

The Real Me

by debjunk

Received Honorable Mention in Anything Goes Challenge. Sybill Trelawney has been hiding a huge secret. She's not the witch she appears to be. Now that she is no longer in danger, she can come out of hiding and be herself. But who is she, really? And what does she want out of life?

Chapter 1: Emergence

Chapter 1 of 20

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Chapter 1: Emergence

Sybill Trelawney woke with a start. It was the first day of the rest of her life. The war had ended the night before. She had done her part, throwing crystal balls at the Death Eaters and casting spells to fend them when she had run out. Now, everything was over. Many good people had died, and that made her sad. But deep down, she was excited. She could finally leave her 'stupid' self behind and once again be the woman she had been eighteen years previously, before her 'prophecy' had changed the world and herself.

The truth was, Sybill Trelawney had been in hiding. Once the prophecy had left her lips and she had come back to herself, Albus Dumbledore had explained to her what she had said. The only bad thing about true prophecies was that the prophetess never remembered what was uttered.

So Albus had explained everything. He also had explained that he was worried about her safety. He had known that Snape had heard part of the prophecy and would no doubt report it to his Master. Voldemort, in turn, would seek her out. He would want to interrogate her to find out everything she knew about the prophecy. Unfortunately for Sybill, she had known nothing but what Albus told her.

Albus had feared that she would be killed by the nasty despot. He had offered her another option.

He had suggested that she take the Divination job at Hogwarts, as she had planned, but instead of the competent woman that she was, she would have to appear to be a batty Seer, who understood nothing of the real world. Her appearance had even needed to be changed to help with the transformation from intelligent to harebrained.

Sybill had frowned and thought about her options. She'd had little choice actually. It was either turn into Miss Stupid, or be killed. She had reluctantly agreed with Dumbledore's plan, and they had set to work transforming her into what she was today, a witless wonder. Her hair had been changed to be long and wild, not even its original color. Her eyesight had been tampered with, so she'd had to wear the ridiculous glasses that made her eyes look like saucers. She had acquired clothing that made her look eccentric. Worst of all, she'd had to hide her true ability and appear to be a charlatan.

Oh, her great-great grandmother had probably turned in her grave at the thought of a Trelawney having to appear to be a foolish babbler, inept at any true insight. Unfortunately, Sybill had had no choice. She had been trapped and it was because of her gift.

Acting foolish hadn't been too bad at first. It had been rather easy to babble on like a crazed canary, spouting out nothing, proclaiming a student's upcoming death, crying

doom at every corner. It had been easy. The hard part had been to hide her true self. It was her nature to share her abilities to help others. She could tell the true future, but she had been kept from using her gift. It had pained her not to be able to tell the girl crying in the corner that her parents would survive from their accident. It had hurt to not be able to let the boy know that his feelings for the girl were not in vain, that she liked him also. She had received a true vision at least daily, but she'd had to keep her mouth shut tight and make up stupid nonsense so everyone would think she was crazy.

Her predicament had driven her to drink. She had known that she had been seen by numerous students and faculty wandering the halls with a half empty bottle, muttering to herself. At least she had known that the students and faculty wouldn't take anything she said while inebriated as fact. They would just think it was the inane ramblings of a crazy woman. But her words had been the truth. She had bemoaned her fate and how everyone thought she was a dolt. She had truly hated this persona she had created and couldn't wait for the day that she could rid herself of the batty woman and become the woman she had been years before.

Now that time was upon her, finally. She went to the mirror and looked at her reflection. Sighing she eyed the huge glasses that sat on the dresser in front of the mirror. She smiled to herself. She would never need those again. She took her wand and waved it over the glasses.

"*Evanescio*," she chanted and the glasses disappeared.

Step one of her retransformation was done. She waved the wand over her eyes and said the incantation to restore her eyesight to normal. There! She could see clearly. She was no more a big blur in the mirror. She felt giddy, she was so excited.

Now for her hair. She hated long hair. Hers reached down to the middle of her back and had been a pain to care for. It constantly was in knots. Taking her wand she waved it around her head. Her hair began to shorten. She continued waving as her hair got shorter and shorter. She stopped when it reached shoulder length. With another wave, the frizzy waves disappeared, and her true hair texture, straight as an arrow, came into sight. Only one thing left with the hair. It needed to go back to its original color. Mousy blonde was overrated. With another swish, her hair turned jet black. Sybill smiled at her reflection. She hadn't seen herself like this in years, and it was good to be herself again.

Of course, she really had no idea who she was. She had been pretending for so long, she was afraid she would not be able to leave the battiness behind her. She would try her hardest, nonetheless. She despised her persona. She wanted to be respected for the woman she truly was. She understood it would take some time. No one but her parents had known her well before she had accepted her position at Hogwarts. The few others who did know her: other family members, instructors, a couple of friends, had been sworn to secrecy.

Her parents had cultivated her talents when she was a youth. They had trained her at home. There had not been a school on the planet that could efficiently train a woman with the sight. She had been trained well, but had led a lonely existence. When she was old enough, her parents had encouraged her to use her skill and find a job that would help her to excel in it. She had been excited to be able to branch out into the world and was hoping to receive the teaching position at Hogwarts. Unfortunately, the job had come with severe limitations. Her true self had been hidden, along with her talents.

Her parents had been crushed. They had supported her, of course. They certainly had not wanted to see her dead, but the thought of a Trelawney being seen as a kook was hard on them. Unfortunately, both of her parents had passed away several years before the end of the war. They would never see the reemergence of their beloved daughter.

Oh well, what was done, was done. She turned to her wardrobe. Opening the closet, she made everything in it vanish away. Everything but one set of robes. They were blue, her favorite color. They were normal looking, not like the eccentric clothes she usually wore. She would go to Hogsmeade and buy a new wardrobe later today. She wanted to feel beautiful again, not frumpy. She quickly got dressed. Glancing in the mirror, she was pleased with her appearance. She was unrecognizable! That was good. She went to her door and exited her room. She needed to speak with Minerva.

oooOOOooo

Soon she was tapping on Minerva's door. She figured that McGonagall would be taking over as Headmistress, but with all of the confusion from the war, she was certain that Minerva was still residing in her normal quarters. The door opened a minute later.

Minerva stared at the woman in front of her. "May I help you?" she asked.

Sybill smiled widely at her friend. "Minerva, it's me!" she cried in her given voice. She had been happy to leave her low wispy voice behind also.

"Me who?"

"It's Sybill!" She put her voice back to what Minerva would be used to. "Don't you recognize me?"

Minerva's eyes grew wide and she grabbed Sybill and dragged her into her room.

"What on earth is going on?" Minerva cried. "Why do you look so different?"

Sybill explained everything to Minerva. Minerva could only gape as the story was retold, not believing that the woman she had been friends with for almost 20 years was not who she'd believed her to be.

"So you see I have been a charlatan. This is what I truly look like. The glammers I have used have finally been removed. I can truly be myself." Sybill smiled happily at Minerva.

"I . . . I don't know what to say!" Minerva responded.

"Say you're happy?" Sybill replied in a questioning voice.

Minerva threw her arms around Sybill. "I'm ecstatic. What can I do to help you back?"

"I would like to continue my job, this time actually performing it well."

"Of course."

Sybill smiled, but then immediately frowned. "Where's Severus?" she asked.

"He's dead," Minerva told her.

"Where is his body?"

Minerva furrowed her brow. "I don't know. I think it was forgotten with all that happened. It must still be in the Shrieking Shack."

Sybill looked to Minerva with worry. "We must hurry. He's still alive!"

Minerva's eyes grew wide as she watched Sybill jump up and race out of her door. She quickly got up and followed her. The two women made their way to the Whomping Willow and made the tree still with a poke at the low lying knot. They quickly crawled through the tunnel and emerged into the Shack. The sight that greeted them was gruesome. Severus lay in an immense pool of blood. Sybill rushed to his side and felt the side of his neck that wasn't mutilated.

"He has a slight pulse," she told Minerva.

"How on earth could anyone survive such an attack?"

"I don't know, but we must get him help quickly or he will die."

Sybill levitated the still man. Half of his face and body was covered in blood. She hoped they would get him to Poppy in time. The two women worked their way slowly back to Hogwarts. Hurrying to the hospital wing, they entered and called Poppy. She emerged from the back of the hospital and gasped.

"Oh my word! Can he still be alive?" she uttered.

"He's got a slight pulse," Minerva explained.

"Get him to that bed!" Poppy ordered, while motioning to the only empty bed in the hospital.

Waving her wand over the man, she clucked her tongue. "It looks like Phoenix tears have been administered to his wound. Could it have been Fawkes?"

Minerva shook her head. "I don't know. No one has seen the phoenix since Dumbledore died. Why would he treat Albus' murderer?"

"I'm sure he knew the truth. I did," Sybill stated simply.

Minerva and Poppy snapped their heads toward her.

"I had a vision on the night of Albus' death. It was of a conversation between Severus and Albus. They planned the death together. I have known all along. I'm sure the bird knew too."

"And you are?" Poppy asked incredulously.

"I'm Sybill Trelawney," she said hurriedly, looking over at Severus again.

"I'll explain later," Minerva assured Poppy, who had been staring at Sybill. She turned back to her patient.

Poppy rushed over to her supply closet and grabbed several potions. She poured one over the wound in Severus' neck, which had closed somewhat, but was still an ugly red thing that showed his flesh. The wound slowly mended itself back together. Poppy poured more on and the wound disappeared completely.

Picking up Severus' head, she helped him swallow the other two vials. She stepped back a bit and waved her wand over him, cleaning off the horrid blood stains and doing some more diagnostics.

"That's better. His vitals are stable again. He should wake in a day or so, once the potions and Phoenix tears have completely cured him."

She looked back up to Minerva. "So what's up with her?" she pointed at Sybill.

"I will call a meeting and explain everything to everyone at the same time."

Poppy nodded to her and then to Sybill. "I must admit, you look quite a bit better now than before," she told her.

"Thank you," Sybill said with a chuckle.

She turned and glanced at Minerva and they left the hospital wing.

A/N: Thanks to my beta, Liliith Kayden. She's great.

Here's the prompt I used:

105. Now that the war is over, Sybil can abandon her ridiculous act, and show herself as she really is. Who is the woman who emerges from the under the shawls? Does she remain at Hogwarts? And how did those years of pretense affect her? Does she have trouble acting 'normal'?

I hope you all don't mind that Sybill saved Severus. (Well, Sybill and Fawkes, actually.) I can't have a post war story where he's dead, sorry. That would be the ultimate tragedy, and this ain't no tragedy.

Chapter 2: Disclosure

Chapter 2 of 20

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Much thanks to my beta!

Chapter 2: Disclosure

The entire staff was gathered in the teacher's lounge. Even though their side had been victorious, there was a hushed tone in the room. Pomona just stared blankly ahead, not acknowledging anyone. Flitwick tried to be chipper, but he would frown and look down often as he spoke with Madam Hooch. Everyone seemed to be absorbed in reflection. There was only a little quiet conversation going on when Minerva entered with Sybill. Everyone looked at the newcomer in the room, wondering who she was.

"Thank you for all meeting here. I have some interesting news. The first is that Severus Snape was found alive in the Shrieking Shack. He is recuperating in the hospital wing as we speak."

There were huge gasps and mumbled conversation around the room.

"We think that Fawkes saved him, as Poppy found traces of phoenix tears in his wound. It will take a few days for him to fully recover. He is not conscious now, but Poppy assures me that he will wake in a couple of days and make a full recovery."

She looked sternly at the teachers gathered in the room. "I am unsure if Severus will want to stay at Hogwarts. I am even less sure that he will want his position as Headmaster, now that the war is over. If he chooses to continue teaching here, I want nothing but the utmost respect shown toward him. He has been on our side secretly and is a hero. There will be no more sideways glances and muttering under our breath toward him."

Everyone in the room nodded.

"We will keep Hogwarts open for a month to anyone who wishes to stay. That should be enough time for the wounded to recover and the battle weary to get their lives in order and return home."

More nods greeted her.

"As many of you have probably noted, the castle is in the process of repairing itself. It will need our help to be completely renovated by the beginning of next term. Our first job is to assess the damage. I want all of you to survey the entire castle. We will find out exactly what needs to be done. Then we will set up work crews to help with the repairs. Any of the war refugees who would like to help may do so. Also, if you have friends or family who would like to come in and do repairs, please owl them that their assistance will be greatly appreciated. I believe that with all of us working together with the castle, we will be able to start school again right at the beginning of the year as planned."

"The last thing on our agenda is quite a surprising revelation. The woman sitting next to me is Sybill Trelawney."

Professor Sprout's jaw dropped open. Professor Flitwick started to sputter, Madam Hooch raised an eyebrow, and Hagrid started laughing. The reactions were all unique, but each showed immense surprise.

"Professor Trelawney? No, it can't be. She looks . . . nice."

"But she's got black hair!"

"She's actually wearing normal clothes!"

"Where's yer beads, Professor?"

"She doesn't look like an owl."

"I think she looks taller."

"Definitely thinner."

"Why did she choose to have a makeover today?"

Minerva held up her hand to quiet the group of babbling professors. "I shall let her explain what has happened," Minerva said with a wave of her hand toward Sybill.

The faculty sat in silence for the next fifteen minutes as Sybill explained why she looked like she did and how it had come about. When she was finished, the entire room erupted in noise. Questions were thrown out, condolences were expressed, and offers for help were given.

Sybill smiled at the faculty.

"I know that I have been hard to take. I hated every minute of what I had to do. I would like to apologize to anyone I may have offended in the past with anything that I might have said. I know many of you have just tolerated me for all of these years, and I can understand that. However, I hope that when you see who I really am, we can form better friendships."

"Are you planning on staying in your teaching position?" Pomona asked.

"I am. I would like to actually be able to make up for my horrible teaching in the past," Sybill said with a smile.

"Well, we're happy tha' yer stayin'," Hagrid cried. "I fer one would miss yeh if yeh left."

"Thank you Hagrid."

"Alright," Minerva said, breaking in. "If that's everything, this meeting is adjourned."

Everyone stood up and went over to Sybill. Hagrid started to shake her hand, but he pulled her in toward him and hugged her. Sybill disappeared in his arms and held her breath. Soon he had let go and she breathed again. She gave him a smile so he would know she wasn't hurt.

"I'll be lookin' forward to yeh comin' to tea, Professor," Hagrid told her.

Sybill smiled at him. "I'll be there, Hagrid, thank you."

Flitwick was next, shaking her hand and wishing her luck in her new life.

Sprout and Hooch both hugged her. Sybill felt quite grateful that they were showing her such affection. They usually ran the other way when they saw her coming. The other teachers shook her hand. Poppy was the last one in line.

"If you have trouble transitioning," she said to Sybill, "stop by and chat. I have some potions that will calm you too, if you feel nervous."

Sybill grasped Poppy's hand. "Thank you, Poppy. I will do that."

Suddenly the room was empty except for Minerva and Sybill.

"Well, that went better than I expected," Sybill muttered.

"Were you expecting a lynch mob?" Minerva asked.

"Something like that," Sybill said with a smile.

Minerva put her arm around Sybill. "We are all here for you, don't forget that."

Sybill nodded and gave Minerva a hug. "It's just that after being a pariah for so long, I expected everyone to just shrug me off. It felt odd to have everyone's support like that. Do you think they'll like me?"

"Sybill, from what I have seen of you, you are a wonderful woman. It's unfortunate that you had to hide behind such an unpleasant persona. You're sure to be a big hit once everyone gets used to the idea that you're for real."

Sybill nodded. "I'm sure it will take some time. It's a bit much for me to get used to myself!"

Minerva laughed. "I'm here if you need to chat, Sybill."

"Thanks, Minerva. I'd best be off. I want to redo my classroom."

"I'm sure we won't be having anymore classes for a while, Sybill."

"I know. I just don't want anymore signs of the old me."

Minerva patted her on the back. "Alright, have fun."

"I will," Sybill said, and then she was gone.

oooOOOoo

Sybill stood in her classroom and looked around. The place looked like a gypsy's lair. She wondered how she had gotten anything done in such a tawdry environment. No wonder her students thought she was eccentric. It looked like she had been a circus castaway. She was just waiting for a gaggle of clowns to come racing in on unicycles, juggling and honking their noses.

Frowning, she immediately vanished all of the shawls that were draped around the room. She looked over at the tables. White lacy tablecloths bedecked every one. Grimacing, she vanished those too. The tables were made of a beautiful dark wood. They would be fine without the lacy ugliness that had covered them before. The pillows were the next things to go. She transfigured the poofy chairs into more tables and chairs.

She stared at the kettle in the corner of the room. It was always boiling with the most offensively sweet incense. It gave her a headache. Why she had ever kept that thing around was a mystery to her. Yes, it forwarded her disguise, but it wasn't worth the daily headaches. She angrily took her wand and vanished the whole thing. She regretted it immediately. Maybe Severus could have used that cauldron. She shrugged. It was too late now.

The walls were gold. She loved gold, but not on walls. With a wave of her wand, a deep blue spread over all of the walls. She smiled at that. Raising an eyebrow, she waved her wand some more. Black paint outlined swirls over the blue walls. *Not bad*, she thought. She placed a few black stars and outlines of Saturn on the walls as well. *Magical, yet not overly ostentatious*, she thought again.

She looked at the shelves that lined almost the whole room. Glass balls were lined up on a few. Tea pots and cups lined several others. There were other odds and ends everywhere. It made the classroom look like a junk shop. She debated how to take care of the objects. They were all needed, but they were an eyesore, lying out in the open. She smiled to herself. With a wave of her wand she transfigured the shelves into cabinets and closets. They were made of the same dark wood that the tables were made of. Walking over to a tall closet-like cabinet, she swung it open. It was filled with crystal balls. A quick survey of the other cabinets showed that everything she needed for teaching was placed orderly in the cabinets. Stepping back, she admired the look of the cabinetry. It transformed the room. Now she had a classroom, not a fortune teller's hovel.

She wandered over to the door to her office. Long beads hung in the doorway. Oh how she hated beads. They had been everywhere in her life. In her doorway, around her neck, draped over her mirror, they had been everywhere. She was so tired of being some throwback hippie from the sixties. With an angry flourish of her wand, the beads disappeared. She entered her office and did much the same to it, changing the walls to the deep blue, this time without the space motif. She vanished the stupid gypsy things that were strewn around. The carpet was changed to a black color. Examining her work, she was pleased. That was much better. A vision suddenly came to her of her students, actually learning and not giving her caustic looks. She smiled at that vision. She felt that now her students could concentrate on the fine art of Divination, and not on the kooky woman who taught it, or the outlandish atmosphere in which they learned it.

A/N: Next up: *Severus awakens*.

Thanks for giving this a peek, and for leaving your opinions. ;)

Chapter 3: A Conversation

Chapter 3 of 20

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Chapter 3: A Conversation

A couple of days after her miraculous transformation, Sybill sat in her room, a magazine on her lap, reading about the latest discoveries in card reading.. Things were going quite well. The faculty was all being very nice to her. She actually was showing up for meals too. She found that now that everyone wasn't avoiding speaking with her, she had some lively discussions with her colleagues.

The only problem was she found herself falling into old habits. There had been one thing she liked about her past life; it had been the ability to say whatever she wanted, whenever she wanted. She found that that had bled into her new life, making it hard for her to hold her tongue.

She had received some odd looks from her friends when she had let something slip. She had turned beet red when she had told Madam Hooch that she needed to change the color of her contacts. No one was supposed to know that Hooch's eyes were actually clear blue. Hooch had left the table abruptly after that, and Sybill had felt bad.

Then she had been conversing with Professor Vector and had let it slip that the Arithmancy professor had a Teacher's text with every answer included. Vector had prided herself on her ability to figure out anything and had been embarrassed that the faculty now knew that she relied on pre-printed answers in her teaching.

She had thoroughly embarrassed Professor Flitwick by mentioning that the woman he had been seeing was the perfect match for him. No one had known that Filius was seeing anyone, and he had liked it that way. Now the cat was out of the bag, and he had to answer all sorts of questions. The faculty was one big family, and they always needed to know the latest gossip. Filius had explained that he had met a goblin woman named Calliope at Gringotts during the summer, and they had both taken quite a

shine to one another. He had tried to downplay the relationship, but now with Sybill's decree, all of the women had been making wedding plans for him before he had even been ready to kiss his Calliope.

All of these little slips had been really embarrassing to Sybill, and she had tried to reign in her tongue before it got the better of her. Some of it, however, she had done on purpose, making fun of herself.

At dinner last night, she had pointed across the room and cried, "I see the grim!" Minerva had looked at her sharply, and she figured she'd save that one for a more private setting.

She did enjoy blurting out, "Are you in the beyond? I think you are," at inopportune moments. Whoever she was speaking with would look at her suspiciously, and she would burst out laughing. The latest victim had been Hagrid. She could tell that he had been trying to be polite after her pronouncement, but his sputtering had given away his thoughts.

"P... P... Professor?" he had said incredulously.

"Yes, Hagrid?" Sybill had said with her deep, mystical, batty Trelawney voice.

"I... I thought... you were giving up..."

Sybill had not been able to hold it in any longer and had burst out laughing, leaving Hagrid looking perplexed.

She had laid her hand on his forearm. "I'm sorry, Hagrid. I'm just having a bit of fun with you!"

Hagrid had heaved a huge sigh. "Well, thank Merlin! I was ready to run fer my hut and owl someone fer an exorcism."

Sybill had laughed heartily at that. She had truly enjoyed seeing her colleagues' look of horror as she had said batty things. She supposed that her quirky sense of humor would take some getting used to.

She shook her head, coming out of her thoughts, and returned to her magazine article. Suddenly a feeling came over her. Severus was awake. She closed her magazine and headed to the infirmary.

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Sybill entered the hospital wing and went over to Severus' bed. He had been situated on the farthest bed from the entryway to help him have as much privacy as possible in the open infirmary. Poppy was nowhere to be seen. Sybill looked down at Severus and wasn't surprised to see him staring back at her.

"You're awake," she said. "Do you need anything?"

Severus tried to speak, but only a croak came out.

"Don't!" Sybill advised. "Your vocal chords were damaged in the attack. You won't be able to speak for a few more days. Just think what you need."

Water

Sybill waved her wand and a glass appeared in her hand. She filled it with water from a pitcher that sat on the table next to Severus' bed. Sybill helped Severus get up into a sitting position and he took the glass shakily. He carefully sipped the cool drink.

Thank you, he thought.

"You're welcome," she said with a smile.

Who are you?

"Why Severus, don't you recognize the bane of your existence? It's Sybill."

Trelawney?

"Do you know of any other Sybill?"

Severus scowled. *What happened to you?*

"Well, thanks to you, I had to hide my true self so Voldemort didn't think I had more information on the prophecy. Albus felt that he would abduct me to find out what I knew, even though I knew nothing. Albus was sure that, in his rage, Voldemort would kill me. He suggested I hide my appearance and become the crazy woman you loved so much."

So you're not a kook?

Sybill laughed. "Well, I probably am a kook, but I do have a bit of talent that I've been hiding away. I also don't look quite as awful as I used to." She settled herself into the chair by Severus' bed.

You can read minds well, I'll give you that.

"A compliment from you? Has the world come crashing to an end?"

As far as I know it has. The last I remember, I was dead on the floor of the Shrieking Shack.

"Ah, well, to make a long story short, Harry killed Voldemort. Everyone's happy."

Severus looked stunned.

Harry didn't die?

"Do you mean that 'Harry's a Horcrux' thing?"

Horcrux?

"Dumbledore had you guarding Potter and didn't even bother to explain why?"

How do you know Dumbledore had me guarding Potter?

"I had a vision."

Right . . .

"Honestly, Severus. You don't think I was truly the untalented dullard I made myself out to be?"

I'm sorry, but I find it hard to believe that you can 'see' much of anything.

"Yet I know about Voldemort's Horcruxes and you don't. Hmm, it seems that although you think I am unable to 'see', I still am one up on you."

Severus narrowed his eyes at her. *What did you do, read Dumbledore's mind or something?*

It was Sybill's turn to narrow her eyes at Severus. "I only use that gift if I am given permission. I understand how much people value their privacy."

So you haven't used your mind reading skills in almost twenty years, yet they're still sharp as a tack? I find that hard to believe.

Sybill pulled herself forward in the chair, getting closer to Severus. "Believe what you will. I have only used my skills twice before this very instance. I am not a gossip monger like some of the teachers in this school."

When did you use them?

Sybill sighed and sat back again, putting a hand up to her face. "I'm sorry to say that they were both directed at you. Once was a long time ago, when you first joined the Order and became a teacher here. I apologize, Severus, but I was incredibly angry with you for hearing that prophecy and causing me to have to go into hiding. I truly hated my persona and the lesser person I had become. I found it very hard to believe that someone like you would turn so readily from your master's side. I was startled to find out that you truly had turned away from him.

Severus looked down in his lap. *I'm sorry I ruined your life.*

Sybill chuckled and waved his comment away. "You hardly ruined my life, Severus. If it hadn't been you, he would have found out from another. I got over that a long time ago."

Severus studied her face. She seemed to be sincere. *And the other occasion?*

"That was when you returned as the Headmaster. I was interested to see your reaction to all of us. It was blatant curiosity on my part, and I shouldn't have done it. But I had to know. I'm sorry we were all so hard on you. I would have been nicer, but I really couldn't change character."

Severus snorted.

"No, really. I had no reason to hate you. I understood what you were going through, having to pretend you were a cold blooded murderer."

I am a cold blooded murderer.

"Severus, your secret is out. Harry told Voldemort in front of everyone. Besides that, I knew the truth all along."

How?

"I had a vision."

And you believed it?

"I have never found any of my visions to be wrong."

Umm hmm...

"Look, just because I appeared to be a crazed loon doesn't mean that I really was one! My parents had high hopes that I would rival my great-great grandmother's abilities."

Were they delusional?

"Ha ha, very funny. No, they weren't delusional!"

So, if you knew all this from the beginning, why didn't you tell anyone about my innocence?

Sybill laughed. "Really, Severus. What should I have said? *You are in grave danger!*" Sybill waved her hands in front of her. She continued in her normal voice. "*Oh, and by the way, Severus and Albus planned his death between the two of them. Severus is on our side, he's not a murderer.* That would have gone over well."

Severus smirked. *I see your point.* He thought to himself for a minute. *So you get visions, but don't tell anyone about them?*

Sybill blushed. "Well, yes, I get a lot of visions, and no, I never tell anybody. Who would believe me? Occasionally it's a vision about someone being in *grave danger*." Sybill's voice went down an octave with her last two words, and she crooked her fingers, forming imaginary quotation marks. "Usually I could help that person and of course, I did if I could."

Their conversation was interrupted by Poppy's arrival. She came bustling over to the bed.

"Oh, Severus, you're awake finally. Now don't try to talk, your vocal chords will be mending for a few more days. But it's a miracle you're alive. Do you know what happened to you after the snake bit you?"

Severus shook his head.

"Okay, let me just do a quick exam."

Severus rolled his eyes as Poppy waved her wand over him.

Oh, Merlin, how long am going to be stuck in this blasted prison. Poppy will fawn all over me and treat me like a child. Maybe I should just curse her now, before she starts gushing all over me.

"Severus was wondering how long he'd be here," Sybill told Poppy while cocking an eyebrow at Severus.

Poppy continued waving her wand while answering. "Once your strength is back, Severus, you can leave. It could possibly be as early as tomorrow. I suspect Fawkes saved your life, as Phoenix tears had been administered to your wound."

Stuck in this hole for a day with Miss Scurry-About fussing over me. Kill me now.

Sybill snorted, but didn't translate his musings.

"You're doing fine, Severus. As I said, you should have your strength back soon," Poppy told him and disappeared into her office again.

"You're quite the patient, Severus," Sybill said with a grin.

I despise hospitals.

"I can't blame you." Suddenly a scared look came over Sybill's face. She stood abruptly and raced out the door.

Severus watched her quick departure and wondered about the odd witch. Granted, she was much easier to deal with without all of her jingly-jangly beads and crazy ranting, but her departure had certainly been odd.

oooOOOooo

Sybill raced up the stairs and down the hall. She had to be quick if she was going to be able to do anything. She screeched to a halt a few feet from Aberforth Dumbledore.

"Stop, Aberforth. Stop where you are!" she cried.

Aberforth stopped and turned, giving Sybill a curious glance.

"Get away from that wall, Aberforth, it's about to collapse!"

Aberforth didn't need to be warned twice. He ran to Sybill's side only a second or two before the wall tumbled to the ground.

"Holy cow!" Aberforth exclaimed. "I was just about to go inspect that to see what kind of repairs it needed." He glanced over at Sybill. "Whoever you are, madam, I am indebted to you!"

Sybill extended her hand. "I'm Sybill Trelawney, the Divination teacher."

Aberforth gave her a once over. "Weren't you blonde with big glasses?"

"Your brother convinced me to use a glamour and hide out here so I wouldn't be killed by Voldemort."

"He was always cracked in the head, that one."

Sybill laughed heartily. "I hate to say I agree with you. Sometimes his schemes were idiotic."

"Just sometimes? The man wouldn't have known a good idea if it slapped him in the face and yelled 'Look at me!' He was a foolish, secretive, old crackpot."

Sybill smiled at Aberforth in agreement. "Anyway, Aberforth, I'm glad I could help. I ran out on a friend, who probably thinks I've gone bonkers or something. Of course, I think he thought that before I disappeared from his side, but now it's been confirmed. I should get back to him."

"Thank you again, Professor. I owe you one."

"Don't mention it," Sybill said and turned to leave.

oooOOOooo

Sybill returned quietly to the hospital wing. Severus watched her as she came back to his bed, her cheeks red. She settled back into the chair she had vacated previously as if she had been on fire.

"Sorry I rushed out like that. Someone needed my help."

Another vision, I suppose.

"No, no! Actually, it was time for my daily jog, and I just happened upon Aberforth Dumbledore about to get crushed to death. No visions! Why on earth would you think that?"

Severus glared at her.

You saved him, I take it?

She nodded. "He was just about to be crushed by a falling wall. The castle is in bad shape, Severus, but it will recover."

Who died in the battle?

Sybill ticked off the names of those brave souls who had given their lives to defeat the maniacal overlord, Voldemort.

I should have been among them.

"No, Severus, you shouldn't have."

Another vision?

"No, I just know you were meant to survive. I'm glad you did."

They sat in silence for a while, Sybill examining her hands and Severus simply looking at the witch whom he thought he knew, but obviously had been incredibly wrong about.

"I should get going," Sybill said abruptly standing. "If you need something, call out to me in your head. I'll hear you."

Can't you just give me a bell or something?

Sybill smiled at him. "Your wand is at your bedside. You can probably get whatever you need with it."

He nodded and watched her leave, sank back down into the bed, and promptly fell asleep.

A/N: Next up: A scary vision.

Many thanks to my wonderful beta, who is hiding in the shadows. Some day your secret identity will be revealed. Thanks for reading and reviewing. I love hearing from all of

you.

Chapter 4: Present Vision

Chapter 4 of 20

Received Honorable Mention in Anything Goes Challenge. Sybill Trelawney has been hiding a huge secret. She's not the witch she appears to be. Now that she is no longer in danger, she can come out of hiding and be herself. But who is she, really? And what does she want out of life?

Chapter 4: Present Vision

A week later, Sybill knocked on Hagrid's door. He had invited her to lunch. She heard his giant dog, Fang, bark a few times, warning her that she had better be a friend, or else. Loud footsteps came towards the door, and it was thrown open. Hagrid looked down at her and smiled happily.

"Ah, Professor Trelawney! I'm glad yeh could come by."

He stood aside so she could enter his home. Sybill looked around at the cluttered, yet homey, hut. Hagrid pointed for her to have a seat at the table, and he hurried over to his kitchen area to get some refreshments. Sybill eased herself into the smaller chair and placed her hands on the table. It was a bit higher than the tables she was used to, but it wasn't uncomfortable. Hagrid returned to the table, setting a bowl in front of Sybill. She stared at it, but even her fine talent in Divination could not help her to identify just what it was that Hagrid had placed before her.

"Hagrid! You shouldn't have!" Sybill cried.

"Nonesense, Professor. I invited yeh ter lunch, and lunch I will provide."

Sybill looked up warily at Hagrid. His eyes grew wide, and he motioned for her to try it before he dug into his serving before him. Sybill gave him a tentative smile. She picked up her spoon in trepidation and stirred the mushy mass, trying to identify something in the bowl. It was hopeless. Everything was covered in brownish green goo. She glanced back at Hagrid and saw him watching her eagerly. She would need all of her acting skills to keep Hagrid happy today. She reluctantly lifted a spoonful to her mouth and tried the goop. Good Heavens, it was worse than it looked. She finally recognized the dish as some sort of stew, but what kind of meat was in it was totally beyond her comprehension. In reality, it tasted like a burned building in liquefied form. She gave Hagrid a wan smile.

"Delicious!" she lied.

Hagrid gave her a huge smile and began to gulp down his own bowl, making sounds like Mmmm, and ahh, as he ate. Sybill forced herself to take a few tiny bites of the mystery-meat stew without grimacing. She watched Hagrid closely, and when he was absorbed in his bowl, she secretly took her wand and vanished her serving. Hagrid looked up a few seconds later and noticed her empty bowl.

"Yer bowl's empty, Professor, I'll get yeh some more."

"No! No, Hagrid, I'm quite full, thank you," she assured him.

"Yer sure?"

"Quite... quite sure, Hagrid."

Hagrid smiled brightly at her.

"How are yeh adjusting, Professor?"

Sybill gave him a true smile, glad that the eating part of her visit was now over.

"Things have been going well, Hagrid. I've been busy with castle repairs, just like everybody else. I'm looking forward to the children's return. For the first time that I can remember, I'm eager to teach."

"Didn' yeh like teaching before, Professor?"

"Hagrid, please call me Sybill. I did like teaching before. I just had to do such a poor job of it before that it became more of a burden than a joy."

"Oh, I see," Hagrid said thoughtfully.

"So how is Olympe?" Sybill asked curiously.

"Ah, she's fine," Hagrid said with a glint in his eye. "Wait, how did yeh know about her?"

Sybill smiled. "I might have kept myself locked in the castle, but I was aware of much more of the goings on than I let on. I know you visit her occasionally. As a matter of fact, you seemed to disappear for a day or two after the battle. How is she doing?"

Hagrid chuckled. "I guess I'm not as sneaky as I thought!"

"Not to a Seer, Hagrid, not to a Seer."

"She's fine. She was practically rippin' 'er hair out worrying about' me, though. I knew she would be, so I went to see 'er as soon as I could."

Sybill nodded. "You care about her a great deal, don't you, Hagrid?"

"Yah, I do," he said with a faraway look.

"You shouldn't let her slip through your fingers."

"Wha' do yeh mean?"

Sybill got a faraway look for a minute and then responded. "You are both well suited, Hagrid. You will not find another woman to be as good as a companion as she is. She too, will be hard pressed to find someone to equal you. She loves you."

Hagrid scoffed. "Oi, I know she cares, but she'd never want someone like me aroun' forever."

"You underestimate her, Hagrid."

"How would yeh know tha'?"

"I'm a Seer, Hagrid. That means I see things. I see the two of you together, very happily."

"Do yeh now? Really? She could be happy with me?"

Sybill laughed. "Oh of course, Hagrid! Stop being so silly. You are a fine man and a wonderful, good-hearted person. She would be a fool not to see those traits in you."

Hagrid sat silently for a while, absorbing everything that Sybill said. Finally, he looked back up at her.

"I'll have to give it some thought, Professor."

"That's all I can ask," Sybill said.

Hagrid smacked himself in the head, making Sybill give him a curious look.

"I fergot ter offer yeh somethin' to drink, Professor! What'll yeh have? I've got some nice scotch if ye'd like?"

"No thanks, Hagrid. I'm giving up on strong drink. It's part of the 'New Me' project. No more crazy ranting from alcohol."

Hagrid laughed. "How about some pumpkin juice, then?"

"That would be lovely."

Sybill sat back and watched Hagrid get her drink. Her thoughts wandered to scotch. Suddenly, she remembered that she had quite a bit of it stored in the Room of Requirement. She would need to do something about all of that alcohol stored and ready for her access at the simple uttering of a need. She would head over to the Room of Requirement when she returned to the castle. She certainly didn't want that temptation right down the hall from her!

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The castle continued to repair itself. Most of the huge holes were now gone. There was still much to do, and the wizards and witches within were all helping, but the castle was quickly becoming what it had been before the battle.

Severus had been out of the hospital for several days now. He had stubbornly declined the offer for him to remain as Headmaster. He had not liked the attention before, and he certainly did not want the attention now. He didn't even want the Defense Against the Dark Arts position. He felt that now that Voldemort had been defeated, he was happy to leave the Dark Arts behind him. He, of course, would use his acquired knowledge, but he had no desire to be involved with even the class that defended against them. He was happy to resume his position as Potions master.

Severus was now helping with the castle's repairs. He was up on the seventh floor, examining the Room of Requirement. He was unsure if it would ever be the same. The door stood open and could not be shut. The interior of the room was a charcoal black cavern. Nothing remained in it but its four walls. He hoped that if they could restore the room, the rest of its magic would be restored too, but he couldn't be sure.

Being well trained in the Dark Arts, Severus knew all about Fiendfyre. Unfortunately, he was unsure how to counteract the damage done by it. Perhaps the counter curse to put Fiendfyre out would help some. He cast the spell and watched a purple light leave his wand and circle the room. The room remained the same.

Sybill wandered into the room, turning her head to examine the ruins before her.

"Are you following me, witch?" Severus asked without turning. His voice was still hoarse from his injuries.

"Ah, you sound much better, Severus," Sybill mused. "No, I wasn't following you. I was hoping that this room had been fixed somehow. I have a lot of scotch hidden in one of these rooms and I'd like to dispose of it."

"It's a bit early for a drink, isn't it?" Severus asked while continuing to eye the wall.

Sybill laughed at his assumption. "I actually intended to pour it down the sink."

"Such a waste of good scotch."

"It's not good for me. I let it take me over for a while, burying my sorrows in it. It was a foolish habit to get into."

Turning to Sybill, Severus smirked. "I found you rather funny when you were drunk, Sybill. You said the craziest things, and that's saying a lot for you."

Sybill flashed him a grin. "I can only imagine, as I can't remember half of the things I did when I was drunk."

"Do you have any inspiration as to how we can fix this room?" Severus asked as he turned back to the wall after a minute of silence.

She walked over to one of the walls and touched it tentatively. The charcoal crumbled in her hands, revealing a pristine wall underneath. Sybill furrowed her brows and began to crumble more of the wall. Soon she had a small circle of the real wall exposed underneath. Severus had wandered up to her and began to crumble more of the charcoal away to reveal the wall behind it.

"Maybe a good *Scourgify* will clean it?" Sybill asked.

Severus tried the spell, but nothing happened. He tried a few other cleaning spells, but none worked. Even peeling and vanishing spells proved ineffective against the charred walls. He turned back to Sybill.

"It looks like we have to do it with our bare hands."

She nodded and they went back to work. It went slowly. It took two hours to clear several feet of wall, and this room was enormous.

"Maybe we should call in reinforcements?" Sybill wondered aloud.

"We at least need a break. All of this dust is irritating my throat."

"Come on, I've got some ice cold lemonade in my room," Sybill offered and turned to leave.

Severus took his wand and waved it over the two of them, making the soot that covered them disappear. They headed out of the room and down the hall to Sybill's quarters. Sybill led the way. Severus was close behind her. Before long they had entered her room. Severus looked around. It was not at all what he had expected.

"I got rid of all of the beads and pillows when I changed my appearance. I couldn't stand the stuff."

Severus smirked at her. She conjured up two glasses while a pitcher with lemonade floated over from her fridge. She poured and handed a glass to Severus. She then filled one for herself. Motioning to the sofa, she took a seat and was soon joined by Severus. After drinking half of the glass, she turned to him.

"You're working yourself too hard, you know," she told him.

"It keeps my mind off of other things," Severus said blandly.

"You'll have to face your demons eventually, Severus."

"I'll choose later, thank you."

"If you ever want to talk about it, I'm here," Sybill offered.

"Yes, just the person I want to confide in: the woman who is more of a bat than I am."

Sybill laughed. "You'll find me to be a good listener, Severus. I know it seems like I was very self absorbed, but remember, that was an act."

Severus nodded. "I don't want to talk about it anyway."

Sybill nodded. Suddenly she dropped her glass and grasped her head. She bent over and cradled her head in her hands.

"Oww! Oh Merlin, that hurts. Make it stop!" she screamed as she held her head. "Please, make it stop!"

Severus grabbed her and turned her toward him. "Sybill, what is it?" he said with concern.

"Oh, please make it stop!"

As quickly as it began, it had ended, and Sybill collapsed against Severus. "Oh that hurt!" she exclaimed. Tears streamed down her face from the pain.

Severus pushed her away so he could look at her. "What was that?" he asked.

Sybill looked at Severus. She breathed raggedly as she tried to collect her scattered thoughts. This type of premonition always left her brain a bit befuddled. She searched his face as she tried to catch her breath.

"It was a vision of the present. These types of visions are rare, and always painful."

"Are you alright? What did you see?" Severus demanded.

"I . . . I saw Rodolphus Lestrange and Lucius Malfoy. They seek revenge for Voldemort's death. They want to kill me for ever uttering the prophecy."

"They will not succeed."

"I shouldn't have thought I was safe!" she wailed. "I'll never be safe! That horrid prophecy will haunt me until the day I die!" Furious tears ran down Sybill's face.

Severus grasped both of Sybill's arms and shook her. "Stop it this instant!" he demanded. "We will find Lucius and Rodolphus and they will not harm you. Surely you can figure out where they are!"

Sybill stopped crying and stared at Severus. She calmed herself down before she spoke.

"Of course you're right. Everything will be fine, right?"

"Of course," Severus assured her.

"But I don't know where they are or where to find them."

"Can you look in your crystal ball?"

"I can try."

She tried crystal-gazing for half an hour. She could conjure up a picture of the two men, but even Severus didn't recognize where they were. She finally pushed the ball away from her.

"It's hopeless," she said in defeat.

Severus stooped down so he could look into her face.

"We'll find them. Don't worry."

"Why are you being so nice to me?" Sybill asked him.

"I owe you. Poppy told me you sensed that I was still alive. Everyone else had forgotten about me. I . . . appreciate you being concerned about a dead man."

"But you weren't dead, and I knew it."

"I appreciate that too."

Sybill smirked at him.

"Oh, get out of here. I don't need a sappy Severus Snape fawning all over me."

Severus raised an eyebrow at her. "I, madam, am never sappy."

"Until this very minute," Sybill finished for him.

"I resent that remark," Severus said in mock indignation and with a slight frown on his face.

Sybill laughed. "Very funny. Now get out of here. I need to think."

Severus rose to his full height. "Let me know if you have any more of these visions," he advised Sybill.

"You'll be the first to know."

Severus turned and left. Sybill hurried and grabbed her teapot, pouring a cup of the ever present tea. She swirled the tea and poured it out slowly into the sink, carefully keeping the leaves behind. When all of the tea was gone, she placed the cup upside down on the counter next to the sink. She feared looking into it for what she would find. She slowly picked up the cup and stared into the bottom of it. *Damn, the Grim.* She could use some of that scotch she had poured down the sink right about now.

Next up: Old habits die hard.

Thanks gang, for reading and reviewing. It's fun to hear from you. And of course, Mystery Beta, I am indebted to you. Someday you'll be able to take your bow.

Chapter 5: Visions in a bottle

Chapter 5 of 20

Received Honorable Mention in Anything Goes Challenge. Sybill Trelawney has been hiding a huge secret. She's not the witch she appears to be. Now that she is no longer in danger, she can come out of hiding and be herself. But who is she, really? And what does she want out of life?

Chapter 5: Visions in a bottle

Severus Apparated to Malfoy Manor. The family was awaiting trial, but everyone felt that they would be let off because of Narcissa's saving Harry Potter's life. Severus strode to the door and knocked. The butler answered within minutes.

"Is Lucius home?" he asked.

The butler shook his head.

"What about Narcissa?"

"The lady is in."

"Well, may I speak with her?" Severus said through gritted teeth.

"Of course, Master Snape."

Severus strode past him and into the study. Soon Narcissa came through the doors and greeted him with a smile.

"Severus, what can I do for you?"

"Where is Lucius?" Severus demanded.

"I don't know. He left a couple of days ago. I haven't heard a word from him."

"Does he have a death wish?" Severus asked caustically.

"What are you on about, Severus?"

"He is plotting with Lestrage. I need to find the both of them before they kill someone or get themselves killed!"

"No, Severus, Lucius has left that life behind him. He assured me . . ."

"His word is worthless, Narcissa, even you know that. I tell you, he is up to no good. Do you have any idea where he might be?"

Narcissa looked at him evenly. "I have no idea."

"If you find out, owl me please. It is urgent."

Narcissa debated her options. She finally nodded her head in the affirmative to Severus. He gave a slight nod of his own head and turned and left.

oooOOOooo

Severus entered the castle and was about to descend the stairs to the dungeons when something grabbed his attention. It was singing. Horrible singing that was coming from one of the floors above him. Curiosity overcame him and he sought the voice. Climbing the stairs, he stopped on the next floor. The singer was female and she was singing on top of her lungs.

"Welcome to the Hotel California! Such a lovely place, such a lovely face."

Severus smirked and went down the hall, looking for the song abuser. He found her quickly. Sybill Trelawney stumbled forward, an empty bottle of scotch in her hand, singing on top of her lungs.

"In the master's chambers, they gather for their feast. They stab it with their steely knives but they just can't kill the beast!"

"Sybill," Severus said, his face filled with mirth.

Sybill turned to him and continued singing. *"Last thing I remember, I was running for the door. I had to find the passage back to the place I was before."* She grabbed Severus' robes. *"Relax, said the night man, we are programmed to receive. You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave!"* Her plaintive song ended in a wail.

"I thought you gave up drinking," Severus said with amusement.

Sybill came up close to Severus' face. Her speech was a bit slower than usual and slightly slurred. "I gave up a lot of things, Severus: stupidity, craziness, a false sense of security. Where did it get me? On a death list! Even Dumbledore can't save me now. Him and his stupid schemes. Here, Sybill, act like a lunatic. No one will expect a lunatic to know anything. Go bonkers! The worse the better. That's it, puppet, dance for me! Join Severus. He's my puppet too! He's gonna kill me and be hated by everybody! Isn't that a great plan! Won't that solve *everything*?"

"Sybill," Severus said calmly.

"Don't! Don't defend him. Did he tell you he cared about you? That's what he told me as he changed my looks into that ugly, batty woman!" Sybill pointed at herself and stumbled sideways. "He did it for me, he told me. What did he tell you, Severus, as he destroyed your life? Was it for your own good? Was it to further the cause? The only cause he ever furthered was his own, the old geezer!"

"Sybill," Severus said a bit more loudly.

"Eighteen years I lived like a shell. Now I can finally be myself and those stupid Death Eater's are going to kill me."

"Sybill, I will not let that happen!" Severus said tersely.

Tears ran down her face. "I read the tea leaves. I saw the Grim. I'm doomed!"

"Tea leaves are an absurdity!"

"No, they're not!"

"What respectable Seer truly uses them?"

"Well, there's . . ."

"Did your great-great-grandmother use them?"

"No, she thought they were hogwash, but . . ."

"Utter nonsense, right?"

"But . . . I saw . . ."

"Nonsense!"

"Severus!"

Severus' hands grasped her arms. "Sybill, snap out of it! You're drunk! Go to bed, for Merlin's sake, and we'll talk in the morning. Wherever did you get that scotch anyway? I thought you poured it all down the drain."

Successfully distracted, she concentrated on the new topic. "I forgot one!" she said with a huge smile as she lifted the bottle to show off her prize.

"I see. Let me help you up to your room."

"But you live down there," Sybill pointed to the floor.

"I can go up the stairs and then go down to my room, it's no trouble."

"Yes, it is. Up is not down!"

Severus almost laughed. "You're right. Let's just go up."

Sybill looked straight up. "But there's just a ceiling up there. Oh, right, you can fly, huh?" Her eyes widened at him. "Someone was talking about that." Sybill's voice was a reverent whisper at her last musing.

Severus rolled his eyes. "We'll fly another day. Let's just take the stairs, okay."

"Right!" she said slowly, her finger pointed in the air. Taking a step away from Severus, she stumbled and almost fell. Severus grabbed at her and steadied her.

"How about I just put my arm around you for support, Sybill."

She laughed. It was rather melodious for a woman drunk off her behind.

They proceeded to the stairway and up the many staircases to her room.

"I should let my hair grow long. Then I can just toss it out the window and you can climb it and visit me, Severus."

"Sounds like a marvelous idea, Sybill."

She looked at him in incredulity. "Really?"

"No."

Sybill frowned. "You are such a party pooper!"

"So I have been told," he said drolly.

She laughed again. Her emotions were on a roller coaster. "It's quite endearing."

"Sybill, I swear, if you call me endearing ever again, I will give you to the Death Eaters."

Sybill stopped laughing. A look of fear crossed her face. Severus knew he had made a mistake in bringing that up again. Why did he have such a big mouth, and why couldn't he keep his sarcasm in check in front of this drunken mess he was escorting?

"I was just kidding," he said quickly. "I would never do such a thing."

Her face looked drawn. "It doesn't matter. They will find me."

"I said we would speak of this in the morning. Now pick a cheerier topic."

"Hagrid is going to ask Madame Maxime to marry him."

Severus looked to Sybill. "Where did you hear that?"

"I was reading the cards this morning. They told the whole story. Isn't that exciting?"

"I suppose. They make a rather large couple."

Sybill hit Severus lightly on the chest.

"Oh, Severus, where's your romance? Everyone deserves someone who can make them happy."

Sybill stared at Severus for a few seconds, then continued, "Yes, even you," she chided him.

"I thought you didn't read minds unless given permission."

Sybill clapped her hand over her mouth. "Oh gosh! I'm sorry," she gushed. "It must be the alcohol. I'm sorry, it will never happen again!"

"Until you're drunk again."

"That won't happen again, either. I'm not very fond of this feeling." Sybill frowned and rubbed her stomach.

"You do look a bit green."

Sybill laughed again. "Do I match my eyes?" She batted her eyelids at him.

Severus looked into her eyes. They were a deep, clear green. "Did you change your eye color too?" he asked.

"Can you imagine looking into these eyes when they are as big as saucers? I wasn't supposed to call attention to myself, remember?"

"So you cavorted around in a shawl and tons of beads. That was sure to not attract attention," Severus said dryly.

"Crazy loon attention was one thing," she slurred and then hiccupped. "Deep, green-eyed attention was certainly another." Pointing a finger at her face, she got close to Severus'. "My eyes had to look stupid too."

"I see," Severus said with a bit of sadness in his voice.

"What?" she asked him.

"I'm sorry you had to act so unlike yourself, Sybill. It's all my fault."

"Sweet of you to say, Severus, but it was Albus' fault, not yours."

"If I hadn't heard the prophecy . . ."

"Didn't we have this conversation once before?" she asked him point blank. Her words seemed to jumble together as she spoke.

"It doesn't matter what you said before. I still feel guilty."

Sybill stopped. She turned and looked at him. It was hard for her to focus on him, so she squinted.

"Don't you have enough guilt swimming around in there?" She waved her finger at his head. "Let go, Severus. Just let go. None of it is your fault and any of it that was, you have more than made up for. Give yourself some freedom."

With that, she waved her finger over his head, turned, and stumbled up the stairs. Severus steadied her and escorted her the rest of the way to her room. His chest was tight within himself. She was right, of course. He had been driven to do much of what he did. The horrid acts of his youth were now long gone, and he had atoned for them. Even the guilt he felt about killing Dumbledore was misguided. He had only been doing what the old man had asked, begged for, even. He had been a puppet, just like Sybill had said in her drunken state. He had danced for two masters, though, not just one. The horrid things he had done had left him a broken mess. Was that who he really wanted to be? Had he not suffered enough under the ministrations of two madmen? Perhaps it was time for him to move ahead with his life.

He was tired of being who he was: a dour, bitter, shell of a man. He had been riddled with guilt for the main part of his life. He glanced at Sybill. Although drunk as a skunk, the woman had been right. He needed to let it all go. Wallowing in guilt and self pity would not change the past. He had effectively changed his life years ago, but had been unable to rejoice in that fact, having been laden with grief and guilt about his actions as a Death Eater, culminating in his hand in Lily Evan's death. Well, she had been dead for a good, long while now. He needed to shed that guilt and move on. He had loved her, she had left him. His love had turned to obsession, guilt, and shame and had overtaken his life. It was time to move on. She had moved on in life and in death. He needed to leave this obsession about her behind and purge the guilt he felt every minute of the day. It was destroying him more so than that giant snake had destroyed him.

He had decided that after his brush with death, it had been time to shed the evil Death Eater persona and become the person he would have liked to have become had his life not become such a mess. If only he could have foreseen the results of his foray into the Dark Arts when he was young and power hungry. Maybe he would be a much different man today. But that could not be changed. He could, however, change his attitudes. He had been trying to be a better man. That was all he had ever wanted for himself for the last twenty years or so, to be a better man. Nothing he had done, however, prior to now, had helped him to see himself as a better man, or had helped him to act as a better one. Now, with both of his taskmasters finally dead, he had a chance to live his life as he saw fit and to be the type of person that he wanted to be. But he was finding it challenging to change years of snappish behavior. It would take time. He would need to keep working diligently to become less heavy handed. But Sybill had changed overnight. Surely that gave him some hope for himself. If she could turn herself around in a matter of hours, he could certainly be a better person with time. He would need to continue trying, at least. He certainly wasn't happy with who he was now.

They had finally reached her door, and Severus saw to it that Sybill was comfortably lying down in her bed before he turned to leave her. He turned back quickly.

"Now, no more wandering the halls, Sybill, or you will have to deal with me and my wand."

"Yes, Severus. I'll be good."

Severus nodded and left her to her stupor of dreams, having much to think about.

Keep those reviews coming! I'm having a blast hearing your opinions on my reformed Sybill. Thanks to my beta, who does a wonderful job and keeps me on the ball, and thanks to you for reading.

Chapter 6: Morning's Musings

Chapter 6 of 20

Received Honorable Mention in Anything Goes Challenge. Sybill Trelawney has been hiding a huge secret. She's not the witch she appears to be. Now that she is no longer in danger, she can come out of hiding and be herself. But who is she, really? And what does she want out of life?

Chapter 6: Morning's Musings

The next morning there was a knock on her door. Sybill groaned loudly, but she was sure that whoever was on the other side of the door could not hear her. Sitting up, she took her wand off her bedside table and waved it at the door.

"Come in!" she yelled and immediately grabbed her head.

Severus came into her room a moment later. He held out a small vial.

"Drink this," he told her.

She took it and downed it without a word. The potion worked immediately, and Sybill's head cleared.

"Thank you," she said as she cleared the taste of the potion out of her mouth by snapping her tongue a few times. She noticed she was still wearing the same green robe that she had worn the other night. It smelled of scotch.

"Finally lucid?" Severus asked.

Sybill looked embarrassed. "Thank you for leading me home last night. I probably would have wandered the halls all night if you hadn't."

"Your singing would have awakened someone, and they would have shooed you back here. Your voice is awful!"

"Thank you. I pride myself on my singing voice," Sybill said with a smirk.

"The Weird Sisters are quaking in their boots," Severus said with a smirk of his own.

Sybill laughed.

"Are you still upset about your tea leaves?" Severus said abruptly as he sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Of course I am! I saw the Grim!" She changed her voice to her deeper one and leaned forward a little. "I am in grave danger!"

Severus scowled. "Well, at least you can joke about it. Do you remember what I told you last night?"

"Was it something along the lines of *reading tea leaves is a bunch of bunk*?"

"Yes, I believe that's close to what I said," Severus said tartly.

"I remember." She eyed him for a while. "Of course you're right. My entire family only ever turned to tea leaves as a last resort. I'm so used to using them now as my alter ego. I just went to them out of habit. I've turned myself into a true charlatan, haven't I?" She looked to Severus with a small, rueful smile.

"Sybill, you are not a charlatan. Your actions this past week have more than shown that."

Sybill's mouth dropped open. "You really believe me? You of all people?"

"Why is that so hard to believe?" Severus asked sternly.

"You hate Divination. You think it's ridiculous!"

"I thought *you* were ridiculous. Have you ever met Madam Darvey? She's a fascinating woman. You remind me of her now, actually."

"Madam Darvey? She taught me to crystal-gaze when I was a child. She is amazing, as you say."

"She has a remarkable sixth sense," Severus agreed.

"She used to always say 'Are you in the beyond?' to center us. She would say it, but not as a hare-brained idiot, whenever we worked with our crystal balls. I'm afraid I've ruined the reference with my take on it." She giggled.

Severus rolled his eyes at her. "If you never uttered those words again, I would die a happy man."

Sybill narrowed her eyes at him. "I'm sorry, I can't promise you that. It's just too much fun to blurt out in the middle of dinner. There's something about everyone eyeing me as if I've lost it that I find quite appealing."

"You really are a loon, Sybill Trelawney."

"Thank you, you're so kind!" Sybill drawled.

Severus only shook his head.

"Severus, may I ask you a question?"

"Yes, you'll just read my mind anyway, so go ahead," he replied tartly.

Sybill stiffened. "I'm really sorry about that, Severus. I wasn't in control last night, and it was out of line."

Severus sniffed. "Forget about it," he snapped.

Sybill looked down, filled with embarrassment.

"Your question, Professor?"

"You seem to be more easygoing since the end of the war. Do you feel more at peace?"

Severus furrowed his brow in thought. "I am relieved that the war is over. I'm not sure I would label it peace. Like you, Sybill, I lived behind a mask of what I needed to be to survive. I too am working to shed that mask. I am trying to be more like the man I would have wanted to be before becoming a secretive spy. Does that make any sense?"

Sybill nodded and smiled at him. "It makes perfect sense. I'm glad you can be yourself, finally."

"I suppose that, in a small way, I have you to thank for it."

Sybill looked at Severus curiously. "Why do you say that?"

"Just something you said last night. It was something about giving myself some freedom. I have been so obsessed with everything that has happened in my past that freedom has not been anything I could even fathom for the longest time. With the end of the war came new possibilities. I hope to take advantage of those possibilities."

Severus looked at her. She could definitely understand what he was saying; she was living the same thing herself. He suddenly found an affinity with Sybill Trelawney that he never thought could be possible. He flashed a smirk at her.

"I'm glad you have been able to take advantage of those same freedoms too," Severus remarked. "You shouldn't think of drowning yourself in alcohol anymore. It serves no purpose."

Sybill nodded. "I know." She looked down. "I'm really embarrassed. I don't know what got into me. It was like a chain reaction. Read the tea leaves, get sodded: typical Trelawney behavior."

"But you're not that Trelawney any more. You need to remember that."

Sybill looked down at her fingers. "You're right, I do."

"So, then we agree that you will never touch a bottle of alcohol again?" he demanded sternly.

"I promise," Sybill answered as she looked back at Severus.

"I will hold you to that, witch. No matter how funny of a drunk you are, I prefer to see you as yourself."

Sybill leaned back against the headboard of her bed and folded her arms. "I'm still trying to find out exactly who 'myself' is."

"You seem to be doing fine to me," Severus admitted.

"Then I have you fooled. Half the time I'm trying to not freak out about something I've seen. The other half of the time I'm worried that everyone still thinks I'm that insane woman that I used to be."

"You're being too hard on yourself," Severus admonished. "Everyone has treated you fine. The staff is talking to you and is friendly. What more do you want?"

"Of course, I should know not to confide in a reclusive man who could care less if he had a friend," Sybill huffed and blew her bangs out of her vision.

Severus looked down. "I actually would like to have friends," he remarked softly. "I was hoping that you were one of them. I have just been used to being so closed about my life for so long, that I am uncertain how to act around others."

Sybill sat up straight again. She reached out and took Severus' hand in hers. "I'm sorry," she said seriously. "Of course you're my friend. I didn't mean to offend you. I'm just feeling a bit sorry for myself, I guess. Will you forgive me?"

Severus stared at her hand holding his and then looked up at her. "I believe that's what friends do. Of course, I have little experience in the matter," he said, a bit sarcastically.

Sybill looked down. "You seem to be doing a much better job than I am at the moment."

"Sybill," Severus called. Sybill looked back up at him. "You need to stop worrying so much. Take things as they are, and stop trying to read into them. If someone is nice to you, then they are probably not cursing you behind your back. I understand how hard that can be, because for most of my life it is how I thought. The spy in me taught me to never trust anyone and to question any niceties that ever came my way. Fortunately, with the war over, those suspicions can mostly be left behind. I too am trying not to jump to conclusions about other's motives. I have been attempting to do so since leaving the infirmary, at least. I find that I am successful only about a third of the time."

"That's probably a better average than mine. You see, Severus, that's what I do. I read people, I read the future, and I look into things, searching for hidden meanings."

Severus carefully took his hand back, as he thought of a response to her. "Sometimes a compliment is just a compliment," he said finally. "Sometimes a smile is not trying to catch you off guard. On occasion, people actually say what they mean, instead of trying to hide their motives. You should see things as they are. You have friends, and they are not talking behind your back. Believe me, if they were, I would have heard them."

"It seems that you have done a lot of soul searching since leaving the hospital ward, Severus. Thank you. I will try to not worry so much."

"That would probably be the best for all parties concerned. No one wants to see you wig out or drink yourself into a stupor again."

Severus rose. "I should be going. I need to speak with the Headmistress."

"You're not going to rat me out, are you?"

"I'm sure she heard you screaming last night. Wait, I think you called it . . . singing?"

Sybill threw her pillow at him. He caught it and threw it back, slamming her in the face.

"I warn you now; you cannot win in a pillow battle against me!" Severus said darkly.

Sybill got up and went over to him, slamming the pillow on top of his head. He wrestled it from her and began to slam her with it. Sybill retreated to the bed and grabbed

another pillow. They fought for several minutes, until one of Severus' blows sent Sybill crashing to the floor. Severus dropped the pillow and bent down to help her up. Sybill was laughing hysterically, which helped Severus' chagrin at knocking her down.

"Are you alright?" he asked with concern.

Sybill couldn't stop laughing. "I'm fine," she finally spit out.

"You sound as if you've been hit with a laughing hex," he said dryly.

Sybill laughed some more. "I just would never picture you to involve yourself in a pillow fight. That's all."

"You will find that I am willing to involve myself in many surprising things, now that I can be myself."

"I think I like this new you, Severus," Sybill said with a smile.

"And I like the new you, Sybill." Severus turned and bid her farewell, leaving her still chuckling as he walked out the door.

Next up: Sybill plans for the future.

Thank you, mystery beta, for checking my work over so thoroughly. Thank you, dear readers, for sticking with this and reviewing it so nicely.

Chapter 7: Formulating Plans

Chapter 7 of 20

Received Honorable Mention in Anything Goes Challenge. Sybill Trelawney has been hiding a huge secret. She's not the witch she appears to be. Now that she is no longer in danger, she can come out of hiding and be herself. But who is she, really? And what does she want out of life?

Chapter 7: Formulating Plans

Several weeks had passed, and Sybill's worries had calmed considerably. At first she had been quite skittish, but now she was back to herself, a calm aura surrounding her. She was in the Room of Requirement, stripping the walls. The faculty and those helping to restore Hogwarts decided to restore the room in shifts. Most shifts consisted of five people, but today she was only scheduled to work with one other person. Each shift worked for two hours, and everyone rotated throughout the week. Today Sybill was supposed to be paired with Professor Flitwick, but he had left the castle to bring Calliope to meet his family, so she was alone.

She didn't mind being alone at all. She had spent a great deal of her life alone and was comfortable with silence. It gave her time to think. She crumbled the shell that was over the wall and let her mind wander. What would she do with the rest of her life?

She knew she wanted to keep teaching. She also knew that now that she had shed her loony-bin persona, she would like to find a gentleman to marry. Unfortunately, it was quite hard to find gentlemen to date when one was cooped up in a castle full of pre-pubescent students all day. She would need to visit Hogsmeade more often. She hadn't been there at all before her retransformation, and she had only gone the one time to get her wardrobe since. She hadn't even browsed much in the town. Yes, she'd need to visit more often. Maybe she could hang out in the Three Broomsticks and find someone nice to date.

Sybill huffed at herself. She had gone from loony to floozy in a few short weeks. Why would she even contemplate trying to find a man in a bar? She must be more desperate than she thought!

Maybe she should just live in Hogsmeade. She could Apparate to the Hogwarts gates every day for her job. That would give her some social life. Maybe that was the answer. She would go to the little town tomorrow and look around. That would help her to know if she should live there or not.

"Professor Trelawney?" a voice rang out behind her.

She turned to see Harry Potter standing in the doorway.

"Harry! How nice to see you!" She went over to him and shook his hand.

"I wasn't sure if that was you, Professor. The Headmistress just said you had straight black hair."

"Well, I'm not Professor Snape, so you chose wisely."

Harry chuckled. "Oh, I just came from speaking with him."

"My we are getting brave in our adulthood, aren't we, Harry?"

Harry laughed. "Professor, I wanted to..."

"Harry, I want to thank you. If you hadn't killed Voldemort, I would still be the batty teacher that you knew all of those years. You have given me freedom, Harry, and I'm very grateful."

Harry turned red. "I'm embarrassed to say I never had a high regard for you when in school. Professor McGonagall has told me that you're quite remarkable with your sight."

"You really are quite brave to divulge such a well-kept secret about your feelings for me, Harry." Sybill laughed at her joke. "I know everyone thought I was nuts. That was my intent. I will admit, it was hard having everyone think that about me, but Professor Dumbledore was insistent that I would be safer that way."

"I wish I could see you teach now. I might learn something."

"You took classes with Firenze, didn't you?"

Harry nodded.

"Then you certainly learned something."

"I thought you hated him?"

"I acted like it. I find centaur Divination extremely fascinating, and when he returns I intend to have a good sit down with him and discuss it."

Harry shook his head. "I can't believe you're so different."

Sybill smiled at him. She suddenly looked at him seriously. "Harry, you shouldn't wait."

"Wait for what?"

"You shouldn't wait to start your Auror training."

"How did you know..." He looked at her in puzzlement. "Oh, right, you really are a Seer."

Sybill put her hand on Harry's shoulder. "You will accomplish great things as an Auror. You need to start now. The people you will work with will not be available to you even in a few months. They will give you skills you will not be able to acquire from anyone else."

"I just wonder if it's the right thing to do, you know?" Harry looked down at his shoes. "After the battle, I find I'd like to not be so entrenched in fighting the bad guys."

Sybill nodded her head at Harry. "That's understandable, Harry. If I were you, I would probably feel the same way. But you are destined to be an Auror. You must begin your path as soon as possible."

Harry wasn't sure whether to believe Professor Trelawney or not.

"I understand your hesitation, Harry, but I'm speaking the truth. Ultimately, it is your choice."

"Thanks, Professor. I'll give it some thought."

Sybill smiled at him. "That's all I can ask. I wish I could have told you some things a long time ago. I have had several visions about you over the years, but have not been able to speak of them."

"You never seemed afraid to tell me of your visions, Professor," Harry remarked.

"I'm speaking of real visions, Harry, not the *you are in grave danger* kind of visions," she answered shrewdly.

"What did you see in these visions?" Harry asked with curiosity.

"Well, for one thing, I knew you would enter the Chamber of Secrets and live to tell about it. The thing, though, that I wanted to tell you the most, is that your parents loved you very much. I always felt that you were lonely growing up. They would have wanted you to be loved, Harry. I saw a vision of them right after they were killed. They were mourning their separation from you. They truly felt terrible because they knew you wouldn't receive the proper upbringing from the Dursleys."

Harry only stared at Sybill. He didn't know what to say. He had seen his parents through the Resurrection Stone and had felt their love, but to hear it from her made it all the more real. He felt himself tear up and fought to control himself.

"Thank you, Professor. That really means a lot to me."

"Anytime, Harry."

She watched Harry leave the large room and went back to her scraping.

oooOOOooo

Later that day, Sybill was eating her dinner and chatting with Madam Hooch. Rolanda and she had formed a tight bond during the weeks since the war. Since it was summer, and all of the stragglers from the battle had finally left the castle, there was a subtle easiness surrounding the entire place. Rolanda and Sybill would oftentimes spend over an hour chatting at breakfast. It was the one meal of the day they gave themselves the luxury of lounging about in.

Sybill had been ecstatic at Rolanda's friendship. Of the entire faculty, Rolanda had been the one who had avoided her the most. Well, except for the times Severus had literally run the other way when he had seen her. Rolanda's personality was certainly the polar opposite of Sybill's when she was 'Crazy Trelawney,' but now they seemed to agree on most everything. It was refreshing to have new friends after so much solitude for so long. Before the only faculty member who had even given her more than a glance had been Minerva. Minerva and she, of course, were still good friends, but it was nice for Sybill to be able to talk to more than one person at the dinner table.

"You really shouldn't move to Hogsmeade, Sybill!" Rolanda cried. "We've just become friends, and I'd miss our talks."

"Rolanda, it's not like we would never speak to one another, you know."

"You can't move to Hogsmeade," Severus said with a scowl. He had just entered the Hall and situated himself next to Sybill moments before the conversation had turned to living in Hogsmeade.

Sybill turned to him. "And why is that?"

"It's too dangerous right now. You must stay in the castle."

"Why would it be dangerous?" Rolanda queried.

Sybill sighed. "I had a premonition that the Death Eaters are out for my blood because of the prophecy I gave about Harry Potter."

Rolanda gasped. "Well, that's all the more reason to stay here, Sybill!"

Sybill pushed down her annoyance at the two friends who had just appointed themselves her baby sitters.

"I am going to Hogsmeade tomorrow, and I'm looking around," she said tersely. "If I like it, I will find a flat and move there."

Severus looked at her and said slowly, "But, Sybill, you are in grave danger!"

Sybill's anger abated, and she laughed heartily. After a minute she composed herself.

"You two need to understand," she explained in a calmer voice. "I have been hiding and running for 18 years. I'm tired of letting others determine my future. I won't let those men manipulate me into being scared and hiding anymore. I can fight just as well as anyone else. I won't be intimidated."

Severus looked at Sybill and admired her bravery. Nonetheless, he still thought her moving to Hogsmeade was a terrible idea and said so.

"I haven't decided to move definitely," Sybill retorted with a wave of her hand. "That's why I want to go tomorrow. The last time I was there I barely looked at anything."

"I'll go with you then," Severus said in a tone that was not to be argued with, "to assure your safety."

Sybill must not have recognized his tone. "You can't shadow me wherever I go, Severus. I'm perfectly fine going alone."

"You'll be perfectly fine going with me, or you will not go at all!" Severus snapped.

Rolanda leaned over and whispered loudly in Sybill's ear. "There's no arguing with him when he's like that. You don't want him to poison you, do you?"

Sybill looked to Rolanda curiously. "If he never poisoned me when I was an idiot, why would he poison me now? I was much more annoying to him then!"

"Yes, you were, and I'm sitting right here," Severus uttered caustically. "You don't have to speak like I'm not even in the room!"

The two women looked over at Severus and burst out laughing. He looked incredibly put out, and they found that to be hilarious. Severus rolled his eyes and went back to his meal.

"What time are we leaving tomorrow?" he asked sulkily.

"Oh, Sybill, you've hurt his feelings!" Rolanda exclaimed.

Severus scowled, and Sybill understood they had gone too far.

"That's enough, Rolanda. There's no need to be rude." She turned her attention to Severus and pretended as if nothing had happened. "How about ten in the morning?"

Severus nodded, but did not look up. Sybill shrugged it off and went back to her own meal. She waited a little before she tried to get Severus to speak again.

"Do you need anything while we're there?" she asked him.

He shook his head no. Sybill was finished with her meal, so she excused herself.

"I'll see you tomorrow, Severus. Both of you have a nice evening."

With that she turned and left the Great Hall.

A/N: Next up: Examining Hogsmeade

I hope you enjoyed today's chapter. Thanks to my mystery beta. She comes up with the most wonderful ideas! Thanks also to you. I was uncertain whether this story would garner interest, but it seems to have a nice following. I really appreciate that!

Chapter 8: Opinions

Chapter 8 of 20

Received Honorable Mention in Anything Goes Challenge. Sybill Trelawney has been hiding a huge secret. She's not the witch she appears to be. Now that she is no longer in danger, she can come out of hiding and be herself. But who is she, really? And what does she want out of life?

Chapter 8: Opinions

Harry Potter entered Grimmauld Place deep in thought. His conversation earlier with Professor Trelawney had given him much to think about. As he went through the door, down the hall, and into the kitchen, he didn't even notice Hermione and Ron sitting at the table, each with a piping hot bowl of stew in front of them.

"Oi, Harry, you're just in time. Hermione has fixed us dinner," Ron said with his mouth full.

Harry looked up, startled, then fished a bowl from the cupboard and filled it. He seated himself next to Hermione and began to silently eat.

The trio had decided to return to Grimmauld Place after the war. Ron couldn't stand being at home, it was just too depressing. Harry, of course, went where Ron went, and since Grimmauld was his own, it seemed like the perfect place to get away from everyone and everything. Hermione had sought out her parents in Australia and restored their memories, only to have them snub her for her actions. She had retreated to the old Black home while her parents cooled down and hopefully forgave her for not consulting with them before using a Memory Charm to change their entire life.

"So, how did your meeting with Snape go?" Ron asked.

"Professor Snape," Hermione interrupted between bites of stew.

Ron ignored her. "Did he throw you out before you had a chance to ask about your mum?" he asked Harry.

Harry smiled a bit. "No, actually he was... nice."

Ron and Hermione both stared at Harry with wide eyes.

"He seemed put out that I had come, but he told me to sit down, and he answered everything that I asked him."

"What did you find out?" Hermione asked curiously.

"Well, he felt really bad when he called my mum a Mudblood. He always regretted that their friendship had ended that day. He kind of lost track of her after that. I mean, he

knew what was happening in her life, but never spoke with her again. Most of his memories were of when they were kids."

"So, what was she like then?" Ron asked. He had actually put his spoon down, too absorbed in Harry's tale to even eat. Hermione thought that the world might just end that very minute.

"Snape said she was smart and caring. She would do anything for her friends. She was very loyal to them."

"So, you're like her, then, Harry?" Hermione mused.

Harry looked down. "I suppose." He looked back up at Ron after a moment. "Guess who else I saw?"

"Who?" Ron asked. He had gone back to shoveling food into his mouth at insane speeds.

"Professor Trelawney."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Did she see the Grim?"

Harry laughed. "No. You guys wouldn't believe how she looked. I didn't even recognize her! She has black hair and green eyes, and she doesn't wear all those shawls and beads anymore. She actually looked like a normal witch."

"Who is she trying to fool?" Hermione commented.

"I don't think she's trying to fool anyone," Harry retorted. "She seemed really down to earth. She told me something interesting. She said I should start my Auror training right away or I would miss out on opportunities that would only come now."

"And you believed that drivel?" Hermione scoffed. "Harry, you know she's a charlatan. You can't believe anything she says!"

Harry looked at her thoughtfully. "I would normally agree with you, Hermione, but she was different somehow. I actually trust her prediction."

"Harry!" Hermione cried. "Professor Trelawney has never uttered a believable vision in her life! You can't just run off and become an Auror. What about finishing Hogwarts? How will they even accept you? You haven't sat for your N.E.W.T.s!"

"I suspect that our 'on the job' training will be more than enough to get me into Auror training without them," Harry mused.

"But what about finishing school? Surely you want to finish what you started," Hermione countered.

"Mate, that's a brilliant idea!" Ron said with a grin. "We could both do it together! Who wants to be stuck writing essays and sitting through greasy git lectures when we can be training for our future! We won't have those bloody professors constantly looking over our shoulders all the time."

Harry smiled at him. Hermione threw her hands up.

"I can't believe the two of you. You are actually considering this?" Furiously, she turned and swished her spoon around in her stew. A little bit of the soup sprayed onto the table.

"Oi, Hermione, lighten up," Ron pleaded. "We don't need to go back to Hogwarts. Look at all we learned while we were on the run. That's way better experience than we could have ever learned in the classroom."

Hermione narrowed her eyes at Ron and then flashed a glare at Harry. She threw her napkin onto the table. "I'm going to bed early. I assume all of your field experience is good enough for you to clean up this mess without me?"

Rising from the table, she stormed out of the room. Harry and Ron exchanged glances, each giving the other a shrug. They didn't know why their friend was so irate. They did know, however, that now was not the time to talk to her unless they wanted to be hexed.

oooOOOooo

The next morning, Sybill was making her way down the long stairway to the dungeons when she ran into Severus.

"Oh, I was going to meet you at your room!" she explained.

"And I was going to meet you at yours," Severus countered.

"Thank you, Severus, but it seems senseless to go all the way up to my room just to climb right back down again." She laughed heartily.

Severus ignored her.

"Hey," Sybill said and grabbed his arm. "I'm sorry if I was a bit too boisterous at dinner last night. I appreciate you wanting to come with me today. You probably have a lot more interesting and pressing things to do than to accompany me on a day trip."

Severus eyed Sybill, not quite sure if she was being sincere or not. He finally nodded his head, accepting her apology and thanks. They turned and left the castle. A few minutes later, they had Apparated to Hogsmeade. Sybill looked around.

"Actually, I'm glad you came, Severus. I really don't know my way around here at all."

"It's really not difficult. All of the shops are on this street in front of us. Some branch out onto the side streets, but most are right along the lane. If you keep going past the shops, the houses and apartments are gathered over in that direction."

"I see," she said. She glanced over at the Three Broomsticks.

"Can I buy you a drink, Severus?"

He nodded, and they entered the friendly pub. They sat at a table, and soon Rosmerta came over to take their order. They both ordered butterbeers. Sybill got a faraway look in her eye and looked up to Rosmerta.

"You shouldn't sell, even if the offer is a good one. You belong here."

Rosmerta gave her a curious look. "How did you know I was thinking of selling this place?"

Sybill extended her hand. "Sybill Trelawney, Seer."

Rosmerta didn't know exactly what to do, so she offered her hand tentatively. Sybill pumped it up and down.

"The happiness that will come in your future is all tied up with this bar, Rosmerta. You should keep it."

Rosmerta looked flustered. "I'll consider your words."

Sybill smiled at her. "That's all I can ask you to do."

She turned to Severus, who was giving her a funny look.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Doesn't it bother you to have those thoughts suddenly pop up into your head?" Severus asked in curiosity.

Sybill shrugged. "It's happened all of my life. I daresay, I probably would think it strange if they *didn't* always pop up into my head."

"It doesn't irritate you when people don't take you seriously?"

Sybill looked down, and her voice became quiet. "People haven't taken me seriously for most of my life. I'm just happy now that they listen to me without rolling their eyes or giving their friends knowing looks. It gets tiresome always being thought of as batty."

Their drinks arrived, and they sipped them silently for a while.

"Is there somewhere specific you want to go?" Severus asked her.

"I just want to look around."

They finished their drinks and left the bar. Severus led her along the street, pointing out the different shops. They went in to Honeydukes. Sybill had a well defined sweet tooth. She adored truffles. She spied some behind the front counter and decided to indulge.

"Do you like truffles, Severus?"

"Yes, I do," Severus replied.

"The raspberry ones?"

"My personal favorite," Severus told her.

She looked at the man behind the counter. "I'll take ten raspberry truffles," she ordered with excitement.

Soon they had left the shop and were reveling in the sweet chocolaty treats.

"Oh, these are heavenly," Sybill gushed. "I think I'll have to move here just so I can be close to that candy store."

"They do deliver by owl, you know?" Severus said with a smirk.

"Really?" Sybill cried. "The things you miss out on when you're hiding up in your tower."

Severus laughed.

"What's that?" Sybill asked as she pointed down a side street to a shop. The sign in front of it read *Madam Puddifoot's*.

Severus frowned. "That is the most horrible shop in Hogsmeade."

"What do they sell?"

"It's a tea shop."

"How can a tea shop be horrible, Severus?" Sybill asked with an incredulous look.

"People go there on dates. It is filled with students making puppy dog eyes at one another on Hogsmeade trips. The only thing it's good for is to catch students snogging and remove points from their houses."

"Then I would think, Severus Snape, it would be your favorite shop here in Hogsmeade."

Severus glowered at her, but noticed her mirth filled face and settled down.

"You would like it, actually," he said snidely. "It's filled with frilly things."

Sybill frowned. "I left my frilly things with my other persona, Severus. I have had enough poof for a lifetime." Changing the subject, she pointed toward Scrivenshaft's. "Oh, can we go in there? I'd like a new quill."

Severus nodded, happy to not be sitting in Puddifoot's, and hurried toward the shop. They entered, and Sybill looked around at the reams of paper that were stacked in the front of the shop. Any form of parchment one would want seemed to be located on the shelves in front of her. She made her way to the back, followed by Severus.

"I would like to purchase a new quill," she told the shop keep.

"What type are you interested in?" the keeper asked.

"Raven feather," she told him.

The man went into the back and soon came out with three different quills. Sybill examined all three of them and settled on one with a silver shaft. The man had it boxed up for her in no time, and Severus and she were on their way. They made their way to the edge of the shops, and Sybill stopped to look out over the rest of the town. There were many thatched cottages clumped together in groups making up the living area of the town.

"Oh, it's charming, Severus!" she exclaimed.

Severus shrugged.

Sybill eagerly went farther down the road and wandered through the street, gazing at the cute homes. Severus followed her, looking bored. Suddenly, Sybill stopped and grasped Severus' arm.

"Look, that one's for sale!" she exclaimed.

"Sybill, I really don't think this is a good idea."

"Understood, now come on!"

She grabbed Severus' hand and dragged him up the walk. She knocked on the door. It was opened a minute later by a middle aged-woman with frizzy blonde hair.

"I see your home is for sale. May I take a look at it?" Sybill asked politely.

The woman smiled and opened the door wider. "Of course," she said.

The minute Sybill walked through the door, she saw a vision of herself sitting in the front room, reading a book. This was where she needed to be. She knew it. The woman who owned the house showed her around. It had two bedrooms, a room that could be used as a library, and a nice kitchen. It wasn't huge, but it was perfect.

"I'll take it!" Sybill cried.

Severus pulled her aside. "Can I talk to you for a minute?" he said sharply.

Sybill looked back at the woman. "Excuse me; I need a word with my friend. We'll be back in few minutes. Is that alright?"

"Take all the time you need," the woman said.

Severus literally dragged her from the cottage and down the lane.

"Are you insane?" he demanded.

"I don't think so," she replied.

"You can't just walk into a house, stay there for five minutes, and proclaim that you'll buy it!"

"It was more like fifteen minutes," Sybill corrected.

"Sybill, you can't do this!"

"I can, and I will, Severus. It's where I need to be! I saw myself in that house, and I was happy!"

"You will be in constant danger," Severus snapped.

"That's what wards are for. For Merlin's sake, Severus, I explained this last night. I won't cower in fear any longer. That wasn't the right way to go, and I won't do it again. I am going to buy that house, and I'm going to live there, and I will be safe!"

Severus eyed Sybill with a death look.

"I will not watch you kill yourself, Sybill. If you want to buy that house, you can negotiate it yourself. I am returning to Hogwarts!"

Sybill looked to the ground. "I'm sorry you don't want to help me anymore, Severus, but I understand. Thank you for coming out here with me today."

Severus wanted to yell some more, but he found he couldn't. He didn't want to hurt her feelings. Since when he cared about other's feelings was beyond him, but here it was. He turned and stalked off, nonetheless, unwilling to see Sybill Trelawney put the nails into her coffin. Sybill watched him sadly, a small knot in her stomach from their disagreement, and then returned to the home she was set on buying.

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Sybill entered the Great Hall with a flourish and rushed to the teacher's table. She excitedly sat down next to Madam Hooch and explained about the darling cottage she had found in Hogsmeade.

"Sybill, are you sure about this?" Rolanda asked her.

"Yes, Sybill," Minerva countered, "wouldn't it just be easier to stay here?"

"Easier?" Sybill thought about it. "Probably. But I've been hiding here for almost 20 years. I need to spread my wings!" she said with a truly Trelawney flourish.

Rolanda chuckled at her. Minerva eyed her curiously. Pomona shook her head.

"Besides, the house won't be ready for me to move into until the end of the summer. I'll be here another month. That will give me time to adjust to the idea of not being here constantly."

"What can we do to help, Sybill?" Minerva asked.

"Yes, anything!" Pomona agreed.

"I don't know. I haven't even thought that far ahead. I'll be sure to ask when I need something, though," Sybill said as she smiled at her friends.

Sybill continued gushing about her new home to the women, telling them every last detail about the cottage. To her distress, Severus never showed up for dinner. She feared he was still angry with her. As the four women wound up their meal and their conversation, she decided to pay him a visit.

As she made her way out of the Great Hall, she was accosted by Hermione Granger.

"Are you Professor Trelawney?" Hermione asked.

"Yes, Miss Granger, I am," Sybill said fretfully. She knew that Hermione Granger had no love for her. They had had their share of rows throughout the young woman's tenure as a student. As Sybill looked at Hermione, a flood of images came into her head. This girl was deeply troubled. She was unsure that she could help her in any way, though, given their past history.

"Could I speak with you for a moment?" Hermione continued.

"Of course," Sybill answered. "Would you like to go somewhere private?"

"No, the hall will suffice. I wanted to ask you what you thought you were doing by giving Harry that advice to become an Auror so soon."

Sybill gave Hermione a puzzled look. "I'm not sure what you mean."

Hermione's eyes narrowed at Sybill. "If he is to start his training now, he will not finish his education."

"I understand that."

"But that's the most important thing he can do right now!" Hermione cried.

"Miss Granger, I think you are mistaking your friend's ambitions for your own."

Hermione clenched her fists. "How dare you try to make me the bad guy here! I fully intend to finish my education, and Ron and Harry did too, until you put this ridiculous thought into Harry's head. Now they're both planning on running off and becoming Aurors."

"And you will be lonely without them here at school," Sybill explained, finishing Hermione's thought.

"What... no... that's not it at all."

"Isn't it, Miss Granger? You don't want to be all by yourself, finishing your studies. I would remind you that many of your friends in the year behind you will be here, Miss Weasley being one of them. You two seem to be quite close."

"I didn't come here for you to give me a list of my friends. You had no right to tell Harry those things," Hermione cried.

"Miss Granger, I saw a vision and felt it was relevant to tell Mr. Potter about it, as it was about him. What he chooses to do with that vision is his choice."

"Why couldn't you just keep your vision to yourself? He was perfectly happy returning to Hogwarts."

Sybill sighed and looked down. She debated how to proceed within herself. After her statement about Harry and the vision, she saw no choice but to be frank with Miss Granger about the things she had just seen about her. She looked back at Hermione with compassion.

"Hermione, this has nothing to do with my vision, or whether Harry and Ron decide to become Aurors or not. This has to do with your parents."

Hermione took a step back, and her eyes grew wide. "What do you know of my parents?" she shouted.

"I know that you used a Memory Charm to keep them safe. I also know, through my sight, that you returned to them and restored their memories roughly two weeks ago. They were upset with you for taking matters into your own hands without consulting them. They are no longer speaking to you and are so furious that they want nothing to do with you right now. They are happy that you are safe, but are deeply hurt that you would just decide their fate for them. They have chosen to stay in Australia and continue their current lifestyle, rejecting their original identities. You are afraid that you lost them and now you will lose your closest friends too. Harry and Ron will not desert you, Hermione, whether they are at school or off at the Ministry."

Hermione's eyes widened even more at Sybill's disclosure, and her eyes filled with tears.

"You have no right," she muttered.

Sybill put her hand on Hermione's shoulder. "Be at peace, Hermione. Your parents will forgive you in time. You just need to give them their space. You're their daughter, and they love you."

Hermione looked up at Sybill in rage. "How dare you! You know nothing about me or my family. You pretend to see, but Divination is nothing but a bunch of silly wishes and made up stories. You don't know what's going to happen any more than I do!"

"Believe what you will, but I think you have been proven wrong about mystical things in the past. You would do well to remember that."

Hermione pulled her shoulder out of Sybill's grasp. "Don't touch me. You haven't changed at all! You're nothing but a scatterbrained woman who pretends to know much more than she does!"

"Miss Granger," came a harsh voice from behind her, "if you are done berating Professor Trelawney, I suggest you take your leave."

Hermione turned to see Professor Snape glaring at her.

"Professor, I was just..."

"I know what you were just doing, Miss Granger. I really expected more from you. You used to have respect for those in authority. But I see your little trip into the wilderness has stripped you of any sense of decency. Now, unless you are here to help with repairs, get out!"

Hermione shrunk down and cowered before Severus. "Yes, sir," she finally muttered.

Before she could make her escape, Sybill's hand was on her arm again, pulling her around to face her.

"Remember what I said, Miss Granger, and give it time. Things will work out, and they will forgive you."

Hermione narrowed her eyes at Sybill and pulled her arm free of her once again. She stalked away with her head held high.

Severus glared at Sybill too and moved away, returning to his path down the hall.

"Severus, wait," Sybill called.

"What?!" Severus snapped as he turned around.

"Thank you for defending me," Sybill muttered as she avoided his piercing gaze.

Severus ignored her, turned, and proceeded, once again, down the hall.

"Wait!" Sybill cried after him, extending her hand in to the air. "Can I talk to you?"

Severus stopped again and turned slowly.

"Severus, I need to ask you a favor."

"I'm through doing you favors," he snapped.

"Please, Severus, I'm sorry we fought before. I need your help."

Severus softened his glare, but his words were just as harsh as before. "You don't seem to appreciate my help at other times, Trelawney."

Sybill's shoulder's drooped. "Please don't be upset with me. Surely, you must realize that I have to do this!"

Severus regarded her for a full minute before motioning for her to follow him.

"Let's go to my room and talk," he said with slightly less animosity.

They walked down the halls in silence, descended the stairs, and found themselves in front of his door. He unwarded it, swung it open, and stepped aside to let her through. She nodded to him and entered, seating herself on a black leather couch in front of the fireplace.

"I don't think you do have to do this at all, Trelawney," Severus snapped as he settled down next to her. "You are perfectly fine here."

Sybill's shoulders dropped, and she sighed. "I'm tired, Severus, tired of living for someone else. I just want to try and do something for myself. Something that no one else told me I had to do. Something, someone is telling me I *shouldn't* do! I've been under the thumb of someone for all of my adult life. I need to do this. I'm not asking you to approve. I just want you to understand."

"I do understand," Severus said quietly. "I just think that you are making a mistake. Can't you do something else to prove your independence?"

Sybill smiled at him. "No, this is the right thing to do. I can feel it."

"You're not always right, you know," Severus argued.

"My visions are, and I saw myself sitting in that living room, and I was happy."

"I still think you're making a mistake."

"Then I'll learn from my mistake in the future."

"You are impossible!" Severus snapped as he crossed his arms in front of him defiantly.

"Thank you. I pride myself on being impossible," Sybill said with a smile.

"What is it you want of me, anyway?" he asked, looking Sybill up and down.

"I was wondering if you could help me set up wards on the cottage when I move in." Sybill held her breath, waiting for the explosion, but it didn't come.

Severus relaxed and unfolded his arms. "At least you're being sensible about protection. But, Sybill, you cannot stay in your house forever. LeStrange and Malfoy, when they find out that you've moved to Hogsmeade, will stop at nothing to get to you. They could abduct you while you walk in the street!"

"And they could break into Hogwarts and abduct me in the halls."

"Yes... wait... no they couldn't!" Severus scowled at her.

"Severus, if they want me, they will find me, no matter where I live. I can put up a good fight if they try anything on me. I appreciate you worrying about me, I really do, but I need to do this."

"As you have already said."

"Will you help me?" Sybill asked with a raise of her eyebrows.

Severus thought about it for no more than two seconds. "Of course I'll help you, Sybill. No one will get to your home if they're not wanted."

Sybill gave Severus a huge grin. A feeling of relief coursed through her that they had patched things up between the two of them.

"Thank you, Severus," she said gratefully. "I really appreciate your help."

A/N: Next up: The move is made.

Thanks to my beta, the international woman of mystery, for helping and giving me the idea for the Hermione part in here.

So, is Sybill being stubborn, or what? I think she is, but I can see her point (probably because I wrote this.) How do you guys feel about her move? Thanks for reading!

Chapter 9: Move-in Day

Chapter 9 of 20

Received Honorable Mention in Anything Goes Challenge. Sybill Trelawney has been hiding a huge secret. She's not the witch she appears to be. Now that she is no longer in danger, she can come out of hiding and be herself. But who is she, really? And what does she want out of life?

Chapter 9: Move-in Day

The month went by speedily. Between final repairs of the main parts of the school, peeling the Room of Requirement, getting ready for the new school year, and preparing to move, Sybill didn't have much time to rest.

She had been excited to see the last charred remains of the old wall in the Room of Requirement peeled away. The entire staff had been present. They had done some last minute cleaning and then exited the room, closing the door behind them. They each had held their breath as Minerva had walked by the door three times, wishing for a room that would prove that the Room of Requirement was healed. Sybill had been excited to see a new door form, and when Minerva had opened it, everyone had gasped as they had beheld the beautiful room that the Room of Requirement had produced. Great marble pillars had surrounded the edge of the room, and a grey marble floor had adorned the large room. There had been beautiful arched windows lining the walls. It had been like the Room of Requirement was saying thank you. The entire faculty had sighed in relief as they had admired the renewed room and its beautiful transformation. Sybill had trashed her liquor supply that very day.

Now, it was almost time for Sybill's departure from Hogwarts. She eagerly awaited the day in which she could move into her new home. She was incredibly excited. Everyone else was excited for her too, except for Severus. He scowled every time the subject of her moving was brought up. There was often talk of moving at dinner. Everyone had their own opinions on what she should do to her new home. She should paint it. No, she shouldn't paint it. She should put in new carpeting. She should get Victorian furniture. She should get modern furniture. There was always something to discuss.

Sybill had been accompanied by Rolanda and Pomona just last week to look for furnishings. They had Apparated to Hogsmeade and gone to a furniture shop hidden down

one of the side streets. It was Rolanda's favorite store. The three women had spent two hours arguing about what Sybill should purchase.

"I think that this would be lovely in your home, Sybill!" Pomona had exclaimed, pointing to a bright yellow couch.

Sybill had frowned immediately. She didn't want to have to wear sunglasses every time she entered her apartment.

"No, no, Pomona, this one is much better," Rolanda had cried.

Sybill had turned to see a light green, plushy sofa with a dog pattern on it.

"I'm not really fond of dogs on my couch, Rolanda," she had said blandly.

"Well, what about this one?" Pomona pointed to a black leather couch.

Sybill's eyebrows raised in admiration. "I like this one," she had told her two friends.

"Great! It's settled, then," Rolanda had said. "Let's move on to dining tables."

The arguments had gone on. Each woman had their own opinion of what would look fantastic in Sybill's home. Of course, Sybill, having been the only one to see her home, knew better than the other two what would look nice, but she greatly appreciated their help. Finally, all of the furniture had been picked out, and the three had left the store with a small box of miniaturized furniture.

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Finally the day came, and Sybill had shrunk all of the rest of her belongings into a box. Her tastes were not what one would expect from Sybill Trelawney. She had bought the black leather couch and two ottomans. Her dining table was made up of a dark cherry wood and had high backed chairs to go along with it. She had chosen a similar wood for her bedroom furnishings as well. All in all, her tastes were modern and elegant. She carried her box of belongings down to the dungeons and knocked on Severus' door. He opened it up quickly.

"Are you ready?" Sybill asked.

Severus nodded with a scowl.

"You're never going to make this easy for me, are you?" Sybill asked.

"Of course not. I don't approve of foolishness."

"Thank you for the vote of confidence, Severus. I truly appreciate it."

"Anytime," Severus said with a smirk.

They headed up the stairs and out of the building. Before Sybill knew it, they had Apparated to her front door.

"We'll have to do something about that," Severus muttered. "No Apparition within the property lines."

Sybill nodded in agreement, and Severus opened the door for her. The cottage looked different now that it was empty. The front room had a lovely dark green rug on the floor, which Sybill would leave as it was. She placed her box on the floor near the door and walked through the rest of the house. All of the carpeting was in really good condition and was mostly beige. There was a nice green and white tile in the kitchen. The appliances were in good shape.

"Great, I don't really need to do much," Sybill thought.

"Surely you're not going to leave the walls this color?" Severus retorted from the bedroom.

She went in to give it a look, not having really noticed the walls before. They were light pink.

"Eew," she said.

"I take it pink is not your color?" Severus said blandly.

"It used to be... but no!"

She lifted her wand. "Make it blue!"

The walls turned into a lovely, if not dark, midnight blue. Severus raised an eyebrow at her color choice.

"It's a bit dark, isn't it?"

"I like dark," she said.

"It is much better than pink," he mused.

"Of course, pink is sickening, especially that light baby pink. The blue is relaxing."

She turned and left the room, examining the other rooms for color changes. The library was white. She turned it into a dark red. The spare bedroom was light blue. She changed it to a cream color. The living room was an eggshell color, and she changed that to dark beige.

"Are you ready to set the wards?" Severus asked.

Sybill turned to him with a grin. "I am," she answered.

It took them over half an hour. Severus left nothing to the imagination. No one would come within ten feet of her door unless Sybill wanted them to. They finally lowered their wands, and Sybill looked to Severus.

"Thank you, Severus, I wouldn't have been able to make them as strong as you have," she remarked.

Severus fished a small box out of his pocket. "I have a gift for you. It's to celebrate your new home."

Sybill's eyes flashed. "Thank you!" she said as she took the box and lifted the lid. Inside was a ring. It was a pewter color, the band engraved with vines. In the center of the ring was a flat black stone. She looked back to Severus. "Why, Severus, I didn't know you cared!"

Severus' cheeks flamed. "It's a protection ring," he explained. "If you are ever in trouble, just turn the stone toward your palm. It will register in my ring." He showed her a

similar ring that was on his finger. This ring also was pewter, but the band was smooth. There was a larger flat black stone in the center of it. "The ring also has a locator spell on it, so I can Apparate directly to you."

Sybill could only stare wide eyed at Severus. Finally, she composed herself. "That's very thoughtful of you, Severus. I shall wear it always."

"That's the idea," he said and pulled the ring from the box.

Sybill extended her hand, and he placed it on her finger. The minute he touched her, her vision began to get cloudy. She looked up to Severus, and he grabbed her and pulled her close, enveloping her in a passionate kiss. She put her hand around his neck and stroked his hair as she returned his kiss. Suddenly everything cleared, and the vision was gone. Severus had not moved from the position he had been in when he had placed the ring on her finger. With a gasp, Sybill pulled her hand from Severus'. He looked at her quizzically.

"Is something wrong?" he asked.

Sybill shook her head nervously. "No, nothing."

Severus narrowed his eyes at her. "Did you just have another vision?"

She nodded.

"Do you need to bolt out of here and save somebody's life?"

Sybill relaxed a little and cracked a smile. "No, nothing like that."

"Well, what did you see?"

Sybill looked to the floor. "It was a personal vision. I can't discuss it."

Severus regarded her for a minute before speaking again. "All right, but if you want to talk about, it I'll give you some of my precious time so you can discuss it."

Sybill laughed at him. "I appreciate the time you've given me already, Severus."

"Speaking of which, should we unpack your things?" Severus asked.

"Let's do that," Sybill said in relief. This was certainly one vision she did not want to discuss with Severus Snape.

They spent the next hour unpacking and arranging Sybill's furniture and other belongings. When the entire box was empty, Severus excused himself and headed back to Hogwarts.

Sybill saw Severus out and then threw herself on the now full size couch that sat in front of the fireplace. Her mind went back to the vision she had had earlier. It replayed in her mind as clearly as if it had just occurred. Severus and she had kissed in this very room. What a shock! She liked Severus quite well, but she had never even considered that he might be someone she could be romantic about. That was probably due to the fact that she had teased him about a relationship for years as her eccentric copy of herself. She smiled as she recalled some of the things she had done to him. They had all brought a good laugh to her, and her years at Hogwarts had not been filled with many of those.

One instance stood out in her mind. It was during the Yule Ball when they'd had the Tri-Wizard Tournament.

Sybill entered the Great Hall from the back. If this were to work, she would have to sneak up on Severus. He always ran the other way when he saw her coming. She had dressed extra special for this event, making her own dress gowns. She had chosen an incredibly gaudy pattern so she would look hideous. Brown paisleys on an orange background bedecked her robes. Sybill could barely stand looking down at herself, but it was all part of the game, wasn't it?

She was proud of the way she approached him. He had not heard a thing, and when her voice rang out, he flinched slightly. That was the equivalent of a three foot jump by anyone else.

"Severus!" she said in her low wispy voice.

He flinched and reluctantly turned toward Sybill. His eyes grew wide as he saw her outfit. She had charmed her hair to be extra poofy that evening also. It stuck out at all ends, making her look more crazed than usual.

"Dance with me, Severus!" she ordered.

His eyes grew wide, and she saw fear there. She chuckled inwardly. Oh, if Voldemort only knew what made this man cringe!

Severus cleared his throat. "Um... I don't dance," he said hesitantly.

"But you know you want to dance with me, Severus. I could feel your longing all the way up in my chambers."

"No, no, it must have been someone else you were thinking of." He had backed up three steps, trying to avoid being near her.

Sybill closed the distance. She took advantage of the large crowd, knowing he wouldn't be extremely rude. She placed her hands on his chest and felt him flinch underneath her. This was quite fun!

"Severus, we belong together. I long to be near you. You must dance with me!"

Severus pulled back again. "I need to go check the coaches for snogging students," he said hurriedly. He turned and bolted from the Great Hall.

Sybill had looked around curiously. "Was it something I said?" she remarked to no one in particular.

Albus sauntered over to her and whispered in her ear. "Very funny."

She gave him a vacant look and left the dance as quietly as she had entered.

She had to admit, hitting on Severus Snape had been one of her only pleasures. She knew she was a sick, sadistic woman to want to see a grown man cower in front of her, but his reactions were so classic, she couldn't help herself. She recalled a time, right before Dumbledore's death, when she had stumbled across Severus on rounds. It was one of the few nights she hadn't gotten herself stumbling drunk. She was grateful about that when she had seen Severus headed her way.

When he had noticed her, he had stopped in his tracks and turned. She knew he had wanted to go as quickly as he could in the other direction. The fact was, however, that he had been on patrol and had to examine the corridor where she had been standing. He had turned back reluctantly and headed her way.

"Severus!" she boomed.

"Trelawney," Severus hissed.

"It is fate that we meet here tonight!"

"I think it just has to do with my being on guard duty," he said blandly.

"No! I have read it in the cards. You want me near you. We must be together!"

The fear came into Severus' eyes again.

"Let go of your inhibitions, Severus. I am yours for the taking! I have longed to be near you!"

"Oh, Merlin," he groaned.

"Yes, I know you want me as much as I want you!"

"Trelawney, I wouldn't want you if you were the last woman on earth!"

"But the cards! They tell of your love for me!"

"You crazy charlatan! Leave me alone! I want nothing to do with you!"

He stormed around her and continued down the hall, never looking back, his robes billowing menacingly behind him. He missed the huge grin that was plastered on her face at his reaction.

She smiled to herself. It had been way too easy to goad Severus into a reaction. She had taken as many opportunities as possible to embarrass him. Thinking on that, she was surprised that Severus even came near her. Perhaps her lack of interest when he was Headmaster had cooled his aversion to her a little bit. Oh, she had contemplated doing more of the same, but he was so agitated all the time. She didn't want to cause him more grief.

But now, her vision had shown her that despite all of that teasing she was going to be in a real relationship with him. She wasn't even sure what she thought of that. Here she had moved to Hogsmeade, partially to meet men, but her destiny had been before her the whole time. Odd. That was life, of course. It always threw odd circumstances at everyone. What one did with those circumstances was the key to happiness.

Could Severus Snape make her happy? She certainly looked happy in her vision. At least, she looked relieved. Maybe this was their first kiss. She wondered what would happen after that. She didn't wonder long. Visions had a way of going sour if one decided they wanted more details. They almost had a mind of their own. Visions were incredibly fussy. They showed what they thought was necessary and almost got offended if one asked for more detail. If the vision even deemed the Seer worthy of more on a subject, it was usually a negative part of the vision that was shown the second time around, which usually resulted in a frightened Seer.

No, there was no point hoping for a more extended vision. If her sight wanted her to know more, it would reveal itself in its own time. She would just have to analyze what she had seen and act accordingly. She shrugged to herself. How else could she act? She would fall in love with Severus, and there was nothing she could do about it. Musing to herself, she found that she wasn't upset by that in the least. She was actually relieved. After living such a solitary life, she was eager to have someone to share it, and Severus Snape would be a wonderful companion.

A/N: Next up: The new school year is finally here.

Thanks everybody! I appreciate you reading and leaving comments. My mystery beta stands in the shadows and waits patiently to be revealed. Let her know she has my utmost thanks.

Chapter 10: School Begins

Chapter 10 of 20

The school year starts, and Sybill gets to teach like she always wanted to.

A/N: A huge thanks to all of you who cast a vote for this. You can't imagine how excited I was to see that it received an honorable mention in the challenge. With so many wonderful stories to choose from, I'm incredibly humbled that you liked this one enough to have it be grouped with such good company among the winners. Also, a huge bow goes to my beta, Lilith Kayden, who really makes me think about what I'm doing with this and everything else I write. And of course, we can't forget the disclaimer: I own nothing!

Chapter 10: School Begins

The week went by quickly. Sybill had holed herself up in her cottage for most of it. She had met her neighbors, who seemed to be lovely people. There was a newly married couple to her right and an older couple with three teenage children on her left. The children attended Hogwarts. The mother, Jeanette, had been quite friendly, asking if Sybill was related to the batty Divination teacher who taught at Hogwarts. Sybill had laughed and explained her story to Jeanette. She had been amazed that the nice woman who was now her neighbor was one and the same as the crackpot that her children had described. The two women had become fast friends.

She had not ventured to Hogwarts, as she had everything ready for classes prior to her move. She had received an owl from Severus in the middle of the week, wondering where she had gotten off to. His attempt to be nonchalant about his wonderings had made her smile. She had written him back, explaining that she was just decorating and would see him at the feast. There had also been a joint owl from Minerva, Rolanda, and Pomona, congratulating her on her new home. She had smiled at that and penned them a quick thank you. No other owls had come her way.

Tonight the feast had finally arrived. Sybill stared into her closet and wondered what to wear. The students would see the real her for the first time tonight, and she wanted to look her best. She chose some dark red robes that looked like an elegant Muggle dress. Putting the robes on, she admired herself in the mirror. She had to admit that

she looked good. The garment came down in a scoop neck and flattered her waist by tapering into it. A red sash was tied at the waist and hung down along the right side of the skirt, almost reaching the floor. The skirt itself did reach the floor, its silky material embroidered with a vine and leaf pattern. She smiled at her reflection. Yes, she looked good. Of course, after the person she had been before, she could wear a sack and look good. She grinned as she went over to her dresser.

She picked up some silver hair clips and put one in her black hair on either side of her head, pulling her hair away from her face. Her green eyes shone even brighter with her hair pulled back in this way. She applied some light makeup and was ready to go. She left her little cottage, which had become a sanctuary for her in the past week, and Apparated to Hogwarts.

oooOOOooo

Sybill entered the Great Hall. She noticed she was the last one to arrive, as the entire teacher's table was filled, except for Hagrid's and Flitwick's places. Hagrid, of course, was escorting the first years from Hogsmeade Station. Flitwick was in charge of the sorting this year, as Severus refused to do it. She caught Severus eyeing her appreciatively from the end of the table. Giving him a smile, she wandered over to him and sat in the conveniently empty seat beside him.

"Hey there," she said to him.

"We were beginning to wonder if you would leave the sanctity of your home to grace us with your presence," Severus said dourly.

Sybill laughed. "I missed you too," she told him, eliciting a scowl from his face.

Rolanda turned and asked Sybill about her new house, and she excitedly told her everything she had done with it. She invited Rolanda to come for dinner that next week and was happy that the witch accepted her invitation. She had missed their daily chats.

"Aren't you going to eat here most of the time?" Rolanda asked.

"Yes, but I want to spend some time in my home too. That's why I bought it, anyway."

Soon, students started trickling into the Hall. Sybill smiled at their arrival. There seemed to be a special lightness in the air that had been missing for several years since the return of Voldemort. Before she knew it, all the tables were filled, and the first-years were coming in to be sorted. On the occasions when Sybill had dragged herself to the feast, she always paid close attention to the sorting. She would get impressions about the new students. Such impressions were usually correct.

She didn't always get to the feast, however, because each new school year tended to depress her. It marked another year of her not being able to be herself. Most years, she sequestered herself in her room and spent the evening with her only friend, Mr. Scotch-bottle. Scotch-bottle was usually empty by the end of the evening. Of course, he always brought his relatives, so that never was a problem for her. She would just grab another 'friend' and suck him dry.

But this year was different, of course. There was no need for her to be maudlin or to sink into the depths of despair. Her life was now her own. She was looking forward to this feast more than she had ever looked forward to any Hogwarts event. It was a celebration for her as well as for the students.

Professor Flitwick called the first student to be sorted, and a small, thin girl sat on the chair and had the Sorting Hat placed on her head. Sybill found this group of first-years to be just as interesting as the ones from previous years. She sensed possible Seeing ability from two of them. One was the young girl, Penelope Archer, who was currently being sorted. The other was a boy who was tall for his age. He had blonde hair and bright blue eyes. His eyes seemed to have knowledge of their own. Such wisdom pointed to ability in Divination. She would need to keep an eye on these two as they progressed through their first two years. She always watched the ones with potential, even though before she could do nothing about it.

The sorting ended, and Minerva had stood up and was addressing the students. She announced the new Muggle Studies and Defense Against the Dark Arts teachers, who stood and waved. Then it was time to re-introduce Sybill.

"Students, we have among us a teacher who has taught here for quite some time. Her appearance, however, has changed. Her personality is also different. She had been in hiding for her entire tenure here at Hogwarts, but with Voldemort's demise, she can finally reveal her true identity. I would like to re-introduce you to Sybill Trelawney, Professor of Divination."

Sybill stood. There was a hush in the Great Hall. No one spoke for a few seconds and then some brave soul began to clap. The brave soul was none other than the new head girl, Hermione Granger. Sybill waved, and the rest of the students began to clap as well.

She sat down again and muttered under her breath, "That went well."

Severus looked to her. "At least they didn't boo."

She cracked a smile. "That's definitely a plus."

oooOOOooo

Sybill was making her way down the hall after the feast. She heard her name called and turned. Hermione Granger was rushing up behind her. Sybill groaned inwardly. After such a wonderful evening, she was in no mood to quarrel with the girl.

"Professor, might I have a word?" Hermione asked.

"Of course, Miss Granger. Congratulations on your new head girl position," Sybill offered magnanimously.

"Thank you," Hermione said. She looked down and was suddenly speechless. Sybill thought this rather odd coming from the normally opinionated girl.

"What did you need, Miss Granger?" Sybill asked.

Hermione looked up at the professor. "I wanted to apologize for my behavior last month. It was very disrespectful."

Sybill stared at Hermione in shock. She had been expecting another outburst. An apology had been the farthest thing from her mind.

"That's alright," Sybill finally said after a few moments.

"My parents wrote to me about a week ago and invited me to see them," Hermione explained hurriedly. "They're still a bit upset with me, but they can understand my motives. They want to start over again."

Sybill smiled. "That's wonderful news, Miss Granger."

Hermione nodded. "I should have believed you. You told me that was exactly what would happen, and it did."

Sybill was the one who was at a loss for words now. She would have bet her crystal ball that Hermione Granger would never admit that Sybill had been right about any vision that she had given.

"It's sometimes hard to believe things that can't be proven," Sybill said after a long pause.

Hermione fidgeted. This was obviously quite difficult for the girl. "That's true," she admitted, "but I didn't need to be so rude. I'm sorry that I was."

Sybill put a hand on Hermione's shoulder. "Don't worry about it anymore. You were stressed out about your parents. Sometimes we say things before thinking in situations like that."

Hermione gave Sybill a slim smile. She nodded her head and told Sybill thank you. She then turned and went her way. Sybill was left staring after her. She felt Severus' presence behind her before he even spoke.

"Perhaps Miss Granger has grown up a little in these last weeks," he observed.

Sybill turned to him. "Are you following me around?" she accused.

Severus raised an eyebrow at her. "I was just heading to my room when I heard your voices. I thought I might have to defend your honor again, so I listened in."

Sybill smiled at him. She had the urge to kiss him on the cheek, but refrained. It wasn't quite time for that yet. She squeezed his hand instead.

"Thank you, Severus, you are a good friend."

"Good friends usually see their friends get home safely," Severus drawled. "Might I walk you home?" Another raised eyebrow accentuated the question.

"That would be lovely," Sybill replied.

They headed for the door, already discussing the upcoming class schedule as they went.

oooOOOooo

Sybill perused her schedule for the day. She was to start with seventh-years. All four houses were combined for that, as there were so few who went on to N.E.W.T. level Divination. She had an hour off afterward, then sixth-year Hufflepuffs and Slytherins. That should be an interesting combination. The rest of her day consisted of lunch, followed by Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw fourth-years and then breaks until the last class of the day, which was the third-year Gryffindors and Ravenclaws. Firenze would teach the other classes.

She had met with Firenze the day before, and they had agreed on the splitting up of classes. Firenze had requested to teach all of the fifth-years, as he had felt they were old enough to delve deeply into the reading of the stars. Sybill had readily agreed and had asked if she could take the seventh-years. She had felt she had a lot to make up to them. She wanted to prepare them as well as possible for their N.E.W.T.s.

Firenze and she had gotten into a deep discussion about the differences in their arts, and Sybill had learned quite a lot about the type of star-gazing that the Centaurs practiced. She had asked Firenze if they could spend an evening sometime soon studying and reading the stars. The Centaur had looked at her solemnly and finally nodded his head. She had hoped that he had found her more serious and less defensive demeanor to be sincere. She had explained her previous situation to him and also had told him that she had never held any ill will towards him. Firenze had surprised her by revealing that he had seen her need to be deceptive in the stars and had never taken anything she had said personally. He had even gone along with it by badmouthing her ineptitude occasionally.

All in all, the meeting had been very amiable and quite revealing. Sybill foresaw a good future working relationship with the Centaur. She hoped that together they could make the Divination department as well known and respected as the other major subjects at the school.

Glancing back down at her schedule, she realized it was time to get going. She was happy to have such a light load of teaching. It would give her plenty of private time to work with those students who seemed to have a special gift. Finishing up her breakfast, she rose to leave, just as Severus was headed in for his breakfast. Smiling and waving, she headed out of the Hall.

oooOOOooo

Sybill stood in front of the seventh-years. They were all looking at her suspiciously. She smiled at them, and a few of them lost their suspicious looks, but the remainder continued to eye her cautiously.

"All right, welcome to seventh-year Divination. I suspect that most of the ten of you in here have an interest in the subject, although I know of at least one of you who just wants an easy O. I will advise you that this class will not be like the ones previous. I must apologize for my lack of teaching in the past." Sybill crossed her arms in front of her and began to walk back and forth in front of the classroom.

"Unfortunately, as part of my disguise, I had to pretend to be less than I truly am. You will actually learn something this year. With your N.E.W.T.s ahead of you at the end of the year, we will be working extensively on advanced Divination. We will also be covering some topics that were left out of the curriculum in years past. No one will be receiving an easy O this year."

The students were now looking at her in amazement. One of them raised a hand and asked her why she had been in hiding. She quickly gave them the run down of her prophecy and what it meant. She then continued with the lesson.

"All right, as you can see, we are going to read tea leaves today."

The students made motions to pick up their cups.

"Wait!" she ordered. "I know that in the past, tea reading has been a large part of our studies, but it will no longer be so. I want you all to understand that tea reading is the most imprecise of all of the Seer's tools. It is only to be used as a last resort. Miss Lovegood," she motioned to the blonde student in front. "Pick up your cup, and tell me what you see."

Luna did as she was told and looked back at Sybill dreamily. "I see a flower."

Sybill went up to the girl and took her cup. She nodded and then handed the cup to Luna's work partner.

"What do you see, Mr. Harper?"

Frank Harper studied the leaves. "I see a pig."

Sybill nodded and handed the cup to a third student.

"What about you, Miss Tuttle?"

"I think it looks like a tree."

Sybill took the cup back.

"So, we have three different people with three different images staring back at them. Who is right?"

She passed the cup around so everyone could take a look. She was met with blank stares.

Smiling she continued her lecture. "Who saw the flower?"

A hand was raised.

"Who saw the pig?"

Two hands went up.

"And who saw the tree?"

Another hand went up.

"Who saw something entirely different?"

The rest of the class raised their hands.

"Here we have the first problem with tea reading: interpretation. What looks like a tree to Miss Tuttle, appears to be a pig to Mr. Harper. Are you beginning to see the problem with such a device?"

The students nodded.

"Okay, let's take Mr. Harper's pig. That's what we'll agree to see in the cup. What does it mean?"

Frank raised his hand. Sybill nodded for him to answer.

"It means gluttony or greed."

"That's correct."

Another hand was raised.

"It could also mean prosperity," the student answered.

"Yes, anything else?"

"Laziness," came a voice from the back.

"Good. So, now we have three different interpretations from one picture. Which is the right one?"

Blank stares again met her gaze.

"They all could possibly be the right answer. Let's assume we settle on greed and gluttony. What does that tell us?"

A hand went up in back.

"That we should beware of wanting too much."

"Could be... what else?"

"Maybe someone will try and take something from us because they are greedy?" Luna replied.

"Another possibility. Good. So, we have already come up with two possibilities for what this could mean. How are we supposed to know which is right?"

She waited.

"We can't," she went on. "Then you might ask: What is the purpose of studying such a haphazard science in the first place? Does anyone have any ideas?"

The students just stared. They couldn't believe that Professor Trelawney was knocking the very thing she had sworn by for the last six years. Sybill gave them a smile.

"You are wondering why I am knocking something I used extensively in prior years?"

They nodded in unison.

"I can finally teach you something useful instead of something so imprecise. As for the answer to my question, tea reading can be useful as a last resort, as I said before. It can also be used in conjunction with other things to make a vision clearer. Take the crystal ball for instance. You gaze into it and see your best friend sneaking around in your room. You have no idea why she is doing that. You turn to your tea leaves and see the pig, which signifies greed in this case. You can surmise that your friend may be greedy and wants something of yours. Does that make any sense?"

The class nodded in unison.

"All right. Take your crystal balls, and use your tea leaves to augment whatever you see in them. Explore several possibilities. I want a two foot parchment on what you find handed in tomorrow."

The class set to work. Sybill watched them. She knew of two students in there who might actually have the Sight. She had wanted to work with them privately for a while, but her disguise had prevented her from doing something like that. Suddenly an idea came to her. She would need to talk with Minerva during her break.

oooOOOooo

"Minerva, might I have a word?" Sybill asked as she entered the Headmistress' office.

"Of course, Sybill, how was your first class?"

"Oh, no problem. I got some wide-eyed stares of incredulity, but everyone behaved themselves."

Minerva smiled at that.

"I was wondering. There are a couple of students in each year that I think might be able to acquire the Sight if given the proper training." She hesitated a minute before proceeding. "I would like to pass along an idea to you."

"Go on," Minerva said with interest.

"Could we pull those students all into one class? I could teach them what they need to know by year and also take the extra time to give them the skills needed to receive visions."

Minerva regarded her for a moment and thought it over. "That would be a good idea, Sybill. The hard part would be to find a time when all of those students can be in a

class together."

Sybill rose. "I'll leave that to you. Let me know when we can get started."

Minerva smiled at Sybill as she left.

oooOOOooo

The third-years fidgeted in front of her. They had no doubt heard the rumors of the batty professor of Divination. She cleared her throat and began her lesson.

"I know that many of you have heard interesting things about me. I assure you, everything you have heard was completely true."

Every eye went wide.

"However, that Professor Trelawney no longer exists. I can guarantee to you that this class will not be easy. You will have to work. You will do things that seem odd, but if you work hard, you will be able to succeed. Some of you will not have a knack for this type of study. Don't be discouraged if you don't. Not everyone can do this type of magic." Sybill walked back and forth and eyed her students. "We will be studying things that are possible for you to master. We will spend a lot of our time this year reading tea leaves, but that is not the only thing we will do. Card reading is also something anyone can do as long as you set the reading spell over the cards before you begin. We will learn that spell next week."

She gave a similar class to the one she had given to the seventh-years, teaching the third-years that tea reading was an imprecise tool that should be used sparingly. She was happy to be instilling this knowledge at the beginning of these students' studies. It would help them immensely in their knowledge of Divination.

"All right, now that we have seen the vast possibilities in tea reading I want you all to look at your cups. Please draw what you see on the top of your paper, and come up with three unique interpretations of what you see. From those, please list three meanings for each of the interpretations of your picture, then three interpretations of those meanings. Finally come up with what you ultimately think your tea leaves represent. Your assignment is due tomorrow. You may begin. I will be right back."

Sybill went to the ladder and quickly descended. She saw Severus trying to make a quick escape.

"Don't run off!" she told him.

Severus stopped and turned around.

"Don't tell me, you had a vision that I was here," he said with a frown.

"No, I saw your head peeking above the floor for a minute and felt your presence while you listened to me. You don't realize how huge your aura is."

Severus frowned.

"So, why were you spying on me?"

I wasn't spying," he said indignantly.

"It may not be what you normally did as a spy, but hiding at the bottom of my ladder, listening to my class, is spying."

"I had a free hour. I just wanted to make sure the students were treating you well."

Sybill's heart felt full with his words. He certainly cared about her well being.

"Thank you," she said finally. "They have been fine. The sixth-years gave me a bit of a time, but everyone else has been attentive and well behaved."

Severus gave her a smirk. "Never would I have thought to hear you tell your students that tea reading was an imprecise art."

"Never would I have hoped to be able to do so. I'm happy to be myself again. I just wish my parents were still alive to see me."

Severus nodded. "I should get going."

"Thanks for stopping by," Sybill said.

She went up the ladder again as Severus watched her. Popping her head through, she couldn't help herself.

"You are in grave danger if you think that you can chat amongst yourselves and not do your assignment," she chided her students, who had been talking animatedly in her absence.

Severus smiled, turned, and left.

A/N: Next up: Lucius gets information on Sybill. He and Lestrage begin to plot.

Chapter 11: Death Eater Plot

Chapter 11 of 20

Lucius and Rodolphus begin to put their plan into action.

Chapter 11: Death Eater Plot

A month had gone by, and classes had gone well for Sybill. Her students were actually learning something. Minerva had worked out all of the kinks, and her little class of possible Seers was meeting every other day. Sybill worked hard with them on clearing their minds. Along with their regular class work, they spent a lot of time meditating. As the year progressed, she hoped to get to the point where at least some of them were able to see some type of vision.

She had spent a bit of time with Severus. They had sat together at meals, chatting about students, her home, and lots of other things. Severus had tried to contact Lucius Malfoy, but he had found the Manor deserted. A house-elf had told him the family was away on holiday.

He had snarked at Sybill to be careful constantly. She would walk home by herself at the end of each day, and when Severus had found out, she thought he would have a coronary. She had calmly explained that she was taking advantage of the good weather, as she would no doubt be Apparating as soon as the weather turned cold. She found that she had an escort home every night after that.

She smiled to herself. No wonder they were to fall in love, he was a perfect gentleman. Of course, you had to discount his surly attitude every time he was 'forced' to walk her home to agree with such a statement. His mood usually lifted within minutes, and they were talking amiably amongst themselves for the remainder of the journey. She found his concern incredibly endearing. The odd glances he would cast toward her now and again were endearing also. She caught him every so often looking at her strangely. She wouldn't label it possessively, but it was somewhere along those lines. Maybe he was beginning to like her too.

She enjoyed teaching and her new home. She marveled at her new life. She was actually content for the first time in almost twenty years. She only wished that contentment had come sooner. But there was no reason to wallow in sorrow. She was one who always looked to the future. She supposed the fact that the future often invaded her mind without asking was partly the reason for that. So, she went along day by day, loving life. She was pleased with her relationship with Severus. They were really becoming quite close. She wondered how long it would be before their relationship really took flight. She was enthusiastically awaiting the arrival of that day.

oooOOOooo

Malcolm Baddock looked over his shoulder and scribbled a note quickly. He ran to the Owlery and attached it to an owl, sending it on its way. Draco Malfoy had asked him to do him a favor. Malfoy wanted to know everything about Professor Trelawney. It had taken Malcolm several weeks, but he had finally found out where she lived in Hogsmeade. He had been unable to enter the yard, but he had found the house during the Hogsmeade weekend. Although he wasn't quite sure what Draco was up to, he knew Draco would be happy that he had found the home. Malcolm figured Draco probably wanted to play a prank on the batty Seer. Malcolm had explained that Trelawney was different this year, but Draco seemed not to care. He had shrugged and told him to get the information anyway. He hoped Draco would be pleased with what he had found.

oooOOOooo

Draco eyed the letter in front of him, reading it through. It detailed the goings on of Sybill Trelawney and where she now lived. He closed his eyes and rubbed them. For the hundredth time he questioned what he was doing. His father had quietly told him to find out all he could about Trelawney, explaining that she had been in hiding all of this time, and Draco was curious as to why. He had debated telling his father that he wouldn't do it right off, but he respected his father, or should he say he feared his father, too much to just blatantly refuse his request.

Still, he wondered what this information was for. Grimacing, he picked up the letter and twirled it in his hand. How he hated his father. The man never gave him a compliment. He expected Draco to follow in his Death Eater footsteps, and he constantly showed his displeasure in Draco's weaknesses. Well, the things that Lucius Malfoy saw as weaknesses, in any case. His inability to kill Dumbledore had been the biggest one of those. The disappointment in Lucius' eyes had cut Draco to the quick. Draco had strived to see pride in his father's eyes for as long as he could remember. He never had seen that emotion... not once. He had seen loathing, disappointment, rejection, and sometimes even revulsion. How he had disappointed his father time and time again. From little things like not doing what he was told as a youth, to things like embarrassing the Malfoy name by falling off his broom and losing a Quidditch match, to severe things, like not being able to carry out the Dark Lord's instructions. He had been an utter disappointment.

Well, he didn't care anymore. He had done all he could to gain the love of his father, and to what end? He had ostracized himself as a schoolboy, only having a few close friends, none being his equal. He had lived a life of fear, doing the bidding of a cruel taskmaster. He had hated his formative years, suffered through his school years, and now he was an adult who was a lonely castaway from a war that he shouldn't have been a part of. He had his father to thank for all of that.

Draco grimaced. He hated the man. Hated him! The only reason he even spoke to him was because of his sainted mother. She had been the one who had fought for his life, making a vow with Severus Snape to assure his safety. She had been the one who had saved Harry Potter so that Draco himself would live as well. She had been the one who had stayed with a power hungry fiend so the man wouldn't kill her son in a fit of 'disappointment.'

He knew that in her way, his mother loved his father. She would not have stayed with him if she didn't. But it infuriated Draco to see her fall into submission to his father's every wish. She had never been as staunch a supporter of Voldemort as his father had been. Lucius had goaded her and prodded her into following the Dark Lord. Draco thought she would have been much happier organizing garden parties, but her lot in life had been a different one because of the man with whom she had fallen in love.

Draco knew that if he ever stood up to his father the way he wanted to, he would be banished from the Malfoy home. With banishment would come the estrangement of his mother. He couldn't do that to her or to himself. The thought of never seeing her again sent a shiver down his spine. He loved her dearly.

He also knew that his father could well make his life a living hell. The man had hexed him to within an inch of his life in the past for insubordination. Draco had no doubt that he could do it again. Nonetheless, Draco had grown weary of the hold his father had upon him. Unfortunately, he wasn't sure he had the strength to do anything about it. He was firmly stuck under his father's thumb, reticent to do all that he asked but fearing what would become of him if he didn't. He was a captive to Lucius Malfoy, the man who should be his ally and confidant, but was nothing more than a cold, malicious, heartless man who pulled at Draco's strings, making him do his bidding.

oooOOOooo

Draco entered the study where his father was reading. They were holed up in a home in Spain, avoiding detection from Severus Snape, specifically. Draco knew that his father had something up his sleeve, and it involved Professor Trelawney, but he didn't know what he was planning.

He approached Lucius and dropped the letter in front of him.

"My informant has responded," Draco told his father.

Lucius opened the letter and read it quickly. He folded it back up again and looked to Draco.

"Thank you, son, you have done well."

"Would you like to tell me what this is all about, then?"

"Sorry, Draco, it's private." Lucius turned back to his magazine that he was reading.

"Why did you ask me to get that information about Trelawney? She's a foolish, untalented witch."

Lucius ignored him.

Draco stared at his father for a few minutes, but realizing he would get no information from him, he turned and left the room. He wasn't sure what was going on. Malcolm had said that Trelawney had basically become someone else. He found it hard to believe that the wide-eyed owl-woman could be anything more than the gibberish-spouting charlatan that had taught when he was a student.

Maybe he should go and speak with Severus. He might know what was going on.

oooOOOooo

Lucius Malfoy and Rodolphus Lestrange sat in a smoky, Muggle bar in Barcelona. Their heads were close together, and they whispered furiously to one another.

"We know she lives in Hogsmeade; she'll be an easy target!" Lestrage said.

"You must not underestimate Severus. He will be watching her. We need to observe her habits and find a weak point where we will be able to abduct her."

"What do you suggest?" Lestrage asked.

"Polyjuice potion."

Rodolphus narrowed his eyes in question at Lucius.

"One of us can go in disguise and watch her. We will be able to tell where she goes and when she goes there. Then we can act."

Lestrage began to laugh nastily. "We will have her soon!"

"And our Master will be avenged!" Lucius agreed.

oooOOOooo

Draco knocked on Severus' classroom door. He had debated for days about what to do and had finally come to the decision to ask Severus what was going on with Trelawney.

"Enter!" he heard Snape call out.

He opened the door and smiled at his former Head of House.

"Professor, how are you doing?"

Severus looked up at Draco, not quite sure why he had garnered a visit from his former student.

"Where is your father, Draco? I have been trying to contact him for weeks now."

"He's on holiday," Draco said simply.

"Where?"

"He cherishes his privacy, Professor. I cannot say."

"Why are you here?"

"I just was visiting a friend in Hogsmeade, and I thought I'd stop by. Besides, I have heard some interesting rumors about Professor Trelawney. Is it true that she looks and acts differently?"

"Are you spying for your father?" Severus asked in anger.

"No," Draco replied.

"You can tell him to leave Sybill alone. She is not to blame for Voldemort's death!"

Draco narrowed his eyes at Severus. "What are you talking about?"

"You know exactly what I'm talking about."

"I have no idea, Severus. What does she have to do with Voldemort's death?"

Severus rolled his eyes at Draco. "She is the one who uttered the prophecy."

Draco sat and thought for a little while. "So, you're implying that my father seeks revenge on her for the prophecy?"

"I'm implying nothing. That is exactly what he's doing. You must tell him to back off, or I can't guarantee his safety."

Draco stared at his ex-teacher and mentor for several minutes, debating whether he should be forthcoming about his father's activities. If he did, he would be betraying his father. If he didn't, a woman's life could well be at stake. Picturing his father, anger filled his mind, and he made his decision.

"Severus, I honestly don't know what my father is doing. He asked me for information on Trelawney, which I provided, but he hasn't said anything about his reasons for wanting it."

Severus felt a jolt throughout his body. "What kind of information?"

"Teaching habits, where she lives, what she does in her spare time."

A feeling of dread spread through Severus' frame. "How did you come across such information?"

Draco chose his next words carefully. "A friend did some investigating."

"A student?"

Draco nodded.

Severus was now angry. "You realize your father will try to kill her, don't you?"

Draco nodded. He'd realized *that* the minute Severus had told him about Trelawney giving the prophecy.

"This didn't occur to you before?" Severus snarled.

"I didn't give his assignment much thought. I just thought he was interested in her transformation."

"You are a fool, Draco!" Severus seethed behind his desk. "How long has Lucius had this information?"

"About two weeks," Draco replied.

Severus rose abruptly. "I must go. Please speak with your father and dissuade him from whatever plan he has come up with."

With that, Severus flew out of the room, leaving a stunned Draco still sitting in front of his desk.

oooOOOooo

Over the previous two-week period, a young girl had been seen wandering the streets of Hogsmeade by herself. No one had given her a second glance, as many young children were sent on errands by their parents in the very safe, little town. The little girl was probably around seven. She had been a curious child, wandering and looking at everything.

She had seemed to hang around a specific neighborhood and had seemed to be waiting for someone. She had liked to spy on the black-haired witch that lived in the cottage down the lane from town. She hadn't liked her friend and had made herself scarce whenever he was near. But she'd had plenty of opportunities to watch the woman without the presence of the man. Finally, she had felt her task was done. As quickly as she had appeared, she had disappeared. No one had even noticed her absence.

oooOOOooo

Severus literally ran to Sybill's classroom. He breathed a sigh of relief to find her still at her desk, correcting essays. She looked up as he stormed into the room, giving him a smile.

"Sybill, I have news," he said hurriedly.

"What is it, Severus?" Sybill asked as she put her quill down.

"I have just been paid a visit by Draco Malfoy. He relates that his father asked him for information on you. He in turn asked one of the students to spy on you. Lucius knows where you live. He will form a plan to attack you. You must come back to the castle."

A vision flashed through Sybill's mind. She saw herself tied to a chair with Lucius Malfoy standing above her, his wand raised. Her heart filled with fear. There was nothing she could do; he would find her and take her. Sybill looked to Severus in concern as she quickly weighed her options. Shaking her head, she made her decision.

"I can't do that, Severus."

"Sybill, stop being so stubborn!"

"We knew he would find out where I lived. That's why the house is warded so heavily. I can't run and hide, Severus. I just can't."

Severus couldn't believe she was being so foolish.

"There is nothing wrong with hiding when you know your life is in danger. Even I have done it!"

Sybill looked down at her desk. "You had good reasons to hide."

Severus started to storm back and forth in front of her desk.

"You do too. Come on! You have to stop this now, before something terrible happens."

"What will happen, Severus? You escort me everywhere. I am perfectly safe with you around."

Severus stopped pacing and leaned over the desk to look Sybill in the eye.

"I know Lucius. He will stop at nothing. He will find a way to get to you, and then he will kill you."

"Do you really think that I am that bad with a wand?"

Severus banged the desk and straightened up. "This has nothing to do with your skill with a wand! If he chooses to abduct you, you won't even get a chance to grab your wand."

Sybill thought about that for a while. "I'll just be extra careful."

"You are being foolish!"

"That's my home, Severus. I just can't run away and leave it."

"Once we have LeStrange and Malfoy, you can return to your home."

Sybill was getting frustrated. She stood up and looked at Severus angrily.

"And how long will that take? Will we have him in a few days? A few weeks? Years? I have been hiding for far too long, and I enjoy my independence far too much for me to just run and hide. Besides, if he's going to get me, he will do it no matter what I do or where I hide. I can't stop the future any more than you can. I won't leave!" Sybill's shoulders sagged in defeat. "If my fate is to die, then I will do so. There's nothing I can do to stop it."

Severus looked as if he was about to shatter something. He took a step toward Sybill and then stopped himself.

"Fine," he spat. "Go ahead and get killed. Don't try to tell me I didn't warn you!"

He turned and stormed out of her classroom. Sybill sat down in defeat. Maybe he was right. Maybe she should move back to the castle, just temporarily. But then Lucius would have won, wouldn't he? In any case, the vision she had hadn't really told her much, just that she would be abducted. It could happen anywhere, and she could be living anywhere. The vision hadn't really helped anything, except to give her the certainty that no matter what she did, she would be captured anyway. She might as well live her life in a way that made her happy until the end.

She was so sick of being at the mercy of others. Voldemort and Dumbledore had driven her life for so long. She was just beginning to enjoy her freedom. Now Lucius Malfoy was threatening her life and security. Would her fate be to stay in hiding forever? She cherished her new life, she couldn't give it up. She wouldn't. So what if Severus was angry with her? He'd get over it.

A/N: Next up: Sybill's vision comes true. (No, not the one where Severus kisses her!)

Thanks, Lilith Kayden, for looking this over.

These two are both a bit stubborn, aren't they? Hopefully, Sybill's decision won't get her killed. Her vision was a bit vague, so it's hard to tell. Well, at least with a story about a Seer, you know what's coming, right? Thanks, everyone, for reading and reviewing.

Chapter 12: Abduction

Chapter 12 of 20

A vision comes true.

Chapter 12: Abduction

Severus hadn't spoken to Sybill for the rest of the week. He didn't accompany her back to her home, so she just chose to Apparate from the castle to her cottage. She wasn't stupid, after all. She fully understood the danger she was in on a daily basis.

The weekend loomed ahead of her. She knew she would be lonely this weekend. Severus usually popped in at some point every weekend, but she doubted he would show his face. She found she was more worried about his anger than the obvious danger that threatened her.

She hated having Severus mad at her. She had grown quite accustomed to his company. She had come to treasure their time together. Unfortunately, with his ire, she had only received dark looks from him when she had passed him in the hallway or had seen him at dinner. He had taken to sitting on the other end of the table, far from her. He would glare at her occasionally, but that was the only eye contact they had made these past few days. Sybill had been beside herself, not knowing what to do to make him forgive her.

Tears formed in her eyes as she thought about him. He had been so cold. She missed him. It had only been a couple of days, but she missed his sarcasm and his company. She had fallen for him, as her vision had attested. However, she didn't know how that vision would ever come to fruition with his being furious with her. She would have to wait and see.

Today, however, she would not sit and pine for a man who obviously didn't want to be around her. She needed to go to the grocer and get some supplies. She found that her stores had been depleted, despite the fact that she ate mostly at Hogwarts. Gathering her wand and some money, she set out to do her shopping.

oooOOOooo

Sybill had gone directly to the market, which was only a few blocks from her home. She was not going to chance being caught by Malfoy just because she had been wandering around Hogsmeade, window shopping. She emerged from the market with a bag in her hand and quickly headed back toward her home. As she walked, she saw a vision of a girl crying in an alleyway. The image left her with a strange feeling. It was a feeling of dread. *The child must be lost and scared*, she thought to herself, chalking up the feeling to the child's fright.

Coming upon the alley, she saw the girl with her head in her hands, sobbing loudly. Sybill debated whether to calm the child. She had always had a soft spot for young children, so she hurried to the girl's side.

As she approached the child, she noted that she seemed to be around seven years old. The girl must be lost. She had her head in her hands as she cried pitifully. Sybill was uncertain why no one else had discovered the child. She came up to her and placed her hand on the girl's shoulder. The girl looked up to her with tears running down her cheeks.

"Are you lost, sweetie?" Sybill asked gently.

The girl started to fidget. She nodded her head while she fished in her pocket for something.

"I'll help you find your mum, dear. What's your name?"

The girl only looked at Sybill as she took her hand out of her pocket. The girl raised her fist until her small hand was level with Sybill's face. She opened her palm to reveal a powdery substance in it. Before Sybill had a chance to react a male voice emanated from the child, and the powder was blown in her face.

"Sweet dreams," the voice told Sybill as she was knocked unconscious by the powder.

oooOOOooo

Sybill slowly regained consciousness to find herself roped to a chair, her wrists bound behind her. She kept her eyes closed and listened for some clue as to where she was and who her captors were. Of course, she figured Malfoy and Lestrage had finally gotten to her as her vision had shown her bound to a chair, but she had to be sure. She heard low voices murmuring in the distance.

"The plan went off without a hitch. She thought I was a kid, and before she knew it, she was out cold!"

Sybill didn't recognize that voice, but the next one sent shivers down her spine. It was Lucius Malfoy's.

"Well done, Rodolphus. We were lucky Severus wasn't around today. He usually hangs around like a puppy dog."

There was silence for a minute.

"When will she awaken?" Lucius asked.

"She should be up any minute now. It's a fast-acting sleep agent."

Sybill heard footsteps approaching her. Suddenly a hand struck her face. Sybill's eyes involuntarily flew open and filled with tears from the pain.

"It seems she's awake already," Lucius said smugly.

Sybill straightened her head and glared at Malfoy.

"You, Sybill Trelawney, have much to answer for," Lucius shot at her.

"I have done nothing to earn your ire, sir. It was the greed of your Dark Lord that brought about his demise!"

"You will pay for your prophecy, Trelawney. Voldemort shall have his revenge."

Sybill worked her hands back and forth slowly, trying to get a grasp of the ring that Severus had given her without bringing attention to herself.

"You will die a slow death," Lucius told her.

Lestrangle came up next to him, now in his restored body. "Before that, however, you will be tortured with the Cruciatus curse until you can stand it no more. It's only what someone like you deserves."

Sybill only stared as she found the ring and twisted it. She hoped that Severus would come quickly. He would come, wouldn't he? Or would he think this a fitting end for her foolishness.

"Say something, witch?" Lestrangle demanded. "Don't you want to grovel for your life?"

"I would not give either of you the satisfaction of groveling," Sybill replied caustically.

Lucius raised his wand and cried, "*Crucio!*"

Sybill felt a searing pain encompass her body. How did anyone survive even a few seconds of this? She screamed aloud.

"That will teach you to be insolent," Lucius told her.

oooOOOooo

Severus was sitting in his chair in front of his fireplace, mulling over not being with Sybill. He usually had Apparated to her home by now, and they would enjoy lunch together. However, today he was angry. He would not be gracing her doorstep any time soon. She could go ahead and get herself killed as far as he was concerned. The woman was insufferable. However meritorious her bravery might be, she was risking her life for nothing. He could not accept that. He had taken too much time trying to protect her for her to just throw it all in his face and basically invite Lucius Malfoy to abduct her. He would have nothing more to do with the infuriating woman.

Suddenly he felt a jolt on his finger. He looked down at his ring. It was growing colder by the second. It was her sign...Sybill was in trouble. Fear filled him, and he forgot his anger. He bolted from his chair. The man had never moved so fast in his life. He raced out of the castle and to the Apparition point, hoping he would not be too late. Reaching the point where he could Disapparate, he extended his wand and spun around, ready for a fight.

oooOOOooo

The two men had been throwing curses at her for a few minutes now, and Sybill's face was stained with tears. She had screamed so loudly that her throat hurt. She knew they were hardly finished. They would continue with this torture until she died from the intense pain or went insane. Then when she was a babbling idiot, they would kill her. She should have listened to Severus.

A loud pop resounded in her ear. Severus appeared out of nowhere and shot a killing curse directly at Rodolphus Lestrangle. Taken by surprise, the man crumpled to the floor in a lifeless heap. Lucius screamed in fury and pointed his wand at Severus.

"Drop... your... wand!" Severus demanded.

"You are in no position to make demands, Severus. I will kill her before you even have a chance to strike me!"

"Your wand is pointed at me, not her!"

Lucius debated what to do. If he turned his wand onto Trelawney, Severus would attack. He was better off dueling with his old friend, then taking care of Trelawney. He shot a hex at Severus, who deftly blocked it.

The battle began in earnest. Both men were very adept at dueling and neither was able to get the upper hand.

"Severus, just let me finish her. What is she to you anyway? I remember you complaining about what a pain she was."

"She was a pain because of people like you who sought her life!"

The curses continued to fly. Severus ducked one that was aimed at his head and shot one straight at Lucius' heart. Unfortunately, Lucius shielded himself just in time. The battle continued.

"She deserves death. I know you weren't really on our side, but surely you can understand justice and revenge?"

"She has done nothing to merit such treatment! Give up, Lucius, and I will spare your life"

Lucius smiled evilly. "Sorry, my friend, I cannot let this go."

They kept fighting. Severus singed Lucius' hair at one point, but that was as close as either of them got to hurting one another. Finally Lucius frowned.

"I see we are at a stalemate," he said as he flicked another curse at Severus.

"Give up, Lucius!" Severus cried.

"I will get my revenge! She may not die today, but soon she will be at my mercy, and there's nothing you'll be able to do about it." Lucius cried.

He shot a curse at Severus and quickly shielded himself. Spinning around, Lucius Apparated away, choosing to fight this battle another day. Severus lowered his wand and stared at the empty space that had been Lucius Malfoy. Severus had hoped to end this today, but they would need to battle again, it would seem. He turned to Sybill and flicked his wand at her, releasing her bonds. She fell to the floor.

Severus went over to her and helped her sit up. Sybill weakly leaned against Severus. She felt him tense up at her nearness. He must still be furious with her.

Severus waited a few minutes while Sybill gained her strength back before even speaking to her.

"Can you stand?" he demanded roughly.

Sybill nodded, and he helped her up. Putting his arm around her, he Apparated both of them back to her cottage.

A/N: Next up: Will love win out over anger?

Whew! That was a close one! You all knew she'd be alright, right? After all, it was in the cards, or the visions, or the crystal ball. Unfortunately, Lucius has escaped, so she's not safe yet.

A big bow to Liliith Kayden for her beta work, and a big hug to all of you readers who are following this.

Chapter 13: Revelations

Chapter 13 of 20

Severus returns Sybill to her cottage and gives her an earful.

Chapter 13: Revelations

Severus led Sybill up the walk and into her sitting room. He eased her into the sofa before stalking halfway to the door and beginning to pace.

"Are you alright?" he barked.

"I think so," Sybill said, once again near tears.

"I told you this would happen!" Severus snapped as he continued to pace. "Did you listen to me? No! I should have left you to your fate!"

"Severus, please!"

Sybill rose from her seat and took two tentative steps towards Severus. She reached out to him, but he glared at her hand and continued his pacing. Sybill could only stare at him. He had saved her life, but he was yelling at her. She had almost died, but he was berating her for being foolish. Tears she had been trying to contain finally rolled down her cheeks as she watched Severus pace back and forth. He suddenly stopped and looked at her. His face was a mask of anger. Then, in an instant, it changed to something else. Fear mixed with passion consumed his face as Severus let his guard down. He closed the distance between them and surrounded her in an embrace. His lips came crashing down onto hers.

Sybill snaked her arm around his back, and her hand grabbed his hair. She returned his kiss with fervor. So, her vision had finally come true. She wondered what would come next, but quickly forgot everything as she became lost in his kiss. Finally, he pulled away and looked into her eyes.

oooOOOooo

Green eyes had always been his downfall, hadn't they? But this time, when Severus looked into green eyes, he saw affection staring back at him. His heart constricted within him, and he fought to control his emotions. He had nearly lost her. The thought of that was almost too much to bear. His eyes became misty, and he struggled not to cry in front of Sybill. Pulling her head into his chest, he finally found his voice and began to speak.

"When my ring turned cold, my heart turned to ice as well," Severus said quietly. "I was afraid I would be too late. I could picture myself Apparating and finding your body strewn on some floor with Lestranger and Malfoy laughing over you. I don't think I would have been able to go on if they had killed you."

oooOOOooo

Great sobs overtook Sybill. The fear she had felt and had pushed down came up and filled her. She held on to Severus as if her life depended on it. He rubbed her back as she tried to contain herself.

Sybill continued to sob. "I wasn't sure if you would come!" she cried into Severus' robes.

Severus pulled back and picked up her chin. Shushing her as he wiped away her tears, he looked directly into her eyes.

"I will always come for you," he said tenderly. He pulled her face to his and kissed her softly. "You have captured my heart."

"Severus," Sybill whispered. "I've missed you these past few days. I thought you would never talk to me again."

"I'm sorry... I was angry... I was furious, actually. But my anger was fueled with the thought that I would lose you."

"You saved me, and because of that, it seems that we have gained a new understanding of one another." She gave Severus a knowing smile.

"I suppose we have. Maybe I should thank Lucius for bringing us together."

Suddenly, Sybill found Severus kissing her furiously. She moaned as he intensely covered her mouth with his. At long last, they pulled apart again. Severus led her back to the couch and settled himself in next to her.

"Severus, I am not complete without you," Sybill admitted.

"You have longed to be near me?" Severus asked as he smiled and arched an eyebrow.

She knew he was remembering all of the times she had said that to him over the years.

Sybill smiled back at him. "Yes, but this time I really do long to be near you."

Without hesitation, she pulled Severus back to her, and they were kissing passionately again. Sybill thought her heart would explode inside of her, it was so full. Severus finally pulled away and gave her a curious look.

"Whatever possessed you to chase after me like that in your other persona?" he asked.

Sybill looked embarrassed. "I'm sorry, Severus. I was just having a bit of fun. You can imagine that in my other existence, chances for fun weren't very plentiful. It was quite funny to me to see your look of dread whenever you came in sight of me. It was even funnier when you would stutter replies to my advances."

"You are nothing but a tease," Severus replied.

"I really am sorry," Sybill countered.

"No, you're not. You just admitted that you loved to see me squirm."

"I did, but then later on I feared that you would never want to have anything to do with me. I was a bit surprised when you actually held decent conversations with me."

"I enjoy conversing with intelligent women."

Sybill giggled. "I'm sure you do. I just didn't think you'd ever see me as intelligent."

"You are incredibly intelligent," Severus assured her. "To be able to pull off what you did for so long without anyone suspecting you was remarkable."

"Flatterer!"

"Stubborn witch!"

"Snarky git!"

"Beautiful woman!"

Sybill was silenced with that comment. Her eyes grew wide, and she regarded Severus curiously.

"Do you really think so?"

"Of course I do."

Sybill pulled away from Severus and turned away from him. She hung her head down and folded her arms insecurely.

"The only people who have ever said I was beautiful were my parents," she explained. "I have been that plain, eccentric woman for so long, I never expected anyone to compliment my looks."

Severus put his hands on her arms. "You are gorgeous, Sybill. I can't imagine what someone like you would see in me, but you seem to enjoy my company."

Sybill turned and looked into Severus' face. "Severus, you are incredibly handsome yourself."

"Lying doesn't suit you, Sybill. I know I am nothing to look at. I have pointy features, my nose is enormous, and I have beady eyes."

Sybill laughed at him and stroked his cheek. "You have chiseled features, a distinguishing nose, and your eyes are deep pools of emotion."

"Flatterer!"

"Snarky git!"

"Love of my life."

Sybill sat there, stunned. "Do you really mean it?" she whispered in awe.

Severus' arms encircled her again, and he kissed her. When he finally pulled away, she saw love in his eyes. "More than I would like to admit," he acknowledged as he nuzzled her cheek.

"What about Lily Potter?" Sybill asked tentatively.

Severus sat back on the couch and pulled Sybill close again. He stroked her hair as he responded to her. "She was my past. It's time to live my real life, not the one I thought I should live." He sat silently for a few moments as he continued stroking her hair. "She was not for me. I fooled myself into thinking that she was, and then when she died, I wrapped myself in guilt and clung to a memory. It may have served me as a spy, but it serves no purpose whatsoever in my life now. I want someone real. Someone who feels for me what I feel for them. I want you."

Sybill pulled back and looked into Severus' eyes. "I want you too, and I love you," she admitted, not just to him, but to herself as well.

Severus took Sybill's face in his hands and brought her to him. His kiss was long and passionate. Sybill thought she would melt through the sofa. How had she not known how much she loved him? He was incredible.

They finally came up for air, both a bit winded.

"Will you please reconsider and move back to the castle?" Severus begged.

"I don't think I have a choice."

"You always have a choice," Severus countered. "How did he capture you, anyway?"

"Lestrage fooled me," she explained. "He was Polyjuiced into a little girl who was crying in an alley. I went to help, and he blew some powder in my face. The next thing I knew, I was tied up to a chair." Sybill looked directly into Severus' eyes. "You were right. I didn't have a chance. I should have listened to you."

"I'm just glad you're alive. They could have killed you right off instead of torturing you. Lucius won't make the same mistake again."

"We need to find him," Sybill said absently.

"You have to keep yourself safe."

Sybill rolled her eyes. "You may be able to make me hide in the castle, Severus Snape, but you're not going to keep me from trying to find Lucius Malfoy."

"Why must you always put yourself in danger?" Severus barked at her.

"Maybe it's a latent desire to be in the thick of things?" Sybill questioned with arched eyebrows.

Severus gave her a scowl.

"Don't!" Sybill cried while putting a finger over his mouth. "Let's make a deal that we'll work together."

"I'm used to working alone."

Sybill smiled at him. "Well, you'd better get used to having a side-kick."

"I don't want you hurt."

"You know, Severus, sometimes you're a one note song."

Severus looked at her curiously. "What do you mean by that?"

"All you do is harp about my safety. What about your safety? You have no qualms about throwing yourself into the middle of danger."

"That's different."

"How so?"

"It doesn't matter if I'm hurt," Severus explained.

Sybill's eyes grew wide. "It matters to me!" She grabbed his face. "Severus Snape, stop thinking your life is worth less than everyone else's. I don't care if Voldemort and Dumbledore treated you as someone expendable... I do not. If something happened to you..." She looked deeply into his eyes. "I don't think I would recover."

"Then you can understand my worry about your safety?" Severus asked.

"I can, but if we work together, we can protect each other. Please, Severus! I want to feel needed. I want to be involved. I've spent so much time hiding." Tears were beginning to form in her eyes. "I feel like I've wasted my life, and I don't want to do that anymore. If I must hole up at Hogwarts, I want to take part in finding the man who is making me hide."

Severus wiped away her tears and pulled her to him in an embrace. "I'm sorry, Sybill. I'm sorry that you have felt so useless for all of these years. I wish I could make all of that disappear. But, Sybill..."

"Please, Severus, let me help!" Sybill pleaded.

"Alright," he sighed as he caressed her hair again. "We will work together, but you must be careful. No crazy wand waving, alright? I will not lose you now that I've just found you."

Severus couldn't say another word because Sybill's eager mouth was attacking his. She grabbed his head and crushed him in her eager kiss.

"Thank you, Severus!" she said in between attacks.

A/N: Next up: Sybill returns to Hogwarts.

Finally, huh? I think that went better than even Sybill could have imagined! Now they have to find Lucius and take care of him. Hopefully, they can track him down soon! Thanks to Lilith Kayden for her beta work, and to you for reading.

Chapter 14: Moving Back

Chapter 14 of 20

Sybill packs her things and returns to Hogwarts.

Chapter 14: Moving Back

Severus arose early, despite it being the weekend. He went to his desk and scribbled a letter on a parchment. Leaving his room, he went to the Owlery and sent his note. It was a letter to Draco. He hoped he could coerce the man to help him flush out his father. His hopes weren't high, but he had to try something.

oooOOOooo

Sybill also awoke early, too excited to sleep anymore. She had just had the most wonderful dream. Just the memory of it made her insides tingle. In it, Severus held her as they sat on the lawn at Hogwarts, looking out toward the lake. He whispered sweet nothings in her ear, and she giggled and kissed him. He returned her kiss affectionately, running his hand through her hair as his mouth covered hers with devotion. She had awakened just as his tongue had entered her mouth. Disappointing as it had been to find that the dream was not reality, she still felt fulfilled. Her lips burned, as if Severus had really been there, showering her with his affection. The man was amazing.

As she lay there, reality slowly set in. She had much to do today. She needed to go through her things and decide what she would need back at Hogwarts. Pulling herself from her bed, she headed for the shower. Ten minutes later, she had emerged and got ready for her day. She fashioned her hair into a ponytail so it would be out of her way as she poked through her things. Heading to the kitchen, she grabbed some bread and butter and headed back into her sitting area. There was a knock at her door. She smiled. There was only one person who could get to her door, and that was Severus.

She raced to the door and flung it open, throwing herself into his arms.

"I wasn't expecting you so early," she told him as she hugged him tightly.

"I forced myself to get up early. I didn't want you starting for the castle without me."

Sybill frowned at him. "I told you I would wait."

"I know, but you don't always keep your word." He bent in toward her head and nuzzled her nose with his.

"Oh, get in here, you prat!" she said as she grabbed him by the robes and dragged him into her home.

As soon as the door was closed behind them, Severus pulled her to him and planted his lips on hers. Oh, yeah, that's what she wanted. She fell into his kisses and gave a slight moan. She had thought her dream had been intense, but it couldn't compare to having the real Severus Snape in her arms, kissing her wantonly. Eventually he pulled back.

"You're delicious," he murmured, eliciting a smile from her.

"So are you," Sybill admitted.

"Shall we get you packed?"

Sybill gave him a little grimace. "I was hoping for more kisses." She pouted at him.

Severus smirked at her. "There will be plenty of time for kisses when you are safe in the castle."

Sybill sighed. "Very well. Let's start with the books."

"You need books for Divination?" Severus joked.

Sybill slapped his chest lightly. "Very funny!" she cried and turned to her bookshelf.

oooOOOooo

It took them an hour to organize all that Sybill wanted to take with her. Everything had been easily miniaturized and placed into a box. Severus and Sybill were now at the door, ready to depart. Sybill turned and looked over the home she was about to abandon. Tears formed in her eyes.

Severus' arms went around her comfortingly. "You'll be back," he consoled.

"Yes, but when?"

"Hopefully soon. I have owed Draco. I hope he can help us track his father down."

"Why would he ever do such a thing?"

"I don't believe he was happy with what I had explained to him when we spoke last," Severus explained. "If I can convince him that this will keep his father safe and alive, he may help."

"I hope he can help us, Severus."

"If he won't, we'll find another way to find Lucius. This will be over soon. I promise."

Sybill nodded to him. He released her from his embrace, and she opened the door, letting Severus pass by her to exit. She gave a single look behind her and closed the door, locking it with a wand wave. They proceeded down the walkway and Disapparated to the castle.

oooOOOooo

Sybill opened the door to her old room at Hogwarts. She was blasted by a loud shout of "Surprise!" Luckily, Severus was holding her belongings, for she would have certainly dropped them. As it was, she jumped into the air, her arms jerking up wildly as she shrieked. Gathering her wits about her, she saw Rolanda, Pomona, and Minerva standing in her room with raised glasses of pumpkin juice, saluting her. Sybill heaved a sigh and gave the three witches a look that could melt steel.

"You are all in grave danger," she cried, "for I am going to kill each of you slowly!"

The three witches laughed as Severus rolled his eyes. Sybill smiled as she went over to her three friends and gave them all hugs.

"You really didn't need to do this," Sybill complained.

"Oh, yes, we did!" Minerva retorted.

"We want you to know that we're excited that you're back!" Rolanda said as she hugged Sybill again.

"I'm only here temporarily," she warned the overly excited women.

"We know, but we want you to feel at home in any case," Pomona explained.

Sybill smiled as she was offered a glass of pumpkin juice. "Thank you," she told them as she saluted them with her drink.

"Alright, Sybill, you are not to leave the castle without an escort," Minerva said.

Sybill furrowed her brow. "I didn't know I was going to jail, Minerva."

"It's only for your protection. You could have been killed when Lucius abducted you."

"Fine, fine. I'm sure I can find a companion to go with me," Sybill said as she glanced at Severus. He gave her a quick nod.

Sybill, Pomona, and Rolanda chatted as Minerva made her way over to Severus.

"I spoke with the Ministry this morning, Severus. No charges will be filed against you."

Severus raised an eyebrow at that. "I killed a man and am a former Death Eater, but the Ministry isn't going to slaughter me?"

Minerva gave Severus a conspiratorial look. "Kingsley told me that after all you have done for our world, you deserve a break. He's looking at the whole incident as an exercise in self-defense. As far as I'm concerned, Kingsley is absolutely right."

Severus was quiet as he studied Minerva's face. Finally, he spoke. "I'm glad nothing will come of it. We have enough to worry about with Lucius still on the loose."

"Indeed we do! I trust you will keep our Sybill safe, Severus."

Severus gave a slight bow. "That is my intent."

Minerva smiled at him before she turned to join the other women who were gabbing at lightning speed.

The witches were planning to head into Hogsmeade that next weekend for lunch and shopping. Severus watched them in a bored way. All of their excited talk turned into a background chatter. He marveled at how women could become excited by the most mundane things. Why anyone would be excited to go shopping was beyond him.

They were talking about shoe shopping now. Pomona needed to buy some dress shoes for a date she was going on the following week. Severus pictured her with her green witch hat and robes. Suddenly, Severus imagined a pair of shoes appearing on her feet. They were green to match her robes. The tips were curled in on themselves. He stifled a laugh as he thought of Pomona Sprout dressed like some Christmas elf, hopping around a man who was turning every which way to look at her as she made wild circles around him. How Pomona had turned into a Jack-in-the-box was beyond Severus, but there was the image, stuck in his brain for all eternity.

Pushing the image from his mind, he concentrated on the prattle going on before him. Would these three ever shut up? Sybill couldn't even get a word in edgewise. She just nodded in all of the appropriate places as the other three yapped away. Severus noted that Sybill didn't seem to mind, so he just watched the others monopolize the conversation. The group chatted for a while, but soon the hen party was over, and the three women excused themselves and left en masse. Sybill closed the door and looked to Severus. He quickly forgot that there had been an entire brood of chickens clucking away for what had seemed to be an eternity. He came up to Sybill and gave her a hug.

oooOOOooo

"Welcome back," he told her as he pulled away.

Sybill smiled up at him. "Thank you."

"Are you sure I can't talk you into moving back permanently? I rather like having you so close."

"Yes, it's so very far away to Apparate over to my house."

"You don't know the hassle I have to go through to get to you."

"You'll be alright, Severus. A good swift walk never hurt anyone."

"It's not the exercise... It's the time it takes. I'd rather just walk up a few flights of stairs and be in your arms."

"There you go, making me feel all giddy inside again."

Severus pulled her closer. "You deserve to feel giddy. You have been miserable for far too long in your life."

He found her lips and kissed her sultrily. Sybill fell into him and let him sweep her into his sweet lips. What an awesome man! Who would have guessed that the dour Potions master was a passionate, fiery man with lips that could make Sybill's heart stop beating? Did they ever have to break this off? Sybill was content to spend the rest of the day locked in an embrace with Severus Snape as the world marched along without them. Alas, her wish could not come true because they both had things to do. Severus pulled away and looked deeply into her eyes.

"I'm glad you are here," he whispered.

"Me too," Sybill told him.

"I have some things to attend to, Sybill. Are you all right being alone for a while?"

"I've been alone for years, Severus, a few hours more is not going to kill me."

Severus gave her a caustic look, but there was only mock annoyance in his gaze.

"If I return and find that you have shriveled up into a ball of loneliness in my absence, I will be very put out," he jibed.

"I have enough to do to keep me from pining away in that amount of time. I need to arrange my things."

"Do you want to wait, so I can help you?"

Sybill shook her head. "No, it has to be done, and I'd rather do it myself. That way when I forget where something is, I have no one to blame but me."

Severus smoothed back her hair and gave her another quick kiss.

"I shall see you at dinner then?"

Sybill smiled and raised her eyebrows. "It's a date."

Severus turned and left her room. Sybill walked over to the box Severus had set by the door and began to unpack.

A/N: Next up: Draco pays a visit to Severus.

That was a bit of fluff before the storm. I hope you enjoyed it. Thanks to Lilith Kayden for her beta work.

Chapter 15: Found

Chapter 15 of 20

Draco gives Severus the information he needs to find Lucius.

Chapter 15: Found

The next morning, Severus was in his room, finalizing a test for his seventh-years that was to be given the next day. There was a knock on the door. Severus sat back in his chair and commanded the visitor to enter. Draco swept into the room in a flourish of robes that would rival one of his father's entrances. Severus looked at him with an arched eyebrow. He had not expected to see Draco quite this soon.

"I assume you got my owl, Draco?" Severus asked.

"I came as soon as I could get away, Professor. What is it that's so urgent that you needed to see me in person?"

"It has to do with your father again, Draco."

Draco rolled his eyes. "What has he done now?"

"He abducted Professor Trelawney and nearly killed her. I appeared just in time and killed Lestrangle before they could do too much harm to her. Draco, this has gone way too far. Will you please help me find your father and stop him?"

Draco studied Severus seriously. "Professor, if I were to divulge the location of my father, I'm sure I would find him dead by morning."

Severus narrowed his eyes at Draco. "If you don't tell me where to find him, he will be killed anyway because of his stupid actions. This is an opportunity to keep everyone

alive while stopping your father from doing something drastic."

"So, you're not going to run out and kill him?"

Severus heaved a great sigh. "Even though I would like nothing more than to see your father dead at my feet for what he did to Sybill, I would rather see the man rot in Azkaban for the rest of his measly, conniving, little life."

"And why should I help you put my father into Azkaban?" Draco asked slyly.

"Because it's a better alternative than death!"

"You are giving me no choice?"

"We always have a choice, Draco. Yours just isn't a palatable one. You can either tell me where your father is so I can capture him and send him to Azkaban, or I can use Legilimency on you and find out the hard way."

Draco became angry. "Don't think that the thought of my father dead or in Azkaban horrifies me. I care little as to whether he lives or dies! It is my mother who I am worried about. I will not sacrifice my father, for she would fall apart!"

Severus leaned over the desk and looked straight into Draco's eyes. "If you do not help me, he will soon be dead. He will make another move on Sybill, he has already promised that. I will be there, and he will not survive. Your mother would much rather her husband be alive and rotting in a cell than dead, rotting in the ground."

"My father is as good a fighter as you are!"

Severus sneered at Draco and gave a low chuckle. "Are you willing to wager on that supposition?"

Draco looked down, breaking Severus' glare. He said nothing for a few minutes.

"Draco, I assure you, your father may be skilled with a wand, but ultimately he will not prevail."

Draco remained silent, and Severus let him stew about their conversation, coming to his own conclusions. Finally Draco looked up with a grimace on his face.

"You will promise me that you will not kill him, for my mother's sake."

"I promise."

Draco put his head into his hands. "My mother is going to kill me," he whispered.

"She will understand eventually."

"My father will not. He will know I betrayed him."

"He need never know of your betrayal."

"He will know," Draco said as he bent over and cradled his head in his hands. "No matter how I try to hide it, he will know."

Severus looked down, understanding the fear and sadness that were enveloping Draco at this moment.

"Will you help me then?" he asked Draco finally.

"Yes," Draco murmured in anguish.

"Thank you," Severus said with relief.

oooOOOooo

Sybill stared into her crystal ball. She watched as Severus walked swiftly down the hall and stopped in front of her door. She heard an urgent knock at that very door. Rising from her seat in front of the crystal, she meandered over and pulled the door open. She saw Severus and threw her arms around him.

"I saw you coming," she told him, before planting a kiss on his cheek.

"You missed," Severus said as he replaced his cheek with his lips.

Sybill couldn't help her chuckle as he kissed her lovingly. He pulled away after a long while, and they entered her room.

"What else did you see in that ball of yours?" Severus asked.

"Nothing, I was just watching you. You see I miss you when you're not here."

Fire rose in Severus' eyes. "I miss you too."

They sunk down into the sofa and resumed their kissing, barely coming up for breath. Severus caressed her neck as she pressed into him. Sybill's heart was fluttering madly with his affection. She knew he could feel it, it was pounding so hard. Finally, Severus broke away and pulled Sybill into his chest.

"Although this is quite lovely," he told her, "I did not come to get lost in your kisses, witch."

"Is there something else I can interest you in?" Sybill asked in a silky voice.

Severus groaned. "You are going to be the death of me."

"Come now, Severus, I know you long to be near me," Sybill said darkly as she traced her finger along his jaw line.

Severus grabbed her hand and looked into her eyes. "You are nothing but a tease!"

Sybill giggled. "Do you want me to stop?"

"No... I mean... yes... I mean... you are exasperating!"

oooOOOooo

Sybill gave Severus such a loving look that he thought he should just hand his heart to her right then and there. The realization that he would do anything for her did not seem as horrid as it would have a few months ago. He was not one to do things for others, especially nice things. He didn't go out of his way to be nice to anyone. The thought of being pleasant and helpful was quite foreign to him. Granted, he had given of himself as a spy for years, but that had been different. The recipients of his actions

had been hidden to him, just a bunch of ungrateful people who hadn't cared one way or the other for him. But this was different. He cared about Sybill and therefore, wanted her happy. He would stop at nothing to see her happy. Severus sighed. He had grown into the biggest sap on the planet. Even that realization didn't faze him as much as he thought it should have. He surely was losing his snarky touch.

"I'm sorry, Severus, I didn't mean to exasperate you," Sybill said as she looked deep within his eyes.

"You may be exasperating, but I would have you no other way," Severus told her sincerely.

"Who would have thought that Severus Snape, colossal grump, would be such a romantic?" Sybill sighed.

"Who would have thought that Sybill Trelawney, crazed loon, would be so beautiful and enticing?"

"Damn, you're good," Sybill muttered before covering him in kisses.

"Alright, alright!" Severus cried as he pulled away from her. "I am here on official business that does not involve snogging you senseless."

Sybill heaved a sigh and pulled away to a safer distance. "You've already accomplished the snogging part, why are you really here?"

"Draco stopped by this morning."

"What did you find out?"

"I convinced him it was in his family's interest to tell me where his father was hiding. He's in Spain, on the outskirts of Barcelona."

Sybill raised her eyebrows at that. "Who would think to look for him there?"

"No one, that's why it's such an excellent hiding place. I hadn't even realized that the Malfoys owned property in Spain. It is a family retreat that has been kept secret from everyone. Unfortunately, Lucius will know that Draco has given up his secret when I show up to confront him."

Sybill placed her hand on Severus' arm. "I told you I want to go with you."

"Sybill," Severus pleaded, "I would rather you not be involved."

She looked to Severus angrily. "We have already discussed this, Severus, and you agreed to let me help. Don't renege now!"

"It will be dangerous."

Sybill rose from the sofa and began to pace. "I know that! Why should you just waltz in there by yourself? I want to help!"

"I couldn't stand losing you."

Sybill sat back down again and looked at Severus with determination. "I couldn't stand losing you either. Please stop trying to protect me. A relationship involves working together. If we can't do that, we might as well just forget about each other right now."

"This has nothing to do with our relationship!"

"It has everything to do with our relationship, Severus! You're pushing me away. You want to keep me from being involved with something that I am invariably involved with."

"This is about your safety, Sybill, not pushing you away!"

"It's the same thing."

Severus took her into his arms. "No, it's not. I love you and don't want you hurt. It's my job to protect you. I don't want to see you in any danger."

"But I am in danger! I have a right to fight for myself." Sybill stroked his face. "Look, there will be times when neither of us can shield the other from danger. It is a fact of the life that we lead. I love that you want to protect me, but you can't shadow me constantly. I don't need a parent, Severus, I need a partner. That means we share in things, not push the other away when there's a threat of danger."

"I just want you safe, Sybill."

"You will be right there, Severus. I couldn't be anywhere safer."

"Sybill..."

"Shh!" Sybill placed a kiss on his cheek. "I will be fine, and so will you. We are done arguing about this."

This would normally be the time when Severus would lose his temper, stand, and stalk off in a billow of robes. He surprised himself, however, by kissing Sybill's cheek instead. What was becoming of him? He didn't even recognize himself. Perhaps Sybill Trelawney had cast some sort of spell on him, for he had no desire to yell at her whatsoever, no matter that she deserved it. No matter that she needed to understand that he would not see her hurt. No matter that she was a stubborn witch who would put herself in danger simply for the fun of it.

"You are insufferably stubborn," he said to her finally.

"I know," Sybill conceded as she pulled him to her, kissing him with abandon.

oooOOOooo

The planning phase of the attack had taken a week. Severus and Sybill had dueled every day, honing their skills. Severus was hard on Sybill. He knew that Lucius would hold nothing back, and he advised her how to dodge killing curses and shield herself from the Dark magic that Lucius was bound to throw at her.

They used the Room of Requirement to create a mock version of Malfoy's hideaway where they stealthily snuck around and ambushed a dummy of Malfoy. Draco had given them the layout of the Malfoy retreat and which rooms were frequented by his father. Draco was to take his mother on an excursion on the day of the attack so she wouldn't be harmed or wouldn't interfere in the abduction. Draco would also drop the wards before his departure so that Severus and Sybill's arrival would go unnoticed.

Finally, the day came for their attack. Sybill paced nervously in her room, awaiting Severus. When he knocked on the door, she ran to it, threw it open, and fell into his arms. He squeezed her tightly and kissed her.

"Are you sure you want to do this with me?" he asked.

Sybill scowled at him. "Of course!" she cried.

"Please, Sybill, don't be heroic."

"The only hero in this room is you, love," Sybill admonished.

"Let's get going then," Severus continued.

"All right," Sybill agreed.

She took Severus' hand. Severus quickly went over all the things that could go wrong and what they would do if it did. Sybill and he looked at each other. They both were apprehensive, but not to the point of panic. Severus reached into his pocket and removed the Portkey they would use to get to Barcelona. They both put their hands on the crinkled water bottle and disappeared.

oooOOOooo

Lucius rolled his eyes at his son.

"I told you, Draco, I am going to take your mother out to lunch!"

Draco's lips thinned. "No, Father. I have been promising to take her to lunch today for the whole week. It's just supposed to be her and me."

"Draco, we are a family. Certainly I can tag along."

"No!" Draco cried, a little too sharply. "You can't. I never get to spend much alone time with Mother. It's just a lunch date. You can take her out any other time."

Lucius regarded his son and mulled over the boy's argument. Something was not quite right. The boy was making excuses... for what, he did not know. He would let this play out and see where it all went. Giving a sigh, he addressed his son once again.

"Very well, Draco. Take your mother from me. I just hope you don't choke on your soup."

Draco eyed his father warily. That had been a bit too easy. He gave a bow of his head. "Thank you, Father. We shall be back within a couple of hours."

"Don't hurry on my part, Draco," his father said with a wave of his hand.

Draco turned and left the room, not seeing his father narrow his eyes at him suspiciously. Within a few minutes, he had led his mother out of the home, secretly lowered the wards, and Apparated the two of them to a fine restaurant in Barcelona. He hoped this plan that Severus had hatched up would work. He hoped his mother would understand what had to be done... that she would accept that his father would spend the rest of his life in Azkaban. He also hoped beyond hope that she would be able to forgive him for his role in arresting his own father.

oooOOOooo

As soon as Draco had Dissapparated with Narcissa, Lucius had done a check of the home. He found the wards had been lowered but not restored. There was no other change in the home. *Now what is that sneaky cur of a son up to?* he thought. Draco had left the wards down for a reason. Obviously, someone wanted to surprise Lucius, and Draco didn't want his mother to be around when it happened. The only person he knew that was looking for him at this time was Severus Snape. Lucius grinned to himself. He would not have to go looking for that stupid Seer. Hopefully, Severus would bring the woman straight to him.

He quickly did a mental search of the house, deciding on just where Draco would tell Severus to appear that would be the most hidden. The spare bedroom would be the perfect place. It was empty, and no one ever went in there. Well, someone would be in there today! Lucius wheeled around and stalked to the bedroom. He would put a damper on Severus' little plot. Opening the door, he entered the empty room. Drab brown carpeting and tan walls assaulted his eyes. The room was ugly, but it would serve its purpose today. He settled himself against the far wall, smirked to himself, and waited.

Next up: The showdown with Lucius.

Well, the fluff fest is over. Thanks for reading.

Chapter 16: Thwarted Plans

Chapter 16 of 20

Lucius is aware of Severus and Sybill's upcoming attack.

Chapter 16: Thwarted Plans

Severus and Sybill appeared in a field near Barcelona. They both looked at one another as Severus raised his wand. Sybill raised hers too. She nodded, confirming she was ready. They Disapparated immediately to the Villa.

oooOOOooo

A loud pop alerted a hidden Lucius to their arrival. Before Severus or Sybill even had a chance to assess their surroundings, he had screamed, "*Incarcerous!*" Long ropes extended from his wand and surrounded Sybill and Severus. They were bound together, back to back. They both struggled to escape the bonds, but that just made them tighter. Severus grasped Sybill's hand and tried to get her to stop moving. She caught on when he squeezed her hand so she too became still. The two of them glared at Lucius Malfoy, who was still pointing his wand at them.

"Well, you seem to have forgotten how to ring the doorbell, Severus," Lucius sneered.

"Lucius, we need to talk. You must give up on this obsession of yours."

"My obsession just waltzed into my home and gave herself to me as a gift. I will destroy her and then my obsession will be satisfied."

He raised his wand, but Severus shouted out to him.

"Wait! Lucius, surely there must be something else that will satisfy you. Why don't you kill me instead? Don't think that I don't know how much you hate me for being a spy all of these years, right under your nose!"

Lucius looked to Severus in fury. "And who do you think was going to be next on my list, hmm? Certainly not Rubeus Hagrid!"

"Then kill me. Let the witch go."

"The witch was the one who gave Potter the strength to destroy our Lord! She must pay!"

Severus saw the insanity in his old friend's eyes. He would never give up this fetid obsession. He would search out all of those who caused Voldemort's death and kill them, one by one. And there was nothing Severus could do about it. Not one thing.

oooOOOooo

Draco sat across from his mother, mulling over the talk he'd had with his father.

Something's not right. Father gave in too easily. Of all the rotten luck, to plan the raid on the one day Father had made plans with Mother. He lets her rot in our home, and here in the villa, for weeks on end but picks this day of all days to do something differently!

Draco sat up straight suddenly. His father had suspected him, he realized. Severus and Trelawney were walking into a trap! He turned to his mother.

"Mother, I have to return to the villa. Come with me, I'll take you somewhere safe."

"But, Draco, we've only just arrived!" Narcissa said in exasperation.

"I know, I'll explain as we go. Please, trust me, Mother."

Narcissa smiled at him. "Of course I trust you, my son."

She rose and extended her hand. They walked out of the restaurant and Apparated to a room he had gotten just for this circumstance. It was a small room over the restaurant where they just were. It would serve to hide his mother away in case he had to return to the villa before the fighting was over. Quickly entering the room, Draco turned to his mother.

"Mother, Father has been plotting to kill Professor Trelawney. Severus and she are planning an attack on him today. That's why I wanted to take you to lunch, so you would be out of the house when they attack."

"Draco, what have you done?" Narcissa cried.

"Mother, it is the only way! Father has gone crazy, he must be stopped. Severus has promised me that he will not kill him. He will only be sent to Azkaban."

His mother wailed and fell to the floor, her head covered by her hands. "You have sentenced him to death!"

Draco knelt next to her and put his hand on her arm.

"Mother, Severus will not kill him."

Narcissa pulled her head up and looked miserably at Draco. "Azkaban will kill him, though. He was a shattered man when he returned from there after the Ministry attack. It took him months to become himself again. He will die if sent back there again, Draco! Please, stop this before it's too late."

"I intend to, Mother. I need to go back and help out." He didn't dare say who exactly he was going to help out for fear that his mother would lose it entirely.

Narcissa grasped Draco's arms and pulled him to her. "Thank you, son. Save your father! Please, go!"

Draco kissed her cheek and stood up. "Stay here until I come for you. I want you safe."

She nodded, and Draco Disapparated away.

He appeared in his bedroom at the villa. Pulling out his wand, he listened at the closed door. He heard nothing. Slowly opening the door, he found the hallway to be empty. He cautiously went down the hall toward the guest bedroom. As he neared the doorway, he could hear his father's smug voice. Lucius had left the door open. Obviously, he had been sure that he would prevail. Draco crept up to the door and peeked inside. He almost gave himself away with the groan that nearly escaped from his throat.

Inside the bedroom, Severus and Sybill were tied together with ropes. He watched as his father paced back and forth and sneered at his two captives.

"You both must be taken care of. Now, I have the opportunity to get rid of the two of you," Lucius cried. "I will reap vengeance on both of you at once. Voldemort will laugh in his grave as the two of you sink to the floor in death!"

He lifted his wand to cast the Avada Kedavra at his two captives. Severus squeezed Sybill's hand in farewell, hoping that his love for her would be conveyed through that simple symbol. Her squeezing back told him of her love for him. He braced himself for the end, but instead of a green shot of light speeding toward him, the ropes that were binding Severus and Sybill disappeared. The couple grabbed their wands and sent Stupefying Hexes simultaneously at Lucius. Another Stupefy Hex flew from the doorway. The three hexes shot Lucius into the wall with a crash. He slumped to the ground, leaving a huge indentation in the wall where he had crashed into it.

Draco entered the room, blowing imaginary smoke from the tip of his wand.

"Draco saves the day," he drawled.

Both Sybill and Severus turned to look at him, relief in their faces.

"Draco," Sybill uttered in awe. "Thank you. One second later and we both would have been dead."

"Yes, Draco," Severus said as he looked into Draco's eyes intensely. "Thank you."

Without waiting for more praise, Draco quickly went over to his father to assess his level of consciousness. It would do no good if the man were to wake any time soon. Severus looked over to Sybill. She was staring at him in relief. Before Severus had a chance to move, Sybill had flown to him and was clutching onto him for dear life.

"Oh, Severus, I thought it was the end!" she cried.

Severus hugged her tightly to himself. "You mean you didn't see our rescue in a vision?"

Sybill pulled away from him and scowled. "You are terrible, Severus Snape. I don't even know why I fret about you at all!"

Severus came close to her ear and whispered into it so Draco couldn't hear him. "You fret because you are crazy about me."

"I believe the same can be said about you," Sybill retorted with a giggle.

A loud throat clearing caused the two to pull apart and spin towards Draco, who was looking at them curiously.

"Don't tell me you two are together?" he drawled. "Trelawney, surely you can find someone who doesn't eat children for breakfast?"

Sybill smiled at him. "Well, I probably could, but I long to be near Severus."

Draco grimaced. "Now that's just wrong," he muttered. He eyed Sybill warily. "I thought you weren't doing anymore of that crazy stuff, Trelawney."

"Draco, my dear boy, whatever gave you that impression? Could it be that your Inner Eye is blurry?" Her voice was deep and dark, as it had been before her transformation.

"Sybill," Severus said quietly.

Sybill grinned as she watched Draco's eyes widen. "Can't a girl have some fun, Severus?" she asked him in her normal voice.

"Yes, but you have entirely too much fun turning yourself into a quack," he chastised her. His retort was lessened by his kissing her neck lightly.

"Ugh! Would you two stop it?" Draco cried. "I have no desire to watch the two of you snog each other senseless while my father lies bound and unconscious on the floor."

Sybill reluctantly pulled away from Severus and went over to where Draco was standing. She examined the man who was passed out on the floor. Lucius was now in ropes, as Draco had cast the binding spell on him.

"So, what are we going to do with him?" Sybill asked as she peered down on Lucius' form.

"I will call the Aurors, and he will go to Azkaban," Severus said as he came up to Sybill and put his arm around her.

"My mother will never forgive me," Draco muttered.

Suddenly an image flashed through Sybill's head. It was of Lucius, back in his home, with his wife and son. They were all sitting together laughing. Sybill stiffened.

"No, this is wrong. He shouldn't go to Azkaban," she said with a faraway look.

"It's what he deserves, Sybill. He tried to kill us both." Severus looked to her as she concentrated on what she had seen.

"But... I just saw him with his family. They were happy. Severus, something's wrong. We're missing something."

"Sybill, he deserves to go to jail," Severus replied as he scowled at her.

"I know that. But what I saw... he was happy. What can we do that will make him be like that? He had lost the evilness in him. Severus, he almost looked like a child."

"There's nothing we can do to make him happy," Severus murmured. "His life has been so full of hate for so long, that nothing we can do can erase that from him."

Draco looked up suddenly at Severus, hope in his eyes. "Oblivate him," he uttered.

"Pardon me?" Severus questioned.

"Oblivate him!" Draco said with more enthusiasm. "We can wipe his memory and start over from scratch."

"Don't you think that's a bit extreme, Draco?" Severus asked.

"As if Azkaban isn't?!" Draco cried. "This will solve everything. He won't need to spend his life in jail. My mother and I can help him to know what his life was like before without all of the nasty stuff thrown in. We can tell him what's important for him to know to be a good husband and father."

"Draco, what you're suggesting is too invasive," Severus chastised. "We have no right to take a man's memories and then create ones that we see fit for him."

"Well..." Draco wracked his brain to try and think of a way to do this well. "We can tell him everything, I suppose. If we help him from the beginning to see how wrong his actions were, then he won't want to repeat them. Severus, please! He's my father, but I have hated him for most of my life, but my mother loves him. She pleaded with me to help him. If we do this, I can help him. Maybe I can even have a father who cares about me."

Severus glanced over at Sybill, who had not said a word for quite some time.

"What do you think?" Severus asked her. "Does it seem like he's lost his memory of those horrid things he's done in your vision?"

Sybill concentrated on the vision once more. It had only been a quick image, so it was difficult to interpret exactly what she had seen. After a minute with her eyes closed, she opened them and nodded her head.

"I think it does. But, Draco, if we do this, the road will not be easy. The type of Oblivate you're suggesting is similar to what happened to Gilderoy Lockhart. He still has not recovered from the spell."

"But that was a backfired spell. Surely that has something to do with it!" Draco's eyes were pleading with them. "Lockhart has no one! With my mother and me, we can help Father know about himself."

"Draco, this might not work out the way you hope," Sybill continued.

"Trelawney, it's better than having him in jail for the rest of his life. It will have to be! We can do this!" He looked from Sybill to Severus, pleading for this one chance. "Severus, he was your friend for years. Surely you owe him something? My mother thinks he'll die if he's sent away. This will give him a chance to live. This may even give him a chance to be happy."

Severus and Sybill exchanged looks. She gave Severus a quick nod, and he turned back to Draco.

"Very well," he acquiesced.

"We will help too, Draco," Sybill assured. "Maybe with the four of us, we can help Lucius to recover quicker."

Draco's eyes lit up. "Could you? That would mean so much."

Severus put his hand on the young man's arm. "Go get your mother. We'll make sure she's alright with this plan before we go ahead with it."

"All right," Draco said with a sigh. "I'll be right back."

He Disapparated as Sybill moved a little closer to Severus and laid her head on his shoulder. Severus moved his arm up and caressed her back.

"Are you sure about this?" he asked her.

"He was happy, Severus. Maybe his mind wasn't all there, but he was happy."

Severus kissed the top of her head. "Then I'm sure it will all work out."

Just at her word, he believed her. Sybill looked up into his dark eyes. Not only did she see love there, but respect also. He trusted her. She had never felt so loved in her life.

A/N: Next up: To Obliviate or not to Obliviate... that is the question.

Did anyone see that coming? Thank you once again for reading. I appreciate your comments. A big hand for Lilith Kayden for her beta work.

Chapter 17: Obliviate

Chapter 17 of 20

Narcissa decides the fate of her husband.

Disclaimer: These characters are not mine. It's really too bad about that, but I would never deny J.K. Rowling her fame.

A/N: Salvamea brought up a critical point, that the Obliviate doesn't change one's character. That is true, but my opinion on what might occur with Lucius stems from this: His experiences and upbringing made him the way he is. Take that out of the picture, and you're starting with a clean slate, which can hopefully be shaped differently. Hopefully, that will happen for Lucius. Thanks to my beta, Lilith Kayden, for her advice and help with this chapter.

Chapter 17: Obliviate

In the time it took Draco to bring his mother back to the villa, Lucius had regained consciousness. He sneered at Severus and Sybill.

"Just do it. Kill me and get it over with. It's the only way I won't come after you!"

"Lucius, please stop being so melodramatic," Severus said with a bored tone. "I believe we have come up with a suitable remedy to our mutual problem."

"I will not go to Azkaban!" Lucius screamed in rage.

"We are hoping that you won't have to," Sybill told him.

Lucius looked at her with loathing. "Do not dare to speak to me, you filthy excuse for a witch!"

"*Langlock*," Severus chanted as he waved his wand at Lucius. Lucius' tongue was securely locked to the roof of his mouth. The man's eyes bulged with rage as he struggled to get free from his bonds.

Finally, two loud pops sounded, and Draco and Narcissa stood before the other three. Narcissa rushed to Lucius' side and fell over him, sobbing hysterically.

"She's not taking this well," Draco mumbled.

Severus had always had a soft spot in his heart for Narcissa. She had become a Death Eater more for Lucius than anything. He had almost forced her to join Voldemort's ranks. She had gone through great grief with Lucius' time in Azkaban and Draco's charge from Voldemort to kill Dumbledore. Severus had no desire to see her suffer anymore.

Stooping down beside her, he placed a hand gently on her back. "Narcissa," he called softly.

Narcissa threw her head back and pulled herself up and away from Lucius. She turned toward Severus and grasped his arms desperately. Her eyes were wild.

"Please, Severus, there must be another way. Any of these options makes me lose my husband forever!"

"There is no other way, Narcissa," Severus answered calmly. "He either is Obliviated or he must be sent to Azkaban."

With Severus' decree, Lucius began to struggle and moan again. His eyes grew wide with fright while he shook his head.

Narcissa sat down on the ground next to him and put her face in her hands. She sobbed even louder than before. Severus placed a comforting hand on her shoulder.

"Narcissa, you can help him recover if he is Obliviated. He can be the husband and father he was never able to be because of his pride and greed. This might be the best thing for all of you."

"You say that because you are not the one about to lose twenty years of marriage," Narcissa wailed.

Draco knelt down on his mother's other side. "Mum," he said. "Think of this as an opportunity to have what you have always wanted. Father has never been overly kind to you. He has pushed you away because he thought you were weak because you always tried to protect me. He's hardly spoken to you much since you made that vow with Severus. All of that can change! He won't remember being angry. He won't remember pushing you away. He'll just know that you two are married and that you love each other. It may take him some time to love you again, but he will."

Narcissa's sobs continued. "What if he never loves me again?"

Draco's look hardened. "Then you will be no worse off than you are now. That man who claims to be my father loves neither one of us. He just stays with us because that's what a good pureblood does. He hates me and just tolerates you. He isn't even happy. He's filled with desires for revenge. How can anyone who is consumed by such feelings ever be happy?" Draco put his hand on his mother's shoulder. "We can help him to be happy. Trelawney saw it. He was with us, and he was happy."

Narcissa pulled her tear stained face up and looked over at Sybill.

"Did you really see that?" she asked.

Sybill nodded.

"How can I trust you? You are rumored to be a charlatan."

"I used to be," Sybill admitted. "But it was because of men like your husband, who would want to harm me. With Voldemort's death, I was able to be myself. I assure you, Mrs. Malfoy, I have never had a vision be wrong."

Narcissa stared at Sybill for a long while. Sybill began to feel a bit uncomfortable, but she remained still, letting Narcissa come to whatever conclusion she was going to come to. Finally, Narcissa put her hands down and heaved a huge sigh.

"All right, we'll do it."

Lucius started moaning and struggling again, which caused Narcissa to glance over at him. She quickly turned back to Sybill. "I am holding you responsible for his future. If he does not eventually become the happy individual you claim to have seen, I will hunt you down and your life will be forfeit. Do we have an understanding?" Narcissa's look was very hard and determined as she gazed at Sybill.

Sybill nodded her head. "We do," she agreed.

With her decision, all frailty seemed to fall away from Narcissa. She sat straight and regally as she now looked at Severus.

"Release the Silencing Spell. I would speak with my husband before we do this horrible deed."

Severus waved his wand over Lucius' head and removed the spell silently. Lucius began to rage immediately.

"You cannot do this! I will not allow it! I am a Malfoy. I have a rich heritage. You cannot take that away from me! Narcissa, surely you see that these three have gone mad?"

Narcissa leaned over her husband and placed her hands lovingly on his chest. "My love, I know you no longer care for me."

"Narcissa, that's not true!"

Narcissa placed a finger over Lucius' lips. "Shh, there's no sense in denying it, love. You have mostly ignored me for the last ten years. This is the best choice. The other options are death or life in Azkaban. Neither of those will return you to me and will destroy you eventually."

"Narcissa!" Lucius screamed. "You cannot do this!"

"I want you to know that I have always loved you. I know you won't remember that in a few minutes, but I want you to know now. I have hoped that someday you could love me again too. I'm doing this for us, Lucius... for a chance at a brighter future. I hope that someday you will understand that." She bent low and kissed him.

As she pulled back, he spat in her face. Draco looked at him in fury and lunged forward to attack him. Severus caught him just in time before he was able to lay a finger on his loathsome father. Lucius looked to Draco in hatred and then looked back at Narcissa with loathing.

"You will be sorry if you do this to me! I will never forgive you. I will remember somehow and hate you forever! You are nothing but a whore. You sully the Malfoy name with even your existence!"

With a swish of his wand, Severus had recast the *Langlock*. "I believe we have heard enough of your hate, Lucius," he told his once friend.

Lucius stared at Severus venomously. His struggling became furious, but he only succeeded in constricting himself so much that he now could barely move.

Narcissa stood up and wiped the spittle from her face. She looked down at her husband once again. "I will always love you, no matter what," she told him.

Lucius narrowed his eyes at her. Severus looked over at her. "Are you ready, Narcissa?"

She nodded.

Severus lifted his wand, about to cast the Memory Charm.

"Wait!" Draco cried.

Severus halted his arm movements and looked over to Draco.

"I will cast the Obliviate," Draco demanded.

Severus raised an eyebrow as Narcissa turned to her son, pulling him into her embrace.

"No, Draco. You mustn't."

Draco pulled back slightly. "I have to, Mother. I want to be the one to do it. Either way it goes, I want to be the one responsible."

Narcissa caressed his cheek. "Are you sure, son? Can you live with the guilt of what you are to do? What if he never comes back to us?"

Draco nodded his head. "I can. Either I will help him, or I will be able to take out my anger on him for his treatment of us. I must do this."

Severus lowered his wand and nodded at Draco. Narcissa kissed his cheek and told him how brave she thought he was. Draco turned and looked at his father. The man was moaning still, his eyes wide. He looked more frightened than Draco had ever seen him. Draco lifted his wand.

"Goodbye, Father. I hope you can become a better person with what I am to give to you."

Lucius screamed. The sound was ugly and guttural. Even the fact that his tongue was stuck to the roof of his mouth could not hide his fear and horror at what was to come.

Draco cast the spell. Golden light flew from the tip of his wand and struck his father squarely in the chest. The man was forced back against the floor, unconscious. Draco flicked his wand again, and the ropes that were binding his father fell away. He looked at Severus.

"We should move him to his bed while he is unconscious. It will be easier for him to wake there."

Severus nodded and levitated Lucius. The four of them moved him to the bedroom in silence. Narcissa lovingly settled him into the bed and placed the covers over him.

"What do we tell him?" Sybill asked.

Draco looked at his father, who seemed to be sleeping peacefully. "He fell down the stairs. We were able to repair a broken leg and fix his wounds. His memory loss will

come as a shock to us."

The four conspirators looked to each other and nodded their agreement. Narcissa sat on the bed and stroked Lucius' forehead. He began to stir and moan. Severus quickly removed the Langlock spell, having forgotten about it previously. Lucius' eyes opened slowly, and he looked around.

"Where am I?" he murmured.

"You are in your bed, Lucius," Narcissa answered gently.

Lucius' eyes narrowed while he looked around. He seemed out of sorts. He looked back at the woman who was sitting on the bed by him. "Who are you?"

Narcissa played her part well, shock showing on her face. "I'm Narcissa, love."

"How do I know you?" Lucius' eyes were vacant.

A tear fell down Narcissa's cheek. "I am your wife," she told him as she stroked his cheek.

Lucius shied away from her. "I don't know who you are. I don't know who any of you are!" He sat up hurriedly. "I can't even remember who I am. What happened to me?"

"You fell down the stairs," Severus offered. "You were hurt badly. We mended your wounds and fixed your leg, which was broken. You have been unconscious for half an hour."

Lucius scrunched up his face, trying to remember something, but he couldn't remember anything about himself, or the fall he had just taken. He looked back at Severus.

"Who are you?"

"I am Severus Snape, your friend. This is Sybill Trelawney," he said as he motioned to Sybill, "also a friend, and this..." He pointed towards Draco, "is your son, Draco."

Lucius' eyebrows rose as he regarded his son. "I have a son?"

"Obviously," Severus drawled.

Lucius looked at all four people surrounding his bed. He struggled to remember something about them. He couldn't remember anything about them. He couldn't remember anything at all.

"Why can't I remember anything?" he asked finally.

"You had a deep gash on your head," Severus told him. "Perhaps your memory loss is due to head trauma."

"But will it come back?" Lucius asked, now becoming nervous.

"I cannot say," Severus continued.

Narcissa put her hand on Lucius' arm. He did not shy away this time but looked at her hand curiously.

"Lucius, we will work through this. We'll overcome it. Even if your memory never returns, we will make new memories... together."

Lucius looked into her eyes. They were warm and friendly. She was not a threat to him. He could tell she cared for him. He did not know her, and he certainly did not love her, but she loved him. He could see it. Maybe his memory would come back and he would remember the beautiful witch by his side. Even if it didn't, he could see himself growing close to her, maybe even loving her. He gave her a small smile, and she smiled back warmly at him.

"Tell me about myself," he requested.

Severus, Sybill, and Draco all pulled up chairs and settled themselves around Lucius' bed. They began to fill in the vast empty space that was now Lucius Malfoy's mind.

Next up: The Malfoys deal with an Obliviated Lucius.

Chapter 18: What Did I Do Again?

Chapter 18 of 20

Lucius struggles with his memory.

Chapter 18: What Did I Do Again?

Over the next three months, the four of them worked hard with Lucius. Severus and Sybill would spend every weekend at the villa and share what good things they knew about Lucius with him. Lucius now knew who he was and that he came from a long line of nobility. He had been quite shocked to learn how wealthy he was. He remembered that Draco was his only son and that he and Narcissa had dated and fell in love when they were students at Hogwarts. Still, the going wasn't easy. They usually had to repeat things multiple times for anything to be remembered in Lucius' addled brain. They did find that the more pleasant the detail, the easier it was for him to remember. He always knew that Narcissa was his wife and that Draco was his son.

The four were careful to share positive memories. They helped Lucius to know that he was a good person who could be caring. They had spent a long, hard time trying to help him to have a good base so that when they told him of his involvement with Voldemort, he would not make the same mistakes again.

That day came a bit sooner than anyone was expecting. An article about Voldemort appeared in the paper one morning, and Lucius made the comment that he couldn't believe that people could be so extreme in their views. Draco had stared levelly at his father. He glanced at his mother. She nodded her affirmation that it was time. He looked over at Sybill and Severus, who were joining them that morning. They nodded too.

"Father," Draco began.

Lucius looked up and smiled at his boy.

"You know that tattoo on your arm that we said you got as a youth?" Draco continued.

Lucius lifted his arm and glanced at the Dark Mark.

"Yes," he said curiously.

"That is the Dark Mark. It's what Voldemort placed on his follower's arms to ensure their allegiance and as a method of communication with them."

Lucius' eyes grew wide as he looked to the Mark again. "You... you mean... I was one of them?" he said as he pointed to the paper.

"I'm afraid so," Severus interjected. "I, too, was one of them." Severus pulled his sleeve up and displayed his own Dark Mark.

"But... they're so evil! You aren't evil. Why would you be a part of them?" Lucius asked. He was trying hard to understand, but everything was just one big mush in his brain.

"I worked to destroy them," Severus offered. "But it wasn't always so. When I joined them, I was young. You convinced me that there was a cause to be fought for and that Voldemort was the one to champion that cause. We were both fooled by his guile."

"I have been one of his followers since I was a young man?" Lucius asked in shock. He turned to his wife. "What about you?" he asked.

Narcissa showed her Dark Mark. Draco also lifted his sleeve to reveal his. Lucius' eyes grew wide.

"My entire family? We all were associated with this madman?"

"Once you ally yourself with him, Lucius, there is no going back," Narcissa explained.

"We weren't happy then?"

"No, not exactly... but we did believe in his cause," she told him.

Lucius stood suddenly. "I need some time alone," he said. Stalking away, he left the others staring after him.

"Do you think he'll remember this in a few hours?" Sybill asked after many minutes of silence.

"I doubt it," Draco responded.

"Will you tell him again?" Sybill continued.

Draco looked at his mother. She looked back at her son. Her eyes showed apprehension. "I don't think it's good for him to become upset like this. It will set back his recovery."

"Are you sure, Narcissa?" Severus asked. "Could you just not want to tell him this again and again, reliving it?"

Narcissa sighed. "Yes, that's part of it. I followed Lucius in the beginning because he was my boyfriend and later my husband. I never was as enthusiastic as he was." She looked up into Severus' eyes. "My biggest fear is that he'll embrace that life again."

Severus put his hand over hers from across the table. "Only you and Draco can decide what is too much for him to bear. If you think this will truly set him back, then perhaps you should never repeat this story again. You have told him. That might be enough, but you must face your fear. Don't keep the truth from him because of that fear."

"Severus, I don't know..." Narcissa started to say.

"Narcissa, he is different," Severus told her. "The thought of these things being a part of his life has shocked him. The Lucius from before would be eager to embrace them. I think the Obliviation has some side effects that make a person more easy going, more loving. Look at Lockhart. He is crazy as a loon, but he wouldn't hurt a fly. He is like a small child, very trusting, eager to please. In many ways, Lucius is much the same. He has gained an innocence that I'm not sure he ever possessed before."

Severus sat back and gazed at his friend. "I think that whatever you choose, he will still be the young innocent that we see before us now. The spell has altered his personality for the better."

Narcissa looked to Draco. He regarded her seriously. "What do you think, Mother?"

Narcissa took a deep breath. She furrowed her brow, deep in thought. Finally, she made a decision.

"I think we should leave it as it is for now. He has heard the truth, yet I doubt he will remember what we have told him. Let's let him get stronger in his mind. Then we can re-evaluate the situation."

"Mother, either we tell him now until he remembers, or we never tell him. He will never get much better than he already is."

Narcissa turned to Sybill. "What do you think?" she asked.

Sybill began to stutter. "It... it's your family... Narcissa. I have no right..."

"Because of your vision, my husband is alive and with us. In a way, he is better than he ever was because he isn't shackled with the weight of trying to live up to the Malfoy name. He's not filled with the hate he had wrapped inside of him for years. In a way, you have freed him. I value your opinion."

Sybill looked to Severus, who took her hand in his and squeezed it supportively. How she wished she could will a vision to her right now. She was at a total loss. She wasn't sure which was the right decision. Perhaps that was the answer in itself. Maybe there was no right or wrong to this dilemma. She looked back to Narcissa.

"If it were me, I would want to know. I think if you describe it so that he knows that it was a mistake and that he doesn't have to choose that lifestyle again, he will accept it and move on. It's a great part of him. You have to consider also that he will be exposed to the outside world at some point. There's really no hiding it from him. Even a casual contact with anyone would bring parts of his past up that could disturb him if he is not aware of them."

Narcissa looked down at her hands. "You're right, of course."

Sybill put a hand over Narcissa's. "We will be here with you. If we repeat it enough for him this weekend, he will absorb much of it. The repetitions after that will be easier."

Narcissa looked up at Sybill and smiled at her. "I must thank you again. Our family owes you a great deal, Sybill."

Sybill squeezed her hand and smiled back.

oooOOOooo

Lucius had emerged from his bedroom an hour later, unable to recall anything that had been told to him. They explained again about his Death Eater associations, trying to deliver it as lightly as possible. Lucius again fled to his room.

The scene repeated over and over again the entire weekend. Lucius spent a lot of time in his room. By the second day, Lucius remembered small things, like his family was involved in something nefarious. Slowly, he came to know the entire truth and remember it. The last time he came out of his room that weekend, he had a look of determination on his face.

"This Voldemort is dead, you say?" he asked to the four who were gathered in the sitting room.

Severus nodded in the affirmative.

"Then we are free from him?" he asked again.

"Yes, love," Narcissa acknowledged.

"Then we no longer need to worry about being involved in such horrible things?" he questioned stiffly.

"Of course not, Father," Draco admonished.

Lucius smiled brightly. "Then we are free."

He rushed to Narcissa's side and pulled her up from her seat and hugged her tightly.

"I'm sorry I got us involved in such horror," he told her. "I don't know why I was the way I was before, but I assure you, I have no intention of following such beliefs again."

"My darling, do not blame yourself," Narcissa begged. "We all were fooled by him."

"I would like to think that I would never endanger you or our son in such a way." Lucius pulled back and looked deeply into her eyes. "I love you both, you know."

Tears filled Narcissa's eyes. It was the first time he had said that he loved her in over ten years. She looked into his face and saw the man she had married. He looked a bit more innocent and lighthearted than he had ever looked before, but he was her husband. The man she had fallen in love with.

"Oh, Lucius!" she cried as she pulled him close and kissed him. He pulled her closer, and they became the only ones in the room for a little while as they showed their affection to one another.

Draco had just sat there with his mouth agape. Between the declaration of his father's love and the display before him, he was totally at a loss for words. He had found himself in such a position very rarely in his life.

Sybill beamed at the couple and then looked toward Severus. His eyes glimmered with affection. Obviously the loving atmosphere in the room was catching, because he leaned toward her and kissed her sweetly. Draco grunted.

"I'm surrounded by saps," he muttered. The two couples ignored him. He cleared his throat.

"Ahem, single, lonely man here! Would you four stop it for Merlin's sake? You're all making me want to vomit!"

Severus and Sybill separated as Severus cast a caustic glare at Draco. Draco cringed but continued to berate them.

"You have to admit, the thought of two of your old professors snogging senseless is enough to make anyone want to leave the country. And my parents... they're just as old as you two, if not older!"

Lucius and Narcissa had broken apart at this time also, but Lucius was holding Narcissa close as they gazed at their son as he ranted.

"Don't worry, boy," Lucius offered. "You'll find the right girl soon. That is, if you left the house."

Draco whipped his head around. "I stay because of you!"

Lucius glanced lovingly at Narcissa. "I think your mother is capable of caring for me from this point on."

Draco arose, slightly annoyed. He was used to being pushed away by his father. He began to stalk from the room. Lucius' hand on his shoulder stopped him.

"Son," Lucius called to him.

Draco turned and looked to his father curiously. He had not heard his father call to him with emotion in his voice for some time.

Lucius continued. "Thank you for all of your help. You are a fine man, and I'm proud to be your father. I just wish I could remember you as a youth."

Draco saw the sincerity in his father's face. He felt a lump form in his throat. "It's all right, Father. We have a lifetime to get to know each other again."

Lucius pulled Draco to him then and hugged him tightly. "I love you, Draco. Never forget that."

All of Draco's reserve fell away as he grasped at his father and tears fell down his cheeks. "I never thought I would hear you say that to me," he told his father. "I love you too. Thank you for coming back to us."

Severus nudged Sybill, and the two of them rose from their seats. With a nod to Narcissa, they slipped out of the cottage and Disapparated away, leaving the family to do their own healing in private.

oooOOOooo

Severus guided Sybill up to her rooms. They entered her sitting room and quietly eased themselves onto the couch. Severus pulled her into his arms.

"Do you think Lucius will be all right?" he asked.

"I do," Sybill said determinedly.

"He seems to be a different man. He isn't a simpleton either, like Lockhart. That was our greatest fear."

"He has the love of his family and friends to guide him," Sybill remarked. "I don't think Lockhart had any friends, as he ostracized his family with his braggadocio years ago."

"It's nice to see Lucius not bound by stupid pureblood rules," Severus mused. "He can finally be the man he should have been."

"Mmm... yes. It seems the death of Voldemort has opened the door for many people to become what they couldn't be before."

There was a knock at her door. Sybill groaned as she got up to answer it. She wasn't in the mood for visitors. The only visitor she wanted was already sitting next to her. She opened the door to find a fidgeting Harry Potter standing there.

"Professor Trelawney, I just wanted to take a minute and thank you," Harry said.

Sybill's eyebrows rose. "For what?" she asked curiously.

"Well, for your advice last summer." Harry glanced behind her and noticed Snape sitting on the couch. He furrowed his brow as he wondered about that. "Um..." He wasn't sure what he wanted to say for a minute. Finally, it came back to him. "I did what you advised. You were right. The head Auror just retired last week, and if I hadn't started my studies, I would not have been able to study with him."

"Edward Grieg has chosen to retire?" Sybill said incredulously. "He's what... one hundred and ten years old?"

Harry laughed. "He is! But he is better than any Auror in the Ministry. I didn't know you knew him."

"I don't know him very well. The Grieg family was old friends of my parents. I used to listen to him tell of his escapades as an Auror in my youth." Sybill smiled. "He's quite the tale teller."

Harry smiled back. "Yes, he is. Anyway, I just wanted to thank you. It's the best decision I've ever made."

"Well, Harry, there's probably another decision that would be even better."

"Please, not you too! Everyone's bugging me to ask Ginny to marry me."

Sybill laughed. "Then maybe it's time for you to listen to everybody!"

Harry frowned. "I just don't want to rush her," he mumbled.

Sybill folded her arms and leaned against the doorframe. "Do you love her?"

Harry nodded.

"Does she love you?"

He nodded again.

"Why would you think you were rushing her? It's been almost a year since Voldemort's defeat."

"I know. Honestly, when I think of my future, I can't imagine it without her. I just don't want her to feel that she has to say yes simply because everyone expects that of us."

Sybill nodded. "That does make sense, but if she loves you, she'll want to be with you anyway."

Harry nodded again.

"Look, Harry, only you can know when the time is right. It doesn't matter if everyone on the earth is telling you to marry her. You should only do it when it feels right."

"It does feel right, Professor."

"Then what are you waiting for?"

Harry brightened. "I don't know," he answered finally. He stuck his hand out to Sybill, and she took it firmly as he pumped it up and down. "Thanks again, Professor. I appreciate all you've done for me." Harry blanched. "I'm sorry for the way I treated you in school."

"Harry... we've already discussed that. There's nothing to forgive."

Harry smiled and bid her goodbye.

oooOOOooo

Sybill closed the door and returned to her spot on the couch next to Severus. He pulled her close and rested his chin on her head. Her conversation at the door with Potter was causing him to evaluate his life and his relationship with Sybill. She was truly a stunning witch, and he was incredibly happy to have her interest. Having her as part of his life felt right. Imagining life without her made his chest clench within him. Perhaps it was time to deepen their relationship.

He pulled back and looked at Sybill. She stared up at him with a quizzical look.

Would this beautiful witch really want to shackle herself to me forever? Would she want to marry me and spend the rest of her life with me?

He saw it then. It was radiating from her. Utter devotion. He took in a sharp breath. He'd never expected anyone to look at him like that. Despite the impossibility of it, Sybill Trelawney loved him.

I'd better do something about this before she comes to her senses and realize just who she fell in love with.

"Don't," Sybill said.

Severus furrowed a brow at her. "Don't what?"

"Don't sit there and think you're not worth my time."

Severus narrowed his eyes at her. "Did you just have a vision, or are you using Legilimency on me?"

"Neither, love, you are just easy to read."

Severus scoffed. "I am not! If I were, I would be dead several times over."

She pulled his head forward and placed a kiss on each eyelid. "It's these. They give you away every time."

Sybill pulled away and stared into his black, fathomless eyes. "Stop feeling unworthy of my affection."

"You have to admit, you could do much better. I am not what anyone would call a prize catch."

"Don't," Sybill reiterated as she brushed a lock of hair back behind his hear. "I don't really care what anyone else would call you. You are mine, and I love you."

"Why?"

"You're everything I've always wanted in a man. You're intelligent, you're funny in a sarcastic way, and you're good looking."

Severus scoffed.

Sybill narrowed her eyes at him. "You're good looking," she said a little more forcefully.

Severus waved his hand in front of her face. "Have you lost your sight?"

"Snarky git."

"Blind witch."

"Foolish man."

"Crazy, lovesick fool."

"Man I want to be with forever."

Severus' eyes widened. "Do you mean it?"

Sybill smiled. "Of course I mean it. I want your awesomely sexy self with me forever."

"Sexy, hmm?"

"Oh, yes! Those eyes, that nose, those lips, all are incredibly sexy."

His hand came up, and he caressed her cheek with his thumb. He gently urged her toward him and kissed her softly. He pulled back and gave her an inquisitive stare.

Sybill opened her eyes and smiled lovingly at him.

"Definitely sexy," she said before they returned to their impassioned kisses.

oooOOOooo

Much later, Severus and Sybill were arm in arm watching the fire in the fireplace. Sybill rubbed Severus' chest as she laid her head on it. She listened to his breathing. It soothed her and made her feel at peace.

"Severus?" she called to him.

Severus opened his eyes. "Yes, love?"

"I think it's time I moved back to my cottage. It's been months since I've been in any danger. I miss it."

Severus' grip tightened on Sybill. "Must you go back?"

Sybill pulled away and looked at him. "You know that I do. I love that house. I've missed it terribly. I want to return to it."

Severus frowned. "Very well. I will help you move your things. I suggest you keep the wards on it. You never know when an enemy might decide to pay a visit."

Sybill turned her head and stared into the fire. "You're right of course," she said finally. "I'd been hoping to just live normally, without all of the security measures, but I suppose I'll never really lead a normal life, will I, Severus?"

"Your involvement with the war is too extensive for you to live a normal life, Sybill. You and I will always have to watch our backs."

Sybill nodded and leaned back into him. "I'll watch your back if you watch mine."

Severus smiled. "I would have it no other way."

A/N: Next up: A surprise for Sybill.

Thanks again for reading. Thank you, Lilith Kayden, for your beta work.

Chapter 19: Happy Birthday

Chapter 19 of 20

Sybill celebrates her birthday with a few surprises.

Chapter 19: Happy Birthday!

"Come with me," Severus demanded of Sybill, his hand extended to her.

Sybill looked up from her desk, where a mountain of essays awaited her attention.

"Are you here to steal me away to somewhere where there are no students and no essays to grade?" she asked curiously.

"I am here to shuttle you away so we can celebrate your birthday," Severus explained.

Sybill's eyebrows rose. "How did you know it was my birthday?"

Severus rolled his eyes. "It's all that your friends can cluck about today. I believe they are planning something for you after dinner."

Sybill blushed. She really wasn't used to being the center of attention. After so many years of spending her birthday alone and unnoticed, this was quite a change.

"So, wherever we're going, I suppose we'll be back in time for dinner, then?" she asked him.

"Yes, but don't let on that I alerted you to anything. Those three hens would hex me into the wall if they knew I had let out their little secret."

Sybill smiled and rose from her desk. She grasped Severus' hand. He pulled her to him suddenly. His arms went around her as she felt his mouth claiming hers.

Their relationship had been going on for several months now, but he still made her shiver wildly whenever he showered her with affection like this.

She gave herself up to him and got lost in the moment. Everything around them disappeared as she was consumed by his passion. Sybill wished he'd never stop. Unfortunately, he pulled away from her a little bit later. Smiling down at her he asked if she was ready to go. Still too overcome to speak, Sybill only nodded. Severus smirked at her and took her hand, leading her out of the classroom and through the halls.

oooOOOooo

Severus and Sybill sat on the ground, watching a waterfall. He was behind her. She leaned into him, enjoying his closeness. His arm rested around her midsection. He would occasionally kiss her neck as they stared at the flowing water that fell steadily from the waterfall.

"Are you having a fun birthday?" Severus asked finally.

"It started out terribly, but I must admit, you've turned it into something wonderful."

"What was so terrible about it?" Severus asked as he tightened his hug.

Sybill laid her head back into him. "Joshua Blakeslee decided to set off a Wildfire Whiz-Bang in class. It rocketed over to my teapots and shattered all of them. Seven children were sent to the infirmary, and I needed Poppy to remove a large piece from my arm. It's been aching ever since."

Severus pulled back and picked up her arm. "Is it this one? There's no scar."

She nodded. "You know how good Poppy is. It still hurts, though. She said it should be better by tomorrow."

Severus kissed her along her arm lovingly.

"Mmm," Sybill murmured. "That feels better already."

"Silly witch, there's no evidence that affection is a pain killer."

"I suppose it depends on who the affection is coming from."

Severus smirked at her. He straightened himself out and fished for something in his robes.

"I have a birthday present for you," Severus mumbled as he felt around in his robes.

"Severus, you didn't..."

Severus put his hand up to stop her right away.

"It's your birthday, and I have a gift for you," he stated matter-of-factly.

Sybill smiled at him finally as he pulled out a large box from his robes. It was decorated with dark purple paper.

"However did you fit that in your robes?" she asked him.

"Bottomless pocket," he explained as he handed her the box.

Sybill turned and took the gift. She unwrapped it and opened the box. Inside was a smaller box, equally wrapped with bright white paper with streamers on it. Sybill looked slyly at Severus. He smirked at her.

Turning back to the package, she unwrapped the second box. Lifting the lid, a smaller box awaited her, this one wrapped in dark blue with Happy Birthday scrawled all over it. Sybill narrowed her eyes at him.

"How many of these do I have to unwrap?" she demanded. "Or should I just use my Sight to see what's in there?"

Severus shrugged and looked innocent. Sybill sighed and tore into the next box. Of course, a smaller box awaited her, this one covered in red paper with tooting horns on it. Sybill laughed.

"Did you get me a thimble, Severus?" she asked.

"It's a surprise," he explained.

"That, I can see."

She tore into that box and found yet another smaller box staring at her. The box was not wrapped. It was covered in velvet and was shaped like a ring box. Sybill caught her breath and looked to Severus.

"Open it," he advised.

Sybill pulled the box out and held it in her hand. If this was what she thought it was, no vision could have prepared her for what was to come. She lifted the lid and looked into the velvet box. A diamond engagement ring twinkled back at her.

"Marry me, Sybill."

Sybill gasped as she looked from Severus, to the ring, and back to Severus.

"If you'd rather, I could get you something else for your birthday. A puppy, perhaps?"

Sybill was met with a raised eyebrow. She tried to look put out, but she was too excited to make her face portray such disdain.

"Severus, you really want to marry me?" she asked excitedly.

"Of course I do. I just asked you, didn't I?"

"But... why would you?"

Severus pulled her into his arms once again.

"Sybill, you are everything I want. You have helped me to become more of the man I wanted to be. You love me and make me feel worthwhile. I can't imagine being without you. I want you with me always."

Sybill brought her hand up and caressed his face. "I want that too," she responded.

"Then marry me," he said again.

"I will."

Severus reached for the box, which was still in Sybill's hand. He took the ring from its place, nestled snugly in the ring box. He slipped it on her finger and kissed her hand. Looking into her eyes, his own showed intensity that Sybill had only seen in them a couple of times.

"Thank you, my love, for condescending to be with me."

"There's no condescension, Severus, my heart's desire is to be with you forever."

He kissed her then. Over and over again, he kissed her. She hoped it would never end.

oooOOOooo

Sybill looked completely surprised when she entered the Headmistress's office to find Minerva, Pomona, and Rolanda standing there surrounding a huge birthday cake. She jumped when they screamed surprise to her. She smiled brightly as the three women hugged her.

She opened her presents as the women hovered around her. Severus sat off to the side on the small couch, content to just watch the proceedings. She cooed over all of her gifts. Minerva had given her some beautiful hair clips, which she immediately placed in her hair. They were golden with green beads on them. Everyone clucked at how beautiful they looked in her hair. Well, everyone clucked except Severus. He just nodded. He was no hen, after all.

The next gift was from Rolanda. It was a painting of a seascape. There was a gentle breeze making the waves lap up onto the shore. It even had an option to make peaceful sea sounds with the tap of a wand. Sybill smiled at Rolanda as she showed the painting to Severus.

"I noticed a bare spot on your lounge wall. I thought that would fit there nicely," Rolanda explained.

"Oh, Rolanda, it's perfect!" Sybill exclaimed.

Rolanda looked very pleased with herself.

Pomona's present was a plant. She had haphazardly wrapped it, so it was obviously a living thing. Sybill tore into the paper to find a honking daffodil inside. She lifted the flower, and it made its trademark honking sound. Sybill laughed.

"You can place it outside and use it as a doorbell," Pomona explained.

Sybill wasn't quite sure it would make an effective doorbell, especially when her wards began at her property line.

"No, Pomona, this deserves a prominent place in my window sill. I'll not have it lost on the ground when it can be seen by everyone in the window!"

Pomona beamed. "That's a wonderful idea, Sybill," she crooned.

Severus rolled his eyes. If there was any more clucking going on, they would all lay eggs. Maybe he would luck out, and they would be golden eggs. He shook his head.

The three women all hugged Sybill again, wishing her a happy birthday. Severus waited expectantly for them to sprout wings, but none did. He was sorely disappointed.

"Thank you all so much for your gifts!" Sybill told each one of them. "But I have a confession to make. Severus topped all of you with his present."

Minerva raised her eyebrows, Rolanda scoffed, and Pomona looked a bit perturbed.

"Well, Sybill, if it's such a wonderful gift," Pomona said with a frown. "Where is it?"

Sybill gave them each a conspiratorial smile and raised her hand. She wiggled her fingers to show off the ring and let the light make it sparkle. The three women gasped. Then they were all speaking at once.

"Oh, my gosh!"

"He asked you to marry him?"

"How long has that been on your hand?"

"What did he say?"

"How did he ask?"

"When is the date?"

"Where will you live?"

Severus sat on the couch and tried to block out the yammering. It all sounded like a bunch of chickens being chased by a fox. He folded his arms in front of him as he was ignored and Sybill's three friends buried her in questions. He watched his fiancée smile and hold up her hands to quiet them. She answered every question and then was bombarded with more. Finally, all three friends put their arms around her and squealed. They had turned from clucking chickens to squealing pigs. Severus could not contain his eyebrow. It shot up in wonder as they hugged Sybill and squealed some more. He would have never thought to get such a reception about the news that he was marrying anyone. He shook his head in amazement.

When the din had died down, the three women realized that they weren't alone with Sybill. They all straightened up and gave Severus their more reserved congratulations. He smirked and nodded at them.

"I suppose there's no stopping you from making this into a circus, is there, Minerva?" he said dourly.

"Oh, lighten up, Severus!" Minerva chided. "You only get married once!"

"If I recall correctly, the tally for the three of you is seven marriages," he countered.

"I can't help it if I keep outliving my husbands!" Rolanda cried. She had lost three men in her life to sickness and war.

Pomona shrugged, but looked embarrassed. She had divorced twice and was on the prowl again. Some poor unsuspecting man would eventually make husband number three. Severus shuddered at the thought.

Minerva only scowled, thinking of her two husbands. Few had known of her first marriage to Albus Dumbledore. Albus had always tried to protect her, so he'd insisted that their union be kept as quiet as possible. She was now married to his brother, Aberforth.

"I can't help it if you killed my first husband, Severus!"

Severus scowled back, his lighthearted mood dimming slightly. "At least you kept it in the family," he remarked cuttingly.

Sybill stood up at that. "That's enough, you two!" she admonished. "Come, Severus. It's late, and we should be breaking up this party."

Severus stood and gave a curt nod to the other women in the room.

"Have a good night, ladies," he told them before sweeping out of the room. Sybill hugged her friends, thanked them once again, and in a flurry, she too was gone. Minerva glanced over at her desk. The cake sat atop it, untouched.

"Oh, dear, we forgot to cut the cake!" she mused.

Rolanda grabbed a knife and started dividing it into huge portions. "There's no sense in letting this go to waste," she told them as she passed out the huge pieces to her friends. The three of them settled themselves in for some decadent chocolate indulgences.

"Oh, Sybill is missing the best part!" Pomona cried as she licked the chocolate from her lips.

Rolanda got a gleam in her eye as she smiled devilishly. "Ladies, who needs men when chocolate exists?!"

The three women laughed and laughed as they filled themselves with the sumptuous cake. Their celebratory party went on long into the night as they took their time in consuming the entire cake and bashing men as they greedily shoved forkfuls of the sinful confection into their mouths.

A/N: Next up: The final act of our little tale.

The scene with the three ladies ooh-ing and ahh-ing over Sybill's ring is based upon a real life event. When my dad proposed to my step-mother, she immediately went to tell her friends. This scene was similar to the resulting conversation... if you could call it a conversation. Who would have thought older women could squeal in such a way!

Thanks, Lilith Kayden, for your wonderful beta work and thoughtful suggestions.

Chapter 20: I Definitely Do!

Chapter 20 of 20

The happy end to our tale.

Chapter 20: I Definitely Do!

Severus Snape pulled his new wife to him and kissed her passionately. His hand came up and cradled her face as he enjoyed her mouth. He never wanted to pull away, but the lack of oxygen was going to his head. Finally, he pulled back and smiled at his bride. She still wore the simple—yet elegant—wedding dress. Her black hair was curled and pulled back from her face. Her eyes gazed upon him with utter devotion. Unable to resist any longer, he scooped Sybill up and carried her over the threshold of her... no, their... cottage. With long strides he brought her to the bedroom and laid her gently on the bed.

The wedding had been small and quiet, except for the cackling, and crowing of the chickens that were Sybill's friends. They'd taken over everything, sweeping Sybill from her home early that day and bringing her to a classroom that had been converted to a dressing room. They'd pampered her and fussed over her, making her into the most beautiful bride Severus had ever laid eyes upon. They'd even descended upon him, rushing into his dressing room en masse, clucking away about his appearance.

"Severus!" Minerva shrieked. "You can't leave your hair down like that!"

Severus looked to Minerva curiously. "What's wrong with my hair?"

"This is your wedding day, Severus. It's not as if you're just taking a stroll around the lake!" Pomona piped in.

Severus' eyebrows furrowed as he looked in the mirror. "What should I do with it? I've always worn it this way."

Rolanda came up behind him and began fussing with his hair. She picked up a section of it and examined it closely, turning it this way and that. "That's just it, Severus, you always wear it this way. It should be special for today."

Severus felt himself lose patience. "So, what do I do with it?" he snapped.

Rolanda had now taken all of his hair and waved her wand over it. It suddenly appeared to be very curly, bordering on frizzy.

"Gads, woman, I look hideous!" Severus cried.

Rolanda quickly reversed the spell. Pomona bustled over and began to feel his hair. She was soon joined by Minerva. The three women spoke amongst themselves while weaving their fingers through Severus' long locks. Finally, at his wits end, he pulled away and scowled at the three harbingers.

"For Merlin's sake, keep your hands to yourselves!"

Minerva went up to him and placed her hands on his shoulders, directing him back to the mirror.

"Severus, what do you think about hair extensions?"

Severus sputtered. "What?"

Minerva picked up a lock of hair. "Your hair is too short to pull back comfortably. If we added some extensions, you could tie it back behind you."

Severus glanced in the mirror and tried to envision himself with longer hair, pulled back behind his neck. He was horrible at imagining such things. Huffing in exasperation, he looked back at Minerva.

"Show me," he demanded.

Pomona and Rolanda clapped their hands together and giggled in appreciation as Minerva waved her wand, and Severus' hair grew another six inches. With another wave, it was secured behind his neck with a black, silk tie that had been fashioned into a bow, the ends left to hang alongside the tail. Minerva motioned for him to take a look. Severus frowned, but looked into the mirror anyway. The sight before him was not entirely loathsome. He arched his head to the left, then to the right. It definitely could be worse. He turned so he could see the back.

"It will do," he muttered.

The women all nodded and began to cluck among themselves once more. Their hands were all over him, straightening his tie, brushing imaginary dust from his suit-coat, and generally fussing about his outfit. At long last, they pronounced him perfect and disappeared as quickly as they'd appeared.

The ceremony had been beautiful. Lucius had been Severus' best man, and Narcissa, the Matron of honor. The Malfoys had hugged both Sybill and Severus furiously once they'd been wed.

"Congratulations, my friend," Lucius said as he pulled away from Severus. "I hope she makes you as happy as Narcissa makes me."

Severus' grin was not the first of the day, nor would it be the last. "She does, Lucius."

"Well, don't take her for granted. Narcissa has been explaining my past self's treatment of her." Lucius gave Severus a disgruntled look. "I'm half tempted to hex myself!"

Severus laughed heartily. "We all have a chance at a new life, Lucius. This is your chance to make amends for prior wrongs. It certainly feels good to be able to do that."

"Indeed it does," Lucius agreed.

Now, Severus looked to the woman who'd agreed to spend the rest of her life with him. He certainly would not take her for granted. She had hidden in the shadows for too long. It was time for her to shine, and he would be there to help her always see how wonderful she was and how much he loved her. Seeing her glancing at him lovingly, Severus felt the urge to shout out to the world that she was his. He restrained himself, of course.

oooOOOooo

Sybill looked to her husband with love. She couldn't believe how incredibly handsome he looked with his hair pulled back and an impeccably tailored black tuxedo gracing his frame. Her breath hitched in her. She couldn't believe that this incredibly wonderful man loved her. She wanted to shout out to the world that he was hers. She laughed loudly, instead and pulled him onto the bed and over her.

Grasping his neck, she pulled his head down and gave him a searing kiss. "You are the sexiest thing alive, Severus."

"You, my dear, are the sexy one. When I saw you in this dress, all I could think of was that I wanted to tear it off you."

Sybill arched her neck back as Severus' lips covered it with passionate kisses. Her breathing was getting a bit fast and her pulse was beginning to race.

"I felt the same way when I saw you in this tuxedo. You make wearing black a fashion statement, love."

Severus said nothing, but continued to trail kisses down her neck. Finally, he lifted his head and gazed into her eyes. Sybill caught her breath again as she stared into his eyes, seeing an eternity of love in them.

"I love you, Sybill," Severus choked out, his voice now rough with emotion.

Sybill's face lit up as she smiled at her husband. "I love you too, Severus, more than life itself."

Severus smiled back at her, before descending and capturing her mouth in a heated kiss. Sybill's heart fluttered at his closeness. She could feel his hands caressing her body as she did the same to his. Her mind was lost in his dizzying kiss. This man was hers, and they would be together always. The life she'd hated before had finally become a joy to her, as she'd found this amazing man to share it with. This would be the first day in a lifetime spent happily in each other's arms. Sybill truly couldn't have asked for anything more.

The End

A/N: Thank you so much for all your wonderful reviews throughout this story. I'm glad you all enjoyed it. A final bow to my beta, Lilith Kayden, who has done a remarkable job as always.