

Manifest Destiny

by odogoddess

Snape's first Valentine.

Chapter 1 of 1

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He ran on the cobbled streets despite the slick ice.

Threadbare trousers were all Severus had, so running was the only way to keep warm. Thankfully, he wore two pairs of socks, and although both pairs had holes, the holes were in different places and sufficient to keep his feet warm in his scuffed boots. The boots, at least, were sound and not too big. His mother had obtained them for a pittance at the Muggle church bring and buy that his father always insisted she go to, even though they had nothing to bring.

Severus was hurrying to their meeting place, his and Lily's. She had asked him yesterday, to meet her this evening since her family was visiting her grandparents during the day. He could not be home late without hearing about it from his father, but he would do anything for Lily if she asked, so his feet flew as only a ten year old boy's feet could.

He was wheezing from the cold, damp air, leaning against a tree at their meeting place and was hoping it would not start to snow before he had to head back, when a light touch to his elbow made him jump. This was followed immediately by a giggle he recognised and he struggled to relax.

"Hi, Sev." She smiled at him and he could feel his cold face warm.

"I'm here," he pointed out, then winced at sounding like a berk.

"I'm glad." Her words soothed his inner assessment.

He waited, but she just stood there, uncertainly.

"Well, what did you want to see me for?"

She studied him. "Don't you have anything to say?"

He frowned. "Like what?"

"Don't you know what day it is?"

Severus's frown increased. "Saturday."

"Severus. Haven't you heard of St. Valentine?"

He relaxed. This was a Muggle thing. He'd heard one of the neighbours mention it last week, but thought it was church related.

He knew of some saints that his mother and, less often, his father told him about. St. Mungo. St. Bertha the weird. St. Nicholas, who brought lumps of coal to bad boys, and left nuts and choccy biscuits in their shoes if they were good, and an orange if they were especially good. Lumps of coal in the dead of winter had always sounded far more

practical to the shivering Severus, who used the heels of his shoes to crack the nuts he got and shared with his mother before their meagre fire, but he did not complain. There were not many days that his father could be relied on to be peaceable.

"Mrs. Humboldt said she was going to get flowers to take to her mother's grave for St. Valentine's, but I didn't know what day it was," he admitted.

"Oh." She seemed crestfallen and Severus wracked his brains to think of something else to say. It was cold, he was acutely aware of the time, and he did not want Lily to leave thinking he was a total pillock.

"W-was there something else about St. Valentine's," he finally asked quietly, hating to admit his ignorance.

She smiled again, and he had to swallow down the sudden tightness in his throat.

"At my school we make Valentine's. You cut out paper hearts and colour them and give them to your friends."

Severus nodded, hoping she hadn't expected anything from him. He did not go to Muggle school, and his mother would cuff him a good one if he borrowed paper, much less used one of her good knives to cut it. Paper dulled knives, he knew. He had nothing to colour anything with, either, aside from some hoarded pieces of broken pottery he carried with him to draw on pavement or the concrete pilings near the crossover bridge.

She hesitated, then stuck a hand in her pocket and pulled out a somewhat wrinkled bit of rolled up brown paper.

"This is for you."

He took it from her outstretched hand and opened it. It was shaped like a heart, as she had said, and it was coloured with potted paint, a thick gummy red that still was tacky in the creases. The middle of it bore more thick potted paint in black block letters that read simply: SEV

He blinked rather stupidly at it for long moments, then looked back up to Lily. She stared at him anxiously.

"Th-thank you," he managed.

She smiled, but he felt a sinking feeling in his gut. He had not expected this, and had nothing to give her in return. Would she want a piece of his pottery or was that too meagre an exchange? He had not made it after all, merely nicked it off Mrs. Harris's front stoop after her son broke the potted plant she had there.

He could try to find a bit of paper and make her one, too, but it wouldn't be now, and it might not mean the same thing some other day. He also did not know where he could find something to colour a Valentine with, and never having received one before, he did not know what colours, aside from red, would be appropriate. Perhaps red was for boys and green was for girls or some such? He did not want to seem a fool by asking.

Maybe, he thought, he could show her his most prized possession – a dessicated grindylow he'd discovered. It was only a baby and not useful for anything, but it was quite plummy. His stupid Muggle father had declared it was just a tiny squid some restaurant had probably thrown out, but he and his mother knew better.

Severus did not want to give it to her, though, and again, he had not made it himself. He had only found it, scrounged up an old jar and a bit of tin foil and put it in there to display it to best advantage. It was also under his bed, and he did not want to take her into his house. He had shown her where he lived once, when she had asked, but they had not gone in, and he could not bear the thought of his father possibly yelling at him or, worse, at her.

"It's all right, Sev. You didn't know," she said now, interrupting his frantic thoughts.

He nodded miserably, clutching the paper in his now sweaty hand.

"I'd better go," he mumbled unhappily. "My parents want me home before full dark."

She nodded, still smiling at him, and he felt the sinking sensation move to his chest, which suddenly seemed very tight and heavy. He swallowed hard, suffering the sudden, mortifying feeling that he was going to burst into tears.

He clenched his hands tighter then, forcing the feeling away, feeling a rush of warmth and tingling energy that surged into his hand and made him gasp with the heat of it. Lily was looking at him strangely. Severus swallowed.

He felt something in his hand now, no longer the sweat-dampened paper he had held, and lifting it up before her, he opened his fist.

One large and perfect lily lay on his palm, white as snow with a stippling of tiny red hearts in the middle near the pistil.

He stared at it, wide-eyed. His few bursts of magic were rarely so effective.

Lily stared at it, entranced. Then she shoved him a little.

"You said you didn't know about the day. I *believed* you! You liar," she said in a teasing, and delighted, tone.

Severus's mouth fell open. What was best? Tell the truth or accept her version of events?

She plucked the lily from his palm and studied it, rapt.

"How were you able to paint such tiny hearts on it?"

He smiled weakly now, feeling faint with relief and still stunned from his manifest magic.

"Secret," he finally managed to say.

"It's beautiful, Severus. I love it!" She beamed at him and he drew in a shaky breath.

Then she hugged him and he froze.

"Thank you," she whispered into his old wrapping coat, then released his nerveless form to run off in the direction of her house.

He watched her go down the street until she turned a corner and he could no longer see her.

Then he lifted his hand and looked at it.

The Valentine she had given him was gone... save for a trace of red paint etched into his heart line.

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