

Falling for Pomona

by MMADfan

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Just a light little one-shot.
Companion one-shot: "Impressing Filius."

First Impressions

Chapter 1 of 1

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Filius Flitwick fussed with his collar, then tried brushing his hair into something more restrained than its usual state of abandon. Finally, he gave up: his hair would lie flat, but then, a few strands at a time, the contrary stuff would begin to spring free and wave about as if in a nonexistent breeze. Even charms, the strongest of them, seemed to work only for a brief time before his hair overcame them to rebelliously and joyously fluff out around his head again, a sort of fuzzy grey nimbus. Frustrated, Filius Summoned his new green, brimless, high-peaked hat. He was going to be late to the meeting if he didn't hurry. The new Herbology professor had arrived that morning, just in time for the mid-summer Heads of House meeting. Although a few of the other teachers had raised an eyebrow that the newest member of the faculty would be made Head of House before having even taught one lesson at Hogwarts, Filius wasn't bothered by it. He knew quite well that Professor James, the Muggle Studies teacher, had hated being Head of House and had only agreed to serve because there had been no alternative. Fortunately, Poppy Pomfrey, sweet girl, had stepped into the breach and had helped the hapless James out, providing a shoulder to cry on and doling out advice that the Muggle Studies teacher, well-intended though he certainly was, was constitutionally ill-equipped to give. It had been quite a relief to him when he had learned that the new Herbology teacher had been a Hufflepuff, and he had practically fallen on his knees and begged the Headmaster to please ask the witch if she would become Head of House.

Filius had never met the new teacher before what was her name? He never seemed to be able to hold it in his head . . . Root? Twig? Trunk? No, no, none of those were right . . . Sprig! That was it! Professor Sprig. Her first name escaped him, as well, but having remembered her last name, he was unconcerned about recalling her first name.

He closed the door to his quarters behind him firmly, and set off for the Headmaster's office, trotting along in hopes to make up for his lost time. He had not wanted to appear the absent-minded Charms professor in his first encounter with the new member of the staff. Dumbledore had assured everyone that she was highly qualified for the position, a worthy replacement of the beloved Professor Birnbaum, and that she was eminently suitable to be Head of House. Those accolades had been sufficient for him; after all, what did he know of Herbology? He couldn't distinguish a gardenia from a carnation, although he could perform lovely colour charms on either of them, even if

he didn't know what it was he was charming. You didn't have to know your flora and fauna for Charms. That's why he had never gone in much for Transfiguration. If he had some notion of what he was supposed to be Transfiguring something into, why, he could do as well as the next chap! Problem was, what was the difference between a hedgehog and a vole? Or even a hedgehog and a hedgerow? That could even present a puzzle, under pressure. But they never did provide you with a picture, did they? Oh, no! That might give a fellow a sporting chance! Can't have that! He understood that the new Transfiguration Mistress had quite up-to-date teaching methods and would actually demonstrate the desired Transfiguration, unlike the teachers of his own youth. As a student, he never had dared try a Transfiguration until someone else had had success with it first: it wasn't the incantation that he needed demonstrated, nor the wand movement. No, what he needed was an example to fix in his mind so he could form the correct intent. Once, in an exam, he'd been asked to change a hatpin into a hairnet. He did his best, remembering all the beasts and blossoms he had crammed into his head in preparation for the exam, but once they'd finally let the hornet out of the classroom window, well, it was clear he was getting no points for that one.

Fortunately, the entrance to the Headmaster's office had been moved from the second floor to the seventh the previous year, and so Filius only had to run to the main hallway, then down to the other end, in order to reach the Headmaster's gargoyles and ride a short way up to the Tower office. As he reached the hallway, Filius turned into it as he always did, rounding the corner tightly. He had been trotting along at quite a good clip, however, and he was unaware that there was a person standing just beyond the corner until he had run into her. This person was quite steady on her feet, thankfully, and barely tottered. Filius, however, fell flat on his back, his fine new hat flying off behind him, releasing his hair to its happy freedom.

The fall had knocked the wind from him, and though he tried to apologise to the person he had just bowled into, Filius was unable to do anything but wheeze.

"Oh, my! Are you all right?" Filius heard the witch say, but he was still unable to do anything but wheeze. Then, floating above him, he saw a vision of beauty: a rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed witch.

Later, he would claim that his incoherence was the result of oxygen deprivation to his brain. "H Ha Hat."

"Your hat? Yes, yes, it's here, but are you all right? I am so sorry! It was so foolish of me, just standing there like that!" The witch bent down and touched his forehead. "Are all right? Should I call for the matron?"

"No, no . . ." Filius took a couple gasping breaths. Oh, the witch smelled lovely! Just like gardenias. And somehow, he knew it was gardenias, and no other flower. He struggled to sit up, and the witch helped him, lifting him and setting him on his feet, but not letting go.

"You're sure you're all right? That was quite a fall there!"

"Fine, the wind was in the fall. I mean, the wind knocked the fall out of me. I mean, the fall knocked the wind out of me." Oh, she was so beautiful, and her grip was firm but gentle. Filius began to blush. "I'm fine. Um, my hat . . ."

The witch gradually loosened her hold on him, seeming as though she was prepared to grab him again if he showed any signs of toppling over. When he didn't, she Summoned his hat for him and handed it to him.

"Thank you. I'm so very sorry! To have run into you like that," Filius said, blushing even more and pulling his hat onto his head, hoping to contain his unruly hair. "Most rude of me. Very sorry! And you must be Professor Sprig!" he said brightly, trying to cover his earlier confusion and embarrassment.

"Sprout. Yes, I am looking for the entrance to the Headmaster's office. I haven't been back to Hogwarts in years, and I'm afraid that everything looks different. I'm not even sure I'm on the right floor."

"Yes, yes, you are! The seventh floor. It's right this way, if you might allow me to accompany you, Professor Sprig, I would be happy to show you to the gargoyles. I mean, lead you to the gargoyles." Filius began to blush again. He seemed tongue-tied in the presence of Professor Sprig, incapable of even the simplest courtesy, it seemed.

"Sprout. Yes, I would like that . . . if you feel up to it." She looked down at him, concern on her face.

"Oh, I'm up to anything, I mean, everything. I mean, I'm fine." Better just to ask a polite question, he thought, and allow her to talk, since his attempts were clearly failing to approach the realm of sense. "Did you have a comfortable trip, Professor Sprig? Apparition or Portkey?"

"The Headmaster kindly provided me with a Portkey to the gates," she responded as she walked along beside him. "Oh, there's the gargoyles! Thank you very much, Professor . . . ?"

"Flitwick. Filius. And you are very welcome. As I am attending the meeting, it would be discourteous of me to do otherwise." Filius breathed a sigh of relief. Well, there was one sentence he hadn't mangled. He didn't know what his trouble was. He was normally quite comfortable with others, conversation coming easily to him. He may not know a porcupine from a platypus, but he could converse well on a wide variety of topics, and had even been told that he was very entertaining company.

"Well, Professor Filius, I am nonetheless grateful you came along when you did, although I am still somewhat concerned about you. That seemed quite a fall!"

"Oh, I'm fine, really. Lingerin' Licorice," he said, addressing the gargoyles. "I'm close to the ground," he joked, "so it wasn't far!" How odd, though, that she had called him "Professor Filius." Perhaps it was her attempt to be friendly?

"All right" The new teacher followed Filius onto the moving stair.

"You know, we aren't well-acquainted, Professor Sprig, but if you would care to address me simply by my first name, why, I would find that quite collegial!" Filius offered cheerfully. He had no thought that she would return the invitation on such short acquaintance, but he hoped she would not be offended by his offer, since she was already calling him "Professor Filius," after all.

"Sprout. It is a kind offer, Flitwick, thank you," the Herbology teacher replied.

Filius was puzzled. Was "Sprout" perhaps her first name? Was that why she had been repeating it? She had been offering the use of her first name to him? But what daft parents would name their poor little girl "Sprout Sprig"? He shuddered to think what names her siblings might be saddled with. But why had she then addressed him by his family name, not even bothering with "Professor"? Had he offended her with his invitation? Most confusing . . .

They reached the top of the stair and the door opened to them. The Headmaster stood and greeted them. Professors Slughorn and McGonagall were already present.

"Ah, Filius, Pomona! I see you two have met! How wonderful!" Dumbledore said brightly. "Come in, have a seat, have some tea, and help yourselves to biscuits!"

Pomona? Filius began to blush once more, giving his new colleague a sidelong glance, wondering what she could possibly think of him. Of course, she had been telling him that her name wasn't "Sprig," it was "Sprout." And somehow he had given her the impression that his first name was Flitwick.

"You know, Professor Dumbledore," Pomona said, "I'm a bit worried about . . . Filius. He had a fall, and now he seems a bit . . . dazed. He said he was all right, but," she added in a whisper, "he kept calling me 'Sprig,' and he said some nonsense about languid licorice a little bit ago. I'm afraid of, you know, concussion or something." The witch shot Filius a sympathetic glance as she finished.

Dumbledore's eyes twinkled. "Well, I believe that if Filius could remember that my password was recently changed to 'Lingerin' Licorice,' he has recovered and has likely suffered no lasting harm. We will keep an eye on him, however. Perhaps you would care to sit next to him and do that?" the Headmaster asked.

"Of course! I feel dreadful about it . . . it was all my fault that Professor Filius fell in the first place."

Dumbledore's eyebrows rose a bit at that, and Filius felt like sinking into the floor. Fortunately, the Headmaster merely waved them to their seats.

"Let us begin, then, with introductions. Pomona Sprout, I do believe you know Professor Horace Slughorn, Potions teacher and Head of Slytherin House. Next to him is Minerva McGonagall, Transfiguration Mistress, Head of Gryffindor, and the new Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts, and, of course, you have met Professor Filius Flitwick, Head of Ravenclaw House and Charms teacher."

Filius was very glad that the meeting did not require him to speak much, although he doubted that he could have embarrassed himself any more than he already had. Nonetheless, he was pleased when, at the meeting's end, the new Herbology teacher smiled at him and asked him if he would mind terribly walking her to the main staircase so that she wouldn't lose her way. And he did, happily.

Note: *There is now a companion one-shot to this story, called "Impressing Filius," in which we see the event from Pomona's point-of-view.*