

Cassandra Wept

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How will the Potions master react to being the subject of her public display of
divination?

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This fic was written in response to the Trelawney's Third Prediction challenge for SH's Spring Faire Festival where it received an honorable mention. It was beta read by the lovely and talented LadyOfTheMasque, who graciously stepped in to help me when my beta went off and had a baby!

Disclaimer: They are not mine; I only take them out to play.

On the surface, it was simply a normal evening meal in the Great Hall, much like the steady flow of evening meals which stretched back in time to when the school had first been founded. The Great Hall was a peaceful place. Despite its size, the Hall had a comforting aura...much like the kitchens and dining rooms of much smaller, cozier dwellings. Dinner was a particularly cherished meal of those who lived within Hogwarts' walls. The night sky reflected on the ceiling was calming, the air above the tables uninterrupted by the flurry of the owls which delivered mail at breakfast. Classes and duties finished for the day, the students and teachers who had rushed through breakfast and lunch would linger over dinner, enjoying food and companionship under the soft glow of floating candles. Worries and squabbles would be put aside as Hogwarts tucked in to its favorite meal of the day. Generally, discussions were quiet, arguments few and far between, the faces of the diners calm and smiling. So it was this night, with one notable exception.

Normally, Severus Snape's face held a calm expression of polite disinterest as he methodically ate his dinner in the Great Hall. While he could sometimes be found engaging in conversation with his fellow teachers, he was more likely to do so earlier in the day. By the time dinner came around, the highly strung nerves of the Potions master were irritated by a long day of classes during which he had done his best to drum some sort of information into the vacant and staring heads of his students. The other professors knew Severus well and were amiably respectful of his preference for peace at dinner. Indeed, until quite recently Severus had little to complain of. Tonight had him scowling into his plate of stew; his routine had been roughly disrupted and he had no idea what to do about it.

Usually Severus sat between Hooch and Flitwick. Both his dining partners were gracious about his preference for quiet in the evenings and Severus found the company of both rather pleasant during the earlier meals. The occasional discussion of Quidditch with the flying instructor was pleasant enough and Madam Hooch had a rather wicked sense of humor in regards to the latest wizarding world gossip which Severus found very amusing. As amusing as Madam Hooch was, Flitwick was Severus' favorite. The Charms teacher's soft spoken words and gentle manners never grated on the touchy Potions professor's nerves and Filius was very knowledgeable about both Potions and magical theory. The unlikely pair had enjoyed many quiet and interesting discussions over the years. A week ago, that had all changed.

For reasons which Severus would never understand, Sybill Trelawney had abandoned her solitary habits and began eating every single meal in the Great Hall. If that wasn't already bad enough, she had insisted both loudly and adamantly that for various bizarre astrological reasons no other chair would do for her but Flitwick's. With his usual, gentle gallantry, Flitwick had given up his seat to the scarf-draped seer and Severus had been stuck with the worst possible dinner partner. Sybill was loud; her voice

high and grating. For someone who supposedly had the mysteries of the cosmos at her command, she had absolutely no sense in regards to the sensibilities and needs of those around her. Despite Severus doing his level best to ignore the irritating witch completely, Sybill kept up a babbling mixture of questions and running commentary that left Severus practically running to his quarters for a headache potion at the close of every evening meal.

Severus had tried--oh how he had tried--to get Albus to intervene on his behalf and put a halt to his daily dose of prattling torture. Albus had remained calm while Severus raved and sputtered, then the Headmaster had calmly asked Severus to be patient with the source of his torment. It seemed that Albus thought it wasn't healthy for Trelawney to spend so much time alone up in her tower, and the kind-hearted Headmaster wanted to do anything possible to encourage her sudden penchant for public dining. Assuring Severus that he would--in time--encourage Sybill to find a new seat, Albus ushered the fuming professor out of his office with a final comment.

"I'm certain you will manage a little more of Sybill's company just fine, my boy. Besides, I rather think Sybill fancies you. Having a little feminine company wouldn't go amiss, would it?"

Albus retreated back into his office, leaving an obviously gobsmacked Severus in his wake. Fancied him? *She* fancied *him*? Sybill *fancied* him? That was the most disgusting idea he had ever had the displeasure of entertaining. Severus did his best to put the distasteful idea out of his head, but it was a bit like trying to dismiss the gently swaying head of a cobra; it would not be ignored. Head aching and rather sick to his stomach, Severus retreated to his rooms in desperate need of a hot bath and a dose of headache potion.

The following week continued much the same and Severus' agitation grew daily. Another insufferable meal spent listening to Sybill's ridiculous and never ending discourse had him nearly at his wits' end. Safely barricaded in his private rooms, he bemoaned his fate as he reached for the headache potion that was fast becoming as necessary to him as breath. It all seemed hopelessly inevitable. His luck was running true to form and none of it was good. Now was the time when Severus should finally have some peace in his life. Voldemort was at last irreversibly dead; Potter was in his final year at Hogwarts and about to pass out into the world...a journey which Severus passionately hoped would keep the annoying brat far away from one Severus Snape. Having worked hard to bring about both freedom from Voldemort and getting young Potter as far from himself as possible, now Severus feared that--with his luck--he would work himself free of these torments only to be chained by new horrors. He had worked hard; he deserved some ease at last. But where was his reward? Where was his peace?

His peace had abruptly fled and all Dumbledore would do about it was grin at Severus while Trelawney prattled on and on.

On Wednesday night, an event occurred which abruptly snapped the Potions master's last frayed nerve. Dinner had been proceeding apace with Severus scowling into a plate of baked chicken while Trelawney's simpering voice droned on endlessly. In the midst of a rambling sentence, Sybill's voice abruptly stopped. Having been doing his best to tune out the obnoxious prattle, Severus scarcely realized that the seer had gone uncharacteristically silent before the hand holding his fork was fiercely gripped in both of Sybill's. Raising furious eyes from his trapped hand to Trelawney's face, the stream of vitriol he prepared to drench her with abruptly cut off before it even began. Strangely speechless, Severus gazed at the seer's amazingly altered countenance with growing alarm.

Trelawney's normally limp posture had gone ramrod stiff. Feeling his fingertips growing numb, Severus glanced down to where Sybill held his hands in a grip so hard that her knuckles had gone white with tension. Another glance at her face did nothing to ease Severus' alarm. The woman's jaw was rigid and the expression on her face was so grotesque that Severus wondered if she was having some sort of attack. Trelawney's half-lidded eyes showed only white; the irises had rolled up under the lids, which added to the witch's shocking appearance. Aghast, Severus was just opening his mouth to shout for Poppy when Sybill spoke.

The voice itself was eerie. It was deep and held a note of authority which Severus had never heard in the babbling witch's voice before. It commanded the attention of all who heard it and Severus was no exception to its call. The message was short and clearly spoken in that clipped, booming voice. Even more surprising was the fact that its message seemed directed straight at him.

"The Serpent King struggles in a Gordian Knot no Alexander can untangle. He shall know neither peace nor pleasure 'til he coils with the bright griffin which pursues him."

That said, Trelawney abruptly released his hands as her body went limp. Flopping gracelessly onto the table, only the quick wits of Hagrid kept the seer from drowning in her bowl of soup as the rest of the Head Table stared at her in shock. Dragging himself to his feet, Severus threw his napkin unceremoniously on the table, his face registering both shock and fear.

"I will not stay another moment and listen to such complete and utter tripe!" he shouted as he glared at the faces which now gaped at him. Turning his fury towards Dumbledore, he continued, "I suggest you keep that raving, rubbish-spouting, travesty of a seer away from me if you value her well being." Turning on his heel, Severus spun away from the table and fled the Great Hall.

With a sigh, Albus Dumbledore calmly placed his napkin on the table as he slowly stood. "Poppy," he said quietly, "take Sybill to the infirmary and care for her until she comes around. If she asks what happened, tell her." Following the path his irate Potions master had taken, Albus left the Hall.

Down in the privacy of his rooms, Severus was pacing before the fire and muttering to himself as he gesticulated wildly with his arms. "It stops here," he sputtered. "I refuse to play jester to Albus' bloody king of the castle act for one more moment. After all I've done for the man, one would think he spend a little less time worrying about Sybill fucking Trelawney and maybe spend one iota of time worrying about..."

A knocking at his door interrupted Severus' solitary tirade. Severus could think of only one person who would dare disturb him when he was this angry. Striding to the door, Severus threw it open and prepared to give Albus a piece of his mind. For the second time that evening, Severus found that his voice failed him even as he opened his mouth. The calm and openly worried expression on his employer's face startled Severus into silence. Gesturing for Albus to enter, Severus waited impatiently while the older wizard took a moment to gather his thoughts.

"Severus," Albus began, "we need to speak frankly about Sybill's prediction..."

"Rubbish!" Severus interrupted. "Since when do we need to discuss any of Sybill's ridiculous twaddle? You know as well as I do that the blasted woman wouldn't know an honest prediction if it bit her in the arse!"

"I'm afraid that's true enough, my boy," Albus said with a half-hearted smile of amusement. "However, that does not change the fact that before tonight Sybill has managed exactly two honest predictions and I'm afraid that now she has made her third." Noting his Potions master's look of disbelief, Albus continued, "I have witnessed both her earlier predictions, Severus...one in person and one by means of a Pensieve. I can assure you that Sybill's performance at dinner showed all the signs of being equally as authentic as her previous two."

His fury abruptly vanished, Severus found himself at a loss. Crossing to the wingback chairs before his fire, he flopped into one of them with none of his accustomed grace. Raising worried eyes to Albus, he asked, "If that is true, then what in the nine circles of hell did it mean?"

"I wish I knew for certain," Albus murmured as he crossed to sit in the vacant chair near Severus. "The first part seems to echo something I myself have worried over these past few months. Severus, I am well aware that the calm and disdainful manner which you affect is your way of putting some distance between yourself and the world. I had thought that after Voldemort fell you would feel secure enough to relax a bit. If anything, you seem to be growing more tense and fretful with each day that passes. Can you tell me why this is so?"

Severus wanted desperately to deny it. He hated appearing weak in front of anyone and his gut reaction to Albus' quietly spoken concern was to slip into his usual defensiveness. One look into Albus' worried eyes changed his mind. After all, if he couldn't be honest with Albus, whom could he be honest with?

Albus thought that he had never seen his young friend look quite as bleak as when Severus softly said "I don't know." Not even back during Severus' days as a spy.

"Well Severus," Albus said with a calm smile, "perhaps Sybill's prediction means that things are finally starting to look brighter. Though I don't know for certain what the prediction means, it seems certain that some answer to your restlessness exists. I have every hope that we shall eventually find it."

The fact that Severus himself had no such hopes was apparent over the next few days. If anything, the Potions professor's ill humor was more apparent than normal. The mere sight of Trelawney was enough to drive him into a fury and the confused seer retreated to her Tower to avoid his scathing remarks. In the corridors, students scattered before him like sheep before a wolf. Potions classes were even quieter than usual, as wary students did their best not to set off their professor's unpredictable temper. Despite their best efforts, points were deducted right and left for the most ridiculous of reasons. In a single class period, Snape deducted five points from Hermione Granger for not raising her hand to answer a question and then deducted a further ten for answering it. Fifteen points from a single student during one class period was a new Hogwart's record--even for the grumpy Potions master. Later, when the Headmaster confronted him about it, Severus had not one reasonable word to say in his defense.

To be honest, there was something about Granger that simply aggravated the hell out of the man. Normally tense, his temper would reach a fever pitch whenever he was near the chit. The bookish Gryffindor had always been a source of irritation. Now that Granger was in her seventh year, the tension Severus felt in her presence had reached epic proportions. The sole reason Miss Granger had not found herself heaped with detentions was that Severus didn't trust himself to be too long alone with her. Whenever the young witch was near him, Severus' hands itched. He constantly found himself wanting to wrap his hands around her throat and throttle the life out of the girl.

Trying to analyze this strange urge had left Severus at a complete loss. Whenever he was apart from the girl, he was puzzled by his reaction. In truth, Miss Granger was a good student and...aside from her annoying habit of trying to answer his every question...Severus found her fairly innocuous. Nothing he could think of explained why every time he was near her he had to practically sit on his hands to keep from choking the breath out of her. In deference to his position, Severus had tried to avoid the girl whenever possible, yet she seemed to be underfoot whenever he turned around. During the past few months, Granger had come to his office to ask him innumerable questions. He had stumbled over her when he walked the grounds during the day and the corridors at night. She had appeared like a ghost in the Owlery the last time he had gone to post a letter and twice this week alone she had stayed behind after class to ask Severus if he was all right. It was all Severus could do to keep from hexing the chit and being done with the matter.

The weekend gave Severus a brief respite. Cloistering himself in his rooms, Severus neither left for meals nor to keep hours in his office. Normally such solitude would do him good and he would return to his professor's duties on Monday morning both calmer and more rested than he managed throughout the week. This particular weekend none of his usual solitary pursuits eased him and he spent more time pacing than anything else. By the time Monday morning rolled around, Severus Snape was as tightly wound as a harp string. Something was bound to give.

How he managed to make it through the day without hexing anyone Severus would never know. As he strode for his office after his last class, he could only hope that no students awaited him. His hopes were dashed as he entered his office to be confronted by the person he least wanted to see.

"Miss Granger," he hissed, "I'm afraid whatever idiotic question has been keeping you awake nights will have to wait. I am in no mood to coddle insufferable students today. Leave. Now."

"I'm afraid I can't do that, Professor. We need to talk, sir, and I am unwilling to put it off any longer," Hermione stated calmly.

"I can assure you, Miss Granger, that there is nothing you could have to discuss which I would find the least interest in. I insist you leave me to my work and I'll thank you to shut the door on your way out."

"Professor, I heard the prediction Professor Trelawney made. Indeed, the whole school couldn't help but hear it. I've been thinking on the matter and..."

"Of all the nerve!" Severus interrupted. "Miss Granger, your conceit never ceases to amaze me. The Headmaster himself told me he remains unsure of the meaning behind that prediction, and yet you have the unmitigated gall to imply that you...a mere student...possess some rare insight Dumbledore himself has overlooked!" By the time he finished the first sentence Severus was shouting. Far from being frightened by the irate man's manner, Hermione simply stared at him calmly as she waited for him to wind down.

"It does not surprise me that the Headmaster was unsure of the predictions meaning," she said simply as Severus paused for breath. "Such things often mean little to all...except those the message is aimed at."

"The message was aimed at me, Miss Granger. If I have no inkling as to its meaning I fail to see how one Gryffindor busy-body can claim such insight."

"Did it not also mention someone else?" Hermione continued in an annoyingly patient manner as if she spoke to a rather slow child. Her patronizing tones infuriated Severus even further and he could feel his hands begin to itch. As Hermione continued to speak, Severus' control neared the breaking point. "Professor, surely you have noted the intense tension between us that has been growing stronger these past few months?"

"The only tension I have been aware of," he snarled, "stems from my doing my best not to throttle you where you stand...an urge I am no longer interested in trying to control!"

With that, Severus allowed his hands to do what they would. To his complete and utter shock, instead of twining around Hermione's throat, his traitorous hands wound around her upper arms and he found himself pulling the young witch firmly against him. Eyebrows rising in surprise, Severus had time to think "Oh, it's *that* kind of tension..." before he lowered his mouth to Hermione's.

The kiss was awkward at first. Severus' actions had taken them both by surprise and the resulting bumping of lips and noses left Severus enough presence of mind to wonder if Hermione would push him away, slap his face, and rush off to owl the school governors. As two mouths at last lined up properly and Hermione wrapped her arms around his neck, all rational thought left Severus' head. The kiss progressed rapidly from a dry brushing of lips to steamy, open-mouthed caresses. Severus' hands gave up their strangle hold on Hermione's biceps and he wound his arms around her waist to drag her even closer. When Hermione's tongue made a brave foray into his mouth, Severus groaned around it before chasing it back between her own lips. His groan was answered by the softest sounds. Tiny, pleading cries that were neither whimpers nor moans sent violent tremors down Severus' spine straight to his hardening cock. When Severus' hips thrust unconsciously against Hermione's stomach, she pressed tighter against him. Far from being deterred by the proof of his arousal, Hermione lifted one leg to wrap around his upper thigh in a near desperate attempt to press more firmly against him.

Placing both his hands roughly on her arse, Severus lifted Hermione until the enticing swell of her hips nestled against his own. When the young witch responded by wrapping both her legs tightly around his waist, Severus turned to carry her to his desk. Pressing her down until Hermione's back rested against the thankfully uncluttered surface, Severus gave up her mouth to nip and bite at the pale column of her throat as he began to undo the buttons of her blouse. Between nips, he murmured statements which were not quite questions.

"You're a student..."

"I don't care," was Hermione's breathless response. "Do you?"

"Not particularly," he replied calmly as he slipped her unbuttoned blouse open. Taking one look at her bra, he simply pushed it higher on Hermione's chest, baring her breasts without bothering to unclasp it. "You could be expelled," he said before taking a crinkled nipple into his mouth.

Hermione's pleased gasp delayed her response. When she spoke, it came out in stops and starts as he suckled and bit at her breasts. "Not likely...Dumbledore...has let...Gryffindors...get away with far...worse. You could be fired..."

"Not likely," he murmured between bites. "Dumbledore has let...me get away with...far worse, myself." Raising his head to look at her, Severus' black eyes flashed with fire as he asked, "--Shall I stop?"

"Never!" Hermione hissed as she reached up to drag his head back to her own. Kissing him fiercely, she pumped her hips up to meet his as he thrust against her.

Patience had never been Severus' strong suit. Once Hermione began to grind against him, it was no time at all before his hands were fumbling at the front of his trousers. In a moment, his jutting cock was freed. Pushing Hermione's skirt up around her waist, Severus pulled her knickers to one side and thrust home.

It had been too long, too bloody long since Severus had last had a woman beneath him and he had never had one so passionate or so willing. After scarcely a dozen forceful thrusts of his hips, Severus groaned against Hermione's neck as he spent himself deep inside her. If Hermione was disappointed, she had little time to reflect on it. Mortified by his lack of control, Severus rested against Hermione's chest only briefly before replacing his softening cock with an eagerly lapping tongue. If he was disgusted by the taste of his own cum, he didn't show it. Hermione was soon too busy climbing toward her own release to even consider being disgusted. Her heels drummed against his back as she thrust her hips up to meet his hungry mouth. She came hard, with a high-pitched squeal that Severus would have undoubtedly found annoying in any situation save this. In this instance, he was amazed to find the girlish squeal strangely arousing and he could feel his spent cock twitch in appreciation.

When Hermione's last shudder of pleasure had ended, Severus rose from between her trembling thighs to look down at her. She was a vision of ravished youth. Her clothes were still on but wildly askew and her bare breasts rose and fell with each ragged breath. Her eyes were closed and her lips curled in an expression of content. Severus had always thought her rather plain, but the passionate girl sprawled half naked across his desk seemed the loveliest thing he had ever seen in his life. Snagging a handkerchief out of his trouser pocket, Severus mopped off his wet nose and chin before he leaned to give Hermione a gentle kiss. When she opened her eyes to look up at him, he regarded her quite seriously.

"That was rather short," he said baldly. "Should you wish to try this again, I dare say I can do better."

"In case you hadn't noticed, I wasn't complaining," she said with a smile. "I imagine we'll both be in less of a hurry now the pressure's been let off."

"Indeed," was all Severus said as he lowered himself back down to her, his lips fastening upon her mouth as his hands wandered to her breasts.

High above Severus' office, a distraught Sybill Trelawney stared at the shattered pieces the crystal ball she had thrown violently against the wall. Tears streamed down her face as she wailed, "It was me! It was supposed to be *me* he wanted!"