispered to herself again and moved towards the lab table in the corner. She frowned at all the ingredients still spread out on the table. It wasn't like Severus to be so messy; his mental condition must be deteriorating. Just another reason why she needed to do what she was going to do, she decided. It was an act of mercy.

She moved aside a few beakers filled with various potions ingredients until she reached the container she was looking for. She reached into her robes and pulled out a concealed satchel. She opened it and quickly dumped the contents into the container, then stirred the mixture to blend the new and old.

A loud sound soon broke out. She banished the satchel evidence of her crime and covered the container. She cringed and listened for Severus's footsteps, but all she could hear was his loud snoring coming from their bedroom. She drew a shaky breath and sighed. She hoped Severus wouldn't discover the difference.

Suddenly, she felt a hand touch her back. Hermione gasped and turned around.

"Why so upset, my dear?" asked Severus, his voice still deep with sleep.



Just last Wednesday he'd somehow managed to nod off in the staff room. He'd woken up to the sound of Flitwick giggling with Minerva. His head was face down on the staff table, his afternoon coffee and scone untouched, with drool in a puddle under his cheek.

"That young wife of yours keeping you up, Severus?" laughed Madame Hooch.

Severus had been horrified at that display of weakness in front of his peers. And Hooch's comment on his personal life left him tempted to turn the whole lot of them into Blast-Ended Skrewts.

Severus scowled and dismissed his class, gathering his things up as he retreated to his personal lab for a cup of his favorite Dragon Brew coffee. He needed to wake up and get his senses about him again.

He poured himself a large cup. Hermione had been on him lately to cut back on his coffee consumption and drink other beverages "nutritious juices from a health-foods store," she claimed. Beverages that smelled and came in strange colors that could hide any number of poisons and mind-altering ingredients.

Nag, nag, nag about "caffeine this, and remember what the healer said that." Now when he drank a cup of coffee, all he could think of was her nagging; still, he enjoyed the taste of his Dragon Brew.

Suddenly, he heard a sound coming from their personal quarters. Severus pulled his wand from his sleeve and crept quietly in. A horrible retching sound was coming from the bathroom.

"Hermione?" he called out.

"In here," came her miserable cry.

Severus walked in and saw his wife sitting on the floor before the toilet.

"What's wrong with you?" he asked.

"The flu," she croaked before returning to her retching.

"The flu?" he said, grimacing at his ill wife on the floor.

"Yes. Poppy says the whole school is coming down with it."

"Oh," he said, taking a large step away from her. "Is there anything I can do for you?" he asked, sincerely hoping she would say no.

"No," she gasped. "I just need some rest."

'Good,' thought Severus. Normally, he would have been more solicitous of a sick wife, but not when he suspected she was trying to kill him. "If you are certain then, I shall be returning to my lab."

"Yes, thank you, Severus," she said weakly and returned to her retching.

Severus walked quickly away and returned to his lab scrubbing his hands at the sink, trying to wash away any flu germs Hermione could have spread to him in that short time.

'Well, that did make sense,' he thought. It was possible then that the symptoms he was feeling were simply those of the flu. If his young, pretty wife had come down with it and Poppy said the whole school was coming down with it, then it was likely he was too. He would have a word with Poppy soon and seek out a remedy, because the school nurse would need him to make cauldrons of it for the students. He didn't mind the extra work, if it meant his wife was not trying to kill him.

Two days later, Severus felt defeated as he leaned over the bucket in his laboratory. He'd never felt so horrid. And that headache of his wasn't making things better.

He'd like to curse the person who had brought this blasted flu into his classroom. He finished his retching and slowly got off his knees. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and whispered hoarsely, "Evanesco," and watched what had recently been his breakfast disappear.

But come to think of it, he hadn't noticed any of his students absent or late. He reached for a vial of headache potion as well as an anti-nausea elixir and tried to again shake away the feelings of suspicion against Hermione. Poppy couldn't be part of his wife's plan, could she? Surely, the nurse wasn't lying when she told Severus she already had enough potions to handle the flu epidemic. He thought back to their conversation: Poppy had been busy folding bedsheets when she'd spoken to him; she didn't look him in the eyes, and the infirmary was empty of patients...

He almost tripped over Hermione's headset. *'What is this doing here? Why would she be in my lab?'* he wondered. On a hunch, he pressed the "play" button to hear the music she liked so much. "And you, you got in my way, stood between me and my friends. It was my sin, it was my shame. You were unconscious to the pain I was in. I hear there's trouble in Shangri-La..."

He switched to the next song. "In the beginning I believed in love and things. It happened like a hurricane. I could never really tell you what this did to me. I could never make it better for you."

He turned it off. Hermione had always been outspoken and unafraid to speak her mind; if she felt that way, she would have said something to him not poisoned him.

He quickly washed the headache potion down with the elixir and headed for the staff room, all flu symptoms now gone. He was eager to get a cup of coffee there, as his usual Dragon Brew wasn't tasting quite up to par. It could be the result of the flu affecting his sense of taste, or maybe the coffee wasn't freshly ground. Perhaps the elves had something better stocked there.

He had just reached the door to the staff room when he heard a discussion coming from inside. Severus sneered as he heard the voice of Harry Potter.

"And you're saying Snape doesn't even know she switched it?" asked Harry.

"Not a clue," said Lupin. "She made the switch a month ago."

"Even though he's an expert Potions master and can smell and taste a glass of wine, then tell you whether it was aged in a stainless steel tank or wooden barrel?"

"That's right. That's Severus."

Harry laughed. "That's our Hermione. If anyone could fool Snape it's her."

Severus had heard enough. He swirled around and stormed off in the direction of their personal quarters.

So he had been right. The woman had made a fool of him. He would never trust anyone again. He whipped out his wand along the way, startling a group of fourth years with his ferocity.

Several of the Hogwarts portraits followed him, running from frame to frame gossiping about the enraged Potions master. He could hear their excited whispers as he sped

along his way, his anger growing with every step.

So his dear wife had been poisoning him. And Potter and Lupin had been on to it. He wondered just what exactly she had been doing to him and what they were up to.

A sudden thought hit him, and he realized that it was his coffee which had been tasting differently. There'd been no flu epidemic!

"Bloody hell," he cursed out loud, frightening even more students scrambling out of his way. "It was the coffee!" he shouted to nobody in particular.

He increased his strides with more vigor, now changing his route and heading to his laboratory. No wonder things had been going so wrong. A number of horrible reasons for his wife's betrayal began racing through his head.

He reached the door and raced to the coffee container on the shelf. He grabbed it and swirled about to the private entrance of their personal quarters. Had he not been in quite such a state, he would have noticed the voices coming from inside.

He blasted his way through the door and stared into the eyes of his traitorous wife.

"It was the coffee!" he yelled as he threw the entire contents of the container into the air at her.

Suddenly, flashes from cameras blinked all around him, a band began to play and confetti began to rain down with the ground coffee.

Severus blinked and looked at his wife, standing with a shocked look on her face.

The room was full of their friends and other staff members from Hogwarts. Minerva was standing just inside with a glass of champagne in her hand, and Madam Hooch was standing next to her. Just then, Potter and Lupin hurried through the door.

"Ah, we missed it," said Harry.

"What in the blazes is going on here?" yelled Severus.

Everyone stared at him silently. Hermione cautiously moved closer to him.

"Severus," she said carefully to him. "This is the team from the Dragon Brew Switch Challenge and a few representatives from the Daily Prophet." She gestured to the strangers behind her.

He looked at her as if she had grown a sixth head.

"The Dragon Brew Switch Challenge," she enunciated carefully. "It's the one where you switch a loved one's regular coffee with decaf for a month and then see if they noticed the switch."

Severus continued staring.

"The one where you win an all-expenses paid trip to Tahiti, if you agree that there was no difference in the taste." She emphasized the last five words, staring meaningfully into his eyes.

"So tell us, Professor Snape," said a rather portly woman who appeared to be a representative from the Dragon Brew Coffee Company. "Did you notice the switch?"

A sense of anticipation hung in the air as everyone in the room waited to see what the famed Potions master would say. Every Hogwarts student for more than twenty years knew of his skills.

Severus looked deeply into his wife's eyes and felt the adrenaline coursing through his veins.

He lowered his wand and opened his mouth to speak.

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Severus looked down at the colorful floral outfit he was wearing. What a ridiculous outfit to have to wear. And for what? For answering a stupid question about a coffee challenge.

He grumbled quietly to himself.

"What was that, sir?" asked a man clad in white, standing to his right

"What?" asked Severus.

"I was asking you if you would like another Pina Colada or would like to try our Tahiti special?" asked the waiter.

"I think I'll stick with the Pina Colada," said Severus. He loved fresh pineapple, and the server was smart enough to give him extra pineapple wedges.

"And the lady?" asked their server.

"Oh, I'm fine with my water. Thank you," Hermione told the server, who then left. "Severus, isn't this wonderful?" she asked as she stretched out luxuriously on her chaise lounge.

"I have to admit, that although it was one of your more harebrained ideas, the end result is rather nice," said Severus, reaching across the distance to hold her hand.

"Oh, Severus, how many times can I say that I'm sorry. I never once thought you would think I was poisoning you. You know as well as I do what the Healer said at your last appointment. You were drinking way too much coffee," she said.

"Yes, I suppose allowing me to go through caffeine withdrawal while the entire school was watching was a much better idea," he quirked, lifting an eyebrow at her.

"Severus," she said tenderly, looking into his eyes. "I am so very sorry... again."

Severus laughed. "That will do, my dear, that will do," he said, kissing her hand. "Now how did I ever let you talk me into wearing these ridiculous shorts?"

"They're called swim trunks. And I happen to think they look lovely on you," she said, smiling. "And besides, you know there is another reason why I wanted you to stop drinking that coffee and get you away to Tahiti?"

Severus looked at her, puzzled again.

"Another reason? I thought we were through with secrets," he said, frowning.

"Well, there is just one more secret to reveal," she said quietly, while looking into his eyes lovingly. "Severus, I'm pregnant."

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Seven months later, Severus still needed no caffeine. Instead, he had a new infant daughter, who with just one squeak could instantaneously wake him up... every two hours. His mind said he was exhausted, but his heart was invigorated by the presence of another person in his life to love. Heart over mind won every time.

**A/N:**

*This was written for the SS/HG Exchange for Regann, the author of "Heart Over Mind," a wonderful SS/HG romance which she recently completed.*

*Her second prompt for this exchange fic was: "Hermione has a secret she needs to reveal. Emphasis on romance, light drama, utter sap." Her first prompt was: "Life being lived in the ordinary moments" which I think includes coffee.*

*Star Trek red shirts from one of Regann's favorite shows.*

*Garak from Star Trek: Deep Space Nine another of her favorite shows.*

*Stevie Nicks is Regann's musical idol, hence the lyrics from "Bella Donna," "Trouble In Shangri-La," and "Some Become Strangers."*

*Regann also likes Stargate Atlantis, so Severus and Hermione might have gone to Atlantis instead of Tahiti, except that Tahiti had the fresh pineapple.*