

Starting Over

by Southern_Witch_69

To get away for a while, Harry and his children go on holiday to a place where they can find peace and have fun. Little did they know that they would meet up with someone from Harry's past, someone supposedly dead: Severus Snape.

Part 1

Chapter 1 of 10

To get away for a while, Harry and his children go on holiday to a place where they can find peace and have fun. Little did they know that they would meet up with someone from Harry's past, someone supposedly dead: Severus Snape.

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AN: This was written for sealcat over at Insane Journal's Snapely Holidays Exchange. See her requests after the last chapter (don't want to give too much away now).

Thanks go to beaweasely2 and rdholmantx for giving this a read through.

Part One — Harry

Ginny's been dead nearly two years now, and sometimes it feels like I've only just lost her. And to my horror, at other times, it feels longer than that. I long to move on and live my life again. Shouldn't I feel guilty about that? The kids and I decided to get away from it all—the British wizarding world, the pesky people who can't leave us in peace, and Molly Weasley, who's become unbearable as of late. In the past, we've vacationed in France, been to Romania, been to Egypt, lots of places, so I decided to do something I never thought I'd do.

I asked Hermione to research the wizarding communities in America, knowing that I wouldn't be a spectacle there and that my family could have a peaceful holiday. It's James' last year at Hogwarts. Merlin, is he seventeen already? Who knows when we'll all have the chance to be a family like this again? Next summer, he'll probably be off with his friends (I'm lucky I could pull him away from them at all). I expect he knows how much this means to me to have them all with me. We've not done anything like this since ... Well, things have been rough for us since Ginny's accident, especially for my Lily—so much like her mother in many ways.

Molly has been... very controlling and interfering. But I won't allow it this summer. This is my family, and we'll never be able to move on unless we put forth the effort. I miss Ginny, always will, but this isn't healthy for the kids or for me. My only regret about this vacation is that Teddy couldn't come, work demands and all that. I'm right proud of that boy. He's working under Hermione now at the Ministry and is planning to ask Victoire to marry him after her parents' anniversary party this summer. I'd thought he might join the Aurors like me (and his mother before him), but he took a page from Hermione's book instead, becoming more like his father.

Hermione came through for me and found several communities. What caught my eye was New Orleans, a popular port city in Louisiana. Even our lot hears what those wizards get up to over there, what with their living practically in the open, Muggles never the wiser. There's even a magical school just outside of town in one of the area's oldest plantation homes—supposedly haunted to hear the Muggles tell it. Intriguing. And that was that. I arranged for our family to fly in an aeroplane, which we all enjoyed, though the flights were horribly long.

And now we're here and settled into our suite at the Magical Resort of New Orleans—see what I mean? They advertise what we are all over the place, and they haven't a

clue! The suite itself is pretty comfortable, and we have the ability to control the temperature and utilities by either magical or Muggle means. I, of course, have the master suite, Lily has her own room, and the boys are sharing one. Aside from that, we've a great room for dining and for sitting about and a rather large bathroom.

Nobody bloody mentioned that the humidity is staggering in any of those pamphlets Hermione brought over. Within the first thirty minutes, all of which were spent at the airport acquiring a shuttle to the hotel, we learned charms to fix that, but they expire quickly.

After opening the French doors to my balcony, which happens to overlook a famous street, Bourbon I believe, where crowds roam all night long, I finally felt a cool breeze wafting through the city's lively streets, likely from the Mississippi River that's located a few blocks away. It's actually comforting, balancing the heat. I confess to casting a Silencing Charm to keep out the noisy wankers on the street below, the sounds of jazz music, and especially the blokes having pints on the balcony across from mine. I saw them tossing down some sort of jewelry to women who pulled up their shirts and showed their breasts! The bobby on his horse saw and didn't even give them a citation of any kind.

Luckily, it's only my room that faces that way. I don't have to worry about the boys looking down at those women, as it might give them an idea or two. It's time to turn in. I'm still exhausted, and tomorrow's the first day of our adventure in the city. Another lonely night.

Part One — Severus

There's nothing like a stroll along the pavement towards the Riverwalk at dusk in New Orleans. The way the dying sun reflects off the water of the Mississippi River and paints the horizon is amazing. The breeze that blows in gives passersby a break from the heat and feel of the humidity. Every so often someone is settling down onto a bench or sitting beneath a tree, likely homeless drifters, and the musically inclined who've spent the day trying to make a few dollars by playing for the public pack up to go home.

This is nothing like England, and yet, it's become home to me. I feel so free and unrestricted here. My business is thriving, I've made a few friends, and I can finally be myself and make my own decisions. Freedom never felt so good, if I've ever felt it in my life.

I watch the ferry as it docks for the night and grin at a group of young men who are excitedly chatting about the night to come—karaoke singing at the Cat's Meow for starters, strippers at Rick's Cabaret, and perhaps a trinket or two for luck in sex and money from Marie Laveau's Voodoo Shop. The city's businesses thrive on those looking for a good time.

In all my years here, I've never run into anyone that I knew back home. The only person who even knows that I am still alive is Minerva McGonagall. She had a suspicion that I still lived when no body was found in the Shrieking Shack, and she did what it took to track me down. She will not betray me, and I can trust in that, especially since she knows all that transpired between Albus and me before and after he died. We exchange letters each month or so, and I am kept informed about the goings on at Hogwarts and others related to my old life. It's satisfactory to have someone I can talk to who knows the truth about me. I think I've finally made her understand that I'll not be going back to Wizarding Britain.

What surprised her most about my new life? I am putting my expertise in potions and herbology to use. I own a flower shop here in the French Quarter. Oh, I don't only sell flowers, naturally, but that's what the Muggles believe of me. I have a private backroom for wizards to peruse—potions, salves, ingredients, and several other things. The money is good, and my hours are simple enough. I open after breakfast and close before dusk. Though the city never sleeps, my shop isn't open all night long. A man needs time for himself after all.

Aptly, the new name that I've chosen is Samael. Old lore says he's both a good and bad angel—sometimes the Angel of Death (a role reminiscent of my Death Eater days) and sometimes the guardian angel of someone deserving. (What was I to Potter all these years if not this?) Among other things. It is even said that Samael chose Lilith as his bride once she left Adam (before God made Eve for him).

Lilith. Lily. Ironic, isn't it?

Yes, I still think of Lily, and I still have many regrets where she's concerned, but I've long since realized that holding onto her memory as I've done most of my life wasn't doing me any good. That isn't to say that I've found anyone else, for I haven't. There's never anyone I feel drawn to. Yet I remain lonely at times such as these. Wouldn't it be nice to have someone to walk along with me on my favorite path? Ah, it doesn't matter. I've a good book and fine wine waiting for me in my flat.

AN: This story is complete. I'll be posting the rest of it over the next week as I'm able to read through it again.

Part 2

Chapter 2 of 10

To get away for a while, Harry and his children go on holiday to a place where they can find peace and have fun. Little did they know that they would meet up with someone from Harry's past, someone supposedly dead: Severus Snape.

Part Two - Harry

Today was nice. We woke up and had breakfast down in the hotel restaurant. While there, Lily overheard the couple at the next table talking about a local attraction—Aquarium of the Americas. It sounded very interesting, so we decided to go there. Albus Severus was very excited to learn that he'd be seeing local animals—alligators and such. The clerk at the desk happened to have a stack of local maps, enabling us to leave straightaway.

I must confess that I had as much fun as the kids. The décor was top rate, and the aquariums were brilliant. I think we sat on the bleachers and watched the schools of fish in the first large tank swim back and forth for almost an hour. Al snapped pictures the entire time and chattered about how he'd like to open a Wizarding aquarium back home. It's an interesting thought, but I highly doubt the Ministry will ever approve of it.

The fun part was taking a family picture while standing inside what were supposedly the bleached, sharp teeth and jaws of a monster great white shark. The Muggle who took the picture for us was puzzled over the camera. Al waved away his confusion by saying it was something new and digital that had just come out in Europe. Luckily, the lad believed it and snapped the shot for us. Oddly enough, he sort of reminded me of poor Colin Creevey. I often wonder what would have become of his life had he lived through that battle at Hogwarts.

Best not dwell on that... or the fact that our family portraits now lacked a second parental figure. Anyway, after going through all the rooms and participating in things such as petting a small nurse shark and finger painting, we made our way to the small café and had lunch. The crusty bread was quite good; the locals said it is something poor boys like to eat, and the fried shrimp, though spicily battered, were delicious. I plan to go back and have another as soon as I can.

We decided to take it easy this afternoon, watching the telly in our room and playing video games. We had pizza delivered for dinner, and now I'm out on my balcony once again while the kids have gone to bed. The brand of beer, Budweiser, recommended by the pizza delivery bloke, tastes strong but smooth as it goes down. Tonight, I don't charm away the sounds of the city, choosing to embrace it instead.

There's a different set of lads across the way tonight, but they, too, have loads of long necklaces that they toss down to women who show their breasts. As far as I can tell, most of the lot are long pearls. I expect that only the wealthy stay at that place. I smirk as I realize they don't know what they're missing by not eating those poor boy's sandwiches like I had for lunch. Second thought... if that's only what the poor lot eats, what's served to the rich?

My mouth waters just thinking of it. As I ease back into the shadows of my dark balcony, I can better see the two little black lads on the corner. They're tap dancing, each having a little box on the ground in front of them where pedestrians can toss in cash. A longhaired, bearded man just across from them is strumming on a box guitar and doing a poor job of singing some tune. I wonder how much money they possibly make like this. What would it be like to not have the responsibilities of a regular job? What would it be like to live in such a city?

New Orleans felt very welcoming. I'm not sure if it's the hospitality of everyone or if it's just me needing a change in my life, but I like it here-even though I've only been here for a couple of days. What would I do if I met someone here? I feel a little guilt settle in at this thought and simply concentrate on drinking my beer and watching the partygoers. Come to that, I wonder where that bag of crisps were put.

Part Two - Severus

Today I had a very strange feeling. I used to get this feeling back in the war when something wasn't exactly right. So far, I've not been able to place whatever it is, but I'd almost swear that something is about to happen. Something that I don't want. My first thought, naturally, is that I've been found out. What would I do if someone did recognize me?

This is something I've thought of for many years, and I always swore that I would do what it took to see that they didn't tell anyone else, as my life is very satisfying: Obliviation being the first on my list with Confunding a close second. Murder is last on the list, of course, but it's still on there.

I smirk as I think this. I've changed so much over the years that I doubt I truly could go through with it unless I had no choice, being attacked or something. I'd probably have to pack up and find another place.

But why? Would it be so bad if people knew that I still lived? There would be the curious ones who'd try to send owls or have chats, but on the whole, so much time has passed now. And I live a bloody long way from England. I really don't think it would matter. I'm still thinking about this as I close my shop and turn around, coming face to face with a beautiful young girl who looks so much like Lily that it causes me to gasp.

She's stopped to talk to a filthy, young man who's taken to making balloon animals for passing children for a dollar. Her voice! She's British. I slide away from them undetected and watch from the corner of my shop.

"I can't find my family," she says. "We were looking at hats... just there, and now I don't know where they've gone. I stopped to watch that lady painting a boy's face."

I don't need to use my Legilimency to know that the boy shouldn't be the one to help her, and for some reason, I can't allow anything to happen to this girl, not when she looks so much like my Lily. If only she had green eyes, she could be her.

When I step out and cut off the sod's attempt to lead her in an opposite direction, she seems grateful, and surprisingly, she doesn't seem afraid of me. Most strangers are wary of me at first. I expect I look sinister sometimes. Once someone asked if I were dressed as a vampire, something about me possibly being one of Lestat's mates. I had to research to find out exactly who this was and ended up enjoying a series of stories by a woman named Anne Rice who happens to live in New Orleans as well.

"All right?" I ask.

"You're British," she says with a smile. "Me as well."

"It's been so long since I've been there," I admit, "but yes, I am. Whereabouts are you from, my dear?"

"London." She grins brightly. "I'm Lily."

I'm sure she notices the widening of my eyes before I extend my hand. "Samael." Was the church's tale of Reincarnation true then? But how?

"Thanks for getting rid of him. Not the best idea I had. It's just that he was giving that child a balloon puppy, and I thought..."

"How old are you?"

"Oh, I'm fourteen-nearly fifteen though. Well, in about six months anyway."

"I'm sure your parents are very worried. This isn't the best place to get lost."

"Oh, it's just Dad and my brothers. Mum died."

"I am sorry to hear that," I say politely, still reeling from the fact that she looks like the Lily I once loved so much and that her name was, in fact, Lily. And she's British. This had to be the foreboding I felt earlier. Perhaps fate has intended to play a cruel trick on me.

"Look! My brother, he's just there!" She points to the lad running over to us.

"All right, Lily?" he asks worriedly, sliding his hand into his pocket as he looks at me.

I hope he doesn't think to pull out a can of Muggle mace or something.

"Of course, Al. This fellow helped me out. He's a Brit, too."

"Thanks, mate," the boy says, extending a hand. "My father told me to do a wan-er, to look for her."

I nearly gasp again as I see the boy's eyes. His eyes are the same shape and shade that I've longed to see once more for many years. I don't take his hand.

"Not at all. Be safe."

I nod and walk away from them as quickly as possible. I will forgo my stroll along the river tonight. It isn't until I reach my flat that I realize how quickly my heart is beating. Something isn't right with all of this. Why would I experience this now? Was this a sign of some sort? Since when do I believe in that rubbish anyway? Luckily, they were just Muggles, else I'd believe someone had sent her purposely. I suppose I'm not quite ready for the world to know about me after all.

AN: More up tomorrow! :)

Part 3

Chapter 3 of 10

To get away for a while, Harry and his children go on holiday to a place where they can find peace and have fun. Little did they know that they would meet up with someone from Harry's past, someone supposedly dead: Severus Snape.

Part Three Harry

Yesterday, we almost lost Lily in the crowd. She told me that she'd approached someone who'd seemed trustworthy only to realize her mistake straightaway. Luckily, another person sensed this as well and scared the prat off. I should have watched her more closely, so it's nobody's fault but my own. I asked her what made her trust the other man...especially after Albus Severus described him to me...and she claimed he smelled like flowers touched by rain and reminded her of someone who would live back home in the Wizarding world from the way he'd been dressed.

When they asked to go to a museum this morning with two teenagers who happened to be staying on the same floor as us, I hastily told them no and claimed to have made other plans. It was just too risky to let them out of my sight for so long. I might have reconsidered if the boy and girl's parents had been going as well, but they were in some sort of meeting.

We ended up going to the Audubon Zoo instead, which was something that I'd hoped to put off until another day, having planned our "big" outings on certain days. It was fun, though, and the two teens ended up joining us. Nice kids.

The zoo that I visited with Dudley and my aunt and uncle as a child was nothing like this one. It was huge, first of all, and had so many exhibits that I feared we might not make them all through the day. For me, the best part was the swamp exhibit. There were loads of alligators there, some hiding in the murky water, some on the bank soaking up the sun. If that's what it's really like outside the city limits in the less populated towns of Louisiana, I imagine I'll stay right where I am, thanks.

This evening I'm not content to remain on my balcony. I want to go down and be a part of things. I learned that the ladies who expose themselves aren't doing so for fine jewelry. The necklaces I thought to be pearls or something expensive? They're merely plastic beads and can be bought for change at any souvenir shop in the city. I suppose I was shocked that people would do such a thing, but then, it's all in fun, isn't it? It's just another reason to cut loose and do something out of the ordinary for once.

And the long, crusty...breaded sandwiches that I love? They are called Po-boys here. I felt like such a berk when I realized I'd misunderstood that it was food for those who couldn't pay as much for their meals. Crazy, that. This place takes a lot of getting used to. Earlier today on the bus coming back from the zoo, some man asked me, "How's your mom and them?"

I nearly said that my mum was dead, thanks, and asked exactly who 'them' was but realized it was just some sort of greeting. When I said, "All right," he started talking about the heat and how he wished for a shower to cool things off. It was an odd exchange, but I enjoyed it. If I tried striking up a conversation with someone on the tube back home, they'd have thought I was mad.

Oh! An idea just came to me. I should go back to the Quarter and see if I can spot the man who helped Lily. I owe him my thanks. I have a good mental idea of what he looks like. I snicker as I think of sniffing around for a dark-haired, stern looking bloke who smells of flowers after a rain shower. Al told me that he'd found them in front of Smith's Flowers, so it's safe to assume the man works there or in the vicinity. At least I know his name; Samael, Lily said it was. I'll start there and walk about. If nothing else, I'll have a nice outing.

Getting to the old building the shop is located in didn't take very long, but I can see that it's already been shut down for the night. According to the hours posted on the door, I could check back after eight the next morning if I'd like. I will. I can ask the owner if he knows this Samael bloke. When I turn around, I gaze down the street and see a young couple holding hands and laughing. The boy resembles Teddy a little, and I can't help but think about him and hope that Victoire accepts his marriage proposal. I follow behind them, grinning, for a few blocks, but then I see something that shocks me: a man's profile.

This isn't just any man. This is someone who greatly resembles Severus Snape...black hair, hooked nose, thin frame. Intrigued, I watch as he pulls a set of keys from his pocket and unlocks a small door that opens to a narrow path between buildings that leads to a courtyard. It's obviously his home. He doesn't see me and closes the door, going about his business.

I know it's not Snape, but the shock of seeing someone so like him brings back a lot of emotions I buried long ago. If only Snape had lived, things could have been so different for us all. Suddenly annoyed, I feel it's best to return to my hotel.

Part Three Severus

Just fucking great! I'm acting like a paranoid idiot! All day my heart has sped up each time the bell over the door rings when it's opened. I half expect the two kids from yesterday to pop in. Hopefully, they've moved on quickly, as most tourists are wont to do. The city is big enough for it, and there are other places they can visit.

Now that I'm looking over my shoulder, it seems my old spy senses have kicked in. I keep getting the feeling that someone is watching me. The hair on the back of my neck prickles occasionally, and it just seems like someone is here. Once, I nearly thought I heard breathing.

And my all-time low so far today? I nearly pulled out my wand in front of Muggles earlier! Why? As I watered a few plants hanging from my awning outside the shop, I saw a bird land on the lamppost nearby. There are plenty of birds here to be sure, but this one seemed to be watching me. I would move one way, and its beady little eyes would follow. I'd move the other way, and it would cock his head to see what I was about. Of course my intuition told me that this starling wasn't truly a bird but a spy. Without realizing it, I'd pulled out my bloody wand and was aiming it at it when... it began to ruffle its dark plumage, the metallic sheen of colors catching the sun's light beautifully, and began to chatter about indignantly.

It was as if it knew I was going to hex it. Or so I thought. That's foolish, though, isn't it? I'm glad that the man who'd been nearby stopped to take a photo of the bird and didn't notice my drawn wand. The starling preened for a few moments and flew off, never circling back. I just don't know what's happening with me right now. I've been content here. I've not worried about being seen in years. Yet, yesterday I had that strange feeling that something would happen. It came in the form of the British kids, one who looked like, and was actually named, Lily, which kept me unsettled all night. And today, I nearly checked a starling to make certain it wasn't an Animagus. Worse than that, it continuously feels as if I'm not alone in my shop when I know perfectly well that I am. My wards would alert me otherwise immediately.

A thought comes to me unbidden. Potter. Potter who has an Invisibility Cloak. "*Accio Invisibility Cloak*," I say to myself as quietly as possible, flicking my wand inconspicuously. Nothing happens. I feel very foolish, but only for a moment. Why should I degrade myself for taking precautions? As far as I know, he's Head Auror back at the Ministry. Minerva and I agreed long ago to not speak of him. She'd tried to inform me of his life: a marriage to Ginevra Weasley, the birth of his first son (named James Sirius of all things), and his promotion to Head Auror after only a few years in the Aurory.

My threat of cutting off communication with her finally made her realize that I don't want to know anything about that boy. I just want to forget and move on. I'm not so angry with myself anymore, and I've got over a lot of things over the years. I wish now that I had let her tell me about him and his life. Did he have other children? Did any of them

have Lily's eyes?

Shock seeps into my veins. The boy yesterday had those eyes, and come to that, he could have passed for Potter's son. His age would be about right. But no, his name was Al, not James. But then his sister, Lily... Another coincidence? I could write to Minerva and ask her, but that would take time, which I don't have. These kids are here in New Orleans. What the fuck would Potter and his family be doing here? What a ridiculous notion anyway. Dumbledore would enjoy this.

My laughter startles the woman looking at the ferns in the corner. "Sorry," I say with a smile, putting her at ease. "Just thought of something that happened earlier."

She walks closer and returns my smile. "Anything you want to share? I know I could use a good laugh as well."

Thinking fast, I blurt out, "Oh, there was a starling perched out there on the lamppost, and it left droppings on a man's head." The lie doesn't bother me, and I can't help but to grin as she bursts with laughter.

"Oh God! Hahaha! That's hilarious. See, I would have figured that something like that would happen to me. It seems like someone's always taking a shit on me."

This is said with a smile, but I can tell she's being honest. "Here," I say, taking one of the long-stemmed peach roses from a nearby bouquet. "It smells lovely. Take it. A gift from me."

"I appreciate that." She sniffs it. "Mmmm. It's wonderful."

We talk a little, and then she leaves without buying anything but promising to return again soon, and I know that she's interested in me. It's very flattering indeed, and I wish that I could find myself attracted to her, but though she's a lovely lady, I feel nothing save friendship. Deciding to close the shop early, I go lock the door and pull the shades down. After doing some arranging, I'll go out by the river and clear my mind.

AN: Thanks go to beaweasley2 and rdholmantx for giving this a read through!

Part 4

Chapter 4 of 10

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Part Four Harry

I've seen enough. Severus Snape is alive. Last night, I barely slept at all. Memories of our past haunted me when I did try to sleep. All of these years I've wished that I'd done a lot of things differently where he's concerned. I've longed to have a chance to make things right with him, to ask him about my mother. When he 'died,' the last link to my parents died with him.

And here he bloody is, alive and well in New Fucking Orleans, Louisiana. He survived somehow and fled the country. Why wouldn't he want us to know he's alive? He's a hero for Merlin's sake! He is to me anyway.

I can feel the bitterness and the anger warring with the shock and excitement that he's alive. I want to hit him, hurt him, and yet, I want to... Enough.

"I didn't drop dung on anybody," I say, smirking as he turns around, wand drawn, scanning the room. I've yet to take off my cloak, and the first thing that came to mind was the comment he made to the lady about me...in my Animagus form...when I was on the lamppost earlier.

His eyes are narrowed, and his skin...which finally looks a healthy shade-turns as white as snow. "Show yourself!" he hisses.

This sounds more like the Snape I remember. I was convinced at first that the man, Samael, was some doppelganger or one of those twins that everyone says we have in some part of the world, but the more I've stayed here, the more his true identity became obvious. His hair is a bit longer and healthier...or cleaner...than I remember, but it is otherwise the same, not a single grey lock that I can see. And he's finally put on a bit of weight, not much, mind, but his face isn't as gaunt as it once was.

"All right. Steady with that wand," I say, and I know that he recognizes my voice. I can see it in his eyes, and I wonder if maybe he hadn't already known somehow. Did he already know that Lily and Albus Severus are my children? Maybe he's kept in contact with our world.

"Potter." Disbelief laces his voice, and his wand doesn't lower.

I let my cloak slip away. "Didn't think I'd need this on holiday," I say with a shrug, not sure where to begin.

"Who sent you? The Ministry?"

"Put your wand down."

"Why should I? What are you here for, Potter?"

I raise my hands. "My wand's in my pocket. I just want to talk."

"So it was an Animagus today! I thought so. That starling, you, watched me too closely!"

"When I realized you were suspicious, I thought it best that I leave."

"You haven't answered my question."

His glare chills me and makes me wonder if I've made the right decision. "How did you survive?"

"Answer," he steps forward, "my," his wand shakes slightly, "question."

"My family, we're here on holiday."

"You just happen to be here? In this part of America?" He sneers. "Forgive me if I don't believe that. Who sent you?"

"Nobody sent me, Snape," I say bitterly. "I just wanted to go someplace where my family could be... normal. Hermione had some pamphlets of Wizarding communities. McGonagall told her about the school system here, how it's sort of like Hogwarts, and well, you know Hermione, she never forgets anything about education."

"Minerva... that..." His wand lowers, but he still looks angry.

"My daughter..."

"Lily," he interrupts.

I nod. "Yes, I just wanted to find the man who'd tried to help her. Albus Severus told me where..."

"What did you say?"

"My kids told me where you were when you helped her, and I thought maybe I'd look you up."

"Albus Severus?"

I smile then, realizing what he's getting at. "I named him after Dumbledore... and you. How could I not?"

"But Minerva said your son's name was James Sirius."

"She knows you're alive?" I ask incredulously. What the hell is this shite? Why would she tell Hermione about this place knowing Snape's been here all this while?

"Yes. She found me years ago and tried to fill me in on all the details of your life once we began exchanging letters."

"So that's why you didn't seem all that shocked to see me? You recognized my kids?"

"No, I didn't know you had them. I only knew about the first child. I told Minerva I didn't care for her to talk about you, and she's not said anything since. I just deduced..."

"Oh. I see." My heart drops at this. The fantasies of getting to know him and having long talks about the past die as I realize he will never want any sort of friendship with me.

"I just want my peace. I am content here, Potter, and I would appreciate it," here it sounds like he's choking, "if you forget you saw me."

"There's so much I want to ask. How'd you come to be here? Why are you hiding away? You're a hero, Snape."

"A hero?" His laugh is bitter, and he walks by me to go to his counter. "I did what I had to do, that's all, nothing more. All right?" He gestures about the room. "I am here because I thought no one would ever think to look here for me. Lucius came back to check on me after you left. He knew that I'd taken precautions and realized that I'd only slipped into a coma-like state and administered Blood-Replenishing Potion to me."

"I questioned him myself. He thought you to be dead."

"I... Obliviated the memory from him."

"Well, as much as I hate to say it, Malfoy was shaken up about it. He must have been a true friend." I feel suddenly angry, and it's not just in Malfoy's defense either. "How could you do that to him? To someone you obviously cared about? You just took off and left without a word! We would have welcomed you back as a hero!"

"It's for the best."

I notice he's toying with his wand and have the suspicion he's thinking of Obliviating me as well. "Don't even think about it," I say, my wand is out and pointed at him before the sentence is even finished.

"Get out of my shop. Forget you saw me here."

"If that's what you want."

"It is."

A sigh escapes me as I can see I've lost. "All right. I just... Thank you for everything you did for me back then."

"It wasn't for you."

"Yeah, I know," I say with a nod. "I appreciate it all the same. When you died, after I saw those memories you gave me, it made me wish that things had been different. I've always regretted not telling you how much you meant to us all...everything you did for us. And..."

My voice fades as I search for the right words. I can see him trying to keep the surprise from his expression, so at least he's listening to me.

"And thanks for loving my mum so much. I'm sure... I'm sure she cared for you, too, even in the end. If you hadn't asked Riddle to spare her, she wouldn't have been able to protect me, and in the long run, we never would have won, Snape." I turn away from him, pick up my cloak, and walk to the door. "I won't tell anyone that you're here, but if you ever want to talk, I'd like that."

He says nothing as I leave, much to my disappointment.

Part Four Severus

Never in a million years did I think that Potter would really be here. It was just a passing thought, but my first instinct was right. Shite. And where is the urge to flee? Why do I trust him to keep his word?

Those words he spoke, they felt honest to me. But how? I thought that Potter would hate me more than ever after he found out the true relationship I had with his mother. Is it possible that he's not the arrogant, spoiled boy I've always thought him to be? I already know the answer to this, having visited this conversation in my mind more than once over the years.

I never really gave him a chance when he went to Hogwarts. He looked so much like his father that I never expected anything more of him. And I resented the fact that Lily chose death... because of him. Selfish, I know, but she could have lived if she'd only stood aside. What Potter said, though, makes sense. It's true. If the Dark Lord hadn't tried to spare her...at my request...then she wouldn't have chosen death instead of giving up her child; she would have just been killed the way James had been dispatched, as if she were nothing. Her choice enabled the old magic to activate.

Green eyes flash through my mind: Lily's, Harry's, Albus Severus'.

My God. Potter's named one of his children after me. If that doesn't back up his words, nothing will. He wants to talk to me. It would be nice to actually have someone to talk to. Minerva is my one connection to my old world, but here's another one before me. I think of the beautiful young girl, named for her grandmother, and I feel a smile

grace my lips.

The girl's words come to mind. Her mother is dead. I sit down with a thump on a nearby stool. How had Ginny Weasley died? Maybe Potter understands the need for a new start more than I give him credit for. He and I have both lost someone we've loved...both lovely women with long red hair.

But am I man enough to let the past go in order to start a friendship? That's something that I need to delve into myself to answer before I make any moves.

Part 5

Chapter 5 of 10

To get away for a while, Harry and his children go on holiday to a place where they can find peace and have fun. Little did they know that they would meet up with someone from Harry's past, someone supposedly dead: Severus Snape.

Part Five – Harry

Days have passed since I approached Snape, and I've kept my word. When we go in the vicinity of his shop, I make the effort to walk by and not even look at it, lest he'll think I'm spying. The night is much cooler than normal, as it rains off and on, so I find myself out on my balcony once again. Interestingly enough, the rain doesn't keep away the hordes of people from Bourbon Street. There seems to be at least fifty packed into a very small place called *Huge Ass Beers*. Huge beer, small premises. Yet the people don't seem to mind, knowing the shower will pass quickly enough. Even the hot dog selling blokes don't bother to take permanent cover when the downpour starts, standing under a large umbrella or the awning of a nearby business.

I smirk as a drenched barn swallow lands on the metal railing and begins ruffling its feathers in an attempt to rid itself of rain droplets. "Not a good night for a flight, mate," I say, saluting it with my bottle of beer, "but you're welcome to hang out all the same."

The bird shakes its lovely blue wings while twitching its long forked tail and seems to glare at me. This causes me to snicker. "You look familiar."

And to my surprise the bird hops down onto the chair next to me and begins to morph into none other than Severus Snape. "How'd you know that was me?" he asks curiously.

Trying to cover my shock, I shrug, take a swig from my bottle, and then say, "I'd know that glare anywhere, Professor."

This causes him to smirk. "I've thought about what you said."

"Oh?" My heart begins to beat wildly. Does he want to talk? Can we be friends then?

"Maybe we... Have you another of those?" He nods to the Budweiser in my hand.

"Yep. Hang on." I quickly jump up, feeling nervous, and nearly trip over the doorway while going to fetch a beer for him. Once done, I am horrified to see my hand shaking slightly as I hand it to him.

"Thank you," he says quietly, taking it and looking away from me. He pops off the top easily and takes a small sip, grimacing. "Definitely not Rosmerta's finest, eh?"

"Definitely not," I agree, chuckling slightly. After a moment of silence, I ask, "Ever miss home?"

"Sometimes, but believe it or not, I've come to appreciate my life here."

"Tell me about it... if you'd like."

"First, Potter, tell me about your wife. What happened to Ginevra?"

This isn't what I expected. "She died almost two years ago."

"I am... sorry to hear that. She was a fine young woman."

He's sincere. "I appreciate that, Snape." I take a deep breath and begin my tale. "Ginny's always liked Quidditch, and if you'll remember, she was a right good player—Chaser or Seeker." When he nods, I continue. "After Lily started at Hogwarts, she tried out for the Holyhead Harpies and made the team. They'd just let Gwenog Jones go—had a nasty snit and turned three of the coaches into woodlice—so they needed a new Beater. Ginny tried for Beater, but when they saw how she handled her broom, they made her Chaser instead and moved one of their Chasers to a Beater position.

"Two seasons ago, they made it to the British finals and had to play against the Falmouth Falcons—"

"Oh, I hate those wankers," Snape interjects with a growl. "What's their motto, 'Let us win, but if we cannot win, let us break a few heads'?"

"Yeah, that's them," I say sadly, "and I hate them as well."

"Go on."

"Remember those bothers, the Broadmoors? Played years ago?"

"I've read of them oft enough. Karl and Kevin, I believe. Rough players."

"Right. Karl's son, Kip Broadmoor, made Beater, and he was just as violent as they used to be. The Harpies won, having caught the Snitch, by ten points, and when the team flew together, celebrating, Kip flew at them and threw his Beater bat. It hit Ginny right here," I point to my temple, "and she just fell off her broom like a rag doll. The mediwizard said she died instantly."

"Potter, I'm... That's horrible."

"Yeah. The kids and me, we were there. I almost killed him with my bare hands, and nobody even tried to stop me." I look down at my hands, remembering them around

the bastard's neck. "But I let him go somehow, and he's still in Azkaban. It wasn't deliberately aimed for her, but he wanted to hurt anyone he could. She just happened to be in the way. I don't think she ever knew what hit her. All she knew was that they were one step away from going to the World Cup. That was her dream."

Instead of wallowing in the memory of that night, as I normally do when I dwell on it, I feel as if a great burden has been lifted. It's sort of nice to talk to someone about it who isn't weeping or trying to smother me with sympathy. It was a long time before he spoke.

"I'm glad she didn't suffer and passed happy."

Nodding, I say, "It makes it bearable. We had it rough for a while. Lily, she's so much like her mum and was close to her."

"When I saw her, I couldn't stop thinking about *your* mother. Do you realize how much like her she is as well? If she only had your eyes..."

I smile. "I see the resemblance there, too. Al's the only one who got that from me. James has Ginny's brown eyes, like Lily."

"What are they like, your kids?"

Pleased, I say, "James, well, I expect you'd give him detention as often as you could." I shrug with laughter. "He's been using my map with his mates for a long time now and is in Gryffindor, plays Quidditch like me—Seeker of course."

"A Potter family tradition," he says dryly before taking another drink of beer.

"Lily's a Ravenclaw, surprisingly enough. I guess it's only right that her middle name is Luna, who was also a Ravenclaw."

"After Lovegood?" Disbelief laces his voice.

"Yes," I say firmly. "A good, loyal friend who did a lot to help me."

He simply nods, though I can see the slight curve of his lips.

"Al's a Slytherin."

"Indeed?"

"Yeah, he was so worried about being Sorted into Slytherin before he went to Hogwarts—James had taunted him of course—and that's right where he ended up."

"I expect that made him angry, to be left out of the grand house of Gryffindor."

"No, not after I talked to him."

"Oh?"

I gaze right into his curious black eyes and say, "I told him that he's named for two Hogwarts headmasters, Dumbledore being one, and you being the other, who was a Slytherin and yet one of the bravest men that I've ever known. It put him at ease, and the Sorting Hat did its job."

Snape looks uncomfortable. "I remember you calling me a coward."

"I was wrong. And, Snape, for what it's worth, I'm sorry."

Nothing more is said for a long time as we drink the last from our bottles. When he places the empty bottle beside him and rises, I say, "So... you're a bird Animagus, too, then, eh?"

He snorts. "Interesting that you are as well."

"Maybe we can go for a flight," I say lamely, cringing slightly.

"Perhaps." He sneers and nods out towards the crowds below. "It doesn't do to fly outside the city limits over the woods, however, as many of the locals round here like to hunt and shoot at anything with wings."

I laugh in response and watch him phase back into his Animagus form and fly away. While he hadn't stayed all that long, it seemed like much progress had been made. I realize then that he left without telling me anything about his life. I'd done most of the talking.

"Dad?" James pokes his head out the door and yawns.

"Yeah, son?"

"Were you talking to someone?"

"I was."

"Who?"

"Ah, would you believe a bird?"

He shakes his head and sleepily makes his way back to the room he shares with Al. I didn't exactly lie, now did I?

AN: Thanks again to beawesley2 and rdholmantx for beta reading this! :)

Part 6

To get away for a while, Harry and his children go on holiday to a place where they can find peace and have fun. Little did they know that they would meet up with someone from Harry's past, someone supposedly dead: Severus Snape.

Part Six Severus

I still can't believe how I've been acting lately. For the last week, I've been going to visit Potter after his children have gone to sleep. We've talked about a lot of things, and even when I'm speaking about my past, I feel that I'm at ease. Perhaps all I've needed all along is a friend like this. I've not felt this relaxed with anyone since Lily. It's as though he doesn't judge me for growing up poor. In fact, he lived a life similar to mine before he went to Hogwarts. Bloody Petunia and her great tosser of a husband mistreated him from the time he was left on their doorstep. He, too, had clothes that didn't quite fit him...hand-me-downs all.

We've got a lot in common. I'm glad that I decided to start over with him. He's not what I thought him to be at all, and it feels like I have a friend again. Not a friend like Lucius was for me, but it's sort of like having Lily back. He's not James, never was. Only my prejudice blinded me in the past. Although, I do smirk when I think about the expression on James' face as he "sees" his son and me share a six-pack of beer and talk like old friends.

From the way Potter acts, he's been just as lonely as I've been, needing someone to talk to about private things and living with guilt over things we simply couldn't control. Even our choice in women is comparable. Today is the first day that I'm going to his suite while his children are still awake. I've agreed to be introduced to them, and while I'm a little nervous, I've been assured that they will be able to keep my existence a secret.

Ah, it's time to go there now. With a last glance in the mirror, I Disapparate to the corridor in his hotel that's right outside his room, knowing only Wizarding families are allowed on his floor, so I don't have to worry about being seen by a Muggle. After only a single knock on the door, Potter opens it.

"Hey, I thought you might have changed your mind."

"Not at all." I look around him and see the kids in the background. "Have you?"

He grins and opens the door more widely. "Come on in." He turns to face his brood and says, "Look who's come for a visit."

"Oh! It's Samael," Lily says brightly, tossing the magazine she'd been holding aside. "Dad, you didn't tell us you found him!"

"It's a surprise," Potter says.

I stare down into the girl's face, and now that I know of her parentage, I can still see Lily in her, but I see a lot of Ginevra as well. "Hello, Lily, staying safe I hear?" I arch an eyebrow as she nods, her red hair swaying lightly.

"How are you?"

This comes from her brother Al. His green eyes sparkle brightly, and I feel myself smile. "I am well." The boy has black hair, untidy and shoulder length, much like his father's.

"So this is the bloke who scared off that wanker...er...prat who wanted to lead Lily down an alley, eh?"

Those words are from the older boy, who looks very much like Potter...down to his glasses...but has hair of a much lighter shade. "You must be James," I say, proud that I can say the name without sneering. "I am happy to meet you."

"Kids, I have a confession to make," Potter says. "I've known this man for most of my life, but I've not seen him for years."

"So he is a wizard," Lily said. "I thought as much. How else could those flowers stay in bloom so long?"

"I am."

"He... Before I tell you, I want your word that you'll not speak of him to anyone. He's living here in privacy."

"If anyone understands the need for privacy," James says, "it's us."

"All right then," Potter agrees with a nod. "Meet Severus Snape."

All eyes widen, and I can feel myself being measured. What I haven't been expecting is the warm welcome that comes next. I mean, hasn't Potter ever told them how horridly I treated him and his mates when they were my students?

"You're alive! I'm so glad," Lily says, hugging me tightly. "Dad's always wished you'd lived."

"I thought it was right suspicious they never found your body," James says. "Didn't I, Dad?"

"Oi! I'm named after you. Wicked! Dad said you're one of the most powerful wizards he ever knew...besides Dumbledore anyway. Is it true you made your own spells when you were just a student?"

Lily snickers. "Dad said he cheated in Potions with..."

"Hey, I never cheated!" Potter denies. "I just followed his advice."

"I knew you had that book!" I say triumphantly. I turn to the teens. "I do hope you give your professors less trouble than he and his friends did."

"I'm in Slytherin," Al said proudly, puffing out his chest.

"So!" James said. "You only won the House Cup by twenty points."

"A win is a win."

"He's right," Lily agrees. "Don't be a sore loser, James."

"Well, we still beat them in Quidditch, so I'm not complaining."

Potter looks at me and then shrugs. "The rivalry continues."

"Indeed."

"Hungry?"

"Just so happens, I am. Have you something?"

"Maybe we can go someplace. Any ideas?"

"Ever hear of Bubba Gump Seafood?"

He shakes his head. "Can't say that I have."

"Oh, I saw that place! It's across from the Hard Rock Café in town."

"So it is," I say. "The food is excellent. I'm partial to the Shrimp Po-boys."

"Say no more," Potter says. I can practically see him licking his lips. "Let's go."

Dinner was pleasant. I listened to the three teenagers speak about their classes and friends back at Hogwarts. Not once was I bored, uncomfortable, or annoyed with them. Shocking, even to me. What surprises me most, however, is the fact that Albus Severus and Scorpius Malfoy are best friends. It seems that Draco and Potter get along well enough to let the boys have home visits.

Things have definitely changed, and I wonder what the public reaction would be to me after all this time has passed. I find myself toying with the idea of visiting home more and more. All too soon it's time to return to the suite, and once there, the kids amuse themselves as Potter and I go to his room to sit on his balcony.

"Do you think it's wrong of me to allow it? You know, Scorpius and Al?" he asks after our second beer.

"Whatever do you mean? I think it's good that you and Malfoy have moved beyond the rivalry you once had. It seems the Dark Lord's death is still working miracles for all of us...me not hexing you for one, me being friendly with you for two, and me not minding dinner with your chattering trio for three."

Potter laughs. "Severus, Albus Severus and Scorpius are not only best friends. They're an item."

My mouth drops open in shock. "Sorry?"

"They're in love."

The last sip of beer that I took threatens to come back up now as I splutter, "How did that happen?"

"I'm not sure," he says nonchalantly.

"And you allow this?"

"I suspected it at first, the way they look at each other, so I asked him one day, and he admitted that he cares for Scorpius that way."

"What does Draco say of this?"

"He didn't like it much, but he's come around now."

"I can't believe it."

"What? That our boys are in a relationship? Got something against someone gay, Snape?"

"Of course not! I wouldn't have worked for Dumbledore for all those years if I did, Potter. It's just surprising that a Potter and a Malfoy are actually..."

"Dumbledore and Grindelwald, I never would have thought that he loved the enemy that way. Maybe there's something to that... loving what we perceive to be the enemy: like a Potter and a Malfoy."

"A Montague and a Capulet you mean."

"Who?"

"Muggle literature. I doubt you've read much Shakespeare."

"Oh, right. *Romeo and Juliet*. Some, but you're right. Not much."

"You'll find that I'm often right about most things." I grin at his incredulous expression.

He shakes his head and chuckles. "You know, I think Ginny would have approved. She's always liked Scorpius."

I finish my beer without saying anything else about it, though I wonder what Lucius thinks about his grandson and Potter's boy. This causes me to smirk. He probably approves of the relationship. After all, it only betters his family's standing, doesn't it? A Potter, son of the Wizarding hero, part of the family!

"Well," I rise, "I suppose I should go. It was... nice. I thank you for the invite."

"My pleasure," he says, rising as well and extending a hand.

I grasp it firmly before spinning to leave. "Have a good night."

"Snape," he says, causing me to turn around.

"Yes?"

"You don't... You don't think differently of Al now, do you?"

"Of course not. One's sexual orientation doesn't offend me. I believe if someone cares for someone, so be it."

The relief I see in his expression is staggering. Did it matter so much to him what I thought of his family? I'm not sure why, but I say, "Would you like to come for a walk with me tomorrow after I close my shop?"

"Oh, all right. What time?"

"Dusk," I say and glide away towards the living area to bid the children good evening.

AN: Thanks go to beaweasley2 and rdholmantx for reading through this for me!

Part 7

Chapter 7 of 10

To get away for a while, Harry and his children go on holiday to a place where they can find peace and have fun. Little did they know that they would meet up with someone from Harry's past, someone supposedly dead: Severus Snape.

Part Seven Harry

All day I've thought about the conversation that Snape and I had the night before. He seemed so shocked about Scorpius and Al. I'm glad that he isn't close minded like some people might be, but still, what bothers me is that he didn't think it possible for a Potter and a Malfoy to be together. Does that mean that a Snape and a Potter can't truly be friends?

That's very disappointing to me. For the past week since he first came to visit, I've felt like there's something to look forward to. And I know I have the kids, and that truly makes me happy, but it's been so long since I've truly confided in anyone. Ron's always busy with George and their business when he's not with Hermione and their kids, so things aren't exactly the same between us and has been even more strained since Ginny's accident. It's like neither of us knows what to say outside of a polite conversation about Quidditch, the kids, business, or the weather.

Hermione, well, she always looks at me as if she's feeling sorry for me, and I hate it. I'm a widower, I'm not dying, thanks! She was so excited that the kids and I were going on holiday. I guess she saw it as a positive step forward. It's just not easy talking to someone who's trying too hard to help. And Molly, she acts as though I don't know the first thing about fathering children, never mind that I've been doing just fine all their lives.

A long time ago I never would have dreamed that Snape and I could amicably sit together for a couple of hours talking about mundane things. He's told me many things about my mother that I never knew, and grudgingly, he's even talked about my dad and Sirius. He doesn't mind letting me know what right pricks they were to him, and I find that I'm not exactly proud of them either. I hope that as a man, my father would have changed. Sirius never did, but I think being locked in Azkaban all those years had something to do with it. Hermione had been right about him all along.

And she was right about Snape all along. He did deserve our respect, even when he was being an arsehole to us. We didn't know it back then, but he'd had a shitty life. He was there nearly every time I needed someone. I just never saw it for what it was. I never wanted to see it. I hated him. I thought him to be an ugly, biased git who...

It strikes me just now that I don't think he's ugly any longer. He looks mostly the same, though healthier, but I actually find him attractive. How did this happen? "Good grief," I mutter aloud. "How pathetic. Someone pays attention to me, and I'm so starved for it, I eat it up and get all muddled in the brain."

"What's wrong, Dad?" Al says from behind me. "You've been talking to yourself a lot recently."

I smile and say, "I was just thinking about Snape. Glad he's becoming such a good mate lately. After I found out what he and mum shared, I regretted not knowing this side of him."

"Aren't you supposed to be going over to his place? It's about that time now."

"Oh, right. My thoughts ran away with me."

"Have fun, Dad. We'll be fine. All right?"

"Right then." I hug my son briefly and then run my fingers through his hair, making it messier.

"Watch it!" he says, laughing.

"I shouldn't be too late."

"And if you are, that's okay, too."

I gaze at him a moment and take in his lopsided grin. "Are you trying to say that..."

"Just that you need to get out and do something besides work for a change. This holiday is the best thing that's happened to you, and I'm glad we have this chance to do this." He shrugged. "And, Dad, I'm glad you've found someone...a friend...to hang out with."

"Al, I can see what you're thinking, and it isn't like that. Really."

"Well, why not?"

"Because he and I, we've only just met again after all this time. We used to be enemies. It's not like that at all."

"Uh-huh."

"Besides, we both like women."

"Why can't you like both? There's nothing wrong with being bi you know."

I smile and ruffle his hair again. "I know you mean well, son. I'll see you tonight."

"Or in the morning," he calls after me.

Though I have a good chuckle over his words, I mull over them the entire walk to Snape's shop. Would I ever find someone that made me feel the way I've been feeling lately? It's been so nice to simply not be alone any longer that I hadn't really examined what's going on deep down in my mind. Am I developing real feelings for Snape? Even I admitted to myself that I find him attractive. But then, that doesn't necessarily mean anything. I've thought men to be attractive before.

However, I never had the impulse to act on that attraction before. Not that I have that impulse now, but it's something to think about, isn't it? As I near the shop, my pulse quickens in anticipation. And then I hear it: his silky voice.

"Potter."

"Snape," I say, turning to see him leaning against a lamppost.

"I just closed up."

"Perfect timing."

He nods. "This way."

We stroll down to the next crosswalk and wait for the light to walk. "Where are we going?"

"You'll see."

I keep quiet and walk beside him along the pavement, my hand brushing his now and again when we meet up with others, causing me to get closer to him. I am very aware of the heated spark I feel and wonder if he is as well.

"Not so hot today," I comment.

He snorts. "It must be some sort of record for July."

"Probably."

"This lot is going to get rowdy over the next few days...it being a holiday in two days."

"Oh, right. Independence Day. I saw someone with red, white, and blue face paint earlier with a sign that said something about it. His shirt looked like a flag."

He shakes his head. "Berk. I saw him, too."

After a trolley car passes, we cross over the tracks and climb a small set of stone steps that lead to a large cement walkway on top of the levee that lines the city. The river is before us. "Wow," I say. "It's big. Look at all those ships. You'd think they'd wreck being so close like that."

"Of course not. They know what they're doing, the riverboat pilots. See how the ferry waits to return until just the right time? Sometimes I sit on one of those rocks down there...if the bloody mosquitoes don't carry me off."

I watch his face and realize he's completely at peace. His entire form is relaxed, and his expression softens his face. As I watch, the wind lifts several locks of his hair and blows them about, and now I become conscious of something else. I want to reach out and run my fingers through his hair to see if it feels as silky as it looks.

Swallowing thickly, I look away and hope he doesn't notice how tense I've become. Maybe Albus Severus noticed something after all. Merlin help me, but the first person to draw my attention since my wife is Severus Snape. The question now is: What do I do about it? My family will only be here for a few more weeks. It's likely best that I just let it go, fight the feelings developing.

"What are you thinking?" he asks.

I turn to find him watching me intently. "Just that it's nice here. You look like... This place does you good, Snape."

"My favorite refuge," he admits. "No matter how busy the city is, I can come here to relax. There's always someone about, but just the peace of the waves flowing, the breeze... I feel so free."

"Look at that," I say, pointing off in the distance where the sky is changing to shades of pinks and oranges as the sun begins to descend below the tall buildings. We lean against the railing for a long time and simply observe...birds flying about, people commuting on the trolley cars, and even a few jets flying overhead as they leave from the New Orleans airport.

Nearby, a scruffy looking fellow plays a tune on a harmonica, and the melody seems to fit what I feel at this moment. I look over at Snape and his eyes meet mine. We both smile and enjoy the moment. Once the man's done, Snape throws a dollar into a hat next to him, and we walk on.

"How would you like to go for a flight, Potter? In our Animagus forms?"

I grin and say, "That would be great. Do this often?"

"Not often enough."

In this one instant, Snape looks years younger, and I feel the way I did when I flew for the first time...stomach tingling excitement and all.

AN: Thanks go to beaweasley2 and rdholmantx for giving this a read.

Part 8

Chapter 8 of 10

To get away for a while, Harry and his children go on holiday to a place where they can find peace and have fun. Little did they know that they would meet up with someone from Harry's past, someone supposedly dead: Severus Snape.

Part Eight Severus

I look around to make certain that nothing is out of place, not that I should care. Potter's rooms are a mess most of the time, as his kids toss their things about just as much as he does. I've never invited him here before and am not sure why I've done so tonight. I expect it's only fair that I should be the one to host our evening for once. I allowed Amber to close the shop alone and left early for the first time. Once she locks the door, my wards will activate.

The afternoon was spent preparing roast and potatoes for our meal, and I Apparated over to the wine shop I like in Metairie for a bottle of their finest elf-made wine. I happened upon it by accident once and was delighted to find that one of the owners is a witch. I've not bought any from anyone else since. I'm sure Potter will enjoy it, considering what he drinks. Hmm, perhaps I should have bought some of that Budweiser he likes so much. Maybe the wine isn't something he likes much, else he would have it at his home.

Hang on a minute. Why do I care? It's not like this is a date or anything. This gives me pause, and I sit down heavily. That's exactly how I've been approaching this evening. I look at the table and gasp: candles, a setting for two, chilled wine.

"Good Lord," I mutter and hurry towards the table to take away the candles. Just as I reach it, I hear the telltale buzzing that means someone is waiting at my gate to be let in. I quickly put the candles on the stand near the balcony doors and try to push away the embarrassment I feel over absently preparing a candlelit dinner for Potter. That surely would have sent him running.

And for some reason that discomfits me. I've been enjoying my time with him. It's been so long since I've had someone in my life this way. I don't want to give him the wrong impression. I want to keep him in my life, even when he returns home. Exchanging letters will definitely be in order. I might even consider taking a holiday to see his family, as I've become fond of them...especially little Lily.

I open the wooden door and say, "Hello."

"Bout time," Potter says, smirking as he enters. "Nice place," he adds as he makes his way out into my courtyard, taking in the numerous plants and flowers I've got planted and hanging about.

"Thanks." I swell with pride. When I've had visitors in the past...to my home on Spinner's End that is...I always felt shame that they would see the state of my home (it being rundown), but now, for the first time, I can be proud of what I have and how I've shaped it into something I enjoy. "Magic helps me keep everything up of course."

"Still, though, I think Sprout would be right jealous of all this."

"She's retired now, isn't she?"

"Yep. Did McGonagall tell you about her replacement?"

"Longbottom! I can't believe it."

"He's come a long way."

"You know," I say, guiding him to the doorway of my flat, "I shouldn't say that about him. During the year that I was headmaster, he took your place as the little ringleader, and he did well. You should have seen some of the things he did to the Carrows. It's no wonder they sent someone after Augusta."

"His Gran is still kicking around, too. When he married Hannah, she made a speech about how proud she was of Neville and how he'd done so much that his parents would have approved of." Harry grins. "I've never seen him happier. I think that's all he wanted all his life...to prove himself to her."

I nod. "It's what most of us want."

"Yeah," he agrees. "What's all this?" He points to the table, running a finger along the set silverware.

I am certainly glad that I got rid of the candles. "This, Potter, is called proper dining."

"Say, you don't like eating off of trays at my place?"

"You should learn to use your table. You do realize that's what they are made for, right?"

He laughs loudly. "I'll have to remind the kids. It's hard without Kreacher here to help us."

"Depending on your poor house-elf? What would Miss Granger say about that?" I motion for him to seat himself and sit in my chair. I lift the lid off of the first dish. "Roast."

"Mmmm. Smells great."

As we serve ourselves, we remain quiet, appreciating the aroma. My hand brushes his as we both reach for the ladle in the gravy. "Pardon."

"Go ahead."

"No, you can. I'll pour the wine."

"All right."

It isn't the first time that our fingers brush, and yet, I felt the same jolt of heat as before. What does this mean? Am I growing a bit fonder of Potter than I should be? Interesting. I finally have a friend, even though it's him...someone I once deplored, and it seems as though I'm becoming attached... in the wrong way. Am I so lonely and desperate?

"Snape?"

"Sorry?"

"I asked how you had time to cook all this."

"Oh, I took off early."

"You didn't have to do that, mate." He smiles. "But I appreciate it all the same."

"You should have at least one home cooked meal while on holiday, and I didn't mind doing it. There's never much occasion to prepare such a feast, living alone and all. I enjoyed it."

I'm taken aback by his next words.

"I'm going to miss you, Snape, when we leave. Miss this." He gestures between us. "Back home... there's no one to..."

Wanting to break up the awkward moment, I say, "I know what you mean. How's the wine?"

"Great."

I launch into my tale of how I found its makers in order to keep things running smoothly, and just as I finish, the lights flicker. "Does that during all the thunderstorms," I say, "but it doesn't usually..." My words are lost as the power cuts off completely.

"Go off?" he offers with a light laugh.

Sighing, I grab my wand, flick it, and say, *"Accio candles."* They fly to my outstretched hand and I light them quickly.

"Candles at the ready, eh?" he asks, eyes glinting. "Careful, Snape. I might think you've planned this. I mean, really, do you only use Muggle electricity?"

"I use both," I say defensively, knowing that my cheeks are heating, humiliated that he nearly guessed what I'd done earlier with the candles. I watch his eyes, mesmerized by the way the flames of the candles reflect in them. They're so beautiful.

"What are you thinking?" he asks, breaking my concentration.

"Nothing really. Just that... I am glad we're friends." I hadn't meant to say that but blurted it out when I couldn't grasp at anything better to say. There is no way that I'd ever admit what I'd truly been thinking.

He reaches across the table and squeezes my hand. "Me too."

Then he goes back to eating his dinner as if nothing had just happened between us. My heartbeat says otherwise. It's in this moment that I fully realize that I fancy Harry Potter. It's a little horrifying, as I used to love his mother a great deal and will always have her in my heart, but it's also invigorating. My life suddenly seems less dim.

"Harry, that day when we talked about Albus Severus and Scorpius..."

"Yes?"

"Are you so accepting of it because, and this is only hypothetical, you have felt that way about someone of the same sex before? Draco perhaps? Weasley?"

He puts down his fork and takes a deep breath. "At one time I was a little obsessed with Draco Malfoy, back in my sixth year to be honest, but I never felt for him what Al feels for Scorpius. It's different."

"I see. And there were no others?"

"I mean, I've found some men attractive, but..."

"Who? What men?"

"Well, Ludo Bagman was nice looking when I first met him."

"That tosser?"

He smirks. "The only person from my school time that I found attractive in that way was Cedric Diggory. Not Ron or any of the others."

So I never made his list of attractive males then. It's just as well. It's not like anything could ever come from my newfound feelings.

"Since then there hasn't really been anyone. I only had eyes for Ginny to be honest, but..."

"But?"

He shifts in his seat, obviously uncomfortable. "What about you, Snape? You didn't seem to approve at first."

"I told you that I have nothing against anyone who plays on any particular side of the pitch. I was just surprised, that's all."

"Answer the question."

"I can't say that I've ever found men appealing. I met and adored Lily from a very young age. Most of my life it's just been her."

"Oh." His expression drops slightly before he plasters a smile onto his face. "This is for us then, Snape." He lifts his glass of wine. "To moving on."

I lift mine and let it clink against his. "To moving on," I say, agreeing completely.

After a moment, he softly says, eyes looking away, "I have a confession."

"And that is?"

"I, uh, I find you attractive, Snape." He holds up his hand. "Don't throw me out just yet. Let me finish." When I don't move (because I'm stunned actually), he continues. "I don't know if it's because we've been spending so much time together or what, but for the first time since Ginny, it just feels like something important is going on."

The breath leaves my chest slowly. What could I say to him? He's just said what I long to hear, and yet, I can't allow him to waste himself on me. One of us would have to relocate, and I don't know that if either of us would be willing to do that. In the end, it would just be a disaster. I, Severus Snape, can move to another country and live peacefully, but Harry Potter would be followed.

"Harry," I say, using his given name for the first time, "I am more flattered than I can convey."

He smiles and his eyes find mine. "Say no more. Let's not ruin what we have. Fair enough?"

"You... you'll find someone again."

"I doubt that," he says with a sigh. "I'm not really looking anyway. I didn't mean for this to happen. Albus Severus was right."

"What did he say?"

"He asked how I felt about you. I told him that it was just friendship, and I've been confused about it since then. I think it is a little more than that though." He sips his wine and is lost in thought for a minute.

I finally break the silence. "Do you want to take the kids to see Lake Pontchartrain tomorrow? It's quite large, the second largest salt water lake in the United States in fact, and there are some manatees in there, according to the girl who works for me anyway. She and her boyfriend spotted them the other day."

"Well, maybe. I'm not sure what the kids want to do."

"They're endangered. I'd just like to put a little warding around them so that anyone who might want to do them harm will become distracted."

"All right then. I'll talk to them about it."

"Excellent. There are boat rentals on the North Shore that aren't very pricey."

"Sounds fun. I think Al would really enjoy that actually."

"It's settled then."

Another day with Potter and his family is what I need. I will long for them once they return home, and I will always wonder what might have been if I had only confessed the

way I've started to feel for him. Until then, I can secretly pretend that they are my family and enjoy myself. My satisfaction will come in knowing that for once in my life, I could have exactly what I wanted had I only said the word.

AN: Thanks go to beaweasley2 and rdholmantx for reading over this.

Part 9

Chapter 9 of 10

To get away for a while, Harry and his children go on holiday to a place where they can find peace and have fun. Little did they know that they would meet up with someone from Harry's past, someone supposedly dead: Severus Snape.

Part Nine – Harry

Tomorrow we'll be leaving New Orleans. These past months have been the best I've had in a long time. Severus... I'm going to miss him. After I confessed that I felt something for him, things didn't change between us at all. In fact, if I'm honest with myself, we seemed to get even closer. Other things happened.

He takes time to talk to my kids—really talk to them—and seems to really enjoy spending time with them. I think he now knows as much about them as I do. I might be going too far to say that he loves them, but I know he cares about them. I can feel it. I suppose I've gone a bit mad. Sometimes I find myself pretending that we're a family, the five of us.

Severus asks about Teddy, and he tells me stories about Lupin that I never knew. I've come to realize that he didn't hate Lupin as much as he hated my father, Sirius, and Pettigrew. I think that if Lupin hadn't passed away, they might have been on friendlier terms one day.

Wait. Maybe not. Snape does hold a grudge for a long time after all.

What would Lupin say if he knew that I toyed with the idea of kissing Snape? For that matter, what would my father or Sirius say? I know they hated him. What would Mum say? Deep down, I think she would be glad that someone cares for Snape that way—the way she couldn't. And if she were anything like me, she would want her son to be happy. That's all I can ask for my children when choosing their partners. Otherwise, I might not have appreciated my son becoming involved with a Malfoy.

As far as the kids, I think they know and even approve. Al often mentions, in private, that I look at Snape almost the way I used to look at Ginny. How can someone do that? Care about two people so much, I mean? I still love Ginny and always will. For some reason, I don't feel guilty about this, about Snape. I think maybe if it were a woman that had garnered my attention, I might feel guilty, but this? I just don't. Perhaps I'll try to talk to Hermione about this one day. I'm sure she would have an opinion. She always does.

I know that Severus likes his coffee black, and he'll have a cup at any given point during the day, just because he likes the taste. He doesn't like a very big breakfast—unless it's a day his store is closed and only after he's been up for an hour or so. I know he doesn't mind doing manual work instead of taking the easy, magical way out. I know he makes his own cologne, and it's a scent that I'll never forget—fresh, woody, like the forest after a rain. I think Lily had it right when she first pegged his scent.

Good grief. I'm wallowing in my misery today it seems. All I can think about is what I've had here and what will be missing. And the way he looks at me sometimes. Those smoldering, intense black eyes. What I wouldn't give to be the one able to use Legilimency.

Tonight is our last night. Should I try to talk to him again about us? What if he has changed his mind? Would he come back to England with us? Would he expect me to move here? I would welcome him into our lives without question. I know I would. It would be harder for me to relocate here. I have so many ties back home.

"Shite. Maybe it's for the best to just leave well enough alone."

Part Nine – Severus

Harry is gone. He and his family flew out of New Orleans this morning. I knew that it would be hard to see them leave, but I had no idea that it would feel as though a part of me flew off into the sunrise with them. There were so many things that I wanted to do this morning, and if I were a stronger man, I might have done them.

Oh, I was at the airport to see them off. They simply didn't know I was there. I said my goodbyes to the children last night when I went to fetch Potter for our evening flight. While Potter was still in the shower, James asked to speak with me privately. I was a little taken aback at first, but now I can appreciate the courage it must have taken to tell what he and his siblings had to say.

'Mr. Severus,' he said, 'Lily, Al, and me, we all talked about this, and we want you to know that we think it's all right.'

I knew what he was referring to, of course. How could anyone close to Potter not know that his feelings for me had progressed into something more than friendship. After he admitted as much to me, it was easy enough to see. His children, knowing him so well, were not oblivious. They only seemed to be unable to detect my feelings, though I think they guessed them well enough.

To play it off, I told him, 'I'm sure that the friendship I have with your father would be a welcome one. Why would I question it?'

'Is that all?' he asked me, brown eyes so wide and earnest.

Never in my life have I ever dreamed of being taken aside by *aJames Potter* and given his blessing to date someone whom he loved. That's exactly what this boy tried to do for me. I decided to be honest with him. I replied by saying, 'It's all it can be, son.'

The way he smiled at me, I couldn't help but feel the outpouring of fatherly affection, and I seemed to convey that to him without words somehow, for he said, 'We have a Mum already, and we already have a Dad, but it would be wicked to have two of you. If it ever can be, that is.'

I am still touched by his honest approval. When I turned away from him to think of something to say, the other two were there, just at the door. When I saw them, they both sprinted forward to embrace me, James joining them after. The feeling of near completion overwhelmed me. It is what I've always longed for: family who respect and care for me.

Those words spurred my later action. I wouldn't have had the courage to do anything otherwise, but when it was time for Potter to leave afterward, I knew he had something he wanted to say or something he wanted to do. I simply told him goodbye in the only way I could convey all that I feel: affection and regret being the

frontrunners.

He was so close to me. I leaned forward slowly, my eyes darting from his lips to his eyes a couple of times, enabling him to realize what I was about and allowing him to back away if he so chose. My lips met his, and I could swear that I felt heat flood through my body in a rush.

Harry's lips are very soft, yet firm, and they perfectly fit against my own. The beautiful green eyes that fascinate me didn't close but met my own in an attempt to express his longing. When our tongues met and tasted and tangled, I knew that I would never want anyone but him again. Never wanted anyone the same way I want him. It's horribly wrong, isn't it? Yet it's so right.

All was right in the world for approximately three minutes. And then I had to end the kiss with a light brushing of my lips against his. After a bow of my head and a last squeeze of his shoulder, I Disapparated to the safety of my home... where I've been brooding since. Pain, it is something the Cruciatus inflicts on its victims.

However, what I feel at this moment is far worse than that. I swore long ago that I would never suffer this fate again, the fate of one who loves and is spurned. Oh, I'm not spurned, but I might as well be for all the good it will do me. It is I who's done the rejecting this time. I've come a long way from the cold, selfish man that I once let myself become. Now I am attempting to be noble and put others before myself.

More the fool I am.

AN: Only one chapter left! Thanks go to beaweasley2 and rdholmantx for reading over this!

Part 10

Chapter 10 of 10

To get away for a while, Harry and his children go on holiday to a place where they can find peace and have fun. Little did they know that they would meet up with someone from Harry's past, someone supposedly dead: Severus Snape.

Part Ten – Albus Severus

It's been about ten years now since our family went on holiday and stumbled across Severus Snape. During that summer, he and my father overcame their past and became friends. My brother and sister didn't notice what I had at first, but all too soon, the three of us realized that what we'd hoped for had come to pass. See, all we wanted was for our father to be happy again, to find someone who would care for him and to care for in return. When Mum died, life just sort of slowed down on us—for Dad especially, even though he worried mostly about us.

Who would have thought that it only took someone like Severus Snape to put the sparkle back into 'The Great' Harry Potter's eyes? I wasn't positive about Severus' feelings for my dad until the last few weeks of our stay there. No matter that he tried to hide them, I could see the way he looked at my father. He had the same look that Scorpius gives me. After James spoke with him and let him know that we all approved, I thought that maybe he would come back to England with us.

We were surprised that he didn't turn up at the airport to at least see us off. I'm not sure what happened on the last night there between Dad and Severus, but my father seemed to know that our newfound friend wouldn't be joining us.

Once we returned to London, things changed for us all. Dad, though a little distant in the beginning, became more interested in fixing up our house—something Mum had been after him to do for years—he treated Gran Molly much nicer than he had been before our holiday, and he even had a new skip to his step. See, I think Severus gave him hope that life could go on, even though things don't turn out the way we would always like. He took one of our pictures from New Orleans of the four of us and placed it on the wall with our other family portraits. It was the first one without Mum that we ever took.

The next time a family portrait graced the wall, a new person had joined us. Severus. It took him a couple of months, but he finally came back to England to let people know that he was alive. He even gave an interview to the *Daily Prophet* and accepted the Order of Merlin, First Class, that had been given out posthumously.

I'll never forget when Dad opened the door to find him standing there. Dad's look of shock quickly changed to a lopsided grin filled with joy before he hugged Severus tightly. What I witnessed that day still touches me all these years later. And I don't mean the tender kiss. I mean love, hope, and respect. Of course they were inseparable after that, Dad living with him part of the year and him living in London part of the year. It was a compromise they were both eager to make if that meant they could be together. And we accepted it—all of us, eventually anyway.

Teddy and Victoire, whom my father gave Grimmauld Place to after renovating, welcomed Severus to the family right away, happy to have him. Mum's family wasn't as supportive at first, aside from Grandpa Arthur, Uncle George, and Aunt Hermione, but they all came around when they saw it was for the best. Scorpius' grandfather was very angry for a long time, but that wasn't because Severus loves my dad. It was because Severus hadn't confided in him and because he had mourned his friend's loss all those years.

Things are fine now, and today, as I look around the large group gathered for the Christmas feast, I can honestly say that my family is proof that enemies can become friends, that changes can be made, and that there is always hope for the future.

~end~

Thanks to beaweasley2 and rdholmantx for the read through!

AN: Sealcat says she enjoys:

--Snape/Harry

--Hurt/comfort

--Friends become Lovers

--Snape become flower shop owner after war.

--love to have animals (pet or Animagus) in story.

--Story with some plot at least

--Happy ending

--Widowed Harry and his children

**I apologize for not having smut in this. When I got to the point where I might put some in, I felt it was enough without it, allowing readers to imagine it for themselves.