

Reunion

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The very last part of *The Way Home* and *A Gift of the Goddess*.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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'Welcome home, Severus.'

Cassandra opened her arms, and Severus sank thankfully into her embrace. She smelled of honey, just as she always had. And her embrace was warm and tender, just like he remembered it.

'Welcome home,' she whispered once more and placed a tender kiss on his forehead.

'Home?' Severus frowned. 'Where are we?'

'Everywhere and nowhere,' Cassandra started to explain. 'This is the afterlife.'

'No heavenly meadows then?' Severus enquired, a sneer on his face. 'No purgatory?'

Cassandra laughed, and Severus stared at her, his mouth open. Her laugh had been the first thing he had noticed about her. It had made him look up from his book in that park in Reykjavik all those years ago. It had him spellbound. And he had missed it dearly.

'Purgatory and heavenly meadows are just words, feeble attempts to describe the afterlife, Severus. The human mind cannot grasp the concept of *this*.'

She waved her hand, and Severus' mind was bombarded with pictures, millions of smells and sensations. Some of it he recognised, other things were new to him. And still, everything was familiar.

'Are those memories?' he asked.

'Some are,' Cassandra explained. 'Others are visions of things that are about to come. Time runs differently here, Severus. A second can last a thousand years, and a thousand years can pass in a blink of an eye. And you can go back and forth in time to visit people and places that are dear to you. Have a try.'

Severus closed his eyes and concentrated on the first memory that crossed his mind. And when he opened his eyes again, he heard a baby cry and recognised his beloved daughter lying in her mother's arms. Red hair and heavenly blue eyes that smiled at him.

'Eydis is a grown woman now,' Severus told his wife. 'Married to the man she loves and carrying their first child.'

Cassandra nodded. 'I know.'

She waved her hand once more and again, there was a baby crying. But this time Severus saw a mop of jet-black hair and blue eyes, and he understood it must be Eydis' first-born he was looking at. A healthy baby-boy of whom he knew that he would grow up to be a Beater and an excellent potioneer.

'But how?' Severus did not understand. He had just left Eydis on her wedding day. And still, he was looking at his grandson and knew what fate had in store for the boy.

Cassandra smiled. 'I told you time runs differently here, Severus. You will learn.'

He turned and looked at his wife, the woman he had missed so dearly for eighteen long years.

'Is this why you still look the same?' he asked. 'Like the day I fell in love with you.'

'I will always look as you want me to,' Cassandra explained. 'If you look for the maiden, you will see her. And if you look for the crone, you will see her, too. You can travel through time and space and visit any place you want, at any time, with anyone.'

'Can I visit Eydis?' Severus enquired. 'Will she know that I am there?'

Again, Cassandra nodded. 'Yes, she will know. Just as she knew that I was there. Just as you knew.'

'I have missed you, beloved,' Severus confessed. 'There wasn't a day when I did not think of you, not a night when I did not wish that I could hold you in my arms.'

He embraced his wife and buried his face in her hair.

'I missed looking at you, Cassandra. I missed your smile and your laughter. I missed the feeling of your fingers brushing my cheek, the sensation of your lips against mine. And I missed being close to you.'

Then he held her at an arm's length and looked deep into her heavenly blue eyes, and all he could see was endless love.

'Do you know for how many years I have wanted to tell you this, beloved?' he asked.

'Yes, I know, Severus,' Cassandra replied and brushed a strand of hair from his face, smiling.

And Severus embraced her once more, knowing that he would never have to let go of her again.