

Five Birthdays for Severus Snape

by firefly124

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Chapter 1 of 1

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1965

"-py birthday to you!" his mum and dad sang. Dad sounded a bit funny, but he mushed up his words like that sometimes.

"Blow out your candles, dear," his mother said.

Severus looked at the little cake. Small as it was, the five candles weren't very near each other, so he took a very big breath and blew as hard as he could.

"Forgot t'tell 'im t'make a wisssh," Dad said. "S'posed t'do that 'fore you blow 'em out."

Severus scrunched up his face and wished very hard. A popping noise startled him, and he opened his eyes.

There, sitting in the middle of his cake, was his teddy bear with its arm all mended and its loose eye sewn back on tight.

With a squeal, he grabbed the bear and hugged it tightly, only to have it ripped from his arms.

"What'd I tell you, Eileen?" Dad yelled. "I won't have thish ... thish magic nonsensh!"

"He didn't know! You're the one said he should've made a wish!" Mum yelled back, but she backed away from the icing-covered stuffed bear being shaken in her face, reaching for Severus' arm as she did.

He ducked and ran into his room, diving for his hiding spot between the bed and the wall. Teddy wasn't there for him to hug, now, because he'd gone and wished for it to be fixed nicely, so Severus hugged his knees to his chest and wished he could unmake his wish.

1974

"Happy birthday, Sev," Lily said, handing him a book-shaped package.

He smiled a bit as he opened the wrapping to find that it was, in fact, a book, but there was nothing written in it. He hoped he didn't look disappointed. She gave it to him, so it was wonderful. But why give him a book with nothing in it?

"It's to write down all your spell ideas and Potions notes," she said in a rush. "That way you don't have to mark up all your books."

His smile grew wider. She was so mortally offended by his scribbling in the margins of all his texts. She couldn't understand that he wanted his thoughts recorded next to the words that had inspired them. But there were other things he would like to write down somewhere else, and this book would work nicely for that.

"Thank you," he said at last. "It's the best birthday gift I've ever had."

He'd lied, of course. That smile she'd given him after he'd said that was actually better by far than the book could ever be.

1989

"Headmaster, really, I ..."

"Nonsense, Severus," Minerva interrupted. "We go through this every year, and you make it worse by resisting."

With a grumble, he accepted the box from Dumbledore and opened it, wincing as a cloud of confetti burst out, changing to butterflies and flying away before settling on him or the table. Peering warily inside, he saw that the contents were the same as ever.

"Thank you," he said, pouring every ounce of resentment he'd ever felt towards the man into his words as he pulled out the puce-colored socks and passed the box, which still contained quite a few sweets of dubious provenance, to Sybill, who took something and passed the box along to Filius. By the time the box returned to him, surely his colleagues would have relieved him of the rest of his "gift."

When Sybill bit into a Bertie Bott's bean that had clearly been one of the less pleasant flavors, he smirked. Perhaps there was something to enjoy about his gift after all.

1998

Snape sat at his desk, reviewing the supposed curriculum Alecto planned to offer next term, infuriated that he could do little to contain her anti-Muggle propaganda. How long must he maintain this farce?

It had been quiet since his visit to the Forest of Dean. Whatever Potter was up to, he was staying out of the Dark Lord's hands. Dumbledore's portrait continued to be coy about the boy's current mission. How was he to protect the bumbling fool if he did not have enough information? And what of the students here, while they all waited for the idiot boy's next move?

A loud crack broke his reverie, and a house-elf stood before him, holding a tea tray that included not only his usual ham sandwich but also a small yellow cake with a candle.

"What is this, Tolly?"

"It's being your birthday, Headmaster Snape," the elf replied as he set down the tray.

Lifting an eyebrow, he asked, "And how did you come by this information?"

The house-elf's eyes widened. "We is always knowing all the teachers' birthdays! Only Headmaster Dumbledore liked to do things himself."

"I see." He looked at the tray. "Thank you, Tolly. That will be all."

Tolly smiled, snapped his fingers, and the candle lit. With a crack, the elf was gone again.

Lips pressed into a grim line, he picked up the cake and glared at the offending flame. He pinched it out and set the candle aside. No foolish wish-making for him.

The cake itself, however, was quite nice, and the rest of the day seemed oddly improved.

2002

"What is this?"

"It's your birthday cake."

He rolled his eyes. "I'm fairly certain that dead men are not supposed to celebrate their birthdays."

"It's a good thing you're not really dead, then, isn't it?"

He sighed. While he couldn't quite regret having been found, nor could he entirely mind that someone actually wanted to celebrate his existence, fond memories of his birthday were few and far between.

"I do hope you do not expect me to make a wish or some such nonsense," he replied with somewhat less bite in his voice than he'd intended.

"Wouldn't dream of it." The cake was shoved along the table a bit closer to him. "But please do blow them out before the house catches fire."

With a half-hearted sneer, he complied, surprised to actually get them all out.

That's when he noticed the oblong package.

"Go on, then. Open it."

The leather cover was tooled with intricate knotwork, but showed no title. Opening the book, he found the pages were empty.

"I think that old Potions book went up with everything else in the Room of Requirement, but I thought you might want something for writing down new Potions and spells or maybe some notes about the old ones you invented."

Tears stung the backs of his eyes, not so much for the memory the gift evoked, but by the comparison between the givers. After everything, he actually thought he might have found someone who would never leave him or use him, someone who actually understood him and – inexplicably – cared for him. That was surely the best gift he could ever have received.