

Silent All These Years

by livvy6

What happened in April of 2002? Why are Death Eaters being murdered? What secret has kept Severus Snape silent for years?

Waiting for Someone

Chapter 1 of 10

What happened in April of 2002? Why are Death Eaters being murdered? What secret has kept Severus Snape silent for years?

□

Katherine Hannover

Sycophant Hex Featured Story on Occlumency

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A/N: DISCLAIMER: Thanks to my wonderful beta, MadBrilliant, who advised me on this fic. Also, this story does not take place in chronological order, since it is foremost a mystery. Please review! I love to hear feedback!

Years go by

Will I choke on my tears

Until finally there is nothing left...?

"Silent all these years" by Tori Amos

May, 2003

Severus Snape Flooded into his private quarters and stripped off his bloody cloak, throwing it onto the floor with unrestrained anger and disgust. He had just come from Headmistress McGonagall's office after tossing onto her desk the last of seven broken wands. It was finally over. He poured a huge glass of firewhisky and slammed it down in one gulp. His eyes fell on the *Daily Prophet* on his desk. He smirked. The headline read:

SIXTH DEATH EATER BODY DISCOVERED

*Well, the Aurors had better get on the stick then! Number seven is ready to be found*he thought darkly. For months, the Ministry and the Auror Department had been

puzzled as to what was now known as the "Death Eater Murders." Apparently, some "vigilante" was on a rampage, killing ex-Death Eaters or "supposed" Death Eaters, whose activities could not be proved in court.

Oh, yes! Snape grimaced. If they only knew! Everyone thinks I'm a nervous wreck as if I'm going to be the next victim.

He sank into his plush chair with a groan. His scowl dissolved into a glassy-eyed stare into the fireplace. He looked at the licking flames as he focused on the events over the past year. He was so relieved it was finally over. Only Minerva knew the truth. Poppy probably knew, but she wasn't going to talk. It had to be done. It was only justice after all: justice *and* self-preservation. He massaged his forehead, wishing he could not have in his mind all the horrors he knew *Katherine*.

He watched her in the Great Hall during meal times and in class. The Death Eater Murders were all anyone could talk about, and she was no exception. She speculated with the best of them over each new issue of the *Daily Prophet*. Every once in a while, she would look over to the High Table at him in concern. He knew she was scared he might be the next target. He was pleased, so pleased that she was none the wiser to the real truth. The only remnant that remained now was her inability to control her emotions during Potions class. To anyone other than Minerva, Poppy, and himself, inexplicably, and without warning, she would start trembling, crying, and would be unable to breathe properly. When it first started, he told her she was having residual effects due to the reaction from a magical plant she had handled the year before. In truth, what was occurring was what Muggles called "anxiety attacks." He had seen his mother suffer through many during his younger years, just before his father would come home from work. The knowledge of what was to come brought them on. She would feel very faint and shake uncontrollably. She would speak of a need to tear off her skin because it was too constricting. Then she would babble incoherently about a feeling of losing her mind and going insane. It was a terrible thing for a small boy to witness, and only proceeded to make the evening drag on interminably once the anticipation of the beatings bled into the actual beatings themselves.

So at each onset, Snape would escort Katherine outside of the classroom, give her a Calming Draught, and speak soothingly to her until she was composed. Somehow, his firm but soft voice seemed to speed up the process. Then she would be fine and return to her work. All anyone knew was she had suffered a terrible magical reaction to an obscure plant that caused some neurological instability. But each week she improved somewhat, and Snape was more than happy to allow the rumor to spread that she would be herself soon. All he could do was hope that if enough time passed, she would be.

So when the fits came upon her, Snape knew exactly how to act and how to stop its escalation. It had been worse in the beginning when she had been in the Infirmary. Madam Pomfrey had no idea how to deal with a malady that was not truly physical in nature. She could read the physical signs, of course, but where was the source? Once Snape had been summoned, Katherine had already slipped into a fit of hysterical delusion that could only be tamed by a full Body-Bind Curse and forcing a Draught of Peace potion and a Sleeping Draught down her throat. Once she had slipped into unconsciousness, her bindings were removed. He had been incensed that Poppy and Minerva had waited so long before summoning him. By the time he had swept into the Infirmary, she was screaming at the top of her lungs that she was going to kill herself because her heart was going to burst from her chest, as her skin was too constrictive. She had smashed a mirror in the lavatory and had a rather large shard of glass gripped in her hand. Poppy and Minerva were too afraid to subdue her with magic after all that already had been done to her mind so recently. Her strength had been awesome, and her face fierce and wild. She was in there, but trapped in so much mental anguish it seemed that she would be bound for St. Mungo's. But, over time, with immediate intervention with Calming Draughts, the attacks subsided and became fewer, much to the relief of the three conspirators. It had been exhausting to keep it all under wraps until the school year ended.

Her parents had been notified as to her "condition," and she had spent that summer after her fourth year convalescing and taking it easy around the castle. She had been forbidden to go anywhere alone, and Snape had taken that task upon himself personally more so than the other teachers because he knew how stubborn she could be. Fortunately, she was quite subdued, but unfortunately, the Katherine he had once known in his class seemed to be gone. He, Minerva, and Poppy had fretted constantly over the change in her personality, but the panic attacks showed a glimmer of her determined nature. She was still in there; it would just take time for her to return. Another gut-wrenching part of her changed nature was her inability to be in close proximity to people. She had suffered that summer from extreme claustrophobia and was resistant to human touch. Perhaps that was why she had preferred her mentor to care for her rather than the others. Snape wasn't known for being a "touchy-feely" person. What had been even worse was her anger. She had asked "Why?" a lot, and grew frustrated over her overwhelming feelings of despair. The same answer was given: a magical accident that would resolve itself in time. Every day, Snape would take her to the lake where she would sit, staring off into nowhere with her thoughts while Hagrid and Filch stood guard with him. They had never known why, they just had known Snape needed help, and Snape had *never* needed help before...

So, he drank and drank, forcing those days a year ago out of his mind, and tried instead to focus on thinking about the days right after the War. The ~~ten~~ *ennui* he had experienced those early days... oh, *how* he wished he could have that feeling back! Just when he thought it was all over and in the past, a remnant of his former life had snuck up on him that reminded him he would never be free until certain people were eliminated. Because he had laid down once...just *once*...he knew they would come back again and again. If she had not been caught in the middle, he would have gladly died. *Katherine. If I close my eyes, I can still remember how it had been and how it should have continued...*

Fall, 1998

The War was over. The Light had prevailed. Voldemort was gone. The healing could now begin. It was strange to those who survived to see the new batch of first years come to Hogwarts. Of course, the castle was under reconstruction, and things would be informal for a while, but at least these young people were living proof that life does indeed go on.

Severus Snape was at a complete loss now that the War was over. He had spent the summer after the War at St. Mungo's. He struggled after his release. What would his purpose be? What would direct his steps now...or who? He had lived the better part of 20 years being someone's property. One master was dead (thank God!), and the one person he had lived to serve in the memory of the woman he had loved more than life was dead. Albus was dead, just like Lily. He had finally released her, and for the first time in over twenty years, he felt completely alone. He suffered in his self-imposed isolation. Like a prisoner who had been incarcerated in prison for a long time now paroled; being a free man was difficult to adjust and accept. He was for the first time actually grateful for the little dunderheads to come back. At least there would be some type of normalcy.

He sat in the faculty lounge that very first day of classes enjoying a cup of tea when Madam Sprout burst in.

"Ah, there you are, Severus!" she exclaimed. Her eyes were all lit up, and she was rubbing her hands in excitement.

"I had my first years for their Herbology class. There is a girl who is absolutely phenomenal! Her grasp of plants and flowers...Magical and Muggle...is incredible!"

Snape sighed impatiently. "I am trembling with excitement," he deadpanned as he sipped his tea calmly.

Madam Sprout was flabbergasted. "Severus, she is so in tune with plants, flowers, roots, and herbs...the properties, healings, how to cultivate, spotting when they are the freshest to be harvested...I can not hope but think she *may* be Britain's next Potions mistress... and how long has it been since we've had a Potions mistress?" she asked with her eyes popping out of her head.

Snape frowned, but conceded a little to her excitement. "Well, it has been over 200 years at least. But if she is so 'in tune' with Herbology, Pomona, what makes you think she'd want to be a Potions mistress? She may want to be a Herbologist, or even be a Healer."

Madam Sprout shook her head violently. "Because her thirst for knowledge goes way beyond just the mundane inner-workings of the plants, herbs, and flowers. She expressed an interest in how certain plants and flowers work together in tandem to create draughts, various *potions*...you just wait, Severus Snape! I am so excited! A Potions mistress! I'd bet my last Knut on it! What a wonderful thing to brighten the gloom. A new generation, a new day!"

Madam Sprout left the room as if she were floating on air. All Snape could think of was he was about to meet the next generation of Hermione Granger*Just what I need...another insufferable know-it-all!*

The first year Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw dunderheads were coming in now. He sat at his desk in his office and waited for them to calm down. When sufficient time had passed, he came into the room in his traditional huff and began his speech on *"Bewitching the minds, and ensnaring the senses..."*

He looked around for the know-it-all, but no one stuck out. No hand shooting in the air like it was going to fly out its socket. No over-eagerness, no one trying to answer all the questions or ask a hundred questions, all at the same time.

Harrumph, he thought as class ended. *I knew Sprout was full of it. She's probably just another Longbottom! Heaven help my cauldrons.*

That evening, a soft knock rapped on his office door. He looked at the clock. His office hours had now officially begun*Someone is a little eager to see me!*He pinched the bridge of his nose in irritation and exhaled before saying roughly, "Enter!"

A small little first year with straight, light brown hair walked in with her head high and a determined look on her face. His eyebrows furrowed at the sight of a little snippet of a girl. She carried a rather large box and placed it on his desk with a rather significant thud. He blinked. *Good Lord, it's as big as she is!*he thought, shocked.

He leaned in and softly growled, "Get that monstrosity off my property this instant!"

"Sorry, Professor, but I wanted you to see this. I came especially to show you. Madam Sprout said you would be most interested!" she said importantly.

Snape sank back into his chair, his anger abated...for now.*Well, here she is! Might as well let her get it out of her system before she bursts.*

"Fine, Miss..."

"Katherine Hannover, Hufflepuff." she stated importantly.

She shifted the box so when it opened it would be facing him. Inside were all sorts of tiny glass bottles in individual square slots. Each bottle was clearly labeled. Written on the lid of the box was a diagram of the bottles. He peered closer to see that each square representing the bottle below was written in Latin.

Well, well! he thought as he read some of the names. *Pelargonium capitatum, Oenothera biennis, Urtica dioica. Interesting.*

He examined some of the bottles and saw that they were well preserved and treated carefully.*This little snippet has a potions store right here!*he thought, impressed with her order and efficiency.

He placed the last bottle down carefully and turned to face her. "Come stand here, girl," he said tersely, pointing to his side.

She walked to him; her face was still set importantly. She neither smiled nor showed any fear. Her eyes were clear and her face was almost smug!

"Where did you acquire these various plants, roots, and what-not?" he asked calmly.

She smiled now. And she was definitely smug! "I made this, Professor. I loved to play in the forest where I grew up, and my parents taught me all about plants, flowers, herbs, roots, including how they could be used for healings and what types of magical properties they hold."

Snape drew out a bottle and handed it to her. He closed the lid and said, "I want you to tell me what you know about this herb."

She glanced at the bottle and said, "This is *Helleborus Foetidus*, called the Bearsfoot. This species of Hellebore can be found in the wild of many parts in England. The root has a slight odor when cut or broken. If smelt deeply when powdered, it will cause violent sneezing, but its powdered form can be used for invisibility potions. It has properties that are violently narcotic, but is extremely valuable in treating nervous disorders and hysteria. It is also one of the ingredients for the Draught of Peace potion, which I know to be a difficult potion. Great care is to be used when handling this herb." She handed it back to him with a flourish.

Snape gracefully placed the bottle back in the box. After he clicked it shut, he turned to the smug girl and said softly, "Why did you not answer any of the questions I asked in class today?" She quirked her lips to one side of her mouth as she looked at the floor.

"Well, I didn't want to get off on the wrong foot, sir. I was talking to a group of other first years on the train, and an older girl came up to me and told me I had better keep my trap shut in your class, otherwise, you'd make my life a living hell."

His eyes flashed. He desperately wanted to laugh, but he had to keep his face straight and continue in his attempt to intimidate the girl. After all, he still had a reputation to maintain!

He glowered at the smug girl and demanded the other girl's name.

"Ginny Weasley," she said softly. *Of course!* he thought.

He leaned back again in his chair. "You are dismissed, Miss Hannover. And ten points from Hufflepuff for being silent in class!"

She quirked her lips to one side of her mouth again, as if she were contemplating contradicting him. As she picked up her box and went to open the door to his office, he called to her.

"Miss Hannover, do you know the meaning of the word 'moderation?'" he asked as he continued writing at his desk, not looking up at her as he spoke.

"Yes," she answered slowly, wondering why he wasn't looking up at her.

"Very well. I expect you to demonstrate *moderation* while in my classroom. No one likes a 'know-it-all,' even if they do know it all!" he snapped. "But I do expect your hand to be raised in an appropriate manner, *within moderation*, of course. I may or may not call upon you, and that in itself is an important lesson to be learnt. Not everyone will recognize a gift even if it is two feet from his or her nose. But, on the other hand, no one is going to sing your praises for you, Miss Hannover. You must go get it for yourself. Of course, you demonstrated that quite well tonight; now, it is time for you to stretch yourself and apply it to the classroom. I realize I'm teaching a concept that for a *Hufflepuff* may be *difficult* to comprehend, but nonetheless, it will be a necessary lesson for you to learn if you wish to excel in my classroom. Now, get out." He waved a hand in her direction, still not looking up at her.

"Thank you, sir," she said softly as she left.

After she was gone, Snape dropped his quill down on his desk and rubbed his eyes. He was exhausted, but exuberant at the same time*Finally! Could she be the one who would replace me and get me away from all this?* he thought hopefully.

A/N: *l'ennui* "boredom" in french

Pelargonium capitatum: *L. Geranium Capitatum*

Oenothera biennis: *L. Evening Primrose*

Urtica dioica: *L. Common Nettle*

Years go by

Chapter 2 of 10

Katherine tries to work her way towards her Potions teacher accepting her. She starts growing and discovers her first love that could distract her from all her plans to become a Potions mistress.

A/N: Thanks to my beta, MadBrilliant. Please, pretty please, review! I love to read about your thoughts! And I cherish every review I get. Even if you hate it, I still want to know your opinion. All opinions are welcome!

October, 1999

Katherine was running down the halls to catch up with Professor Snape.

"Professor!" she yelled at him.

He stopped and closed his eyes in frustration before turning around. *Damn this infernal girl!*

Severus Snape had a new irritant in his life, and its name was Katherine Hannover. She was forever nattering and hounding his every step. She lived up to the name of her House mascot: the badger. Because that was what she did. Day or evening, she was forever questioning, needling, begging to try something new, or wanting to show him something "exciting" she had discovered in a book. His rudeness and callousness seemed to not register with the girl. He'd give her detention, but then he'd be stuck in a room with her, and then whose detention would it be? So, detention with Filch was the only resource he had to hold over her since he discovered detention with Hagrid in the Forbidden Forest only resulted in her coming back to show him samples of all the interesting plants and flowers she had found!

"Miss Hannover, that will be 20 points from Hufflepuff for running in the halls and another ten points for yelling at a teacher!" he thundered.

She licked her lips and caught her breath. "I'm sorry, sir," she said. *Please*, can I come with you to the Forest? Madam Sprout told me you usually go out this time of the year to replenish your stores. I could help, really I could! I'm really good at finding things and not just finding...I'm also really good at picking out the freshest bits!" Her words had tumbled out so fast, Snape barely had time to consider what she said. He closed his eyes in hopes of deciphering the mass of words that had spewed from her mouth, but then he decided he didn't care anyway.

"No," he snapped as he turned away.

Katherine jumped to his side and jogged along. Now the Potions master was beyond irritation. He stopped walking and faced the girl. She had that same hungry look for knowledge as Granger had, but without the irritating insecurity of needing to prove herself. No, she was infinitely worse. She knew she was intelligent and was ready to expand her education. Plus, she had no problems expressing that fact! Hell, even he knew she was hungry for more challenging work, but she needed to reign in that smugness, that damn infernal ease that made her slouch in class in boredom, ignore his insults, and push the boundaries in her Potions work, all because she was already beyond the curriculum for a second year. She was ready at twelve to take on fourth-year-level work. But, she needed to learn patience and humility if she were ever going to be his apprentice!

"Miss Hannover, I am a very busy wizard...far too busy to deal with you traipsing along and upsetting my work and concentration. Besides, I think you are overestimating your abilities a tad. You may have had a successful first year, but now that you are a second year does not make you a qualified person to select ingredients for my stores!" he said icily.

"If you would please give me a chance!" she began.

"This discussion is over!" he barked. "You get back to your common room this instant, or I will take another 50 points from your house. Am I understood?" His eyes were glaring menacingly at the twelve-year-old standing far below him.

She cowed, but did not break. "Okay, sir. I'll leave. But if I continue to do well in Potions, perhaps when I'm older, will you just give me a chance? Just one chance to show you?" she pleaded.

Snape glared at the little snippet standing so small in front of him. *She is infinitely worse than Granger ever was*/he thought.

"Perhaps," he mumbled as he swept out of the castle.

Katherine smiled as she watched him go. She was so happy. He was going to make her into the best Potions mistress in the world!

Snape did not know at the time; it was years later when Katherine told him her thoughts as she watched him walk out towards the Forest on that particular day. Katherine deeply respected her Potions master. She thought he was the most intelligent man she had ever met. She obeyed everything he told her to do even though, at times, she would test the limits of the boundaries, just to see what she could do, and at those times she would have to face his wrath. But she didn't care; in fact it was worth facing his fury. She knew that he was the best Potions master in Britain, and it wouldn't hurt to get the hide verbally ripped off her if it meant she might come up with something original or learn something new...even if it was how to not do something. Because for Katherine Hannover, failure just meant she had succeeded in learning how something did not work, and that could only bring her one step closer to true success! She was a true enigma for a wizard like Snape, who was by nature a "glass is half empty" kind of person.

She stood at the entrance gate for a long time watching him walk away. She was determined that one day he'd take her with him, and she'd show him! She would grow to be just as clever as him! She was determined to be a Potions mistress, and he was going to mentor her, even if she had to hound his every step and wear him down to do it! She was indeed a remarkable sight as she watched her teacher with determination. She was a very focused twelve-year-old.

November, 2000

"Miss Hannover, you will remain after class," Snape said sharply.

Katherine blew out a breath as she struggled to clean up what was another botched potion. Things were just not going well at all! She was now in her third year. It was a difficult time all around, having discovered boys, starting her period, hormones, and all that. She was easily distracted, and there was a boy that had begun noticing her: Marcus Luddington. Marcus was a Ravenclaw. He was, in Katherine's opinion, bloody brilliant, and he had the greatest smile she'd ever seen! More than once, she found her mind fixated on his smile rather than her potion. Snape was well aware of what was transpiring between the two, and he would be damned if he was going to sit back and watch his prospective protégé ruin herself over an idiotic boy!

She slowly gathered her books and noticed that Marcus was lingering by the door, waiting for her. She blushed as she slowly walked towards her Professor.

Snape was growing more irritated by the second. "Mr. Luddington, I demand you leave at once, or I shall be forced to remove you..*bodily!*" he snarled.

Marcus' smile vanished as quickly as he did. Katherine turned around and gave a hurt look at her Professor. She walked defeatedly up to his desk. He glared at her so menacingly, she thought she surely would burst into flames and die!

"Fifty points are taken for your abysmal performance in class today, Miss Hannover!" he snapped.

Katherine opened her mouth to object, but shut it and quirked her lips to one side as she saw his expression grow darker.

He sat down in his seat and appraised the young girl. "I am at a loss, Miss Hannover. Whatever happened to the young girl who pushed and cajoled me incessantly about the need to push herself to excel? What happened to the thirst for knowledge? I thought you wanted to be a Potions mistress? What has become of you? You are turning before my very eyes into just another moronic dunderhead that I am forced to teach!"

Katherine sighed and crossed her arms. *He is right. Of course, he's always right!* she thought with irritation. Her mouth quirked to the side, and she thought about what he said.

"I don't know, Professor. It's all becoming so complicated. I do want to be a Potions mistress, I'm just..*distracted.*"

Snape's face softened. He knew what was going on, and he wasn't the person she should talk to about it. He wasn't so sure Pomona Sprout was either. *Minerva. I'll let Minerva handle her. Her tough Gryffindor demeanor will sort her out!*

"Miss Hannover," he said in his softest tone, "I want you to go see the Headmistress. Talk to her about your *distractions.* Because I would sorely hate to see a good beginning come to a disappointing end. After all, I was starting to consider taking you along with me before long into the Forest in order to assist me replenishing my stores."

That did it! The old gleam was back! Her eyes snapped to attention, and she started to smile. "Do you *really* mean it, sir?" she said excitedly, gripping the edge of his desk.

"Possibly...I was thinking next year we could start. But you are to control your 'distractions' in my classroom. Am I understood?" he barked at the end.

Katherine smiled happily. "Yes, sir! Thank you, sir!" she called as she sprinted from the room.

Snape sat back and sighed. *Four more years and two more counting her apprenticeship; how am I going to survive? Retirement can not come fast enough*

Katherine did have a lengthy chat with Professor McGonagall and continued to talk with her as the months passed. A connection formed between the two witches, and the Headmistress at times would sigh to herself at the fact Katherine Hannover was not in her own house. She was sure she'd have made a damn fine Gryffindor!

Katherine would look back in later years as her third year being the most challenging academically of all her school days. She had to discipline herself to keep Marcus out of her mind while in class and studying. It was difficult because he did not make it easy on her. Marcus wanted her attention, and her lack of attention towards him during classes made him want to distract her even more! It was only in Potions class that he let her be. Professor Snape was like a hawk, ready to pounce if anyone came too near his baby chick. He had to learn that the hard way by gathering a great deal of detentions under his belt. Soon, he put two and two together. He knew Katherine was special. She was Snape's protégé. She was also a Hufflepuff. She had a fierce loyalty to the Greasy Bat whom she believed was going to shape her future as a Potions Mistress. She refused to allow him to speak disrespectfully about him in her presence. When she told him she was going to be a Potions mistress one day, all Marcus could think of was how famous she would be and how being attached to this girl would be a wise move for his future. So he began to "make nice" and obeyed the Potions master and did not interfere in her studies with him.

As the year came to a close, an understanding between the two young people had arisen. Marcus left Katherine at Kings Cross at the start of the summer with an incredible first kiss and a declaration of love. They corresponded over the summer holiday and each letter Katherine received was cherished. The young girl could not wait for school to start. As summer closed, she knew she loved him too. She knew he was the one she would spend the rest of her life with.

What do you Think of me Now?

Chapter 3 of 10

It is spring of 2007. Katherine is engaged to Luddington, and all her dreams seem to be coming true until something happens to unravel it all.

MadBrilliant.

Spring, 2007

Katherine raced down the spiraling stairs to the dungeons to start her day. Her black robes billowed behind her. Her face was beaming with happiness. A beautiful diamond was sparkling on her left hand. She couldn't wait to tell Severus!

"Severus!" she called out in her husky voice.

Snape was working early in his office. He swore to himself he would never get used to her voice *When did she grow up? Wasn't it yesterday she had a shrill, high voice chattering away like a magpie?* he mused.

He came out of his office sipping on his morning tea. "Good morning, Katherine," he said pleasantly. "You seem to be rather excited this morning."

She was grinning like an idiot, she knew. She ran over to him, took the teacup from his hands, and placed it on a table. Then, she pushed her hand into her mentor's face.

"He proposed, Severus! He asked me to marry him!" she squealed.

She threw her arms around him. He grimaced and stiffened his body in reaction to her hug, then gently pulled her away, patting her on the back. "Yes, yes, very nice. I'm sure you and Mr. Luddington will be very happy."

"Severus, can't you be more happy for me?" she pleaded. "You know, in two months you are going to be rid of me. I will officially be a Potions mistress, and you will be happily retired. Then I'm going to be married, and we all will live happily ever after!" She beamed.

"I think I may vomit," he snarked as he picked up his teacup.

"Ha-ha," retorted Katherine. She was used to him by now. She went and sat across from his desk while he looked over essays from his N.E.W.T. students. She crossed her legs and absent-mindedly stared at the beautiful diamond on her hand. Snape was already semi-retired. This year was Katherine's second and final year as his apprentice. Already, she was teaching most of his classes, although he still wanted to have the final say-so over the N.E.W.T. levels. Not that he ever found fault with Katherine's work. She already was an excellent Potions mistress in his eyes, she just had yet to take her final examination by the Board.

He had a lot of reservations about Marcus Luddington, though. He had never liked the boy. *Never!* His parents were very wealthy and were pure-bloods. They had never been Death Eaters or openly supported Voldemort, but the Luddingtons were shameless social climbers, perhaps only outdone by the Malfoys in their smarminess. To this day, Snape believed cynically that the only reason Marcus even wanted Katherine was because she was on the cusp of greatness. After all, she was going to be the first Potions mistress in over two hundred years! Plus, she was going to be famous, not only here in Britain, but around the Wizarding world. Securing such a wife would be quite a feather in Luddington's cap! He covertly glanced at his apprentice as she happily swayed her leg back and forth while watching how her diamond twinkled in the light.

He looked into her sweet face. She was so happy. He had promised himself long ago he would never do anything to ever make her unhappy ever again. He would rather die than see her cry like she did that day. He managed a twisted smile and forced himself to say, "Well, I do hope you will invite me to the wedding!"

She came out of her daydream and stood up. She clasped her hands to her heart and looked at him with big, teary eyes.

"Severus! How could I not have you there! You're my best friend."

Her smile was so genuine it made him uncomfortable. It was true; she had grown to care deeply for her mentor. He had over time slowly let down his guard as she had grown older, and once she had become of age, they had considered each other as friends and kindred spirits in their love of Potions. He was still a very surly and overly sensitive person, prone to getting offended and overwrought at anything that could be even loosely construed as an insult, but Katherine still loved him and remained grateful to him for sticking with her during her fifth year when she was so ill and teaching her to be a Potions mistress. And he knew deep down she probably was the only person in the world who could tolerate his snarky and prickly nature for considerable lengths of time.

He scowled at her. "You would do better to not repeat what you just said," he muttered. "People might think you're a bit touched in the head. Now, get to work; enough of this sentimentality!"

She smirked as she went into the classroom to prepare for the day. He glanced up from his paperwork and looked at his apprentice *When did she start wearing her hair up?* he thought with irritation.

Months later, on a beautiful August afternoon, after Katherine had finished her apprenticeship and officially become a Mistress of Potion-making, Severus Snape sat in the tiny chapel and watched his protégé become Mrs. Luddington. He was grateful that she would have the life she wanted. He was enjoying retirement. He had gone back to Spinner's End to gather his possessions and get rid of the things he did not want, which included most of his parents' old possessions, and was preparing to embark on a Grand Tour of Europe. He was determined to spend a significant period of time in Spain, France and Italy. All he had to do was close his eyes and imagine he was already there.

Minerva accompanied him to the wedding. After all, she had been his accomplice in the cover-up of years ago. It was only fitting for them to stand together to witness the culmination of six years hard work to get Katherine to where she was today. As the ceremony ended and the couple walked back down the aisle, Minerva gave a sad smile to Snape. He smiled weakly back. Only they and Madam Pomfrey knew what really happened six years ago. And now that Poppy had died, along with all whom Snape held responsible, it was finally over. Katherine was safe and secure. Now, only Severus and Minerva had to bear the burden of knowing.

Ever since that fateful day, he had taken the young Katherine Hannover on as his responsibility. He had watched over her, guided her, and had helped to hone her natural talents in potion making to become the wonderful, intelligent woman before him now. Not that it had been difficult. She was born to brew potions, and she had blossomed into a very affable young woman and was eager to learn. No, he took very little credit for the woman before him. She was beautiful in her white gown. He watched in relaxation and joy as she waltzed with her new husband at the reception. He felt a great weight had been lifted off his shoulders. Her snow-white dress was so pretty. She was perfection, and she should have nothing less. *After all*, he thought, *she deserves it.*

Minerva watched Severus as he looked at the happy couple dance across the floor. As tradition, for a Galleon, the groom and bride could be interrupted at anytime for a spin around the floor.

"Are you going to take the bride for a spin, Severus?" Minerva asked quietly.

"Absolutely not!" he snorted as he crossed his arms.

Minerva placed her hand lightly on his arm. "It's okay that you will miss her, Severus. You have been a true friend and guiding force in her life," she pushed.

"Minerva, I know *exactly* what I have been in her life, and that will never change, no matter what good deeds I have done since!" he snapped.

Minerva lowered her eyes and shook her head sadly.

After the reception was over and the happy couple had Apparated away to their honeymoon, Snape Apparated to Spinner's End and relaxed with a book and some wine. Boxes were everywhere, but he couldn't be bothered with housework tonight. He was just starting to nod off when a hair-splitting bang on his door made him jump and reach for his wand.

"Nox!" he whispered. He cautiously walked to the door in the dark as the banging continued. Finally, a blood-curdling scream emitted from behind the door, followed with a guttural threat. "Goddamn it, Severus! Open the door!" Snape was shocked. It was Katherine!

He said, "*Lumos*," as he ripped open the door. She was barely standing, disheveled in her black robes and barefoot; her light brown hair was tussled, and her face was blotchy as if she had been crying her heart out.

Snape pulled her in by her arm and looked outside. She was alone! He took the now sobbing girl by the arms and looked into her face.

"Katherine!" he said sharply as he gave her a firm shake by her arms. "Look at me! What are you doing here?" He bore into her eyes, forcing her to look at him.

"He kicked me out! He kicked me out and told me to leave!" she screamed as she threw herself at him, sobbing on his chest.

"What? What happened?" he demanded as he wrapped his hands across her back to comfort her. *Good Lord! She has nothing on under this robe* he thought absently.

"He...he said I wasn't a virgin! He called me a slut, ripped my wedding rings off my finger, and kicked me out! He gave me enough time to get a robe on, and he threw me out! Will you help me?" She looked up at him confused, clutching to his arms, hopeful that he would make everything all right again. Snape could not bear it.

He closed his eyes, and his hands dropped from her. She slumped down on her knees, grasped onto the bottom of his robe, and looked up at him as if in supplication. He covered his face with his hands and emitted a primal roar that petrified Katherine. She shrank from him and slid down into a corner of the room, crying anew at the reaction from her friend. Finally, Snape got a hold of himself and said quietly, "Tell me precisely what happened."

"Severus, it's personal...I can't!" she protested.

"Believe me...you can," he said determinedly.

She swallowed and looked away. She couldn't believe she was going to tell him this. She couldn't believe what had happened to her! But he had known. He had never liked Marcus. He had warned her about Marcus back in her seventh year when things had started to get serious between them, but she had gotten angry and told him to sod off. Everyone loved Marcus. All her family and friends thought they were the perfect couple! No one would understand this! Severus was the only one whom she thought could help.

"We were naked in bed and kissing. He started to touch me between my legs, you know. Um, he got a funny look on his face, and then he...it felt like he was pushing his whole hand inside me. It really hurt! He removed his hand, looked at it, and he punched me!"

All the blood drained from Snape's face. "He did what?" he roared.

All the crying and running make-up had masked what Snape could see now was the beginning of a black eye. He was livid! *am going to kill him!* he thought.

"Go on," he demanded. He wanted her to get it all out, so he could get the facts...in order to go begin the slaughter.

Her voice shook as she continued. "He...he looked at his hand, and at the bed sheet, and then between my legs for a long time, and...and finally said, 'You are no virgin! Who've you been fucking?'"

I told him no one. I've never been with anyone...ever, Severus! He was so angry, he threw me out of the bed onto the floor, tore my wedding rings off my finger, went to my bag, threw one of my robes and my wand at me, and he told me to get dressed and get out. He threw me out with nothing! I have no underthings or any shoes! I tried to get my things, but he grabbed me, threw me out, and told me he was getting an annulment. He said he wasn't going to have a whore for a wife and that I was a lying slut! I didn't know where to go...I couldn't face going back to Hogwarts, so I Apparated here," she explained in a broken voice.

She looked up at Snape, confused and scared like a terrified first year. Snape could not fail to notice that she was slipping mentally. It was a miracle she had Apparated without splinching herself!

She reached up and grabbed his hand. "Professor, what am I going to do? Why did he do this to me? You believe me don't you, sir? I never, ever...I wanted it to be special!"

She let go of him as she burst into fresh tears while rocking back and forth, holding herself, wailing, *Why?* A memory flashed across Snape's mind of a younger Katherine saying the same word over and over to him.

Snape was terrified for her sanity. She hadn't addressed him as "Professor" or "sir" since her seventh year! He had to do something, or she was going to have a complete breakdown. Not that she was mentally whole to begin with! He had known her mind would be fragile after all he, Minerva, and Poppy had done to modify her memory. He had honestly believed it would never have come down to this. And if she had fallen for a better man than Marcus Luddington...that bloody tosser...her lack of a hymen wouldn't have been an issue! As far as Snape was concerned, she had been a virgin and still was, no matter what her imbecilic husband had told her!

He was shaking with fury. He went and got a Calming Draught and a Sleeping Potion and made her drink them. He picked her up, carried her to his bed, and put on his traveling cloak. He had been deeply disturbed by how she had desperately held onto him as he had carried her. She was going to need a lot of care and understanding, and God knew he wasn't the type to provide that! But there was one thing he could do...and that he knew how to do very well. *Now, I'm going to get that fucker and have a little chat!* he thought viciously as he left the house.

Marcus Luddington was pissed out of his mind. He had thought he had a prize find for a wife. She was going to ensure his place in the Wizarding world. He had it all planned. As soon as she had established her fame, he would then get her pregnant. He had wanted to make sure she didn't get too full of herself being a Potions mistress and enjoy too much the accolades of her success. That was for *him* to enjoy. Being saddled with a couple of kids would handle that problem!

She was also very pretty, but damn, she had held him at an arm's length for years! It had been unbearable! Every time he had seen those full lips he had wanted her to wrap them around his cock. She also had incredible breasts! He had discovered that one night a year ago. They had been kissing, and he had slipped his hand in through her robes and found she had quite a handful...more than a handful. He remembered releasing it from her bra and fastening his mouth around her tiny nipple. That had been incredible!

She had these huge, firm breasts, but such tiny nipples. He had remembered he had almost burst in his pants when he had heard her moaning. But when she had finally realized what was happening, she had put a stop to it and had never again let him get that close. That had made him decide they needed to get married and soon! He couldn't tell how many whores he had shagged over the years in order to deal with her "frigidness." He had just kept telling himself he would change all that after he had fucked her a few times. Then she would be begging for it. They would have a few good years, have kids, then when her body got stretched out and saggy from having the kids, he'd just go back to having whores or take a young mistress.

Then what the fuck should happen? The bitch had lied to him! She was no virgin. He had seen enough pussies to know! He could even see a small tear that had been healed some time ago when he had examined her. She had definitely been fucked hard. The slut! Making him a fool all these years while she was off spreading her legs for God knows who, or how many?

He heard a deafening blast behind him, and he jumped up, spilling his drink all over him. *Oh, fuck! Not this prick!* he thought. He had had to put up with his nosiness and disapproving attitude for far too long! He had always been looming around like the great bat he was! *Well, that's over and done now! I don't have to make nice to this arse for Katherine's sake anymore!*

"Get the fuck out of my house, Snape!" he bellowed.

"Not until you and I have a chat, Mr. Luddington," Snape drawled smoothly. "Now. Sit." He clicked his fingers, and a chair slid up underneath the young man, forcing him to sit.

Snape sat down in a chair opposite him and crossed his legs, calmly toying with his wand as he observed the state of the young man.

"Please do not interpret my calm demeanor as anything other than absolute fury. It is only because of your bride that you are already not dead. And believe me, boy, if I were to kill you, I would not go to Azkaban because there would be no body to find," he said, barely above a whisper. *There, I have your attention now!*

Marcus shifted uncomfortably in his chair. Snape continued. "Imagine my surprise coming home after your lovely wedding, relaxing with some wine and a good book, eagerly anticipating my retirement and subsequent departure from this *wretched* country, when suddenly I am taken surprise by finding *your* bride in a hysterical heap on my doorstep, instead of being in connubial bliss in your marriage bed. That would be the proper assumption, would it not? A wedding takes place, family and friends enjoy a lovely reception, and then the bride and groom leave to begin their honeymoon. Why is your bride in *my* house on your wedding night, Mr. Luddington?" he asked in a sickening, sweet tone.

Marcus was not going to allow this old bat to intimidate him. He may have been a force to be reckoned with back in his Death Eater days, but now he was just another middle-aged wizard. "So," he said sarcastically. "You mean the *slag* didn't tell you?"

There was a flash from Snape's wand, and the young man screamed, grabbing his right arm. "That hurt, you fucking *git!*!" Marcus shrieked.

"Language, Mr. Luddington. *That* was for calling your bride a filthy name. You will speak respectfully about her, otherwise my hand might *slip* and hex another part of your anatomy that is far more sensitive," Severus said silkily.

"Now, listen, you prick!" Marcus spat. "She made me a fool! She *deliberately* kept me at an arm's length, claiming her virginity, and there is *no way* she's a virgin!"

Snape breathed deeply and closed his eyes wearily. "You are correct, Mr. Luddington. Katherine in the 'technical' sense is not a virgin. Believe me, it wasn't her choice."

"What the fuck are you talking about?" he snapped impatiently.

Snape's eyes snapped open, and he glared furiously at the young wizard. "She was *raped*, you imbecile! It was a horrific, tragic event that Professor McGonagall, Madam Pomfrey, and myself took care of. We Obliviated her memory of the event, but before that, I performed Legilimency on her in order to collect her memories, just in case something like *this* should happen. The proof of her violation is safely tucked away, in case you want to see for yourself. As her husband, you have that right. But I warn you, it happened a *long* time ago. *Now*, are you prepared to be a caring husband, take her back, and give her the love and understanding that she needs and deserves?"

"Look, I don't want someone's leftovers. I made damn sure I would be getting a virgin for a wife. I mean, I don't even know who did it...probably some disgusting pervert! I don't waste my time *marrying* someone whose pussy I'm required to fuck that has had some dirty pervert's todger inside it! If I want that, I can just go to a whore!" he spat.

"You are a swine!" Snape hissed at him as he sprang from his chair. "I knew from the start you were nothing but a sniveling little piece of shite! I tried to tell Katherine she was making a mistake being with you, but she wouldn't heed warning. I *had* to let her make her choice. Some fucking choice! You are a pathetic excuse for a wizard!"

Marcus snorted. He could care less what the Greasy Git of Hogwarts thought of him. "Just get the fuck out of my face!" he sneered impatiently.

Snape considered his options. Then he blasted the young man across the room, knocking him out. "It's fortunate for you I don't like to waste my time, Mr. Luddington," he sneered at the comatose young wizard. "It's just going to have to be enough for you to never recall I was ever here tonight."

"*Oblivate!*" he hollered.

He repaired the front door, removed all evidence of his presence, and left. When Mr. Luddington woke in the morning, all he would remember was drinking, hating his new wife, and planning his annulment. And Snape would make damn sure it would stay that way!

Choking on My Tears

Chapter 4 of 10

Snape comes back to Spinner's End to discover a very drunk Katherine. He speaks with Minerva about the events of Katherine's Wedding night, and the two come to the decision after reminiscing about the past to finally tell Katherine the truth about what really happened to her in April of 2002.

A/N: Much thanks to my beta, MadBrilliant! Please review! I love each and every one I get!

Morning came with a shocked and traumatized bride sitting at Snape's coffee table. Katherine had not changed from her robe...not that she had anything else to wear! She didn't even have a bra, underwear, or shoes! Her hair was in a complete shambles, and her face was now sporting an angry bruise on her eye. She was sitting with a bottle of firewhisky when Snape found her, and he closed his eyes. Obviously, she had found his liquor cabinet! She was so pissed she was just swigging from the bottle. *FUCK!*

She was completely blitzed. It was probably the best she could do. The shock and humiliation of her wedding night had traumatized her to a debilitating level. How was he going to explain? He decided, for now, he'd have to lie. He went to get a bruise healing salve, sat down next to her, and took her face into his hand. He started to apply the salve to her eye and began to talk to her gently. "Katherine, I want you to know I thought a great deal about what you said last night, and I'm sorry what transpired between you and your husband."

"Sev'rus," she said slowly, her eyes glazed over, her voice unsteady. "W-why didn't I bleed? That's w-what wa-was supposs-ss ta happen. Me Mum told me 'bout it. I knew from my girl'fends. He puts it in, it hurts a bit, a-and you bleed. There wa-was nothin', Sev'rus. Nothin'."

Snape cringed inside. He could not believe he was hearing this! But of course if she weren't drunk, she would never be saying these things out loud to him. He had to think fast.

"Katherine, some women aren't born with...that."

He had to catch his breath; he couldn't believe he was saying this tripe! It was such a lie...in her case, at least! His mind drifted, and he remembered in flashes *her blood coloring the flowers she had been lying on as she lay there unconscious*. The memory of it made him want to retch but he kept calm.

"Katherine, you also could have had an accident when you were a small child. It happens. You just need to know that you are a virgin. Truly, where it counts. In your heart and in your mind." He prayed she would understand what he was trying to convey, but her eyes rolled back into her head, and she slipped from her chair, falling into his arms. Snape rolled his eyes as he hitched her up into his arms to carry her to bed.

"Marcus, take me back," she whimpered. Then she was asleep, and Snape again carried her to his bed as he did last night, to sleep it off. She again in her sleep held on to him for dear life as he carried her, and again, he was greatly disturbed. When she woke up she was going to have one hell of a hangover, *and* she would have to face her rat bastard husband! He tucked her in and smoothed her hair from off her face. "Sleep well, Katherine," he whispered. *Have happy dreams. God knows you deserve them*, he thought sadly.

"Hello, Minerva," said Snape as he entered her office.

"Severus, what's happening? You sounded so upset. That's not like you!"

He sat down tiredly. "Minerva, it's all come undone."

She sat down weakly, her face pale and her lips quivering. She knew from his look and tone precisely his meaning. She stood up angrily and turned to look out the window, tears threatening to betray her. Her mind wandered back into time as she remembered the events of that afternoon long ago...

April, 2002

She was working in her office when Poppy came through the Floo and hysterically called for her to come to the Infirmary. She Flooed down in time to see a dirty and bloody Severus Snape holding an unconscious student swaddled in his teaching robes, rocking her gently in his arms as if she were a baby. He looked as if he were in a trance.

Minerva knelt down to look closer into his face. She was dumbstruck. Whatever could have happened to jar Severus to the brink of madness? She decided to deal with him with kid-gloves.

"What happened, Severus?" she whispered.

His eyes focused, and he looked at her with such anguish. "Death Eaters," he choked out. Tears were streaming down his face as he cradled the unconscious girl closer to him.

Minerva felt her blood grow cold. "Death Eaters...after all this time, Severus? I thought surely by now they all would have been rounded up and sent to Azkaban or at least deep in hiding! To take a chance coming to Hogwarts? Insanity!"

"Well, obviously, they decided to have a reunion!" he snarled.

Minerva was shaken. "Here, at Hogwarts? Whatever for?"

Snape gave her a withering look before he howled, "What do you think? ME! They wanted to kill me for my treachery and defection! I would have gladly died. But she was with me. Now, this is my punishment!" he said as he clutched the girl tighter to him. He shook as the tears flowed down his face.

"Who is she?" she asked after he had calmed himself. The girl's face was half-covered and her hair hid most of her features.

"Katherine Hannover. Hufflepuff. Fourth year," he said as if back in a trance.

"Oh, no!" she cried. Katherine had been, since her first visit back in her third year, a special young lady that she held in high esteem and had great hopes for her future.

"Poppy, get Madam Sprout," she said urgently.

Snape finally snapped out of his fog. "NO!" he roared.

The women stood frozen at his outburst. "My fault, my fault," he cried over and over as he rocked her in his arms.

Minerva was at a loss for words. She had never seen Severus in such a state.

"What happened to her, Severus?"

"All they wanted was to kill me. I told her to run...she ran so fast. She gave me immediate obedience. All I ever asked was for her to not disobey me. She never failed me. But. I. Failed. Her!" he cried and started to scream as he clutched Katherine to him. His anguished screams echoed throughout the empty Infirmary.

Minerva and Poppy warded the Infirmary and spent the rest of the afternoon cloistered with the distraught Potions master and the unconscious Katherine Hannover. It took hours and many breaks as Snape retched into a wastebasket for Minerva to extract the details of what actually occurred in the Forbidden Forest.

Finally, she forced herself to focus on the present. "What does she know?" Minerva asked after Snape told her about last night's disaster.

"She was completely pissed this morning. I found her disheveled and swigging firewhisky at my breakfast table. I tried telling her some rubbish about perhaps she had a fall as a young girl...of course her mother will deny such an event! Then I told her perhaps she wasn't born with a hymen...you know, not like that. I didn't know what to say, and time *is* running out."

Minerva turned to face him. Her jaw was set. "Severus, we're going to have to tell her. She's almost twenty. She can handle it now."

"Minerva, I'm 46 years old, and I can't handle it! You can't tell me that she's just going to say, 'Oh, thank you, Headmistress, and you too, Professor Snape, for modifying my memory... for keeping such an important, albeit, tragic event from me.' And then, what is she going to say about my involvement in all this? That after all these years of trust and friendship, being her mentor...she'll hate me forever. I can live with that...after all, I've lived with *this* for all these years, but *she* will have to live with knowing that I betrayed and deliberately kept intimate information from her. I swore to her that day I would bring her *no more pain*!"

He slammed his fists onto the desk, his dark head hunched over in defeat. Minerva came and stood by him, placing a hand on his shoulder.

"You've always been scared she would hate you and you would lose her. You've spent all these years atoning for something she doesn't even remember! And I understand you've always felt it was your responsibility to watch over her. You know she adored you from the first moment she met you. She admires you to this day. Nothing will change that. Her Hufflepuff loyalty for you runs *so strong*. She knows your past. I have spoken of it to her, myself, over the years."

Minerva took Snape by the shoulders and forced him to face her.

"She is quite perceptive and logical. She is mature enough to see the choice that had to be made. You did what you had to do to get her out of there! It was a life and death situation!"

Snape slumped weakly into his chair, his head hung with shame and overwhelming guilt. "Minerva, I should have died in the war. Why must my life be one disaster after another?" he despaired. "But you are right. I allowed my guilt to keep her near, to watch over her. I never wanted her to be unhappy another day in her life. I owed her at least that!"

He banged his fist on the desk. "I begged her to break it off with that little fuck!" he seethed as he recalled the disastrous conversation he had with Katherine during her seventh year when he had asked her to stop seeing Luddington.

November, 2004

"Miss Hannover, I asked you to come here tonight because I think you need an objective voice of reason. I know that you and Mr. Luddington have grown closer over the years. I think you and I have reached a point where we can be honest about such things," he began carefully.

"Sure, Professor," she replied as she sat down across from his desk.

"Please call me Severus, Katherine. I want to speak to you as a friend and as a person that cares about you and your future. You know our plan has been for you to take over as Potions mistress here at Hogwarts after your apprenticeship. We've worked hard together over the years, haven't we?" he asked wistfully.

"Yes, sir, uh...Severus, we have," she replied. "I am very grateful, and I'm looking forward to my apprenticeship and working more with you. I have always respected you and your opinions, even if sometimes I didn't always agree." She laughed a little at her last remark.

He smiled at the girl. "I want you to stop seeing Mr. Luddington," he said suddenly.

"What?" she exclaimed as she stood up from her chair. Her face was white with disbelief and anger. For a moment she looked as if she would actually cry!

He had to regain control of the situation. He remained calm and continued to speak softly to her.

"Katherine, I see things that you don't see. He is not a nice boy, and I don't believe he will grow up to be a nice man. If anyone knows about men who are not nice, it's me."

She stood there with her eyes full of tears threatening to fall at any moment. She finally found her tongue and lashed out at him.

"Well, I don't think this aspect of my life is any of your business, Professor! I will continue to keep my personal and professional life separate. I expect you to respect that. I don't stick my nose into your love life, Professor!" She stood, fuming, visibly upset that he did not approve of her choice. His approval meant the world to her, but she loved Marcus more. Nonetheless, it still hurt deeply.

"I don't want you hurt, Katherine!" he yelled in a futile last-ditch attempt at convincing her.

"Oh, sod it...Severus!" she snapped at him as she rushed out of his office

"How did she take your advice?" Minerva asked.

He shook his head out of remembering. "Not well at all, Minerva. I can't tell her what happened. I don't know what I'm going to do."

"Well, it's not what 'you're' going to do, Severus," she said as she put her arm around him and faced him square in the eye. "It's ~~what~~*we're* going to do: you and me. Now that Poppy's dead, it's up to us to restore her memories and let her face the truth, no matter how ugly, or difficult it may be to take, or even understand."

She hugged the wizard as he sobbed onto her arm. There just had been too much pain over the years, and it finally had taken its toll on the Potions master. The war and his near death experience had broken him. Sure, he was still the snarling bat of the dungeons, but whenever he was alone or with Minerva, he could no longer hide his feelings. He had slowly begun to cry easily as the years went on. He just couldn't handle any more tragedy, suffering, and keep it all inside anymore.

The only people he felt he had was Minerva, who knew him and accepted him as a son, and a young girl he had seen grow up into a radiant, self-assured woman that probably would crumble before him if she knew the truth of her past. He just did not want her to know. He only wanted her to be happy! *Was it too damn much to ask?*

I Love the Way We Communicate

Chapter 5 of 10

Severus finally takes fourth-year Katherine into the Forbidden Forest to replenish his stores.

A/N: Thanks again to my beta, MadBrilliant. Please Review! I live for reviews!

September, 2001

Severus Snape was pacing up and down the entrance way, waiting for his star pupil to meet him. She finally came rushing down the stairs, out of breath, and apologizing.

"So sorry, Professor! It won't happen again!" she said breathlessly.

"It had better not, Miss Hannover!" he snarled. "Otherwise, you might not be invited again to join me on these outings!" He glanced at her attire. She was dressed in Muggle clothes. Well, he wasn't about to waste any more time on her going back to change! She had irritated him and wasted enough of his precious time as it was!

She meekly followed him as they walked towards the forest. She had her bag slung sideways across her chest and had her vials ready for samples.

They came to the edge, and she stuck her hand out in front of him. "Halt!" she commanded.

He stared down at the little bossy witch. He was about to give her a tongue lashing when she whispered, "Do you smell that?"

"What?" he said in irritation.

"Close your eyes and breathe deeply." He did as she asked, just out of curiosity. "Now, what do you smell?"

"Mint?" he queried.

"Right!" she exclaimed. "Open your eyes, and I'll show you how *do this*."

"How *you* do this? What do you *do*, precisely?" he said sarcastically.

She was far too entranced by the sights in front of her to bother looking at him as she gazed over the plant life in front of her. "Oh, Professor, you would pass out if you saw my own personal stores back home. *There!*" She pointed.

She reached down and showed him. "*Isanthus brachiatus*, otherwise known as—"

He interrupted her. "Yes, I know what it is, Miss Hannover!" he snapped. "Why don't you enlighten me as to how you sniffed it out?"

She sighed and began. "Fluxweed, or false pennyroyal, is a part of the mint family. You and I know it best picked at the—"

"... full-moon," they finished in unison.

"Which is because of its uses for Polyjuice Potion. Tomorrow it is the full moon," she said proudly.

"I know this, Miss Hannover!" he growled impatiently. "I do happen to be a Master of Potions," he snapped with a glint in his eye. "That was not what I asked you."

"It is a part of the mint family, sir," she replied. "If you train yourself to the scents, even the more subtle ones, you can't miss. I found mint to be most overwhelming once we reached the forest, and of course I would because it is at the precise time for it to be harvested."

Snape was furious at her impudence, yet impressed with her knowledge. Fourteen years old, and she could know all that? Of course, it would never do to show his pride at her abilities, she was insufferably smug as it was already!

"Twenty points, Miss Hannover, for your talents. But ten points will be taken for not answering my question when asked. If you hope to be a good apprentice, you had better learn to keep that gaping maw of yours *shut*, think, and then answer precisely and accurately what I ask of you!" he snapped angrily. "And by the by, don't you *ever* think to tell me when I may or may not step wherever I wish. Your attitude is most unseemly. *I* am the teacher and *you* are the student! Am I clear?"

She quirked her lips to the side again. He noticed she tended to do that when she thought he was wrong. Finally, she muttered, "Yes, sir."

He snorted at her weak attempt at humility and whisked from her. She went ahead and bottled the fluxweed. When she reached him again, he was gathering belladonna.

He sensed her presence without turning. "Go and gather daises. I trust you to be able to locate a daisy, correct?" he snarked.

He could hear her irritation as she stomped off. He smirked at himself. *Good, I don't want to be the only one annoyed today!*

At the end of their work, they had gathered nettles, peppermint (which Katherine sniffed out), privet, valerian root, sage (which she sniffed out again), ginger, knotgrass, and asphodel.

Snape saw her bag was bulging with more than just her vials. "What have you here?" he asked.

"Oh, heather—I'm going to dry it for you—and I also found lemongrass. I want to make some Lemon Balm Tea. Can we do this in the lab? I want to see if you like it. I want to thank you for bringing me. I know I can be difficult, and I definitely badgered you for a long while now." She was going on and on at a mind-numbing pace.

He interrupted her. "Miss Hannover, you and I will be spending a great deal of time together in the future if you wish to become a Potions mistress. There's no need to bring your house mascot into it! So, let me be frank with you. You talk far too much. Just do as you are told. I expect immediate obedience! Remember from now on that I only

do the things that I wish. No one forces my hand. So, let me see how you make your Lemon Balm Tea," he said exasperatedly *Merlin, I am getting soft*

Hurt

Chapter 6 of 10

Katherine tries to commit suicide and spirals further downward as friends and family desert her in her time of need.
Snape can not take the pain anymore and decides it's time to tell Katherine the truth.

A/N: This chapter contains a great deal of angst, includes a suicide attempt, and more flashbacks of what happened to Katherine and Snape in April of 2002. I have worked hard to not make it graphic, but it may be difficult to read.

Present time August, 2007

Snape went to the Headmistress' fireplace to Floo himself back to Spinner's End. As he grasped his hand into the Floo Powder jar, his words came tumbling back to him.

"No one forces my hand."

It was like a knife in his heart.

He walked into the kitchen; it was empty. Severus went back towards his bedroom, but Katherine wasn't there. "Katherine!" he bellowed. He heard a groan from the bathroom and wasted no time dashing inside.

"Sweet Merlin!" he thundered. There was Katherine, naked on the floor with her wrists slashed. She was on her back covered in her own blood with her right leg swung over the bathtub. He took out his wand and closed the wounds and cleansed the blood from her body. She was unconscious. He started breathing hard. Flashes of the past crept upon him. A much younger Katherine laughing, and then blood all over the wild flowers she had picked.

He had heard her laughing as she worked, "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may, Old Time is still a-flying. " He was laughing softly at her joy of communing with her precious flowers. Then he saw her smile turning into instant fear. His head jerked towards her gaze.

"Run!" he hollered. She pulled her bag off from across her chest and flung it down at once, and the sack turned upside down in her speed; the wind scattering her precious flowers away as she dashed off into the forest.

Then she was screaming, her head was turned to the side, her eyes shut tight as the tears squeezed through. Her blood was all over the rose petals, daises, lemongrass, and heather. Mercifully, she had finally passed out...probably from shock. And he was cowering on his knees, bloody, filthy, cut, and shaking against a tree, still recovering from the effects of the Cruciatus Curse, sobbing and broken as he retched onto the forest floor. Her screams, now mercifully silent, were still ringing in his ears...

He shook his head from the memories as he bound her wrists. After he finished, he glanced at her body. She wasn't little Katherine anymore. It was confusing. She had a woman's body. He had never thought of her as a woman before. He shook as a chill coursed through him. He berated himself for looking at her intimate areas. *You are sick, foul, and lecherous!* he screamed in his head. He took off his robes, wrapped her in it and then Flooed them to St. Mungo's *Damn Luddington! Damn them all!*

The news of the annulment spread like wildfire across the gossips of the Wizarding world. She had been denounced as a whore. Her reputation was ruined. Snape blamed himself. He should have just killed the bastard, but Luddington's death would have only made Katherine's condition worse! He'd rather her know the truth of his vile nature then to continue a life believing her one true love had been stolen from her before they could reconcile. He had hoped against hope that Luddington might take her back once he learned that she had been violated. The time for all the lies to end was drawing close. This weighed heavily on him.

He tried talking to Katherine, but she was just beside herself. "Am I going crazy?" she asked him as she clung to him. "Why is this happening to me?" "What did I do?" She begged over and over for someone to help her make sense of it all. Her parents and friends came one by one to see her. She had almost died. She had to take a great deal of Blood Replenishing Potion.

It was gut wrenching for Snape to see her in such anguish. Especially when, one by one, each person who *claimed* to love her told her they believed her, but Snape, who could spot a liar from a kilometer away, knew they all believed the worst about her. Day after day, he sat fuming in his chair in the corner, watching her life fall apart bit by bit.

After such terrible visits, he would sit next to her, stroke her light brown hair, and talk to her in soothing tones. He tried to use the same formality with her, as when she was a fifth year, but he couldn't. He couldn't be firm. The child, Katherine, was gone forever when he saw her naked on that floor. Everything was different now, and he did not know how to feel about it. She was a woman, and he didn't know how to deal with a woman. So, he just spoke to her gently and stroked her hair tenderly. Nothing much of consequence was said, just that he believed her, would always believe in her, and he would never leave her while she still needed him. It was during these times he noticed she would be able to truly sleep deeply. He would just keep stroking her hair or her arm. Once, he fell asleep in the chair next to her, holding her hand. Then one afternoon while she slept, she took a hold of his forearm and wrapped her arms around it like a security blanket. It was pure hell. He could feel the warmth and softness of her breasts against his hand, and he thought he was going to lose all control, strip down her gown and suckle on her breasts until she begged for him to take her. *Stop it! Do not think of her like that! It's disgusting!* he scolded himself.

The absolute worst day was when her parents came. Katherine had demanded to be examined by a Healer to prove her virginity earlier in the day. When the results showed that she was definitely not a virgin and that they had even found a small tear that had been healed a long time ago, Katherine went into complete shock. She sat in her bed and stared at her lap for a very long time. Finally, Severus tried to speak with her.

She turned to him with angry tears in her eyes and said, "It's like my fourth year all over again *Why?* Why won't anyone tell me what has happened to me? I can't live like this, not knowing what has happened to me! Someone did something to me, and I can't even remember. *Why me?*"

She looked at her friend and mentor for answers. He wanted to tell her, but he could not find the courage to do it. She burst into hysterical sobbing and buried her weeping face into his neck as she grasped his frock coat into her hands. He wrapped his arms around her and held her until she fell silent. He leaned back and cupped his hand

under her chin to look at her face and realized her silence was not a good one. Her eyes were glazed over. He laid her down on her bed. She was in complete shock. Snape sat by her side, his hands buried in his face. *How could things get any worse?* he thought. Well, they did.

She was still in shock when her parents had arrived. Mr. Hannover, a German who had attended Durmstrang, and her mother, Lucy Hannover, who had been Lucy Shepard when she and Snape had been students (and still a student when he had taught her at Hogwarts his very first year as a young teacher) were so angry about the annulment it overshadowed their concern for their daughter's physical and mental health.

He had sat scowling in the back corner while they railed at her for the disgrace she had brought on them. She had cried and stuck to her claim that she had been a virgin on her wedding night. Finally, just as Snape decided he would put a stop to their cruelty, Katherine lost it and started screaming at the top of her lungs. Snape threw Mr. Hannover out of the room by the seat of his pants and glared at his former student as she scurried after her husband. Snape bellowed for the medi-witch, and Katherine had to be sedated.

After Katherine had been given a Calming Draught and Sleeping Potion, he turned to her parents and unleashed his venom on them.

"How dare you speak to us like that!" Katherine's mother had screamed at him. "You seem to forget, I remember when you were just *Snivellus*! Why are you hovering over our daughter anyway? Were you the one who did this? We should call the Aurors!" she shrieked.

"Do not test me, madam," he softly threatened. "Obviously, I was the only one Katherine could turn to when her *dear* husband unceremoniously threw her out of *her own house*! I knew from the start that boy was nothing but a filthy social climber. He only wanted to use your daughter for her brilliant mind. But she loved him." He sneered. "She has loved him since she was thirteen! There was never anyone else for her. She has been completely devoted to him! Although *why* I shall never understand!"

He stopped talking and turned his face away, unable to look them; his rage was so great. He wanted to hex everyone in this damn place. *How dare they judge the things they know nothing about?*

He turned around and with a malicious leer said silkily, "Oh yes, and I recall you as well from dear old school days. Wasn't your nickname *'bosey Lucy'*?"

Mrs. Hannover clenched her jaw, her face burning red as she flared her nostrils in anger. He smiled evilly and then swept back into Katherine's room to sit by her side.

Two weeks later, once she was stable, she was able to really start talking about Luddington and the annulment. She sat with Snape and McGonagall, the only two people she felt believed her. She was depressed, and all her hopes of being a respected Potions mistress seemed to be over.

"Stuff and nonsense!" spat McGonagall. "We will continue as planned. I think though, Severus would be more than happy to stay on for another year, not as a teacher, but more as a mentor, to help you adjust. Won't you Severus?" she prodded.

"Certainly, Minerva," he replied softly.

"I don't know if am capable anymore," she murmured dumbly.

Severus grabbed her face and forced her to look at him. "I did not waste nine years of my life, pouring my time and knowledge into cultivating your talents and putting up with your insufferable nattering just for you to give up now!" he growled.

She looked at him with wild rage in her eyes and tore her face from his grip. "What does it all mean now? No one will respect me, and I'm *ruined*. RUINED! I'll never get married, no wizard will ever touch me now!" She broke down crying weakly, holding her arms protectively and rocking back and forth. It was far too much for Snape. He got up angrily and left.

He went back to Spinner's End and found the original robe she came to him in. He held it to his nose, inhaling her scent. It was beyond him how that moron could throw away such a lovely woman as Katherine! He would do anything than allow her life to be ruined because of one evil day years ago. The evil wasn't even his choice! It had been a simple decision. Will Katherine live or die? He had never allowed himself to see her past that age. *I never thought of her as anything but a child, my protégé*

But the person he had seen naked and bleeding on his bathroom floor was a different Katherine. She was no child. She had become a beautiful woman. She had always been beautiful, but physically he had never taken noticed her. She was absolutely breathtaking! And now, the only man Katherine had ever loved was driving her...this beautiful, exquisite woman...mad! He closed his eyes and continued to inhale her scent. He had to stop this torture. He couldn't stop thinking about how lovely her breasts and hips were. Then how her leg hiked up on the bathtub gave him a perfect view...*STOP! STOP! Yet I could change all of this, if I weren't such a coward! After all, I was the one...NOOOOO!* he screamed in his head.

Don't think about it. Never think about it. If you think of it then it becomes true, and it never happened! It never really happened. See, she wore white on her wedding day! But why can't I get the sight of those bloodstained flowers out of my head?

"Why didn't I bleed?" the woman cried.

"Please stop! You're hurting me!" cried the young girl

Snape threw his glass into the fireplace and started destroying everything he could find. The silence over the years was eating him alive, and it was killing Katherine. It was finally time to tell the truth and face the fallout. And if she demanded satisfaction, he'd gladly go to Azkaban, or if she demanded marriage from him, it was the least he could do. He would marry her and comfort her as best as he could. After all, she had become such a dear friend to him, and he would *never* touch her in that way or require her to fulfill *any* marital rights. He was sure he could make her happy, or at least content with life. He would do anything for her. She deserved the very best that life could offer. Whatever she wanted, he would provide. It was finally settled. He had been silent all these years, and it was time for it to end.

The poem recited by Katherine in the forest was written by Robert Herrick, entitled, "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time."

Where Some Screams Have Gone

Snape and Headmistress McGonagall sit down with Katherine in the Headmistress' office to discuss the events that led up to that fateful day in April of 2002.

A/N: This Chapter will not be a chapter to worry over. This is to "set the stage" before the actual "story" is told, so there should not be anything that would upset anyone. Thanks again to my beta, MadBrilliant, and for all of you who have continued to review. Keep 'em comin'!

One week later, Katherine was back at Hogwarts and sat with Severus and Minerva. They had something very important they wanted to tell and show her.

She sat down, looking very pale and sad. She was suffering greatly since the annulment had been swiftly granted. It stung her pride that a life dream could be ruined so perfunctorily. Her dreams of living happily ever after with Marcus were gone. *What else can possibly be worse?* she thought.

The Headmistress poured all of them tea and made sure it was spiked with a Calming Draught. This was going to be upsetting enough as it was!

She nodded to Severus as she handed out the tea. He cleared his throat and spoke to Katherine in his most commanding tone.

"I want you to talk to me about your fifth year."

She blinked a few times and furrowed her brow. "What exactly what do you want to know?" she asked.

"Just talk about whatever strikes you as significant," he said softly.

She took a sip of her tea and began. "Well, I was excited because it was my O.W.L. year. I, of course, already knew what I wanted to do. Oh, I remember you and I argued, Severus! You refused to let me go back into the Forest again with you. I was so angry with you...I didn't understand. It was so confusing! But then, Professor McGonagall said I was old enough that it would not be proper for us to be alone like that, which, by the way, Minerva, I thought was a very sorry excuse. I mean, Hagrid, or Filch, as a chaperone, could have joined us! But anyway, I would sit looking out the window of my common room and watch you, Severus, walk out without me, and I remember I would feel so sad and lonely."

Snape shifted uncomfortably in his chair and cleared his voice. Katherine scrutinized him. *Why does he look so guilty?* she thought.

She started getting upset. "What is going on here? Why the trip down memory lane?"

Minerva spoke up. "Please, Katherine, just go on."

Katherine relaxed back into her chair and took a deep breath. "Well, I remember the whole Death Eater Murders! It was all anyone could talk about for months! It dominated my whole fifth year!"

"Tell us about it," whispered Snape.

She looked at them like they were crazy. "Um... you know all of this. But okay! Um, there were seven Death Eaters, four who were confirmed, who had survived the war and had disappeared, plus three who were only suspected of Death Eater activity. The Aurors concluded they had each been stalked and executed one by one in a very perfunctory Muggle fashion, so it was undetectable by magical means. To this day, no one knows who it was, and after the seventh one was murdered, it stopped. I recall the Ministry tried half-heartedly to find the person or persons responsible, but no one really cared. The war had only been over with for five years, and the sentiment was, 'if we ever caught the guy, we'd give him a medal!' I also remember I was very concerned about you, Severus. The vigilante had been ruled out as a Death Eater because there was no Dark Mark over the areas they were murdered. I was so scared you would be targeted because I already knew by that time you had been a Death Eater."

She stopped, and when they kept silent, she went on. "You want me to talk about things you already know?" she asked.

"Partly," said Snape.

"Well, you know, Severus, my fifth year was difficult. Marcus was...h-he really started to court me for real, but I was having a lot of problems. I remember I stopped drinking my Lemon Balm Tea. I couldn't stand the smell of it. And roses, I don't know...I still don't know. Every time I see red roses I get angry. You remember, Severus... I was having crying fits in class. Only in Potions class, though. Strange. It was all so disturbing. I thought it was the combination of the excitement of really dating Marcus, getting sick during the end of my fourth year, the residual effects of that plant I had been exposed to, pressure of O.W.L.s, the Death Eater Murders, and my anger about not being able to go back to the Forest."

"But, it was, at the same time, an exciting period for me academically. That was also when you really started to take me on as a serious Potion maker, Severus. I remember happy times in the lab, learning about all the potions I'd be making in the future, and you were very kind and patient with me. You made Calming Draughts for me in advance, I recall, for whenever I had one of my fits."

She turned abruptly to Minerva. "And don't think it has escaped my notice that there is Calming Draught in my tea, Minerva!" she chided.

The Headmistress gave a slight smile. "Well, under the circumstances, I thought we all could use one," she replied.

Snape still sat stiffly in his chair. "Tell me about your fourth year," he said, sounding more demanding than he had intended.

Katherine quirked her lips to the side of her mouth as she furrowed her brows at him. Then she started becoming agitated and set her teacup down. "You both know my memory isn't very clear about that." She started squeezing and flexing her hands. "I don't like to think about it!" She jumped up and started pacing when she realized they weren't about to let her out of it.

"I just remember that I don't remember. April is gone! I mean it was March; the snow was melting. The weather was getting nice. I went to Hogsmeade with Marcus and some friends. Then, it was May! I woke up in the Infirmary, and I was told I had been very sick with some obscure disease, that it had been contagious, and no one had been allowed to see me. Then, Severus tells me I had unknowingly touched or inhaled some rouge plant during our last trip into the Forest! That was the explanation for all my crying and agitation during my summer and my fifth year, you said. Something about "residual effects."

"It was a very blurry time, I recall, staying all summer at Hogwarts in the Infirmary, drugged most of the time. Everything was fuzzy. But I remember getting sick, real sick, like my body couldn't hold me anymore. I wanted to literally jump out of my skin. At times I thought I was going to have a heart attack! It was an awful time! But by my sixth year, I was back to normal, although I still don't like red roses or Lemon Balm Tea."

"Well, Severus?" prodded Minerva.

"Katherine, please sit down," muttered Snape.

Katherine knew something was wrong. She started breathing hard, and her heartbeat was fluttering. Her stomach was turning. She flashed her eyes back and forth between the two of them. Suddenly, she was grateful for her laced tea.

"What!" she yelled.

Snape produced from his wand a small bottle.

"Memories?" she whispered.

"Your memories, Katherine, with a few of mine and Minerva's mixed in. It's time to face the truth. Minerva, Madam Pomfrey, before she died, and myself...we were all complicit in this cover-up. You were not sick...not in the way I had told you...but you were so very damaged and in terrible shock. We did what we thought was best, although, I must say, I pushed the issue. Poppy and Minerva had their doubts. But I was rather insistent."

Katherine's eyes started to tear up as they darted back and froth between Minerva and Snape; her lips quivering. "Does this have to do with why Marcus left me?" she asked, her voice shaking.

"Yes," Severus answered, so softly it was almost inaudible. He couldn't meet her eyes. He handed her the bottle. She turned it over and over in her hands. Finally, Minerva stood up and offered her hand to the young women. She took her hand and allowed herself to be led to a Pensieve. Snape sat in the back corner and watched her pour the silvery fluid into the basin.

She was about to go in when he jumped up and said, "Stop!"

The two women jumped and looked at him. He strode over to Katherine and took her into his arms and embraced her, knowing full well it could be the last time he would ever be able to be near her again. He stroked her light brown hair and held her tightly as he could without crushing her.

"Please, know that I never wanted this to happen. I never wanted to hurt you." His voice cracked as he whispered into her ear. She pulled back from him and saw the pain in his face. She was shocked. Severus had never embraced her before!

"It's okay, Severus. I believe you," she said looking into his eyes earnestly.

She extricated herself from him and went into her mind.

One More Casualty

Chapter 8 of 10

Katherine learns the truth, and Severus faces her reaction.

A/N: Here is the chapter in which Katherine learns the whole truth about what happened to her. I put a whole bunch of warnings; this is the chapter that will be the most upsetting. Again, thanks to my beta, MadBrilliant, who worked hard with me to make this chapter as respectful and delicate as possible. If you have not reviewed, but have been reading, this would be the time to review. I am most interested in your opinion!

April, 2002

A bright April morning was surrounding the two figures walking towards the Forbidden Forest. The wizard, whom Katherine recognized right away as Severus, wore flowing black robes and was smiling slightly at the young witch at his side. Katherine recognized herself at fourteen. She was wearing her favorite outfit at the time: corduroys and a sweater over a tee shirt. Katherine smiled as she recalled that she could not be comfortable gathering and harvesting in robes that could so easily snag on the various prickles and bushes. Her younger self was eager to get right to work, picking out flowers and humming to herself. The two were periodically examining a plant or flower. She questioned her teacher, and the two of them were discussing and laughing. It was a beautiful spring day.

Katherine watched her younger self. She recalled that she and the Potions master had just started becoming used to each other that year...her fourth year. The first semester had been difficult, but she had proven herself to be reliable and worthy of his time and energy. Severus told her later, during her first year as his apprentice, that it was during the Christmas hols that year that he made his final decision: Katherine would be his successor. She had the abilities and the intelligence to become a great Potions mistress. That was the reason, he had told her, that he put up with her nattering. She loved being in her element, gathering and harvesting, finding the best possible choices of each herb, plant, flower, and root for his stores. He had even admitted once that, even with her chattiness and smug attitude, at times he laughed in spite of himself. Katherine smiled at her younger self. She really had been a silly girl at times, but it had been good for her. She had been far too serious for her own good! He took her education very seriously and treated her with respect that she had never heard him show towards any other student. Well, why not? she had thought back then. I am his protégé! His successor! In return, she devoted herself to her craft and took his command of "immediate obedience" to heart. Even when she didn't agree, she never contradicted him. She trusted him implicitly. After all, he was going to mentor her in the ways of being a great Potions maker!

The girl was lovingly stroking the petals of a wild red rose bush. She started gathering the red petals while saying to her teacher, "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may, Old Time is still a' flying." The wizard chuckled and smirked as he looked at her smiling face. She had innocently thought the Muggle poem's meaning was just about roses. Now, observing her younger self reciting this poem to her teacher, she shook her head in embarrassment and laughter. What Severus must have thought of her! All of a sudden the girl's face turned into horror. Black figures were descending from the sky around them out of nowhere.

Katherine watched her younger self as Snape whipped out his wand and hollered at her, "Run!" She was pulled along as young Katherine threw down her bag, the flowers scattering everywhere. She was sprinting, panting heavily through the brush her hands and face were scratched as she fled, but in her terror, she hardly noticed. Then there was a black figure descending from above that blocked her path. She screamed and tried to run away, but she was magically hoisted up by her ankle, and she was spinning around and around. The spinning stopped, and she felt so dizzy and disoriented. Katherine was terrified for her younger self. What in the hell is going on? she thought. The man led her back to the clearing where Snape was.

They were torturing him with the Cruciatus Curse. He was cut, bleeding, and groaning in pain as he writhed on the ground. Katherine listened to the conversation between Severus and one of the Death Eaters.

"Snape, you didn't really think your deception would go unpunished! You betrayed our Lord. You will finally pay for all your lies!" he hissed.

"Lookee, what I've got!" the man with young Katherine called out. Katherine whirled around to see herself in the air, suspended and frightened. The men all laughed and

looked at the girl as she was dropped to the ground in a heap. She was dazed as she looked at the black robed men surrounding them. Snape was lying on the ground in pain. He was in agony. Blood was streaming from his nose, and his robes were slashed and his skin underneath lacerated.

"Come on, Snape! You love being the teacher. Show us how much!" Another man laughed.

"Let her out of this. Just kill me and let her go!" he begged. Katherine stood in disbelief. Severus never begged...never! It was surreal to see him so helpless.

Katherine looked over the face of her Potions teacher more closely. He was terrified.

The realization came over her. "No!" she screamed as she held out her hands. But no one could hear her. She was completely helpless to intervene. All she could do was watch as the horror unfolded before her woman's eyes. What was the most heart wrenching was that her younger innocent self was completely ignorant of the scene that was about to unfold. Her younger self was thrown down at the ground upon the beautiful flowers she had picked so lovingly earlier, looking confused and in shock. Everyone was talking at once. Katherine didn't want to hear and didn't want to see. She closed her eyes and shook her head in rejection, but the words came anyway into her head.

"Your choice, Snape. It is either you or the seven of us. And if she gets us, she'll die. At least we'll let you live with your guilt and shame."

"NO!" he thundered. "Don't do this! It's me you want to destroy, just kill me...let her go! I swear, just let her walk away, and you can torture me all you want. Just let her walk away!"

The man leaned down close to his face and whispered. "That is the point, old friend. You will live with your guilt and torment...that will be your torture. Every time you see her face, you'll hate yourself just a little bit more, and then, when you are ready, you'll decide to put yourself out of your misery. Now do it, or she will accompany us and die...but not before she spends time with us. And I promise you, it will be very painful and prolonged."

Katherine watched as he slowly and resignedly crawled painfully towards her younger self. Katherine crashed to her knees as she screamed, pressing her hands over her ears and shutting her eyes tightly. She did not want to know, did not want this to be real! She could hear words being whispered into her younger self's ear. It was soothing and gentle.

"I'm sorry; please forgive me. Just close your eyes."

Katherine watched her younger self as her eyes closed and turned her head away. She did the same and screamed and cried with her younger self, finally feeling the physical pain and trying to stop the realization from reaching her mind. Her younger self did not watch then, so Katherine wouldn't watch now.

Katherine could still hear her younger self was crying and choking through her screams, "Please, stop it! You're hurting me! Please, please!"

Katherine covered her eyes and screamed as if she were screaming out her very soul. All these years, this was the truth that surrounded her. And she never knew!

Finally, it was quiet. She opened her eyes slowly and saw the two of them, alone. The men were gone. Snape was cowering against a nearby tree, vomiting over and over. Her younger self had apparently passed out from shock. After he regained some composure, he crawled painfully back to her, kneeling before her, sobbing and screaming up into the sky as her younger self lay unconscious. The flowers surrounding her were the wild flowers and rose petals she had picked earlier, a sickening reminder of ruined youthful innocence. Katherine arose and walked closer to her younger self. She could see the blood on the roses and daises and smell of the lemongrass that was so strong and sickening, sweet smelling. Her teacher closed her legs and covered her with his cloak. She sank down onto the Forest floor and looked upon her unconscious self. She realized now why lemongrass and roses triggered such crying fits during her fifth year in Potions. She did not want to see anymore. She was whipped around and landed in the Infirmary.

Snape was holding her unconscious form, cradling her form swaddled in his robes like a baby. He was so distraught; Katherine thought he might go mad. She watched as Minerva talked Severus into releasing her younger self and laying her down on the bed. She watched as he told Minerva and Madam Pomfrey what had happened between racking, heaving sobs and more retching. She then watched Minerva patch him up while he watched Madam Pomfrey heal young Katherine's scratches and clean her up. She went closer to Madam Pomfrey as she whispered to Minerva about the extent of the damage.

"Considering everything, Minerva, there is a slight tear, but I healed that in a heartbeat. No real physical trauma. I think the trauma will be more mental and emotional," said Poppy.

"Aye, and for Severus as well. I wish Albus were here. I don't know what we're going to do." Minerva looked very worried as she shifted her eyes from unconscious Katherine to the distraught Snape.

Poppy put her in a gown and tucked her in one of the beds. She was still mercifully out cold. Pomfrey brought her back to consciousness only for a moment to force a Sleeping Draught down her throat before she could start remembering anything that had transpired. Snape was now sitting by her side, tears coursing down his face. He was truly broken. Minerva put her arm on his shoulder. He winced and shrank from her.

"The transformation is now complete, Minerva. I am now officially a monster," he said, his voice hollow and defeated.

Minerva grabbed his shoulders and shook him. "Look at me, Severus Snape! You did what you needed to do to get her out alive! Her life, Severus, her life! She is alive. You are NOT a monster. Those evil creatures are. You were just as violated as she was. Oh, Severus, I'm so sorry! Just when we all thought this nightmare was finally over!" she cried now. Poppy sniffed in the background.

"What are we going to do?" Poppy asked.

"We'll have to explain when she is strong enough," Minerva answered through her tears.

"NO!" roared Snape. He ran his hands down a non-existent wrinkle in Katherine's blanket and tried to smooth her sheets to make her more comfortable. It was unnecessary, but he was under a compulsion to guard and protect her.

"She can't know this; it will destroy her. No, I will not allow it! She has a future, and I'm not going to see it destroyed because my past happened to catch up with me while she had the misfortune to be in my presence! It's all my fault! All I asked of her was unquestioning obedience. She never failed me. But. I. Failed. Her!"

He broke down again and sobbed so desperately, Katherine thought he would just curl up and die right there. She was glad her younger self was unconscious. It would have been far too much to bear, seeing Severus like that.

Katherine stood stock-still, unable to process the farce the three created to tell her. Finally, a bottle was conjured, and while she was still unconscious, Snape performed Legilimency on her and extracted the memories from her young mind. Again and again, he probed and withdrew many silvery threads from her and deposited them into the bottle. It was a gut-wrenching process. At times he would have to hand the wand and bottle to Poppy so he could vomit once more. But by now, he was dry heaving more

than retching. After numerous, exhausting episodes that kept repeating over and over, it finally ended. He then withdrew some of his own memories and placed them into the bottle. When he was finally finished, he was near total collapse. Poppy and Minerva put him in bed with a Sleeping Draught, and he mercifully slept.

Katherine whipped around to another scene where Severus was now dressed in his usual black robes and was healthy, but very sad. He leaned over her induced unconscious form and kissed her softly on the forehead and murmured, "I will take care of you. I will do everything I can to ensure no one ever causes you any more pain, I promise. I will avenge you, and I will always be here for you."

Katherine was whipped yet again into another scene. She was in the Headmistresses' office. She was working at her desk. Snape came in and threw a broken wand on her desk.

She looked up at him darkly, peering over her glasses. "It's over then?"

"Yes," he spat. "They are all dead."

Minerva sank back into her chair. "Finally," she whispered. "Can we tell her now, Severus?" she asked.

"NO!" he roared. "Never tell her! At least, if we ever MUST, it should be when she's an adult. I won't risk her happiness or her future. She's so entranced with that idiot Luddington!" he sneered.

"Why do you hate him so much, Severus?" she prodded.

"Because I am an evil man, Minerva. I know my own kind."

Minerva looked so sadly at him. "You are not evil, Severus!"

"I can't seem to be able to steer her clear of this rotter, but she's happy. I won't be the cause of any more pain. I won't!" the Potions master raved. "I made a promise that I would never be the cause of any more pain. I will continue to do my part to warn her and try to make her see reason, but it is clear she is bound and determined to be with him. When the fallout comes from her romance with that piece of shite, I will be there to help her pick up the pieces, but I refuse to be the source of her pain!"

With that, he swept out of the room.

Katherine was swept back from that scene and back to the present time. She fell on the floor and wept. No one moved. Finally, after she was spent, she looked up and saw her teacher sitting in the corner of the room with his hands in his black hair. He was crying. She stood up, walked over to him slowly, and fell to her knees, embracing him. They cried together then, holding on to each other, finally sharing the pain.

She took his face in her hands. Everything was falling into place, all the events over the years: he had tried to warn her about Marcus; he had watched over her; he truly cared for her.

"You were silent all these years," she whispered in awe and wonder. "You carried it all, so I could be free to grow up happy. Thank you, Severus, for saving my life and being my friend."

She embraced him again and cried with him. "I still love you, Severus," she whispered. "You are the noblest man I've ever known."

"NOBLE!" he screamed as he jumped up. "I am a hideous beast; a monster that deserves to be locked away for the rest of my life. There is no excuse!"

Katherine quirked her lips to the side and her brow furrowed. "True, Severus. It was an evil act. But all the times you and I were in the forest, did it ever cross your mind to do *that* to me?" she asked.

"Of course not!" he spat. "I do not desire girls! I was sick for months. Every time I thought of it I retched. But ~~it~~*it* did it. How can you call me 'noble?' I'm a sick and worthless piece of shite!"

She looked at him in sorrow. "Because I saw how they tortured and taunted you with threats of hurting ~~me~~*themselves*! You saved me from horrible tortures that would have gone on and on and then a death that I'm sure would have been horrendous! You pushed your revulsion aside to save my life. Minerva was right; you were a victim too. That's why I can call you noble. You sacrificed yourself to give me some precious, blissfully ignorant years so I could become the woman I am today. I know I should feel angry at all the subterfuge and lying, but I can't summon that feeling. Maybe I need some time, I don't know. I'm just glad I didn't have to grow up knowing *that*. I'm not a Gryffindor. I don't know how to be that strong. But I do know about being loyal and caring about others above yourself, so I can't help but feel grateful that I wasn't told until I was older. I do wish though I had been told before I married Marcus. I could have been spared a lot of pain, but what's done is done, and I do still trust you, Severus. I do trust in you and your love for me; after all you did try to warn me against being with him. You have been my best friend, and...I still love you," she said finally in a choked whisper.

He looked at her with such pain and sadness. She grabbed his arms and held him to her. He sank into her embrace, and she held the wizard as he sobbed. It was her turn to comfort him. He cried until he could cry no more, and he resignedly sank back into his chair, looking as if he were a broken man.

Finally, he spoke. "Katherine, you have the authority to bring me to the Aurors and have me put away in Azkaban. I will do whatever you ask of me. I will marry you, if you will have me, and I swear I shall never touch you or assert any marital rights on you. Whatever you want of me, I will gladly pay."

Katherine kissed her friend's hands gently and said urgently, "I want you to be free and ~~live~~!"

She turned to Minerva and said, "I don't think we need to keep Severus from enjoying his retirement. I am ready to take my position as Potions mistress here at Hogwarts. I have one week to prepare, and I'm sure if I need any advice, I can always owl Severus."

She turned her head to see if he would agree, and he nodded sadly *She forgives me, she still cares for me, but now I'm out of her life. Well, I said I'd pay whatever the cost. Exile isn't so bad.*

"Good-bye, Severus," she said after she stood up from the floor. "Remember to live and be happy."

She left the room, making made her way down to her room. She felt a huge weight had been lifted that she never realized was there. She didn't give a tinker's damn what people thought of her because she knew the truth. She knew she was a good person worth loving. Severus taught her that.

Do You Think It's Enough?

Chapter 9 of 10

Katherine and Severus work hard to rebuild their lives apart from one another.

A/N: This is the last chapter before the epilogue. I hope you all enjoy this chapter, there is a lot of changes, angst, and realizations that come about during this time, which covers a period of three years. Thanks again to my beta, MadBrilliant, and to all who have faithfully stuck with this story.

July, 2010

Severus Snape was enjoying his retirement in Italy. He loved the Rivera. He could relax in the sun and read for hours. After so many years in the dungeons, it was a pleasant change. He was sitting out on the balcony of his hotel suite with his scrapbook. He had kept up with Katherine's career. She had indeed overcome the disaster of her failed marriage and gained the respect and fame due her. After all, she was Britain's first Potions mistress in over 200 hundred years! Snape kept all the press clippings he could find and kept them in an album. Sometimes, like today, when he was lonely, he would sit and look through them. Her first published article and the reviews on the lecture circuit she went on last summer, he kept them all. She was, from what he had heard, a very talented orator, although he never had the fortitude to actually go and hear her speak. She had only stayed on at Hogwarts for that one year. The demand for her knowledge and abilities could not keep her contained behind the castle walls. She had won numerous awards for potions she had created, and the press loved her. She was bright, beautiful, and at the top of her profession. A celebrity. Severus would smugly drink to her successes as they came and was content that she was finding her way in the world. He reminded himself that it was important that she learn to live life without him being her safety net, but it was hard to accept because deep down he actually liked being her hero...although he would never admit it to himself.

And he missed her. She had been a good friend over the years. He wished her all the happiness and joy she could get. More importantly, he prayed she would find a kind and decent wizard who would treat her with the respect and admiration she deserved. He even kept clippings of her pairings with promising young wizards. There weren't many, only two or three over the past three years. And they were respectable wizards, not bad choices, but they never seemed to last long, a couple months at most. Perhaps they could not keep her interest or satisfy her need for stimulating conversation and the high priority she placed on her work. But she was so young, she *should* take care in deciding who would be worthy of her. He was confident after the debacle with Luddington, she would *never* fall for another bastard again! All in all, from what he heard through the academic grapevine, she was doing just fine by herself. And it chafed him for some reason.

He remembered as he turned the pages in his scrapbook of the trouble Luddington caused Katherine last summer. All her success, her cures for various diseases, and awards won caused the bastard to open up all the old wounds. He had given an interview in *The Daily Prophet* about their ill-fated marriage and his claim that she was a harlot.

June, 2009

"That son-of-a-bitch!" Snape swore as he read his morning paper. *Oh, if I were only in England, I would tear him limb from limb!*

He immediately went to pack up and depart for England. Paris was still calling him, and he was not done haunting the city, but Katherine had to be helped. He couldn't allow her to be maligned and deal with that tosspot by herself! She might have another breakdown!

As he furiously packed, an owl tapped on his window. He frowned and went to the window to open it. A fluffy little white owl hopped inside and offered her leg. Snape untied the scroll and tossed some toast to the little fluff ball. He knew it had to be from Katherine.

Severus,

Whatever you are planning, STOP! I have everything under control and do not need you to save me from my ex-rat bastard husband. Just stay on your trip, enjoy Paris, and continue reading the Prophet. I shall deal with him by myself!

Love,

Katherine

How she can understand me is downright scary!he thought. Fine, if that's what she wants, I'll back off, but she doesn't realize what a prick he is!

He spent a couple of days worrying and grouching to himself over it. He couldn't understand why she just wouldn't let him come there and kick that upstart's arse! He could finish him off in a minute! She doesn't need to be involved with this nastiness. *Obviously, she doesn't need me anymore*, he thought sadly. *She probably has another wizard taking care of her and protecting her. I should be happy, but I'm not!*

The following day there was a rebuttal from Katherine. It was on the front page! She flat out refused to dignify anything Luddington had said to malign her.

"My reputation as a Potions mistress speaks for itself. My colleagues and leaders in my field have the utmost respect and faith in my abilities and talents. That is the yardstick I wish to be judged by."

"Nonetheless, I do understand that there is an interest in my private and social life, due to my young age and also the fact I am the first Potions mistress in two hundred years. It continues to be a joy to give such pride to my country. So I take this all in stride. My personal life has never been anything but exemplarily and never have I acted in a way that supports the claims my ex-husband has made against my character. So I say to you, the Wizarding community, allow my actions to speak for themselves. I am and will always be proud to serve my country through my profession."

Thank you,

Katherine Hannover

Snape was impressed. She had taken on the gossip-mongers and held her own firmly with grace and poise. And what impressed the Potions master the most was that she did it all with no man by her side. Katherine was all grown up in every sense of the word. She didn't need him anymore to protect her...she didn't need any man anymore to protect her. Maybe that was a good thing. She owled him every once in a while to keep him informed on all her various successes. She kept her correspondence upbeat and happy and never once mentioned the hurtful part of their past. He had become less consistent with his own correspondence after the Luddington interview. He didn't want to complicate her life. She seemed to be fairing just fine by herself. It was time to really let her go. And it hurt...a lot.

October, 2007

Katherine was into the full swing of her first semester as Potions Professor at Hogwarts. It was hard, some days seemingly impossible to spend her days and nights in his space. These had been *his* chambers, *his* classroom, *his* desk, and *his* chair at the High Table. Every night she cried. She missed him. She missed his reassurance, the safety she felt that he would always be there to take care of everything. He had killed for her so she could be safe, she had his protective nature to thank for that, but she felt lost. She felt like a child in shoes far too large for her to fill. It was going to take time to make *this* job Katherine Hannover's. But who was Katherine without Severus? She sat at what was *her* desk now, and she could still smell his scent in the room. She laid her head on the desk and cried.

2nd Term, 2008

Life started to turn for Katherine. She was in high demand. She found working on her research to be extremely therapeutic. She was being sought after for articles she had written for various academic publications in her field. She also was starting to work on cures for various diseases. Some had been extraordinary. Some were only steps towards eradicating certain magical diseases. Nonetheless, Katherine was making a name for herself, and slowly she started to figure out whom she was.

She still felt his presence, even if her own scent had eradicated his. She finally wrote him a letter, telling him of her successes and challenges she faced as a first year teacher. He wrote back, his letters stiff and formal, but slowly as time passed, they became less so. Katherine longed for the day they would be able to resume the friendly banter they had enjoyed so much.

Minerva had cornered her around Easter Hols, and they had finally had a long chat about what she had seen in the Pensieve. There was a lot of anger that came out. So much that after she left Minerva's office, she went down and blew apart the storeroom. She had saved some things that had belonged to Severus, but he hadn't known what to do with them and as the new teacher she might have had a use for them, so they had stayed. She destroyed them all and got rid of the desk as well. She could not keep herself tied to the past. She started making small steps forward and developed friendships with wiser wizards and witches with whom she could share her trauma and pain. But by the end of the term, she knew she could no longer remain at Hogwarts. She put in her resignation and started to place herself out in the public spotlight. She still felt a great deal of anger for a quite a while until she met a very nice young wizard later that fall...

Present time August, 2010

He was packing up to leave Portofino for Rome. There were many things he had wanted to see the last time he had been there, but had decided not to spoil the experience by inhaling what the entire city had to offer in one go. He was almost finished when there was a knock on his door. He went over and opened the door. He was shocked!

There was Katherine. She was beautiful in her Muggle sundress. Her brown hair hung loose and free, and her eyes sparkled brightly. She looked different, freer, and happier.

"Hello, Severus." He was taken aback slightly by her voice. It was the voice of a woman confident in her meaning.

"Katherine, this is such a pleasure! What brings you to Portofino?" he asked slightly nervous.

"You, of course," she replied smoothly.

He stepped aside, and she entered his room. "It's a good thing I caught you in time! You're leaving?" she asked.

They sat in the sofa chairs across from each other.

"Yes, I'm going to Rome. There are some sights I wish to see... libraries and all that."

"You are quite the globetrotter these days, Severus," she mused.

"I am loving retirement. But I daresay, after a while I shall tire of shuttling myself hin and yon and settle somewhere," he said in a far-off voice.

"And where would that be?" she asked.

"Perhaps France, or Spain. I quite enjoy the Continent. The atmosphere, not to mention the climate, is far more cheerier than England or Scotland." He tried to analyze the situation he was in. *Why is she here?* he thought.

As if she had read his thoughts, she got to the point. "Severus, I miss you. I've missed you a lot these past three years. I admit the first year was hard. And I need to tell you that I hated you for a while. I had anger towards you and Minerva, but I was able with some help from older and wiser witches and wizards to place my life into a broader perspective, and I found myself able to forgive, although I will never forget, I can see you now with different eyes and appreciate you and our friendship more. Life has been everything we planned: the fame, the accolades, and the successes. But I've no one with which to share it. You were the one I always knew who would truly appreciate my accomplishments."

"What are you trying to say, Katherine?" he said darkly.

"I want to be with you." The expression on her face was simple and uncomplicated. It was clear she had no second thoughts or reservations.

"Impossible!" he spat as he jumped up from his chair. He went to the window. He couldn't believe this was happening.

She walked to his side. Her lips were quirked to one side. He snorted.

"What?" she snapped defensively.

He smiled at her as he gestured with his hand. "You...you do that thing with your lips when you think I'm wrong."

"I know you are wrong, Severus," she said in all sincerity...but also with her trademark smugness.

He looked at her in disgust and amazement all at once. "How can you even think of this? After everything that happened?" he said in an embarrassed whisper.

"It was a terrible thing that was forced upon us, Severus. I am 23 now. I know what I want in my life, and I know whom. You have been and still are my best friend. You have loved me more than anyone ever has. You can't tell me that after Marcus left me you didn't feel...*something* between us. In the hospital, you were so loving and caring. The way you stroked my hair, held my hand, and told me you believed in me. You stuck by my side when no one else would...not even my own parents! It kept me sane! And don't you dare tell me it was all guilt and pity!"

Snape swallowed thickly as he continued to stare out of the window. "No, I...I knew there was something when I found you on my bathroom floor that day. You had always been little Katherine, even when you were my apprentice. Because of what had happened, I had to keep you a child. I could never see you past that day. But when that bastard threw you away, I felt such rage, and I started to recognize you for the first time as a flesh and blood woman. Then when I saw you on my floor naked, it shook me to the core. You *were* a woman, and I wanted to be the one to *care* for you. But I don't want this, Katherine. Our history, for the most part, is a good one, but we can't erase what happened."

She leaned into him. "One day that neither of us wanted to happen. Does that eradicate all the good times? During these past three years, I realized something. I have loved you since I became your apprentice. But I thought love was only lust. That was what I thought I felt for Marcus Luddington, but never the simple joy of just *being* with a person with whom you can feel at home. I feel that with you. *You* are my home, and I want to come home!"

He finally turned and looked into her honest eyes. "Katherine, what you say is a foundational part of a successful marriage, but lust, desire, and passion should also be a component...an important component of a good marriage. You have said nothing about feeling that way for me." He looked away from her. *This is too painful to handle. I don't want to hear her tell me she can't think of me that way! End this now, Severus!* he ordered himself.

"I don't know if I could ever be sexual with you, Katherine," Snape admitted. "I will admit I have imagined it, since we parted, but the guilt I feel is so strong. I just don't know, and if it doesn't work out, we'll have lost something very precious. And I care too much for you to risk it." He looked deeply into her eyes for understanding.

She leaned further into him and wrapped her arms around his shoulders as she stood in front of him. "No, it won't fade away. Give me a chance. I want to stay. I can't imagine entrusting myself to anyone but you. We can take all the time in the world, Severus. I have thought of us too. Even before I knew what I know now, I remember working with you in the lab, and I could smell your scent behind me when you were so close. I wanted to kiss you so badly." He slowly wrapped his arms around her waist, and she slid her arms around his neck, sliding her fingers through his hair as she continued talking.

"I think that was the reason I never could *be* with Marcus before the wedding. All those years, I couldn't imagine *being* with him in reality, only in my mind. Then, when I would see him, I couldn't do it," she explained. "I always pushed him away. But when I was *with* you, I *wanted* to kiss you and hold you. That has never changed. There hasn't been anyone, Severus. No one. Believe me, I've tried to have lovers! I really tried, but I couldn't do it. Your face, your voice, your hands, everything about you haunted me. *I love you*" She leaned farther in and stood up on her toes and slowly found her way to his lips. She just barely grazed them with her half-open mouth. He wrapped his arms around her as he responded to her kiss. He hungrily tasted her lips. She moaned and opened her mouth to invite him in. He accepted her invitation and responded to the woman standing before him. He couldn't believe what he was experiencing! She was kissing him as if she would die if she couldn't taste him. He flicked his tongue against her lips, and she responded by capturing his lower lip between her own lips. It was pure ecstasy.

When they broke apart, he swallowed hard, and the familiar tears sprang in his eyes when he looked into her bright eyes. She was happy! And that was all he ever wanted. *Katherine is happy.* She wrapped her arms around his head as he lifted her from the ground; his arms secure around her waist as they passionately kissed. They finally broke apart, and she said, "We'll take our time. Small steps, agreed?" she asked shyly.

"I will do whatever makes you happy. That is all I ever wanted: Katherine happy." He put her down so they could talk.

She smiled brightly and hugged him hard. "You make me happy, and you make me feel loved, and like I'm home just you being near me. I love you, Severus."

"I love you too, Katherine. I've missed you so much! I missed talking with you..."

September, 2005

"Severus...goodness, will I ever be able to say that without it sounding strange?"

Snape smirked at her.

Katherine smiled shyly at her mentor. She really had come to deeply care for him since she started her apprenticeship. Being an adult and no longer a student changed so much in her mind! They were equals as adults, although he still was her mentor. Whenever she was around him, she felt so safe and secure. She could relax and feel so cozy like she could let her guard down and be herself. But she knew she loved Marcus. *But why when I'm with Marcus can't I be physical with him?* she thought. It was starting to bother her.

Whenever she thought of Severus: he was her friend, her mentor... but lately, when she was close to him, images of grabbing him and snogging him senseless were all she could think about! Every day she was growing more attracted to him, and she couldn't understand why. *It's just that we are such good friends. We respect each other; maybe I have a complex for older men, or maybe it's because he is my mentor,* she told herself. But it never went away. Day after day, they would be talking about a potion or some latest development in their field and her eyes would start to gloss over, and she would imagine what it would be like to feel him pressed hard against her, how his erection would feel if he pressed it against her back? Would she even be attractive enough to get such a reaction from him? Would he moan? Would he whisper her name? Whenever he happened to stand close to her, observing her work, she felt like she would melt. He was so intelligent and self-assured. He *listened* to her and *respected* her. Marcus could care less about her work and research! By the end of the workday, her knickers were saturated and an ache so deep inside her throbbed so badly she didn't know how to get it to stop. It was torture. Whenever he stood behind her to watch her work, she wanted him to wrap his arms around her, pull up the front of her skirt, dip his hand into her knickers, and run his fingers across her clit until she cried out his name. *I don't even feel like this when Marcus and I snog! And I get this randy by Severus just standing behind me?* Every day after her work was done, she would race to her room and find her own release, but it was never enough, not even close...

The first year of her apprenticeship was excruciating. By the end of the year, she had allowed things to progress with Marcus physically because of her secret sexual frustration for Severus to the point that her boyfriend had gotten through her blouse and had released her breast from her bra. In her mind, she envisioned she was on Severus' lap and it was he that was doing these things to her. She snapped back into reality and stopped things progressing any further. That was it. A decision had to be made. Marcus Luddington was her future, and Severus Snape was just a friend. After all, she had invested years into Marcus and Severus, well...it was insane to think he would want to marry after being her teacher and then her mentor, not to mention he'd been alone for so many years! So she forced the door closed. But every now and again when he would stand near her in the lab and she would feel his strength next to her, the old want would rise in her. *Just one kiss...*

Epilogue - Take Hold of my Hand

Chapter 10 of 10

Here is where we leave Katherine and Severus. Have they found contentment at last?

A/N: Here is the end of Severus and Katherine's story. I thank all of you who read and especially to those who reviewed. A special thanks, love, and chocolate to my wonderful beta, MadBrilliant!

August, 2016

Katherine sat on the beach in Miami. She was enjoying her vacation immensely. The water was soothing, and the beach was perfect for napping. She was relaxing under her sun umbrella when a little black-haired boy jumped out at her.

"Oh!" she squealed and feigned surprise.

The little boy laughed as he threw back his head. "I scared you, Mummy!"

"You sure did, you little devil!" she teased. "Now where's your Daddy?"

"He's coming!" he said, pointing

Severus walked to them with their one-year-old daughter, Minerva, wrapped in his arms.

He stood in his bathing suit, all tanned from the sun. No longer the bat of the dungeons, he was a different man altogether, except for his fading Dark Mark and the battle scars on his chest and back. He handed baby Minerva to his wife, crossed his arms, and said sternly to their son, "Brian Albus, have you been tormenting your mother?"

"Just a little, Daddy," he smirked.

He eagle-eyed his three-year-old son and knelt down beside his wife and kissed her.

"Having fun?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, but I'm going to hate going back to England after this! Alas! The two top Potions makers of Europe cannot escape their destiny! But wherever you are, that's where I want to be," she said with a bright smile on her face.

"You still haven't changed your mind after six years?" he asked suspiciously.

Katherine regarded her husband. It hadn't always been easy, but they sure had some fun times over the years! Right after she surprised him in Portofino, they immediately married and embarked together on Severus' Grand Tour. They enjoyed visiting all wonders of the Continent before heading to America to visit there. She remembered their wedding night and blushed.

Severus knew that blush and remembered of how she had shyly whispered in his ear of her secret fantasy on their wedding night she had when she was his apprentice of him standing behind her in the lab. He had been more than happy to offer make that fantasy a reality.

He cornered her in their hotel suite and pressed into her from behind as she stood facing the massive desk. He gathered her hair to one side as he kissed her neck and inhaled her perfume. She felt his erection pressing urgently into her back. He slowly brought his arms around her waist and gathered up the front of her white satin wedding gown as she shifted her legs apart to accommodate him. She turned her head and kissed him passionately as he dipped his hand into her knickers and deftly stroked her. She was having a difficult time kissing and breathing, but he would not release her mouth from his. Finally she broke from him, panting and gasping, "Oh, Severus, oooohh! God, Severus!"

She tried to push his hand away, to signal she was finished but he would not let her go. He slowed his movements and brought her mouth to his again. Her face was hot and flushed, whether from her release or embarrassment, he knew not. He slowly slid his other hand into the top of her bodice until he found an already hardened nipple. She moaned and whimpered as he laughed wickedly into her mouth. He continued to stroke her gently, finally turning her slowly around and leaning her carefully back onto the desk, never breaking eye contact with her. He then gently lowered her knickers and peeled off her nylon stockings as he knelt down to love her more intimately.

His mouth descended onto her, and she relaxed on the desk, spreading her legs as far as she was able as her husband nuzzled, teased, and stroked her sweet nether lips with his fingers, nose, tongue and mouth, bringing her to orgasm after orgasm until she could no longer stay awake from pleasure and exhaustion. Severus stood and admired his handiwork. Her beautiful white dress was pushed up to her stomach, her creamy, naked legs and feet gracefully draped apart, with her core glistening wet from his ministrations. Her arms were laid back in a posture of surrender, her hands near her sweet, flushed face. She was content in her sleep, and a small smile played on the corners of her lips. Her light brown hair was fanned out beautifully. He definitely would have to keep this image in a Pensieve. There had never been before or ever would be a more beautiful and innocent woman ever created, he was positive. He brushed a hand lightly across her wet mound, caressing her curls and considered his bride. She would always be pure to him; no matter how many years passed; no matter how many times she would allow him the honor of being inside her; she would never change. This was the Katherine he would remember and love: the lovely, graceful, woman who chose him to love.

He gently closed her legs and picked her up to carry her to their bed. His time would arrive when she was ready. Until then, he had more to lavish on her, more pleasures and intimacies to indulge her senses. Then when she asked, he would take her oh, so slowly and delicately. After all, he thought, she deserves it.

Being equals in all things, they slowly experienced togetherness and an intimacy that grew to be very gratifying over time. Sure, there were sad times and tears over the past damage, but now, six years and two kids later, things kept getting better and better. The love and friendship they shared created a trust that was more precious than anything in the world to them.

He finished his remembering. She quirked her lips to the side of her face, knowing how his mind worked and said, "You are intolerable, Severus Snape! You know very well, I will never change my mind about you. You are my home." She kissed him deeply and passionately, pulling her hat down to shield them from the children. It didn't matter; they knew they were kissing, and soon her hat was snatched away by their son as he ran away from their reach.

They laughed with their arms encircling each another.

Til my body is dust

til my soul is no more

I will love you, love you

Til the sun starts to cry

and the moon turns to rust

I will love you, love you

But I need to know

will you stay for all time

forever and a day

Then I'll give my heart

'til the end of all time

forever and a day

And I need to know

will you stay for all time

forever and a day

Then I'll give my heart

'til the end of all time

forever and a day

'Til the storms fill my eyes

and we touch the last time

I will love you, love you

I will love you, love you....

I will love you, love you, love you...

I Will Love You, by Fisher

A/N: Here is a link in case you want listen to the song above. I listened to it over and over while writing this epilogue.

<http://www.fishertheband.com/#>

Just go to where it says Videos and click on "I Will Love You."