

# The Portrait on the Wall

*by themistresssnape*

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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"Glad to see death hasn't changed your temperament," Hermione said, trying to hide a grin. She was folding a pile of laundry on the sofa, above which hung a portrait of Severus Snape.

The portrait grimaced as he stared down at her. "Yes, well, I do have the same company I enjoyed in life," he replied, peeking to his right where Albus Dumbledore snoozed in his frame. "The loony old codger, sleeps all day and keeps me awake all night with a badly out of tune rendition of the school song. I know the school is an abhorrent bore during the summer holidays, but why must he stay in *this* portrait?"

A lovely young girl of around seventeen traipsed through the sitting room, her long ginger hair pulled back into a plait. She smiled at her mother, spinning a parchment envelope in her hand. She smiled softly up at the portrait of Dumbledore, grinning as a loud snore erupted from the beloved headmaster. The portrait of Snape was still staring down at her mother, a pained look on his face.

"Hogwarts letter came today," she said, her voice eerily like that of her mother. "You think we could go to Diagon Alley tomorrow and pick up my books?"

Hermione nodded absently, folding Ron's maroon socks. The portrait of Severus smiled at the young girl who reminded him of both her mother and Lily Evans. "How are we this morning, Miss Weasley?"

"We are doing fine, *Uncle Severus*," she retorted with a grin. "When are you ever going to start calling me Rose?"

Feigning shock, he replied, "I'll do no such thing! A gentleman never refers to a lady by her first name if he is not related to her."

A sputtering laugh came from Hermione, who looked at Severus through watery eyes. "Well, then, you've got several problems then, don't you, Severus? For one, when have you ever been a gentleman?"

"I'll have you know—"

Hermione hiccupped and continued on, ignoring Snape's interruption. "And secondly, have you forgotten you were named her godfather?"

Severus grunted and folded his arms. Both women fought to retain giggles. "Yes, but only after you talked your pigheaded husband into it! And dare I say you had to bribe him as well. Potter's attitude may have changed toward me, but I'm sure your darling Ronald doesn't fancy me hanging about the sitting room all day!"

"Dad's not like that," Rose said, putting her hands on her hips in a perfect imitation of her mother. "I know you tow never got along, but he really does like you, Uncle

Severus. You saved him and Mum! You helped to protect everyone!"

Her godfather's face grew darker than she'd ever seen it. His hands clenched into fists and he roared when he spoke. "I cut off his brother's ear! I couldn't stop the battle that killed Fred! There are many sins I am guilty of, and I am surely no one's savior!"

There was a *harrumph* from Snape's right as the portrait of Albus awoke. "What's all the racket for? Can't you let an old man sleep?"

"Severus is refusing to let go of the past," Hermione said, rolling her eyes. "You try and have a joke with him and he goes off the deep end. Has he always been so humorless, Albus?"

Dumbledore smiled broadly, his blue eyes twinkling. "No, he used to be a quite humorous young man. The years have jaded him a bit, but I'm sure, given the right circumstances, he would be a jolly man."

It was Snape's turn to *harrumph*. "I will never be a jolly man, Albus. I can enjoy a good joke as much as the next person, but I'll not be made fool of."

"He really is funny, Mum," Rose interjected. "And he's very intelligent. I come down sometimes when I can't sleep, and Uncle Severus and I can talk for hours about lots of things. I think I'll go for N.E.W.T.s in Potions and Defense. Uncle Severus says I should do really well. He says I'm like you, Mum."

"And that's an amazing compliment from Severus," Albus said. "Because your mother always reminded him of Lily Evans."

"Uncle Harry's mum? Why?"

Hermione and Albus looked at each other, wondering if they should answer. Snape's voice softened and a light smile crossed his face. "Because I loved Lily Evans my entire adult life," he whispered. "And Lily was a very intelligent young woman."

Snape looked off into the distance as if seeing something he'd never seen properly before. A thousand emotions washed over his face before he spoke again. "I have known three lovely, intelligent women in my life, and they've all been bloody Gryffindors," he said with a small smile. "And, I have loved them all, each in their own way. Lily was my first love. If only I could have been there, I would gladly have given my life to save hers. But I couldn't, so I made a promise to her that I would do whatever it took to protect her son.

"Then," he said with soft eyes, "there was your mother, Rose. Hermione was my favorite student by far, but I couldn't say so in my position at the time. She was so bright, so eager to learn, so much like me when I was a student. Rose, your mother was so brave, so pure that I fell in love with her. She defended me until she was blue in the face. It tore my heart into shreds when the time came for my betrayal.

"My only true regret with you, Hermione, is that I never got to explain myself to you, that I never got to spend the time with you that I wanted. I wish I could have done your postgraduate apprenticeship. There were so many ideas for research we could have done together. Perhaps you may have loved me in time, perhaps not. My only wish for you now is that you are happy."

Hermione smiled shyly and blushed a bit. "Harry showed me your memories, Severus. I suppose he shouldn't have, but he wanted me to know that you were everything I thought you were."

Snape smiled uneasily before leaning against the frame of his portrait. "Yes, I thank him for that. And then there is you, my darling Rose. So intelligent, so true, so beautiful. A talent in potions like I've never seen. You are my other love, Rose. I will do whatever I can to give you every advantage possible. There's a little gold in my vault at Gringotts and my will left it to your mother, father, and Potter."

"Severus, you know we couldn't take that," Hermione whispered. "Ronald and Harry do very well at the Ministry and I enjoy my research with St. Mungo's. We'll be fine."

"I couldn't help Lily and I betrayed you and lost you," he said, pain echoing on his face. "I will atone for my sins with Rose."

The young woman smiled at the portrait of her godfather. "I love you too, Uncle Severus. You don't have anything to be sorry for. I think you are wonderful." Rose slipped past her mother and kissed the portrait of Severus on the cheek before bounding out of the room.

"You see, Severus. You're not just the portrait on the wall, you're part of this family."

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**Notes from The Mistress:** As much as I hated the death of our beloved Potions master, I suppose he died an honorable death. After reading the fact that Harry named one of his children after Severus, I thought about what Hermione and Ron may have done to honor his memory. This is what became of it, with help from the hubby.