

Yule be Sorry

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The Shrieking Shack is where Albus and Scorpius always seem to deal with life's little crises. No matter how inane.

Episode 3, The AI & Scorp Show

Chapter 1 of 1

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(Third in a continuing series--starting with 'Do Not Enter' and 'Elixir'--about Albus Severus and Scorpius. WARNING: Fluffy angst!)

Disclaimer: I don't own them, and honestly, I'd just as soon they went to play in someone else's imagination so I could finish the laundry. Run along, lads... Any day now...

The sound of the trap door creaking prompted him to turn invisible, cursing silently at the interruption.

Is it not enough that they've made this place into their own private little clubhouse on Hogsmeade weekends for over a year? Must they sully it with their inanity on weeknights as well? Is it too much to ask of this pitiful excuse for an afterlife, that I should have a little solitude?

Snape silently bemoaned his lack of privacy while remaining in the same room as the boys. He adroitly ignored the inherent contradiction in doing so.

"I still don't know why you want to come all the way here to do homework," Scorpius complained as he heaved his book bag out of the hatch in the floor.

"I like revising someplace really quiet," Albus insisted. He propped up a rickety table with an empty Fizzing Whizzbee tin from one of their previous visits and Banished the dust from its surface.

"The library is quiet. Old Pince sees to that." Despite his complaint, Scorpius levitated the sofa (long since cleared of any potentially hostile fauna) a little closer to the table so that they could study in greater comfort.

"Madam Pince gives me the creeps. It's like she's old enough to have been Salazar's girlfriend," Albus said with an exaggerated shudder.

Scorpius snickered, and resolved to keep the rim of his inkbottle cleaner. It seemed to make a slight snorting sound when he twisted the lid off. "Well, there is that. Slughorn's older, though."

"Yeah. Older than dirt."

"Older than rocks."

"And twice as lumpy." They both laughed.

"Anyhow, it feels wrong, bringing schoolwork **here**. This is where we get away from all that shite. You're tainting the place."

"Tainting? The place got 'tainted' when you tried to brew an invisibility potion and ended up making the very expensive equivalent of a dungbomb," Al retorted.

This earned him a very dark scowl. "That was all your fault. I told you not to add the newt livers until closer to the end."

"For the millionth time, I DIDN'T add the newt livers too soon! They were sitting on the cutting board and the whole thing just fell into the cauldron all of a sudden!" Albus scowled back, exasperated. "Anyhow, we could've saved a lot of trouble if you'd just let me get the Invisibility Cloak from James in the first place."

"I didn't think it was possible. James is...is..."

"Mum says he's Uncle Fred reborn."

"How did you get him to turn it over, anyway?"

"If I told you, it would get out...and I'd have to give it back."

"Heh. You're an asset to Slytherin, my friend."

"Whereas you are a gossipy little..."

"Shut it."

They settled down with books and parchment, working quietly for several minutes. Al had the feeling that even the lonely and disgruntled ghost (whose existence Scorpius steadfastly denied) grudgingly approved of their current studious pursuits.

"Anytime you want to tell me the **real** reason we're studying here, go right ahead."

"I told you. I like the quiet."

"Been there, done that, bought the hat charmed to flash the repeating message."

"Correction: I would enjoy the quiet, if someone would stop talking."

"Whatever."

"Besides, it's *private* here."

"Hmm... getting closer. You know you'll feel better if you tell."

"You are the nosiest git in history."

"I'll keep that in mind in for the next edition of *Hogwarts: A History*."

Al rolled his eyes.

Scorpius was just getting warmed up. "Or maybe journalism will become a respectable career option and it will turn out to be one of my many useful qualities. So, in the interest of practicing for my future vocation... what's the story?"

"God, even trains stop sometimes."

"Go ahead. Blame me for being a concerned friend."

"If I tell you, will you belt it so we can finish our homework?"

"Well, if you insist..."

"It's to get away from all those idiots nattering on about the ball! Are you happy now?"

"Blissful."

Albus sighed and reapplied himself to his Charms text. Scorpius made an effort to do likewise... for almost two solid minutes.

"You know that Delilah Perkins wants you to ask her to the Yule Ball."

Albus briefly considered throwing his book at Scorpius, but ultimately opted to drop it on the table and bury his face in his hands.

"Oh, no."

"Oh, yes."

"Well, I don't want to ask her."

"Why not?"

"She's... she's..." He shoved his book aside and applied his full attention to opening his inkbottle.

"She's smart."

"I know."

"She's got nice eyes."

"I know."

"You're always partners in Herbology, and she's not weird or anything."

"I KNOW!"

"So, why don't you ask her?"

"I dunno, it would be like... like taking my cousin to the ball."

Scorpius laughed, tried to make it sound like a cough, and failed miserably. Al glared at him. "You're not related."

"Yeah, but she looks a lot like Rose. Acts a little like her, too."

"Not that much. At least Delilah doesn't look at everyone who's not a Ravenclaw like they were recently removed from the bottom of her shoe."

"Hmm." Al frowned at his Charms essay in pretended concentration and willed Scorpius to shut up.

By Scorpius' expression, it was plain that he wasn't taking the hint. Al reflected that he would have to teach Scorpius to play poker...he could make a killing, watching that face broadcast the identity of every card. "Better her than Annabelle McLaggen."

"No. Bloody. WAY. That was a YEAR ago, I can't believe you'd mention..."

"You should be flattered. How many third years get asked out by a fifth year?"

"Flattered?! I was almost FLATTENED." It was not helping Albus' mood that he had a sneaking suspicion that the ghost was silently laughing his arse off somewhere nearby. He scribbled furiously, hoping to get a few inches finished before the next wave hit the shore, so to speak.

"She does take after her mother." It was hopeless. Scorpius' giggling was completely out of control. "I've seen photos of Millicent Bulstrode when she was at school."

"Remember this? Charms essay, due tomorrow?" Al waved the piece of parchment in Scorpius' face.

He might as well have tried to stop an Erumpent with a wall of jelly.

"See, Delilah is nice, **and** she doesn't just want you to take her because you look like..."

That was the last straw. The only thing worse than bringing up Annabelle McLaggen was to be reminded that she'd only asked him because of his resemblance to his dad...and didn't mind saying so. "Look, if YOU like her so much, why don't YOU ask her to the ball?"

"What?" Scorpius' face turned several unflattering shades of pink. "I don't need your rejects, Potter! Don't do me any favors!"

Al sucked in a breath with a sharp hiss. "Oh, so it's 'Potter' now, is it? Well, **Malfoy**, maybe I just don't feel like GOING to the damn ball! Did you ever think of that?"

"You can't not go to the ball! If you don't go, James will be all over my arse 'cause of Lily!" Scorpius made the transition from pink to ice-white in about two seconds flat. It was rather alarming.

"What are you on about? Wait... you aren't... you didn't..." Al was having a hell of a time parsing Scorpius' sentences, but the facial expressions were almost as good as subtitles. Especially when his hair was practically standing on end from fear, making him resemble a human dandelion.

"She asked me!" Scorpius squeaked. "I mean, she can't go unless someone in an upper year takes her, and... I said OK." When Al continued to regard his friend as if he was showing signs of being an heir to the Hairy McBoons, he babbled on. "It was easier than really asking...asking a real girl! They're... they're kinda scary."

This earned Scorpius the Patented Potter 'Damn, you're strange' Expression. "You know, *she* // get scary pretty fast, if you say any of that 'real girl' stuff around her."

"Uh... right."

They regarded each other with complete mutual bemusement.

"So... all this was so that you could take my little sister to the ball without getting your arse kicked by my big brother."

"Well, sort of. That, and Delilah bribed me with a whole box of Chocolate Covered Toffee Tree Leaves to drop the hint."

Albus blinked. "A...a whole **box**? Just to drop the hint?"

"Yeah." Scorpius blushed. Albus blushed more.

"Oh."

"So..."

"I'll ask her, okay?"

"Thanks."

"You're welcome, you git." Albus sighed. "I need more friends who aren't in Slytherin."

This earned him a cool glance that was a decent parody of Scorpius' 'Slytherins Rule' expression, with the exception of the laughing eyes. "Whatever for?"

"Peace of mind."

"Pfft." Scorpius eyed Albus' parchment, surreptitiously comparing how many inches worth of the assignment they had each completed. He grinned to notice that, once again, Al's attention to detail failed to keep pace with his raw academic ability. "I know your chicken-scratch is pretty distinctive...but don't you think you should hedge your bets by actually writing your name on the parchment?"

Al wrinkled his nose at his friend in annoyance, but remedied the omission.

The candles in the room suddenly started to flicker, and both boys reached for their wands in case they needed to cast 'Lumos.'

Scorpius contemplated his friend's name with something like approval and envy. "You have the coolest initials for a Slytherin, *ever*."

"Hah. Except when the 'smart A.S.P.' jokes start up."

"Better to be a smart asp than a dumb asp." The giggling was threatening to start again.

"Shut up. Just shut up." Al was fighting a grin manfully.

"It could've been worse. Your Dad could've named you Severus Albus."

"How do you always manage to get lost between 'shut' and 'up?'"

They were distracted for a moment as the candles flickered, the room stirring with an irregular draught. Al's candle went out altogether, and he concentrated on re-lighting it while Scorpius concentrated on bothering his friend.

"Guess I didn't leave a trail of Chocolate Toffee Leaves. Although, I could." Scorpius was lost in his own hilarity. "*She* //ikes you."

Albus' flopped forward dramatically on the table. His face landed precisely on the still-damp final line of his essay, leaving a faint, backwards imprint thereof just about his right eyebrow. "I'm begging you, stop. A whole box?"

"Stop fishing for compliments." Scorpius smirked. "You've got..." he made a gesture at his own eyebrow.

Albus frowned and rubbed at his head, grimacing at the ink that transferred to his fingers. "Thanks...you great pillock. And I wasn't fishing, I was going to ask you for some toffee leaves."

"All right, wanker."

Scorpius' attempt at breezy nonchalance was spoiled by his unthinkingly mangling his quill. Al sighed.

"I'm okay with it, Scorp."

"You're sure?"

"Sure. I mean, you and Lily are friends. It's just so she can go to the ball."

Scorpius gave a sigh of relief.

Al gave him a shrewd look out of the corner of his eye. "And besides... unlike James,I know exactly where you sleep."

"Right."

An hour after seeing the boys to the end of the tunnel, Snape floated from room to room, dazed.

I... I read that wrong.

I heard that wrong.

But he hadn't, and he couldn't convince himself otherwise.

"Why, Potter?"

FIN

Thank you, peppermint, for giving the lads the once over before I sent them out in public!