

You Have

by dracontia

Ninth installment in the series unintentionally begun by 'Do Not Enter.' Scorpius faces a challenge with which Albus cannot help him. Albus finds someone to talk to while his friend awaits fate.

Al & Scorp Show, Episode 9

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: I don't own them, don't charge for them; do be a dear, and don't sue me for borrowing them.

Note: While some episodes in this series COULD stand alone, albeit with reduced significance, I would venture to say that this one really and truly can't. So please--if you are interested in this series and want to read this installment, pop over to my story list and refresh your memory.

In chronological order:

Do Not Enter: Off Limits to Students (G/PG for a mild swear)

Elixir (G/PG for a mild swear)

Yule Be Sorry (G/PG for language)

Once Upon a Window Pane (G/PG for language; gen content)

Uniformly Brave (PG-13 for language, minor violence)

In Gratitude (G/PG for a mild swear)

Xenial, After a Fashion (PG for swearing)

Seeing His Way Clear (PG for swearing)

He watched the boy walk up the path to the Shrieking Shack. If he'd still had a beating heart, it would have sunk at the sight. This young man bore only a superficial resemblance to the excited, laughing child whose similarly lighthearted accomplice had nearly burned the bloody shack down almost four years ago. Nor was he anything like the determined youth who had gradually turned the dusty building into a comfortable sanctuary for himself and said friend.

This boy looked tired. Bowed by sorrow. Almost despairing.

Too much like his father.

It could not bode well that he was approaching the house alone.

"You are alone today."

The whisper nearly startled Al out of his skin.

"Um, hi, Ghost... sir. Yeah... Scorpius couldn't make it." He stared around the room, groping for words and wondering why the ghost had finally chosen to speak. He could have sworn that the usual lonely feeling in the house was laced with a ripple of amusement at his reaction.

"Where is he?"

"He had to talk with his dad."

The silence was demanding, as if the ghost knew that there was more to it and was awaiting elaboration with scant patience.

Al sighed and curled up forlornly in the corner of the sofa. "Mr. Malfoy wants him to get married as soon as we're done with N.E.W.T.s. I guess he has someone picked out already."

A more eloquent silence; this time, the ghost himself broke it. "What will he say to... his father?"

"I don't know."

The silence stretched again. 'Mixed feelings' was the best way Al could describe the emanations from the ghost. It was something of a relief, considering that his own feelings consisted of unadulterated depression and he wasn't entirely certain why. He felt oddly uneasy at the thought of studying it closely enough to find out, lest he discover something other than sympathy for his best friend.

"Ghost?"

"Yes?"

"Do you...do you have a name?"

The pause was so long that Al almost believed his whispering companion was gone, except that he could still feel the faint tinge of wistful loneliness that typically marked the ghost's presence.

"I did."

"I don't understand. Don't you have one anymore?"

Another pause, almost as long as the last one. "Someone else is making better use of it now."

Still puzzled, Albus said uncertainly, "Oh."

The air quivered with anticipation and then stilled with resolve. It was as if a dam had broken and the ghost was spilling forth all the words he'd stored up for however long he'd been there. "I have wondered about something you said before, about your name. Why do you feel so strongly about it? Is it only because of your father's insistence on honoring the individuals in question?"

"When I was younger, it was. Little by little, as I heard about them from other people...some of it wrong, some just... prejudiced...my father told me more. More of the truth as he knew it. Their accomplishments. Their faults, as he saw them. That they both died bravely in the service of the Light."

"Your father told you how they died?" The whisper was almost sharp.

"Not exactly. Well, it's common knowledge about Headmaster Dumbledore. But, Headmaster Snape... Dad doesn't like to talk about it. He wants to. He tries to tell me things all the time, but he always has to stop after a while. It's too hard, I guess." Al fidgeted his hands slightly...not from nervousness, but grasping at a way to phrase his thoughts. "From what he tells me, sometimes I wonder... I wonder if it wouldn't make them happier somehow, wherever they are, if they knew that I were... well. Happy. I'm not really sure what I mean."

"Are you...happy?" The ghost seemed to have trouble wrapping his mouth around the word.

Al frowned. "I'm... determined."

They sat in companionable silence for a while longer. He could sense some change in the invisible conversationalist...a growing sadness combined with a sense of urgency.

"What's wrong, sir? You're making the air, um, worried."

The ghost made a snorting sound...as if Al had startled the response from him, but he was too careful to let it become anything more articulate. More revealing.

"I confess to a certain curiosity as to what you aren't telling me."

"About what?"

"Many things. In no particular order, how did you come to be a Slytherin?"

Al's jaw set, as if he'd heard that question many times before and had prepared his defense. "I asked to be one. I'm ambitious."

"What is your ambition?"

"To teach at Hogwarts. To become head of my house...such as it is...and make it respected again." He took a deep breath. "To prove that ambition doesn't have to be evil."

The sadness in the room quivered like a plucked harp string, hope and affection rising with it. "That is, indeed, ambitious. But people's memories are long, and as you have pointed out, your house is much diminished."

Al sighed. "We struggle most years to put a whole Quidditch team on the pitch, never mind alternates," he admitted. Feeling his own sadness rise to join the ghost's, Al twisted his fingers together, staring at them. "We have good qualities, once people actually look for them. Even old Slughorn... I mean, he's taught me the importance of making connections. I'll do more with them than he's ever done... They can be used to do more than just amuse yourself. It's not about blood purity. It wasn't at first, not entirely...if it had been, the school never would have been founded. It's baggage we don't need to carry."

"Does your family understand?"

"They try to. It's not the same thing, but it means a lot." He gave a half-hearted puff of a laugh. "Hell. Other Slytherins don't even understand. Most of them are only in

Slytherin because they want to make their parents happy." He bit his lip, not schooling his expression quickly enough to hide the fact that there was one very specific example on whom he based this generalization.

"And what would you teach?"

"Potions, of course," he said, lifting his head with an expression of fierce pride. "Slughorn has been on his last legs since James was a first-year. I know what I'm doing." Al's lip twisted in a slightly sarcastic grin. "I'm his best student, even if he does say so himself."

A ripple of amusement shivered the air. Al suspected that the ghost rather appreciated the joke.

"I hadn't realized that subject was the fast track to the headmaster's office," the ghost said dryly.

Al opened his mouth as if to retort. Instead, he stopped, considered, and his 'stubborn' look came over his face again. "If I have to, I'll make shameless use of my name... all three of my names. After all, I have two examples of good headmasters as close as my signature. Surely their help can't be too far away," he finished, the words barely whispered as he contemplated the scope of his chosen task.

"And if they were near?"

"I should feel that I wasn't quite so alone."

The room suddenly was suddenly drowned a curious sense of grief, and Al looked up in alarm. A tear was surprised from one eye, not for his own sadness, but in sympathy to the terrible pain he could feel around him. "Ghost? What's happening to you?"

The room remained silent, but the pain spiked as if someone had twisted an incorporeal knife into his spirit companion. "Please, I need to know that you'll be..." he stopped before he could say something so inane as 'that you'll be okay.' *He's a ghost, Al... He's beyond normal hurt. Or help, for the most part.*

Al sat helplessly as the grief finally faded back into the background levels of loneliness, sadness, and that glimmer of affection that he almost believed he'd imagined before. Now he felt certain it was actually there.

"I'm so sorry, sir. I hope it wasn't something I said that hurt you. I wish I could help."

He waited until he could tell that no reply was forthcoming. "Goodbye, then," he said gently. He left by the front door instead of the tunnel because that somehow seemed the thing to do.

Snape watched Albus shuffle through the dead leaves. A close observer might have made out his gray shimmer, draped against the windowpane along with the grime and the frost and colder than either.

"But you have," he whispered.

FIN

Thank you once again, severuslovesus, for beta-reading and commenting. :)

The companion story outlining Scorpius' experience is entitled 'Never Have' and will be posted shortly.