

One for Sorrow

by Tarie

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Chapter 1 of 1

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The Second Sight skips three generations, but the affinity for sherry does not. Just as her mother did and her mother before her, and so on, Sibyll Trelawney has a heated love affair with sherry.

Sherry in the morning and sherry in the evening. Sherry at tea...time and sherry while post...reading and sherry sherry sherry. Sibyll sometimes believes that sherry runs through her veins, sweet, dry, and slightly crisp. She sometimes believes it, and the thought of sherry running through her veins, and on the matter of sherry itself, comforts her.

The Room, one would see if he was so inclined to inspect it himself, contains solid proof as to just how much the thoughts of sherry...pumping through her veins, rolling about on her tongue, dry with something just shy of a proper and definitive taste, smoothly gliding down her throat, filling her belly with warmth and bringing clarity to her very being...comfort her.

Now, though, Sibyll does not drink sherry for comfort.

She does not even drink it to quench thirst.

She drinks the sherry in hopes that she can forget.

Or perhaps not forget.

Maybe it is clarity she seeks. Understanding. Reasoning.

They're out there. Sibyll knows it. She knew it would happen, and it has, and she cannot drink the sherry fast enough to help her cope with the fact that everyone who calls Hogwarts home is currently outside attending Dumbledore's funeral.

Dumbledore is dead and Sibyll feels guilty.

It is because of Dumbledore that she has been fortunate to call Hogwarts home for the past sixteen years. If not for him, she would have been turned out on her ear only a few months ago at the behest of that vile Umbridge woman. Dumbledore insisted that Sibyll remain at Hogwarts, even though she had been given an Order of Dismissal by the Minister for Magic.

On the other hand, Dumbledore had also hired the nag, Dobbin... Firenze," she corrects herself, hiccupping...to take her place.

Oh ho, yes, of course she was reinstated as an instructor a few months ago, but Dumbledore did not release the centaur. Hadn't she *proven* herself to Dumbledore? Didn't

he value her?

It was...it *is*...insulting to share the duty of teaching Divination classes with the horse. None of the other teachers share their instruction duties with another, let alone a *creature*. It is insulting, and she doesn't understand why Dumbledore prefers fewer visits from her about such matters, why Dumbledore doesn't value her as she does him, why...

"Preferred," she mutters, taking a long pull from her bottle, "...erED. Dead."

Dumbledore is dead.

Dumbledore is dead and she didn't go to his funeral.

She isn't at his funeral. How *dare* she snub his honour like this? After all he did for her...

Sibyll's head hurts. Her head hurts, her Sight is painful, and she would give anything to drown.

She does not wish to drown in the lake or the bath. Sherry is the only way to go.

Yes.

Finishing the bottle in her hand, she tosses it aside, making a face as it lands perfectly whole in the springy moss at the base of one of the many trees in classroom eleven.

The classroom is warm and muggy, and Sibyll isn't sure if it is because of the pseudo-forest environment, the sherry, or her guilt. Probably a combination thereof.

Blinking, she pushes huge glasses up the bridge of her nose with one hand and feels for her wand with the other. A Cooling Charm or two would be nice.

Her wand isn't anywhere to be found, but her fingers do find a home around the base of another bottle of sherry, and Sibyll is pleased. Hot with sticky-sweat skin, but pleased.

Off goes the cap and down the hatch one, two, three, one...

One for sorrow,

Drink.

Two for joy,

Swallow.

Three for a girl,

Drink.

Four for a boy,

Dry.

Five for silver,

Sweet or

Six for gold,

Bitter?

Seven for a secret

Swallow. Hot.

Never to be told.

So. Hot.

The bottle drops easily from her fingers. Tips touch palm lines and Sibyll cannot find her lifeline. Curious and absent and is she feeling? Or remembering what it is like to feel Dumbledore's hand?

Lemon drops.

The last time they spoke...the last time he made it clear that he would not turn out Dobbin...he pressed a sweet in her hand. Her fingers swept over his palm and she felt nothing.

She feels nothing.

Nothing in her palm save for hot moist skin and oh.

Too much.

Fingers move and nimbly free buttons from holes, and the air is heavy and familiar on her skin.

Deep in her stomach the sherry turns and churns, and Sibyll hiccups again. Her head is light, and she just might be able to float, if she wishes for it hard enough. Every time she moves, beads rattle and bump against each other. Sibyll considers removing the beads, too, but she likes them too much to take them off.

It is close in the room and she is thirsty again. There is enough sherry to quench her thirst but not to drown. Maybe when her head is not so light, she can remedy that. In the meantime, she will quench her thirst and not think about Dumbledore's lifeless body out on the grounds. She will not think about anything but sherry and Cassandra and how greatness is never, ever appreciated, not when it ought to be.

Sibyll empties another bottle, lays back against the moss and lush grass. Dappled light, soft and green, spills across her skin, and Sibyll sighs. Then she belches before everything becomes black.

Sibyll dreams of horses and men, of centaurs and Seers and Mars.

When she awakens, the nag is standing over her.

"Sibyll Trelawney," he says, his brilliant blue eyes large and unblinking.

She stares up at him, hand wrapping around the nearest bottle of sherry.

"Centaur," she slurs, rapping one of his hoofs.

The nag steps back, his long tail twitching, whipping from one side to the other. "It was foretold this would happen." His face is stoic and his voice quiet.

"What?" Sibyll coughs and hiccups and climbs to her feet, clutching her bottle against her chest.

Dobbin crosses his arms about his own chest, his eyes darting up and down her form quickly.

"This," he says simply, opening his arms and gesturing around them.

Somewhere deep inside, Sibyll thinks that perhaps she ought to be embarrassed, being starkers in front of this creature. But she will not be embarrassed. She will not be anything, save for herself, sherry addiction, Inner Eye, and all.

"I knew it," she says loudly, daring him to question her.

He stares back at her and nods, and hate flares white-hot in her belly, marinated by sherry and guilt and jealousy.

"Certainly you have somewhere to be," she says.

"As do you."

"I'm where I need to be." Sibyll cannot believe the horse's nerve. What gall to tell her she ought to be somewhere other than right there at Hogwarts?

Angry and annoyed and much lighter in the head than she was before, Sibyll decides that she needs to return to her tower. The silver ladder is beckoning her. It's safe there, a place where the centaur can't reach her, can't talk to her, can't insult her, can't try to take her job away. Setting her jaw, Sibyll crouches down and gathers up her clothes in one arm, protecting the last bottle of sherry in the other. She'll go and that will be...

Oh.

The room sways back and forth...or maybe it's Sibyll herself doing the swaying...when she stands. It's too much. Her knees buckle, and she is pitching forward, falling, falling, falling...

Sibyll can feel the rush of disorientation set in as her body falls, and then suddenly she's being grabbed by strong hands and turned, and ~~it~~*an't* be.

But it is.

She is sitting astride the centaur. Side-saddle, no less. Not that he would deign himself to be saddled, of course.

She is sitting astride the centaur and he is taking her somewhere. Her beads jangle, and his hoofs make clopping sounds against the grass and moss of the room, and the sounds become louder when they travel down the corridor.

"Where are we..." Her voice trails off. Everything is too much effort. Keeping her eyes open. Speaking. Thinking. Seeing. *Seeing.*

She moves to open the lid on the sherry, and the ball of clothes under her arm slip onto her lap first before landing onto the floor. It's all right. Sibyll has her beads, and she has her sherry, and now one hand is free to rest against the small of the centaur's back for balance. Underneath the fog of alcohol, Sibyll realises that Dobbin is making a statement, carrying her as he is.

That realisation is sharp and cuts through the fog, and Sibyll knows. Dumbledore is dead, and they both owe him gratitude. They owe it to his memory to make an effort. For him, and for each other.

The centaur does not answer her question, picking up his pace instead. They move through countless corridors until reaching the staff room.

"Minerva McGonagall decreed this meeting so," the centaur informs her as he pushes open the door.

This makes sense to Sibyll; Dumbledore would have wanted the faculty and staff to move on and continue operating the school. As the doors open to the protest of groaning hinges, Sibyll raises her bottle in toast to the absent headmaster, tips back her head, and chugs.

"Goodness me!" a small voice squeaks. The sound is accompanied by the thud of head meeting stone, and the centaur rounds the door just in time for Sibyll to see Pomona Sprout rushing to Filius Flitwick's side. Minerva McGonagall's eyes widen while Horace Slughorn stares blatantly at Sibyll's breasts.

Sibyll hiccups and throws her bottle at Slughorn's head.

As the glass bounces off his head and shatters into hundreds of pieces on the ground, the strong perfume of sherry fills the air, and Sibyll thinks that Dumbledore would be proud of her decision to keep her head above water.