

Never Say Never

by RachelW

Just why did Snape look as if he was trying not to smile when Mrs Norris was petrified?

Runner-Up, round three of the Multifaceted award, 'Desire' category.

One Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Thanks to Nakhash Mekashefah, my wonderful beta-reader.

This came to me while re-reading this scene in canon, only with a twist. All dialogue up to the point that Harry, Ron, and Hermione leave the office is straight from CoS.

Snape stood half in shadow as Professor Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall peered closely at Mrs Norris, examining the cat. He was trying not to smile, but was finding it hard not to...even as Filch's dry sobs filled the room, he couldn't contain his elation.

He was also trying to tune out Lockhart's boasts about how he could have done this, that, or the other, to save the feline. Not surprisingly, no one paid him any heed.

At last Dumbledore straightened up. "She's not dead, Argus," he said softly.

Blast! Snape thought. That cat was a menace, a danger.

"Not dead?" choked Filch, looking through his fingers at Mrs Norris. "But why's she all stiff and frozen?"

"She has been Petrified," said Dumbledore. ("Ah! I thought so!" said Lockhart). "But how, I cannot say..."

"Ask *him!*" shrieked Filch, turning his blotched and tearstained face to Potter.

Snape nearly winced at the sight. Filch was hardly attractive under normal circumstances. Usually, in their clandestine meetings, Snape had closed his eyes and imagined that it was another's mouth moving along his length usually Lucius, who had never reciprocated in their affair years before sucking him with fervour...another's body he pounded into...and now, he was downright hideous.

Mrs Norris was the reason the pathetic man would no longer continue with their clandestine meetings. Sometimes it had been in the trophy room, sometimes the staff room if it was empty. There were many other places about the castle and the grounds where they had taken a quick moment together. But always, Mrs Norris had taken any opportunity to interfere.

There was a certain thrill at the danger involved, the possibility of being caught by a straying student or another professor making rounds. In fact, only the previous year, the Potter boy had walked in on them just as Filch was about to lift his robes completely, about to... He had bellowed for Potter to get out and had later surmised that it was a good thing that his mangled leg perhaps gave adequate excuse for that compromising position, even if the boy had suspected him of trying to get past Fluffy and obtain the Philosopher's Stone for himself.

"No second-year could have done this," said Dumbledore firmly. "It would take Dark Magic of the most advanced-"

"He did it, he did it!" Filch spat, his paunchy face purpling. "You saw what he wrote on the wall! He found in my office he knows I'm a I'm a " Filch's face worked horribly. "He knows I'm a Squib!" he finished.

Snape resisted a snort of disdain. Filch had never been able to come to terms with his non-magical status...Snape had had to listen to Filch whine and groan on and on until he'd found a way for Filch to put his mouth to better use. Really, Dumbledore thought he was doing the poor man a service by hiring him on at a school of Magic, when all it did was remind him daily of his shortcomings. They should really be training Squibs to assimilate with Muggles, who lived just fine without magic, not knowing what they were missing.

"I never *touched* Mrs Norris!" Potter said loudly. Snape shot a glare in his direction. "And I don't even know what a Squib *is*."

"Rubbish!" snarled Filch. "He saw my Kwikspell letter!"

Snape decided he'd heard enough. He'd told Filch numerous times that Kwikspell was nothing more than a scam and would never work. Filch would be much happier if he would simply accept that he was a Squib.

"If I might speak, Headmaster," said Snape from the shadows. He had decided it was time to put this situation to a quick end, and perhaps even come out of it in a better position in several ways. He felt a glimmer of satisfaction when Potter looked noticeably apprehensive.

"Potter and his friends may have simply been in the wrong place at the wrong time," he said, feeling his lips curling with a sneer he couldn't hold back. No doubt, Potter and his friends had been up to no good, even if they couldn't have petrified Filch's feline. "But we do have a set of suspicious circumstances here. Why was he in the upstairs corridor at all? Why wasn't he at the Hallowe'en feast?"

Snape scowled down at the children as they launched into a tall tale about going to the Deathday party of Nearly Headless Nick. "...there were hundreds of ghosts, they'll tell you we were there "

"But why not join the feast afterward?" said Snape. "Why go up to that corridor?"

And of course, the sycophants looked to Potter, who was searching for some explanation. "Because because " Potter stammered, "because we were tired and wanted to go to bed," he said, an obvious lie.

"Without any supper?" said Snape, smiling triumphantly. Oh, this was a night of many triumphs. "I didn't think ghosts provided food fit for living people at their parties."

"We weren't hungry," said the Weasley boy loudly. Snape's smile widened as he heard the boy's stomach rumble.

"I suggest, Headmaster, that Potter is not being entirely truthful," he said. "It might be a good idea if he were deprived of certain privileges until he is ready to tell us the whole story. I personally feel he should be taken off the Gryffindor Quidditch team until he is ready to be honest." Snape knew if this worked, Filch would be very...grateful.

"Really, Severus," Minerva said sharply, "I see no reason to stop the boy playing Quidditch. This cat wasn't hit over the head with a broomstick." Snape cursed inwardly, he should have known she would say that...Minerva and her 'logical consequences' philosophy be damned. "There is no evidence at all that Potter has done anything wrong."

"Innocent until proven guilty, Severus," Dumbledore finally said after watching Potter for a long moment.

Snape was furious. Slytherin, even with the new broomsticks Lucius had bought the team, would have a hard time winning the first Quidditch match if Potter was still the Seeker. He'd be strutting about, puffed up with pride, just like his father. He already showed as little heed for school rules as his father had. And he also knew that without his plan to seek retaliation on Potter, Filch would be all the more difficult to console.

"My cat has been Petrified!" Filch shrieked, predictably, his eyes nearly popping from his head. "I want to see some *punishment*!"

Oh Filch and his *punishment* fantasy. He still polished his antique manacles daily, but only Snape knew Filch secretly enjoyed being the one locked in those shackles, no matter how much he railed for permission to put students in them and whip them.

"We will be able to cure her, Argus," said Dumbledore patiently. "Professor Sprout recently managed to procure some Mandrakes. As soon as they have reached their full size, I will have a potion made that will revive Mrs Norris."

"I'll make it," Lockhart butted in. "I must have done it a hundred times. I could whip up a Mandrake Restorative Draught in my sleep "

"Excuse me," said Snape icily. "But I believe I am the Potions master at this school." He glared at the pompous Lockhart. How dare he attempt to usurp his position? Besides, he wanted Filch to know it was within his power, and only his power, to bring his cat back.

"You may go," Dumbledore said to the children. They went quickly from Lockhart's office.

Dumbledore looked gravely around to Minerva, Filch, and then at Snape, who managed to look appropriately solemn. "We should begin a full investigation of this matter. This is most unusual."

"Yes, well, I daresay it is a good thing you now have me here at the school!" Lockhart boasted.

Everyone turned to scowl at him, except Filch, who was crouched before the desk petting his petrified cat, his chin quivering as he muttered softly.

"I shall see to the students," Minerva said to Dumbledore.

Lockhart announced that he would go in search of the culprit, and also left his office, only pausing to announce before he left: "Stay as long as you like. While you're here, you might be interested to look up in my autobiography where I dealt with an experience quite like this ten years ago. Good night!"

"Argus," Dumbledore said softly, "I will take her to the hospital wing, where she can remain until the potion is made to restore her. She will be fine, Argus. We will do all we can do discover how this came about."

"It was that boy, I tell you...that boy..." he trailed off with a squeak as he buried his face in his hands once more. Dumbledore, thankfully, did not continue to protest. Rather, he gathered Mrs Norris gently in his arms and left the office.

Snape stood there beside the desk for several moments when the two of them were left alone. "Argus," he finally began, "I will brew the potion when the Mandrakes are ripe. Your cat will be returned to you in full health."

"You never liked her anyway! You're glad she's Petrified, you are!" he snarled, turning his tearstained face towards Snape, his lips pulled back to expose his crooked teeth.

Snape couldn't deny that, exactly. "Argus, I was merely...annoyed that time she bit me in the trophy room. It was a reflex; I didn't mean to kick her across the room."

"And what about the time you locked her in my desk? What about that?" Filch raged.

Snape considered if it were really worth trying to calm the man, perhaps to even *comfort* him in some way. "Argus, Mrs Norris hates me and takes every opportunity to make her opinion of me known. Some...resentment...cannot be helped. What about the time she," Snape shuddered, "...remember, in the greenhouse?"

A chuckle escaped Filch's lips, a start of a smile beginning. "That was right funny, that was," he said, wiping tears from his eyes with the sleeve of his dirty coat.

"I didn't think so," Snape replied through clenched lips, remembering the painful experience. "She left scars!" He should have known better than to leave himself so exposed as he took Filch in the greenhouse...he should have kept his thighs together, rather than leave a bouncing, dangling target for that cat to sneak up upon. Filch laughed some more, hiccoughing and sniffing.

"Not like they're in a place anyone would notice. Ahh, my lovely Mrs Norris..." his lips curled in a nostalgic half-smile, "she's jealous of you, your attention, is all. But now...now..." Filch sniffled noisily, wiping his nose with the already tear-dampened sleeve. "Oh, poor Mrs Norris!" he wailed, then turned and nearly fell onto Snape, wrapping his arms around Snape's torso, effectively pinning his arms to his sides. Snape stood stiffly as the Squib sobbed, wincing as he smeared his tears and snot over his robes.

"Er...Argus...there, there..." he stammered awkwardly. Argus responded with a wet sniffle, pulling back from Snape.

"S-sorry about that," he muttered.

"She will recover; I will personally brew and administer the potion. You have my assurance she will be all right."

"Oh, Professor Snape, I'd be forever grateful!" Filch gushed. "You know...I've really missed..." he trailed off, and Snape felt Filch's hand move south, attempting to feel him out under his robes. Filch, after some fumbling, found his target, and Snape closed his eyes and groaned as Filch's calloused hand squeezed and stroked him through his robes.

"I thought you said you would never..."

"I didn't really mean it...you know what they say...never say never..."

"Argus, I know you're upset now, I wouldn't want you to do anything too difficult." Snape sighed, knowing this was the perfect way to get Filch on his knees.

"If Mrs Norris will really be better...I-I just want you to know..." He choked off his words; Snape was worried he would start crying again. Instead, Argus Filch knelt in the office filled with the portraits of the pompous Lockhart and lifted Snape's robes as he sank to his knees. Snape smiled triumphantly, closing his eyes and calling up the image of his old friend, Lucius Malfoy, as his cock was enveloped in warm, tight heat.