

A Good Night's Sleep

by h_vic

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This was originally written cmwinters' class: 'Potions – Ascending into Alchemy' on MNFF.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A baby's cry tore through the still night, and Lily Potter woke with a start. Regretting having to leave the warmth of her husband's body as he lay beside her, she struggled upright to make her way to her son. With barely coordinated fingers, she picked up her wand from the bedside table and, twisting her hair up at the nape of her neck to keep it out of the way, shoved the wand through the loose bun to secure it. Grabbing her dressing gown on her way out of the room to keep out the chill of the autumn air, she hurried across the hallway Harry's thin screams drawing her on. She was greeted by his screwed-up, beet-red face as she entered the nursery.

"Hush, sweetie, it's OK. Mummy's here," she whispered, picking him up. Helplessly, she jiggled the baby in her arms, knowing it wouldn't stop him. Every night for the past fortnight, he'd had them up with colic, and nothing seemed to fix it. James had been up with him last night, so tonight it was her turn, and she'd be lucky if she was able to return to her bed before dawn. They'd tried everything, every old wives' tale, mother's tip or medical recommendation they could find, but nothing seemed to be working.

Sighing softly, Lily pulled the blanket from Harry's cot to keep him warm and headed downstairs there was no point in James being woken too. She collapsed onto the sofa, the sobbing child resting against her shoulder as she absently stroked his hair, letting her mind wander. *Surely there was some solution?*

Then it hit her a potion! There had to be a potion that would help, or at least something that she could modify to the purpose. She wondered with irritation why it hadn't occurred to her before sleep-deprivation probably had a lot to do with it.

With Harry in one arm, she wandered over to her grandmother's bookcase, which stood proudly in the corner of the room, and dragged out *Common Potions for the Home*, *Wandsworth's Medicinal Potions* and *Children and Potions: Is it Safe?*

Curling back up on the sofa, Lily began her research.

Two hours later, Harry still wouldn't sleep, but Lily had a plan. She thought that if she combined a Calming Draught, a Sleeping Potion and a Stomach Soothing Solution with a few tweaks of her own, she ought to produce something that would help her son (and herself).

It had been a long while since Lily had made a potion, let alone created her own, but she decided with a grimace that the skills involved would most likely be remarkably like falling off a broom not easily forgotten. She had deliberately styled her remedy around the simple, more everyday ingredients that she knew she would have in order that she could start immediately, and so leaving her grizzling son in his playpen, she began to root around for the things she needed.

First, she retrieved her faithful, old, pewter cauldron, finding a new home for the carnations that it had been displaying in a much uglier, porcelain vase, and set it up on the dining room table above a camping stove James had purchased for a trip to Devon they had taken as newlyweds. Then, realising that she had not bothered to bring her silver knife with her when setting up her marital home, she collected the sharpest one she could find in the kitchen draw. Stainless steel was hardly ideal, but it would have to suffice.

Stopping to study the makeshift laboratory she had created, Lily could not help but smile as the long-forgotten anticipation of experimentation began to thrill through her. Memories of long, comfortable hours of study and practice with Severus stole in from the dusty corners of her mind, and she scowled. Tonight she was brewing alone. Severus was long gone from her life by his own hand (or his own words at least). She tried not to think of him these days; she refused to miss someone who had made his opinion of her so cruelly clear, but it was hard to think of potions without thinking of him. Perhaps that was why the only use her cauldron had received in recent times was as an ornamental vase.

Forcing Severus from her mind, Lily collected a jar of pure Murtlap Ointment from the bathroom cupboard and several ingredients from the fridge. The ointment was not as potent as a decoction of the fresh tentacles would be, but it was available, and it would serve her purposes. Stopping for a brief cuddle with her son, who was watching her with interest (she smiled to herself maybe he'd grow to love potion-making as much as she did. She realised that she couldn't wait until he was old enough to begin playing at it), she returned to the cauldron and emptied the tub of ointment and a small carton of yoghurt into it.

She reached up to free her wand and, as she used the wand to light a small flame underneath the cauldron, red waves cascaded around her shoulders. Lily snorted with remembered laughter; Severus had always deplored her habit of stowing her wand in her hair and lamented how often the retrieval of her wand, when she needed it for a particularly tricky stage in the process, had almost led to disaster. On several occasions she had even singed the ends. *There he was again. Would he not leave her alone tonight?*

With her hair unburnt and safely re-secured, Lily chopped the fennel and root ginger that she had found loitering in the depths of the fridge, occasionally stirring the cauldron to ensure the yoghurt didn't catch on the heat.

Adding the shredded vegetables, Lily grabbed a jade figurine of a woman from above the mantelpiece and dropped it in with a splash. Nothing in the potion ought to damage the ornament as far as Lily was aware, and she fervently hoped she was right, or she would be spending the morning attempting to make it up to her husband for destroying his mother's treasured heirloom. She did need the gemstone in the potion though to align the magnetic resonances, and that the subject of the little statue was distinctly maternal could only be an added advantage.

Releasing her wand once again, she stirred the contently bubbling mixture three times counter-clockwise, watching with relief as it turned a subtle mint green colour.

"*Accio gloves!*" Lily muttered quietly before repositioning the wand one-handed whilst she waited with the other hand outstretched to catch the gloves. Turning the heat down so that there was no risk of it boiling over in her absence, she donned the heavy gloves, drew her robe tighter against the unseasonable chill and ventured into the garden.

Her breath came in cloudy bursts as she collected a handful of tired nettles, a few windfall apples and two heavily perfumed spikes of lavender (for their soothing effect). On her way back in, she spotted a familiar silhouette perched smugly on the gate post in the watery dawn light. "Good morning, Barnaby," she greeted her aging owl. "Did you have a good night's hunting?"

The owl hooted contently as she smoothed the feathers on his head, but that quickly turned to a very disgruntled squawk as she plucked one from his breast. "Sorry," she apologised as the owl nipped her hand in a less than affectionate manner, "but it's for Harry's sake." The owl gave her one last disgusted look before turning his back and fluttering off to sulk on the chimney stack.

Back in the warmth of the house, Lily wiped off the chill dew that clung to her skin and rinsed the feather before adding it to the potion.

She cut open the apples, removing and grinding the seeds (and nibbling on several slices herself); mashed the nettles into a rough paste and tied the lavender together with a fine, silver unicorn tail-hair before adding them all to the simmering potion, which finally turned into a promising pale lilac.

A little hesitantly, she dipped in a spoon and tasted a tiny amount. It was, quite frankly, disgusting, but that could easily be remedied with a little honey and cocoa without ruining its inherent properties. Lily was far more perturbed by the absence of any tingle of potency on her tongue. Something was missing something vital. The potion lacked some key ingredient that would bring it together and make it function as a magical whole.

She uttered a frustrated sigh and wandered over to pick up her son, who was now gurgling contently. She was so close, but what could that last ingredient be? It would need to be something powerful, and she wasn't sure she would have anything at hand that would suffice. Suddenly, a long-forgotten conversation with Severus stirred in her memory, a conversation that might be able to provide a solution. He'd told her that the most powerful ingredient in any potion meant for a child was the tears of a parent. He'd worn a strangely hollow look as he said it, and Lily had known that neither of his parents would ever willingly shed a tear for his benefit.

"Don't worry, Sev," she'd said, "maybe one day you'll be making potions for your own children." It had been a casual comment, meant solely to lift the melancholy from his eyes, but he had given her the oddest look: hungry, yearning and almost wistful.

Lost in old memories, Lily glanced down at her son, now sleeping contently in her arms, and just for a moment she saw him not as he was, but with sallow skin and dark eyes, as she wondered what might have been.

Then her husband's soft footsteps brought her back to the present as James came up behind her and gently kissed her shoulder.

"Long night, darling?" he whispered in deference to their sleeping son.

"Mmmm, I suppose it was," Lily murmured.