

A Touchy Subject

by veradee

Severus Snape learns how (un)pleasant it can be to deviate from one's usual way of dressing.

A Touchy Subject

Chapter 1 of 1

Severus Snape learns how (un)pleasant it can be to deviate from one's usual way of dressing.

Disclaimer: The characters in this fan fiction are copyrighted by J K Rowling, but this specific story is entirely mine. It was written for the Fabric of Time Challenge at the LJ community colourful_bat. The prompts were 11 p.m. and cashmere.

Many thanks go to harrietvane for beta-reading and introducing me to some of the finer intricacies of the English language.

The air in the kitchen of number twelve, Grimmauld Place was heated. This happened to be the case whenever the members of the Order of the Phoenix met at their Headquarters. The gloomy kitchen, although quite large, was just too small to comfortably host all of them, and the long, fierce discussions about how one should defeat Voldemort added fuel, as did the tiny window, which could be cracked open only.

But the main reason for this mid-August night's heated atmosphere was Severus Snape. This alone wasn't surprising either because his tendency to make acerbic remarks often caused people to go up the wall. This time, though, Snape was unusually quiet, and the longer the meeting lasted, the quieter he became.

The reason why he caused the room temperature to rise steadily was rather mundane. It was because he had for once foregone wearing his customary robes. Instead, he was clad in Muggle clothes: a pair of black trousers and a black cashmere jumper to be exact.

This morning, when he had decided to wear the jumper, he couldn't have anticipated what would be happening later in the kitchen of Grimmauld Place. If he had anticipated it, he would have dressed as he did every day.

However, if he had done so, the female members of the Order would have been very disappointed. Not that any of them would have known what they had missed out on. If one had asked them before this meeting whether they could ever imagine being attracted to Severus Snape, they would certainly have denied it, but now they were obviously enjoying this new side (or perhaps sight would be more correct) of their comrade very much.

It was a rare and truth be told not too unpleasant sight. Nymphadora Tonks, who was sitting close to the door, had to admit this, but nevertheless she thought that the other women were slightly exaggerating, not to mention behaving in a very embarrassing way.

All of the Order members were huddled together around the kitchen table. Empty plates sat in front of them, and in the middle of the table there were bowls with the remains of a stew.

Snape, as was his custom, sat in the right corner below the window. Usually, everyone remained at arm's length from where he sat, but today Emmeline Vance and Hestia Jones couldn't sit close enough to him. First, they had only stolen glances at him, but by now they were taking turns at seemingly accidentally brushing against his arm, and in between they threw angry looks at each other.

Snape was truly annoyed. It wasn't that he generally minded being an object of female attraction, but at least in company he preferred subtlety over bluntness. Apart from that, the wrong women suddenly were attracted to him. Hestia, whose black hair was in a worse disarray than Miss Granger's could ever be; Emmeline, who could never be seen without her smelly, old shawl; and also Molly Weasley, who had squeezed her plump body in a robe that was one size too small. There was only one woman in the room he might be interested in, but so far she didn't seem to show any interest in him.

"It's too early," Albus Dumbledore, the Head of the Order, said, trying to end a discussion that already had been going on for too long. "We don't know yet what Voldemort's plans are. If we move now, we might make things worse. We have to be patient and wait until Severus can gather more information."

Mad-Eye Moody opened his mouth to object, but was interrupted by Molly.

"Another helping, Severus?" She reached across the table to take Snape's plate. Her voice was sweet and her smile bright, which made Hestia growl while Snape had to suppress a shudder. He shook his head, and Molly sank down on her chair again.

There was a moment of silence before Remus Lupin began to explain why he thought that Dumbledore was right, but only the men listened to him. Molly pondered how to make Severus take proper notice of her; Hestia, her usually pink cheeks a deep red, wondered whether it would be too daring of her if she laid her hand on Snape's thigh; and Emmeline imagined even more intimate actions.

Tonks watched the three women with an amused smile on her lips. Then she had a look at Snape. Apart from the fact that he wore a jumper, he looked like he always did. His black hair was lank, his nose hooked, and as usual he looked gaunt. Inconspicuously, as it befitted an Auror, Tonks inspected him more closely. His shoulders looked rather slender, and his arms seemed to be lightly muscled. She came to the conclusion that perhaps he didn't look gaunt but sinewy.

Minerva McGonagall also didn't concentrate on Lupin's words. She felt as if she had never seen Severus Snape before, although he had been first her pupil and now her colleague for many years. She couldn't take her eyes off him, admiring his broad shoulders, his well-defined chest and his chiselled features. And had his hair always been so shiny?

Minerva caught Snape's eyes, which pierced into hers, but she didn't give in. She knew the tactics he used to intimidate people, and they didn't work with her. Instead, she licked her lips.

Snape, who at first had registered her behaviour with incredulity, was repulsed. Abruptly, he averted his gaze and turned to his left, which brought him into contact with Emmeline. The stately witch instantly took the opportunity and grabbed his arm, placing her head against his shoulder. Snape went rigid. He pushed back from the table, shaking himself so that Emmeline had to release him.

His chair screeched as it scraped along the floor, and Moody, who had just begun to explain why both Dumbledore and Lupin were wrong, stopped mid-sentence.

Everyone now looked at Snape as he got up and, moving between the chairs and the wall, walked towards the door. Just when he was about to pass behind Arabella Figg's chair, the old witch whirled around and flung herself at him, burying her face in his cashmere jumper. Snape reeled back, but Arabella didn't unhand him. She only released him when he snarled in his most threatening tone, "Let go of me, woman."

Her wrinkled face went red, and with a low, "I'm sorry," she sat down again. Snape visibly gritted his teeth before he returned to his chair as well.

This turned out to be the moment of revelation for almost everyone in the kitchen.

The women looked around, trying to figure out whether they had been as obvious in their admiration for Snape as Arabella had been, and they were horrified to realise that they all lusted after Snape.

No, actually it looked as if one woman was quite unaffected by Snape's new and improved outer appearance. Now that the other women thought about it, Tonks had remained remarkably calm throughout the meeting. She had only upended her teacup twice, broken only one of her pencils that she used to take notes with, and hadn't even stumbled when she had popped out to the loo earlier.

But none of the witches bothered wondering for more than a second about why Tonks was so unaffected because, obviously, it meant having one rival less for winning Snape's attention. They were assured in their opinion when they began to compete even more for that attention while Tonks just sat back, twiddled with her pencils, and enjoyed the show.

But the people in the kitchen who knew Tonks much better realised that the women were mistaken. Kingsley Shacklebolt, Tonks's fellow Auror, recognised the signs at once. Tonks was on a trail, and like a Niffler she wouldn't stop until she had got hold of her treasure.

And Minerva remembered that her former pupil, who often appeared very bumbling, could also be very determined. Nonetheless, Minerva didn't feel threatened by the young woman. She was convinced that she could offer any man much more than Tonks could.

But Minerva's optimistic mood waned when her eyes wandered from Tonks to Snape. While Snape had spent the entire meeting shooting angry glances at everyone and flinching whenever a woman touched or addressed him, he now calmly assessed Tonks. And Minerva knew that, when Snape felt that someone was worthy to be assessed, he had already made his decision. Defeated, Minerva leant back in her chair, but she was unable to not continue staring at Snape, who in turn stared at Tonks.

Tonks herself did her best in order not to show how excited she was to realise that Snape returned her interest. With huge determination, she managed to prevent her hair from taking on a darker shade, which it was wont to do whenever she got aroused.

With the exception of Shacklebolt, only two other men had caught on about what had just happened between Snape and Tonks, and both of them were furious. Sirius Black not only felt a certain protectiveness for his cousin Nymphadora; he also believed that Snape was the most horrible person that had ever lived and therefore was unworthy of her attention. The second man was Lupin. Lately, he had realised himself how lovely Tonks was, and he had been determined to woo her when the time would be right. Now it seemed that he might have waited for too long.

In contrast to Black and Lupin, Snape felt something like elatedness for the first time since he had entered Grimmauld Place that day. He would never betray his Lily by falling in love with another woman, but once in a while he needed more than to relieve tension by using his own hand. Then he needed someone to feel close to, albeit only for a few hours. Not that he would ever admit it, but it had been quite a while since he had spent the night with a woman.

And Tonks was exactly who he had hoped for. She was young, lithe and enthusiastic, and he was sure they would complement each other well in bed. He had never slept with a former pupil before, but it was already four years ago that she had left Hogwarts. Therefore, he felt confident that he would be up to it when the time came.

As Snape wasn't too keen on all the Order members knowing about what he and Tonks would be engaged in later, he cast one last glance at Tonks, who gave him the tiniest of smiles in return before she averted her eyes as well. Perhaps not everyone had caught on yet what was going on, he thought.

Only a few seconds later, Snape's thoughts were confirmed by Hestia and Emmeline, and he realised too late that the prospect of having sex had momentarily let him forget what this meant. Having retreated when he had risen, the two women were now closing in on him again. Emmeline stroked his left arm, and Hestia leant in to whisper into his ear to ask whether he wanted another beer. It took all his willpower to decline in a calm voice while simultaneously freeing his arm.

This finally told both of them that Snape just wasn't interested, and they suddenly were both very interested in their empty plates before them. But Snape couldn't relax just yet because there was one woman who was still entranced by his jumper and his body underneath.

Molly, sitting directly opposite of him, had completely forgotten about her surroundings. Slipping her hand into her robe, she adjusted her full breasts and gave him an unmistakable look.

Arabella coughed loudly. It was bad enough that she had embarrassed herself, but at least she had no family that might be hurt by her behaviour.

Molly looked around and, feeling almost all eyes on her, started to blush, finally realising what she had been doing.

The male Weasleys in attendance were blissfully oblivious, though. Like all children, Charlie and Bill believed that their mother wasn't interested in sex at all, and Arthur felt secure in the knowledge that Molly only loved him. He was convinced that Molly only cast glances in Snape's direction because Snape looked skinnier than ever in his jumper.

Before the three men could realise that their trust in Molly wasn't entirely justified after all, Dedalus Diggle spoke up. "I'd like to come back to what Remus said earlier. I think he was quite right in remarking that we shouldn't forget about the Ministry."

Grateful for the fact that Diggle distracted them from imagining Snape and Molly in all kinds of sexual positions, almost everyone turned their eyes to the elderly wizard, but no one really had the energy to concentrate on his words any more.

Dumbledore interrupted Diggle. "It's getting late, and I doubt we'll come to any conclusion tonight," he said and managed to penetrate everyone's thoughts with these words. "Let's call it a day and meet again in two weeks' time."

A collective sigh of relief could be heard. Everyone got up; chairs were pushed back under the table, and Mundungus Fletcher was the first to make for the door. Sturgis Podmore, Elphias Doge, Hagrid and Kingsley Shacklebolt followed suit, although Shacklebolt stopped in the door and turned around to offer Tonks a cheeky smile. Laughing, she waved back at him before she cleared away her plate and teacup.

Snape would have liked to leave the kitchen and his fellow Order members as soon as possible as well, but he was suddenly struck by a bout of uncertainty. Therefore, he lingered beside the door, trying to catch Tonks's eyes.

Only when she looked at him and gave him a tiny nod did he leave with quick and perhaps even bouncy steps. But if he had thought that his ordeal was over and that the pleasant part of the evening was about to start, he was mistaken.

"Yes, it's cashmere. Yes, it's soft. No, you're not going to touch it," one could hear him bark only seconds later on his way upstairs. Then his steps retreated, and after a moment a wide-eyed Hermione Granger came into the kitchen.

"Is something wrong with Professor Snape?" she asked, but the remaining men were only too happy to get out of the room to answer, and the women were much too embarrassed. Only Tonks seemed unperturbed. She winked at Hermione, but this confused Hermione even more.

Then Minerva remembered her duty as Head of House. "It's very late, Miss Granger. I'm sure you're on your way to bed?"

Hermione nodded. "Harry and the others went to bed already. I just wanted to prepare myself a hot chocolate before going to sleep as well." As proof, she held up her steaming mug before she went out.

Something was going on, Hermione decided. It was only the second Order meeting she had experienced as a sort of casual bystander, but she already felt left out. Apparently, it was about Professor Snape. She would have to discuss it with Harry, Ron and the others in the morning.

If her professor, who had arrived in the room he usually stayed in when he spent the night at Grimmauld Place, had known about Hermione's plans, he would have thrown a fit. Instead, he was standing in front of the mirror, combing through his hair with his fingers, and waiting for the things to come.

In the kitchen, Tonks grabbed a bottle of Ogden's Firewhisky and not one but two glasses, which earned her a furious look from Hestia; Arabella just looked sad. Tonks wasn't sure whether she should feel sorry for them. In her opinion, Hestia was too old for Snape, and she didn't even want to think about how much older Arabella was.

For a moment Tonks paused, struck by how unconcerned she felt about the fact that she shortly would be having sex with one of her former teachers. Like all the other women in the room, she would have never considered Snape before this day, but like all the other women she had made sure to check out his body and had come to like what she had seen. And Tonks wasn't one to think twice if something felt just right.

Without looking back, she left the kitchen, leaving behind several women and their disappointment, anger and jealousy.

Tonks climbed up the four flights of stairs that led to Snape's room on the third floor. She knocked at the old door, and Snape immediately opened it to let her in.

The room was as gloomy as most of the other rooms at Grimmauld Place, and its sparse furniture consisted of two armchairs, a coffee table, a wardrobe and a bed only. Before she could stop herself, Tonks glanced at the bed, which looked clean and comfortable enough.

Snape smirked because he had done exactly the same when he had entered the room. He gestured toward one of the chairs, sitting down in the other one.

Tonks remained standing, though, a bit disappointed that Snape obviously wanted some small talk before they proceeded to the bed. Of course, if she had asked him, he would have told her that the bed would be just fine, as her fitting robe gave him all kinds of very intriguing ideas, but sadly she didn't ask him.

Instead, she said, "Let's have a drink." She put the two glasses on the table and filled them with a generous amount of Firewhisky. "What a meeting, eh? I don't think I've ever experienced something like that."

"You?" Snape said and took the glass she gave him. "What about me?"

Tonks sat down. She was about to answer when there was a loud metallic click as the door to Grimmauld Place was unlocked. Then the door creaked open, and everyone who didn't spend the night at the Order Headquarters left. And at least all of the women paused in front of the house for a moment, wistfully staring at the illuminated window of Snape's room, before they finally went home.

"What about you?" Tonks said and grinned at Snape. "You brought it on yourself by wearing that jumper."

He raised his eyebrows but didn't answer.

She took a sip. "So, what made you wear the jumper today and enchant everyone?"

"Everyone? Do you intend to tell me that I managed to enchant you?" he asked, smirking at her again. She blushed, and he was truly beginning to enjoy their banter. "I was in Muggle London on Dumbledore's orders before I came here, and tomorrow I will have to go there as well. That's the boring truth."

"I see." Tonks decided that it was time to hurry things along a bit. She set down her glass, got up from her chair and purposefully went over to where Snape sat. Her hair, which had been a light pink for the whole evening, turned a much darker and fiery shade.

It was one hour until midnight. Everyone at Grimmauld Place was asleep. Almost everyone. Because while Molly tried to pretend that Arthur's scratchy chest hair was Snape's soft jumper as she kissed along her husband's upper body, the only female Order member who hadn't touched that jumper so far was about to do so now.

Tonks reached out and began to draw lines on Snape's chest. Up and down, from the left to the right her finger went. "You know, that's a very nice cashmere jumper, indeed," she said, looking into his dark eyes.

He stood up, his eyes never leaving hers. "No, it's an abomination. My mother gave it to me for my last birthday. She meant well, but after today I'm never going to wear it again."

Tonks was now exploring his chest and shoulders with her hands. "Well, you could always take it off," she said in a voice that left no doubt about her intentions, if there had been any doubt in the first place.

His breath hitched, his self-control beginning to unravel. He stared at her. He couldn't remember having ever met a woman who was so forward, and it gave him a thrill.

"I suppose I could," he said. Then he pulled the jumper over his head, revealing his bare chest. It was pale and skinny, but lightly muscled.

In short, it was perfect.

Tonks stepped closer, again first reaching out with one finger before she caressed him with both hands.

And a short while later, Tonks did to Snape what every other female Order member would have liked to do to him as well.