

Arguments

by chivalric

Snape is alive – only he doesn't believe it. Sometimes a little arguing is needed to open one's eyes.

One-shot Story

Chapter 1 of 1

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Endless darkness, endless silence, endless peace. No one to disturb him, no one to bother him, no one to kick him around; no one around at all.

"You're dead."

So much about the endlessness of things.

"Hello? Did you not hear me? You're dead!"

"Am I?"

"Of course you are look round! It's dark, it's quiet, you have no body, no senses, you don't feel pain you're dead."

"Hmmm. I can't see a thing, I admit that much, and you are right about the body bit, most senses, and the pain. But I can hear you. So I'm not really convinced that I'm dead. If I were dead who would be?"

"Me? I'm part of your dead subconsciousness."

"So I'm having a conversation with myself whilst I'm dead?"

"Exactly."

"Nonsense!" Damn it. It was impossible to snort without at least a little bit of a nose. *I'm missing my nose only because I can't snort?* Snape wondered. *Now that's ridiculous.*

"You can't be a part of me," he then accused. "You are impertinent. You are annoying. I'm neither, obviously. Come to think of it, you sound like one of my students." There. One of his students had found a way to bother him, even here. Subject solved. He wasn't dead. He was far too young and too brilliant a Potions master to be dead.

"If I'm one of your students, how come I am here?"

"You obviously found a way to follow me here. This could be some sort of afterlife, and you find it amusing to walk on my nerves."

"Afterlife? Ah so you admit now to being dead?" There was a smug little sub-note to these words.

Snape, annoyed as he was at this insistence in his very personal matters, wanted to shake his head with one of his little, sharp movements and found he didn't have a head left he could shake. Arse. *But fine*, he thought, *that at least solves the hair-problem.* "There are different afterlives, and not for all of them you need to be completely dead. And I don't admit anything without proof," he stated, if only to shut up this insistent voice in his non-existing head.

"What do you need proof for Nagini has ripped half your head off, in case you don't remember! There is absolutely no way that you can still be alive and not to talk about the snake venom. This is an afterlife where you have to be very dead. As you are."

He couldn't glare either. Very disappointing. He had always liked a good glare. Surprising, really, how hard it was to keep up a proper argument whilst being completely bereft of one's natural weapons. Well, maybe not completely. There was still his sarcasm. "Actually, I was the victim, in case you have failed to observe that," he snapped. "And I do in detail remember the attack. Nagini ripped open my neck, but my head was still sitting firmly on my shoulders when I hit the ground. And whilst we are at it for someone not completely daft, it would have been quite easy to seal my wounds long enough for Poppy to arrive and patch me up properly. But then, there was obviously no one sufficient around."

"Granger was there."

"How do you know who was there and who wasn't?" he demanded, his temper rising with the minute.

"I'm part of your dead subconsciousness," the voice reminded him.

"Are you bullshit," Snape growled. "Besides, the babble-mouth looked like fainting on the spot with all the blood."

"I'm not a babble-mouth and I would have never fainted!"

A long silence followed this outburst. Then, Snape said with resignation, "Don't tell me we are stuck together in hell, Miss Granger. That would be a punishment even I haven't earned."

"Being stuck with you anywhere would be quite awful for me as well, Professor Snape," she answered with indignation. It told Snape that Granger was still not used to his harsh comments, although he had certainly used them often enough during her school career.

"You're not in hell," she finally grumbled. "But you're dead. I just came here to tell you so."

"Where's 'here'?" he asked, for the first time slightly curious.

"Use your brain, Professor you've died on the floor of the Shrieking Shack, I have been there, unable to save you, so this is where 'here' is. The Shrieking Shack. Your dead body is too stubborn to let go of the mortal world, and that's why you can still hear my words. I just try to make it easier for you to cross the veil."

"Merlin," Snape sighed. "Don't tell me Potter is around as well. He's supposed to kill the Dark Lord."

"What do you care? You. Are. DEAD!"

"No, I'm not!"

"Fine," she snapped. "So if you are not dead, what are you? Where are you? And why are you here, wherever here is?"

"You just said that 'here' is the blood-covered floor of the Shrieking Shack! Can you at least try to remember what you have said only a minute ago?" Frustration crept in his mental voice. *Whatever a mental voice might be*, he thought bitterly. He nearly wished he were either properly dead or alive. *This here must be something in between*, he mused. *Shit!*

Airily, she replied, "I might have lied."

"About what? My whereabouts?"

"As well. Or other things. Or nothing. Maybe I AM a part of your subconsciousness. Maybe I just try to convince you that I am someone else to drive you crazy. Maybe you are crazy. Crazy and dead, by the way. As is the rest of you, in case I haven't mentioned it."

"Can't you just bugger off?" Snape asked in desperation. This argument was wearing him out, a stupid observation in itself, as a dead man can't feel tired. But then he had been insisting since the last, well, minutes, that he *wasn't* dead. "Go away," he grumbled. Maybe he could concentrate on dying when she was gone. She had always talked too much.

She pondered on that for a moment. "I don't think so, Professor. But let's say you are right and you aren't dead..."

"Hah!"

"... then tell me how I happen to be here. Tell me where 'here' is. Prove to me that you aren't dead."

"Just leave me alone, will you? I am not in the mood for proofs."

"What, you are unable to solve such a small riddle, to answer a few simple questions?" Was there mock in her voice? Damn the girl, how dare she!

"Assuming I am not dead," he started to lecture her, "I would like to know how it is possible to have survived Nagini's attack."

"Well, assuming you aren't dead what you are I would answer that Miss Granger used a stitching spell to stop the bleeding until Madam Pomfrey arrived. But that wouldn't have done any good at all the venom would have finished you off anyway. Ahmm, **has** finished you off, of course. Now talk yourself out of *that!*"

Surprisingly enough, he could feel a familiar smirk curve his lips; or so he imagined at least, as he wasn't entirely sure he had lips left that could smirk. But *she* got caught in her own lies. Good!

"A Bezoar would have easily done the trick," he said. Maybe she was right, maybe she wasn't Granger. The girl would have known that *Bugger*, he grumbled silently. *I'm getting caught in my own thoughts. If she isn't Granger, who is she? If she isn't that awful know-it-all, who am I talking to?*

"As if I run around with a Bezoar all the time, Professor," she scolded. "Plus, it's very hard to find."

Maybe he was right and truly not dead. That left the question how to get out of this unbearable situation. "You run around with absolutely everything in that hideous bag of yours," he reminded her. "Niggellus kept me informed about that, as even he was in the said bag." Thinking about it, he added, "So *did* you save me with a Bezoar?"

"Of course not," she replied dryly. "I didn't save you at all but if, and only if, I would have wasted a second thought about your survival, I would have used the potion Arthur Weasley was saved with when Nagini had attacked him in the Ministry of Magic a few years ago. Miss Granger might have considered it useful to have it at hand, just in case a snake slithered by and bit one of her friends or one she was fond of."

"Ah," Snape said thoughtfully. *She's fond of me? Did she just imply that or did he make wrong conclusions already? And how confusing that she referred to herself to as 'I' as well as 'Miss Granger'. Maybe he was crazy. Maybe she was. Being neither dead nor alive truly messed up one's logical abilities. "Clever solution," he said, getting back to safer ground. "And of course the potion would have been a lot easier to gain than a Bezoar. You've been always a quite extraordinary student, Miss Granger."*

He could hear her grumbling and mumbling in the darkness. Was there a shadow bending over him her shadow? "What?" he asked briskly.

"You had to wait till you are dead to tell me that I'm good? Well, thank you so very much!"

"I. Am. NOT. Dead!"

"Yes, you are." Matter-of-factly, the shadow that hadn't been there only a few moments ago bent down even lower. "Or at least as good as dead."

"And that's supposed to mean what precisely?" Presumptuous, as he had been in classes. Actually, the thought that he would never ever make a nervous wreck out of one of his students concerned him quite a bit.

"Figure it out yourself."

Snappish little witch, he thought. "As I am not dead, it is only logical to conclude that I am in a coma."

"The Healers would have got you out of it with a quick flick of the wand."

"Me?" Wow, so much arrogance in such a small word. "Definitely not. My barriers are too strong, my Occlumency shields would prevent even the best mind Healers from intervening with my..."

"...death?"

Now that stunned him into silence. Could he have been so stupid as to fall into a coma without considering first the fact that there might not be a way back out? That his barriers might prove to be even too strong for him? Well, Nagini's attack had come to him as a shock and a surprise; maybe he simply didn't have had a chance to make some precautions. "... guess..." he started, but the shadow's voice (*since when shadows have so incredibly bushy hair?* he wondered) cut him short.

"Alright, you aren't dead. You are in St. Mungo's, tied to a hospital bed, and Harry and I are performing a Shaman ritual to break inside your greasy head just to save you. How humiliating, don't you think so? Do you really prefer that *theory* to the possibility of being peacefully dead and lying in a nice, quiet grave?"

He shuddered. From the Shrieking Shack straight into the grave, where the worms would nibble him up. Unpleasant thought. But she said she was lying. He couldn't feel worms on his skin, surely. Actually, he was feeling quite cold, his head ached like hell and his neck felt like... well, like having been feasted upon by a giant snake. He even believed for a moment to feel the binding spells around his chest. He certainly didn't feel like a corpse, lying in his grave. He didn't *want* to feel like a corpse!

Thinking about graves, worms, and death did his head in. Better not think about it, then; better state some facts. "Shaman rituals don't work, Miss Granger. It's nothing but folklore."

"Aha. So pray to explain to me how I am possibly able to be in your head? And just for the protocol: I have asked you that before and until now you have failed to provide me with a sufficient answer." The smugness was back. This girl needed detention to the end of her life!

But the basic problem remained. "There... is one ritual I know of..." he considered, tentatively, and balled his hands to tight fists in his attempt to remember what this specific ritual included. "It is old... ancient... and opens the mind of the patient for someone who is determined enough that would be you, Miss Granger by someone skilled in Legilimens. Like... Potter, distasteful thought as this might be, although I'm at a loss why he should try to get me off death's shovel."

"I have asked him nicely. It helps, you know, to be nice now and then. And of course he now knows that you've been always loyal to Professor Dumbledore. As we all do."

Wonderful. The whole bloody world knows each of my secrets. How fucking humiliating. But not as humiliating as another thought Snape's mind was already pondering about. "That ritual," he gasped and tried to free himself from the binding spells. "It contains a lot of singing, scented smoke... and... and..."

"... and the main participant in the ritual that would be you, Professor would have to be painted all over with magical runes whilst lying naked on a sanded floor inside a pentagram carved with a silver knife. Surely you would prefer to be dead?"

Damn the girl, she'd used irony on him! But hang on what had she just said? That she... Painted? All over? Naked???

Snape felt the little colour he had left draining from his face. "Tell me you... tell me you haven't done that!" he whispered, not even bothered that sheer horror had crept in his voice.

"Done what?" she asked innocently, and for a brief moment, he felt a cool hand on his upper arm and smelled the heavy flavour of burning patchouli combined with a winter breeze and the fragrance of wild orange flowers.

"Tell me you didn't undress me. Tell me tell me you didn't paint... on my..." He couldn't finish the sentence. His body was shaking *Gods, let me be dead*, he prayed.

She did finish his words, though. "...naked body? Of course not. Harry did the undressing."

Snape found he couldn't lie still anymore. He didn't care if he was dead or not the prospect that not only one, but two of his students were staring at the very moment at his entirely nude form was far too much to bear. He would come back from death if he had to, or a coma, or whatever, only for the chance to wrap his robes round him and then to jump out of the nearest window. That would kill him neatly and leave no chance to paint anything on the remains. Struggling, he fought against the binding spells; desperately, he ignored the heavy weights keeping his eyelids shut. With a vengeance he ripped his head up in order to get out of bed or up from the floor or wherever he

was lying as quickly as possible, and...

...pain pierced his head when the Potions master finally found his way out of the coma and managed to open his eyes to the cruel hospital light. He could feel blood trickle down his shoulder where he had damaged the new skin in his attempt to wake up, and strong hands were holding him, pulling him back to the mattress an instant later. Voices shouted, and then someone was very close to him, soothed him, calmed him down.

"Everything is alright, Professor Snape," the voice said. "You are not dead, you are not in the Shrieking Shack anymore, you are certainly not in a grave and I'm sorry that I had to scare the life well, the death, really out of you in order to bring you back to the living. Will you lie still now, or does the mediwitch need to get you sedated only a minute after you have woken up?"

There were arms around his bare chest, and hair tickled his cheek; someone was sitting behind him, holding him close.

Hell, there were runes painted up and down his arms, across his chest, over his stomach and Merlin! even on every inch of his lower abdomen. "Tell me... you didn't... do it," Snape croaked, leaning heavily on the girl who had still wrapped her arms around his bony, pale figure.

Soft laughter answered his comment. It did a lot to keep the panic at bay that was approaching the Potions master. He found that waking from a coma after the Dark Lord's snake had chosen him for her dinner wasn't really something he would like to ever experience again. Taking a ragged breath, Snape slightly turned his head, winced at the pain in his neck and shoulder and searched for the one who held him so close and thus had prevented him from falling out of the bed. Who had been in his head, annoying him and arguing with him. Who had told him more lies in a few short minutes than he would have believed possible. Who quite obviously had pulled him back to life.

Granger.

His infinite black eyes found her brown ones, looking down at him with concern.

"Good evening, Professor," Hermione said grimly. "You surely must be the only person who can be actually scared out of a coma simply by mentioning nudity." She looked tired. And beautiful. Sweat was glistening on her temples. Arguing with her dying professor had worn her out.

"It took a bit more than that," Snape hissed, slightly ashamed that she was right. "Now tell me that you didn't perform that nasty Shaman ritual!"

"Use. Your. Brain!" Hermione scolded. "You are not on the floor, only your torso is painted, and you are at least partly dressed." Gently, she let the man in her arms slip to the pillow beneath and sat next beside him on the bed instead. "We found that it was sufficient to perform the ritual only partly," she explained. "But obviously it was immanent to let you believe the contrary." Sharing an amused look with Harry who sat on the other side of the bed with a wide grin on his face, she continued, "Just a few runes and a bit of smoke were enough to allow Harry to crack a tiny hole into your barriers so I could convince you that it is better to be alive than stuck inside your head with me."

"Potter," Snape hissed, distaste dripping from every word. "I will personally..."

Hermione interrupted her teacher. "Enough! We worked very hard to get you back, Professor, so the least you could do is show some gratitude!" But despite her growling words, she tenderly brushed his hair out of his face.

Snape grumbled. With fantasy, one might have been able to hear the word 'Thanks', but only if one was in a good mood.

Harry started chuckling. He was in a very fine mood. The fact that he had helped to save Snape's life again was more than enough for him he wouldn't let pass a single opportunity to point this fact out to anyone who would listen, and he knew that Snape knew this, too.

"Honestly, Professor," Hermione said. "One should think that you would at least be able to..."

Snape wrapped his fingers round her wrist. "I'm weak as a kitten," he managed with effort, snuggling deeper in the amazingly soft cushions around him, but not letting go of her. "I couldn't crush as much as a grape, I feel like being dead so could you *please* come back for your tongue-lashing when I... I... at... least will... will... be able... to..." Head lolling over, Snape fell asleep in mid sentence.

"Was a bit much for him I'd say." Harry grinned, eager to get out of the room. He turned to Hermione, expecting her to be as happy as him that this was all over now.

But Hermione stared with big eyes down at the sleeping man and his hand around her wrist. A disbelieving smile crossed her face. "So you want me to come back then, yes?" she whispered. "Dear Severus, you have no idea where this will lead to. I usually get what I want I have just proven it!"

Carefully freeing her hand, she grabbed Harry's arm and shoved her dumbstruck friend out of Snape's room, closing the door silently behind her. A few minutes later, Hermione left St. Mungo's with a quite remarkable spring in her step and a very anticipating smile on her lips, thinking about her next visit that she would pay her Potions master.

AN: I used the following Prompt: "Snape is alive only he doesn't believe it. He lays in a deep coma at St. Mungo's, his mind locked in an afterlife of his own making. Occlumency shields prevented the best mind healers from intervening. He's considered a hopeless case but there's this irritating know-it-all with a crazy Shaman trance plan and a boy-who-just-won't-bugger-off."